

# UZBEKISTAN

Political **ORDER**,  
Societal  
**CHANGES**, and CULTURAL  
**Transformations**

Marlene  
**Laruelle**  
editor

Central Asia Program

Institute for European, Russian  
and Eurasian Studies

Elliott School of International Affairs

The George Washington University



CENTRAL ASIA  
PROGRAM

**UZBEKISTAN:  
POLITICAL ORDER, SOCIETAL CHANGES, AND  
CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS**

**Marlene Laruelle, editor**

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Academic knowledge on Uzbekistan blossomed in the 1990s, before drying up in the 2000s and 2010s with the closure of the country and the increased difficulty of doing fieldwork. However, research has continued, whether directly, on the ground, or indirectly, through secondary sources or diasporic and migrant communities abroad. The death of the ‘father of the nation’, Islam Karimov, in fall 2016, partly changed the conditions and may slowly reopen the country to external observers and to regional cooperation and interaction with the world more broadly. This volume offers a unique collection of articles on Uzbekistan under Karimov, giving the floor to scholars from diverse disciplines. It looks at critical issues of history and memory, at dramatic societal and cultural change the country faced during two decades, at the domestic political order, and at change and continuity in Uzbek regional and foreign policies.

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# PART I.

## HISTORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND MEMORY

### The Roots of Uzbekistan: Nation Making in the Early Soviet Union

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Adeeb Khalid<sup>1</sup> (2016)

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The political map of Central Asia with which we are all familiar—the “five Stans” north of Afghanistan and Iran—took shape between 1924 and 1936. The five states of today are each identified with an ethnic nation. A hundred years ago, it looked very different. The southern extremities of the Russian empire consisted of two provinces—Turkestan and the Steppe region—and two protectorates—Bukhara and Khiva—in which local potentates enjoyed considerable internal autonomy as long as they affirmed their vassalage to the Russian Empire. No ethnic or national names were attached to territories. Indeed, the ethnic nomenclature in the region was different and quite unstable. Outsider accounts of the period spoke of the population being composed of Sarts, Uzbeks, Kipchaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turcomans and other “tribes,” with different authors using different categorizations. Even the Russian imperial census of 1897 did not use a consistent set of labels across Central Asia. In Central Asian usage, on the other hand, the most common term for describing the indigenous community was “Muslims of Turkestan.” Where did the nationalized territorial entities come from and, more basically, from where did the national categories emerge?

During the Cold War, we were comfortable with the explanation that the division of Central Asia into national republics as a classic form of divide and rule in which the Soviets destroyed the primordial unity of the region for their own ends. All too often, writers lay the blame at the feet of Stalin himself. One of

the gentler formulations of this view belongs to the pen of Sir Olaf Caroe, British imperial functionary and historian, who wrote in 1954, that the “Russian policy [of national delimitation] is in fact describable as cantonization, conceived with the object of working against any conception of the unity of the Eastern Turks and bringing the *disjecta membra* under the influence of overwhelming forces of assimilation from without.”<sup>2</sup> That judgment is much too beguiling to be let go and is repeated ad nauseum in all registers of writing. Olivier Roy writes of the “artificial creation of new national entities” along completely arbitrary criteria, in a process in which the Soviets “amused themselves by making the problem even more complicated.”<sup>3</sup> For Malise Ruthven, “The potential for political solidarity among Soviet Muslims was attacked by a deliberate policy of divide and rule. Central Asian states of today owe their territorial existence to Stalin. He responded to the threat of pan-Turkish and pan-Islamic nationalism by parceling out the territories of Russian Turkestan into the five republics. ... Stalin’s policies demanded that subtle differences in language, history, and culture between these mainly Turkic peoples be emphasized in order to satisfy the Leninist criteria on nationality... ”<sup>4</sup> In the aftermath of the horrible ethnic violence in Osh and Jalalabat in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, *The Economist* trotted out the same argument: “After the October revolution of 1917, new autonomous republics were created. In 1924 Stalin divided the region into different Soviet republics. The borders were drawn up rather arbitrarily without following strict ethnic lines or even the guidelines of geography. The main aim was to counter the growing popularity of pan-Turkism in the region, and to avoid potential friction. Hence,

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<sup>2</sup> O. Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1954), 149.

<sup>3</sup> O. Roy, *La nouvelle Asie centrale, ou la fabrication des nations* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 101, 117.

<sup>4</sup> M. Ruthven, *Historical Atlas of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 103.

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the fertile Fergana Valley ... was divided between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.”<sup>5</sup> Ahmed Rashid opines that Stalin drew “arbitrary boundary divisions” and “created republics that had little geographic or ethnic rationale.”<sup>6</sup> The journalist Philip Shishkin one-ups Rashid when he writes, “Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin ... drew borders that sliced up ethnic groups and made it harder for them to mount any coherent challenge to Soviet rule. If you look at a map of the Ferghana Valley, ... the feverish lines dividing states zigzag wildly, resembling a cardiogram of a rapidly racing heart!”<sup>7</sup> One can round up dozens of such statements that continue to be popular even in academic writing.

This is in striking contrast to current historiography in Central Asia itself, which takes the existence of nations as axiomatic and sees in early Soviet policies a historically “normal” process of nationalization. Central Asian scholars who criticize the process do so for the “mistakes,” deliberate or otherwise, that gave lands belonging to one nation to another, but do not see it as a fraudulent enterprise. To be sure, there are differences between the historiographies of the different countries today. Kyrgyz historians see the delimitation as the moment of the birth of the statehood of their nation. There is likewise no animus against the process among historians in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Indeed, archivally grounded research has clearly shown that the national-territorial delimitation of Central Asia was part of a pan-Soviet process of creating ethnically homogenous territorial entities and that it formed a crucial part of the Bolsheviks’ nationalities policies. Our understanding of Soviet nationalities policy—the assumptions behind it and the forms of its implementation—has been transformed over the last two decades. We now know that the Soviets took nations to be ontological givens and considered it a political imperative to accord administrative and national boundaries. More sophisticated accounts of Central Asia’s delimitation

have emphasized the importance of classificatory projects of ethnographers and of the Soviet state.<sup>8</sup> The creation of ethnically homogenous territorial entities took place all over the Soviet Union and indeed Central Asia was the last part of the union where this principle was implemented. In 1924, for the Bolsheviks, the main problem in Central Asia was the region’s political fragmentation, rather than some overwhelming unity that needed to be broken up. In fact, the region’s borders (which disregarded nationality) had come to be seen as yet another aspect of its general backwardness. The implementation of the national-territorial delimitation was a stage in the Sovietization of the region.

However, there has been a tendency in this new literature to see the creation of the new republics as simply a Soviet project and hence, ultimately, a Soviet imposition, a conclusion that doesn’t take us very far from the divide-and-conquer argument. We might have local cadres arguing passionately over territorial boundaries, as Adrienne Edgar has so clearly demonstrated in her fine book, but we still give credit for the idea of dividing up Central Asia to the Soviets.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, we ignore longer term trends in the historical and national imagination of Central Asia’s modernist intellectuals and the purchase that the ideas of nation and progress had on their minds. Central Asians did not come to the revolution of 1917 with a blank slate. Rather, their societies were in the midst of intense debates about the future. The revolution radicalized preexisting projects of cultural reform that interacted in multiple ways with the Bolshevik project. One of the results of this interaction was the creation of Uzbekistan.

This is the point I make in my new book, *Making Uzbekistan*.<sup>10</sup> Uzbekistan emerged during the process of the national-territorial delimitation of Central Asia in 1924, yet it was not simply a product of the Communist Party or the Soviet state. Rather, its creation was the victory, in Soviet conditions, of a na-

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5 “Stalin’s Harvest,” *The Economist*, 14 June 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/16364484>.

6 A. Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 88.

7 P. Shishkin, *Restless Valley: Revolution, Murder, and Intrigue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 238.

8 On nation-making in the USSR, see R. G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Y. Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53 (1994): 414-52; T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); R. G. Suny and T. Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and F. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). On Central Asia specifically, see A. Haugen, *Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003).

9 A. L. Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 51-59.

10 A. Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

tional project of the Muslim intelligentsia of Central Asia. Muslim intellectuals, not Soviet ethnographers or party functionaries were the true authors of Uzbekistan and the Uzbek nation. The idea of the nation had arrived in Central Asia well before the revolution, but it was the revolution, with its boundless promise of opportunity, that planted the nation firmly at the center of the intelligentsia's passions. The revolution also reshaped the way the nation was imagined. As I have shown elsewhere in detail, before 1917 the new intellectuals, the Jadids, generally saw the nation as encompassing "the Muslims of Turkestan," a territorially limited confessional nation.<sup>11</sup> The revolution saw a rapid ethnicization of the Jadids' political imagination, as they came to be fascinated by the idea of Turkism. A Turkestan-centered Turkism (quite distinct from "pan-Turkism" that was a constant bugbear of Soviet and western historiography) imagined the entire sedentary population of Central Asia as Uzbek, and claimed the entire tradition of Islamicate statehood and high culture in Central Asia on its behalf. The rule of the Timurids was the golden age of this nation, when a high culture flourished in the eastern Turkic Chaghatay language. I use the term "Chaghatayism" to describe this vision of the Uzbek nation. Thus the "Muslims of Turkestan" became Uzbek, and the Chaghatay language, modernized and purified of foreign words, the Uzbek language. The Uzbek nation thus imagined has rather little to do with the Uzbek nomads under Shaybani Khan who ousted the Timurids from Transoxiana, but claims the mantle of the Timurids themselves.

The era of the revolution provided a number of opportunities—all eventually aborted—for realizing a Central Asian national project, from the autonomous government of Turkestan proclaimed at Kokand in November 1917, through the renaming of Turkestan as the Turkic Soviet Republic in January 1920, to the attempt at creating a national republic in Bukhara after the emir was overthrown by the Red Army in August 1920. The Chaghatayist idea lurked behind all those projects, but it was the Soviet-decreed national-territorial delimitation of 1924 that provided the clearest opportunity of uniting the sedentary Muslim population of Turkestan into a single political entity.

The success of the Chaghatayist project also defined the way in which the Tajiks were imagined. Most Persian-speaking intellectuals in Central Asia were heavily invested in the Chaghatayist proj-

ect, even as the denial of the Persianate heritage of Central Asia was foundational to it. In the absence of any mobilization on behalf of a Tajik nation, the Chaghatayist project prevailed during the national delimitation. "Tajik" came to be defined as a residual category comprising the most rural, isolated, and unassimilable population of eastern Bukhara. It was only after the creation of Tajikistan that some Tajik-speaking intellectuals began to defect from the Chaghatayist project and a new Tajik intelligentsia began pressing for Tajik language rights and a larger national republic. The delimitation froze the identity politics of the early 1920s in time. The current shape of Tajikistan can only be understood in the context of the triumph of the Chaghatayist project in 1924.

The key figure in the Chaghatayist project was the Bukharan intellectual Abdurauf Fitrat (1886- 1938). The son of a prosperous merchant, Fitrat spent the four tumultuous years from 1909 to 1913 in Istanbul as a student. These were the years in which the hopes unleashed by the Constitutional Revolution were soured by the wars in Libya and the Balkans and debates over the future of the empire—on "how to save the state"—raged in the press. We know little about Fitrat's activities in Istanbul, but he first appeared in print in the pages of the journal *Hikmet* and was close to other emigres from the Russian empire. It was in Istanbul that Fitrat was introduced to the idea of Turkism (*Türkçülük*) and to the need for self-defense and self-strengthening in the face of colonialism. The experience was transformative for him and it marked his thinking for the rest of his life.

The Russian revolution of February 1917 provided both the opportunity and the urgency for articulating a new vision of solidarity. For Fitrat, it involved a passionate plea for the renewal of "Great Turan" and the Turkic-Muslim nation that inhabited it. The "Muslims of Turkestan" had become Turks and their homeland the cradle of a great race of heroes. The Russian revolution provided the opportunity for the Turks to take their place again in the world as Turks. The key historical figure of the past was Temur (Tamerlane), the world conqueror who had established an empire centered on Central Asia. He was a node where the Turco-Mongol heritage of the steppe, of Attila and Chinggis, came together with the Islamicate heritage of Central Asia.

It became quickly obvious in 1917 that Kazakh, Kyrgyz, or Turkmen intellectuals had no interest

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11 A. Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), chap. 6.



in the Chaghatayist project. Rather, the inheritors of Temur were the sedentary Muslim population of Central Asia, a nation, which came to be called Uzbek. The name “Uzbek” for the community was in use in Turkic sources before 1917 and became standard after that. “Amir” Temur emerged as the founding figure of the Uzbek nation in 1917. His reappearance in 1991 should not have surprised anyone.

Asserting the Turkicness of this nation was a key feature of the Chaghatayist project. This Turkism should not be confused with pan-Turkism, for it was centered on Turkestan and significant not for seeking the unity of the world’s Turks, but for asserting the Turkicness of Turkestan. In a different sense, the emirate of Bukhara came to be seen as the direct descendent of the statehood tradition of Temur, as a Turkic state. The Turkification of Bukhara was a major part of the policies of the Young Bukharans in their short years at the helm in the People’s Republic of Bukhara.

In 1924, when the Soviets opened up the possibility of delimitation, it was Bukhara that pounced on it. The basic document laying out the rationale for a new entity to be called “Uzbekistan” was laid out by the Bukharan delegation. “Bukhara will be the basis for the construction of the Uzbek republic,” it stated. “Uzbekistan will unite ... Bukhara, except for the left bank of Amu Darya; Ferghana; Syr Darya oblast, excluding its Kazakh parts; Samarqand oblast; [and] Khorezm, except for regions inhabited by Turkmens and Kazakhs,”<sup>12</sup> that is all territory inhabited by the sedentary population of Transoxiana. This territory would also incorporate all the historic cities of the region in one republic. This was the Chaghatayist vision of Uzbekness laid out in territorial terms.

Eventually, this project succeeded with very few alterations. The Uzbekistan that emerged in 1924 included all the regions of sedentary population and almost all the ancient cities of Transoxiana. Some cities (Jalolobod/Jalalabat, Osh, and Toshhovuz/Daşoguz) were ceded to other republics on the principle, central to Soviet nationalities policy, that cities’ role as economic centers for their hinterland overrode the concerns of nationality. At the same time, Tajikistan, encompassing the mountainous, rural parts of what had been eastern Bukhara, became an autonomous

republic within Uzbekistan in 1924. It was separated from Uzbekistan and raised to full union republic status in 1929 after a determined campaign by its leadership.

Understanding the origins of Uzbekistan has considerable contemporary relevance. I want to conclude with three main points. First, the incessant talk of the artificiality of the new states of Central Asia and of the weakness of their identities is misplaced. All of them, but perhaps particularly Uzbekistan, have a highly developed sense of a national identity that calls upon a nationalized past, complete with a pantheon of heroes and well cultivated sense of a national cultural heritage. To a great extent, these identities crystallized during the Soviet period. Soviet institutions of history, ethnography, and folklore were crucial in creating the research that nationalized the past, while Soviet-era practices of everyday life made nationality an indispensable and politically relevant part of people’s identities. This was what Michael Billig has called “banal nationalism.”<sup>13</sup> The Soviet period might have crystallized and operationalized Uzbek national identity, but it did not create it. As should be clear from the foregoing, the roots of Uzbekistan’s national identity predate the revolution and are not Soviet. It is for this reason that the post-Soviet Uzbek state has banked so heavily on it and succeeded rather well.

Second, Uzbekistan is not entirely analogous to the other states of Central Asia. Contrary to what is often repeated, modern Uzbekness has little to do with the Uzbek nomads of Shaybani Khan who ousted the Timurids from Transoxiana. Rather, it claims the entire Islamicate heritage of Central Asia as embodied in Temur and the high culture created under his dynasty. As such, it claims to be the central phenomenon of Central Asia, while the other national identities of Central Asia were often defined *against* Uzbekness.

Finally, given that the national identities and national programs based on them are well developed and often mutually antagonistic, the scope for cooperation in anything beyond the most practical concerns is limited. We should recognize that the persistent hopes for common action of the Turkic world or of Central Asia are utopian.

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12 “Osnovnye položeniya po voprosu sozdaniya Uzbekistana,” State Central State Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan, f. 48, op. 1, d. 272,11.16-17ob.

13 M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

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# The Role and Place of Oral History in Central Asian Studies<sup>1</sup>

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Timur Dadabaev<sup>2</sup> (2014)

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## Recollecting the Soviet Past

Throughout history, Central Asian states have experienced a number of historical changes that have challenged their traditional societies and lifestyles. The most significant challenges occurred as a result of the revolutions of 1917 in Russia, the incorporation of the region into the Soviet Union, and its subsequent independence as a consequence of the collapse of the USSR. However, any impartial and informed public evaluation of the past, in particular the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, has, for various reasons, always been a complicated issue in Central Asia.

Two of the most important and determining factors shaping public perception and opinion regarding the present and the past are the official historical discourse and the everyday experiences as lived by the population. Official historical discourses can take many forms and are very often exemplified in state historiographies, which invariably characterize the “politically correct” determinations of “good” and “bad” events of the past. There is a long tradition of history construction in Central Asia, and political pressures and official ideology have always had a decisive say in how history is interpreted. Such an approach to constructing history was practiced both in the Soviet period, with the aim of embellishing the realities of the Socialist society (well documented in the Communist-era archives), and in the post-Soviet period by criticizing the Soviet past and praising post-Soviet society-building (demonstrated by current historical literature in Central Asia).

These “official” descriptions of the past have sometimes confirmed, but more often contradicted, the interpretations of the past as viewed through the everyday experiences of ordinary people. This con-

tradition in depicting history is one of the intellectual dilemmas in Central Asian studies today.

One effort to utilize the tools of oral history studies, jointly conducted by the author of this essay together with colleagues from Tsukuba and Maltepe Universities, is a project which collects, records, and interprets the views of the public regarding their experiences during the period of the Soviet Union and their memories of the Soviet past in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Throughout these interviews with elderly or senior citizens, this enquiry aimed to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the government-endorsed history of the Soviet era and people’s private lives and beliefs. In doing so, the study attempts to contribute to academic knowledge concerning how people remember their Soviet past and their memories of experiences during that time. It also leads to a better understanding of how these memories relate to the Soviet and post-Soviet official descriptions of Soviet life. In addition, the study represents an attempt to examine the transformation of present-day Central Asia from the perspective of personal memories. In more specific terms, it emphasizes that people in Central Asia reconcile their Soviet past to a great extent through a three-fold process of recollecting their everyday experiences, reflecting on their past from the perspective of their post-Soviet present, and then re-imagining it. These three elements influence memories and lead to selectivity in memory construction. This process also highlights the aspects of the Soviet era people choose to recall in positive and negative terms.

The specific focus of this study was very broad and covered, through its questions, the everyday experiences of people throughout the Soviet era. However, the most interesting responses elicited tended to focus on the periods corresponding to the respondents’ most “productive” years. Because the target group of the study consisted entirely of senior citizens in their 60s and 70s, they often tended to reflect on everyday experiences during their youth and

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of a book project on recollections of the Soviet past in Central Asia. An edited volume in Japanese has already been published: *Soviet Union Remembered: Everyday Life Experiences of Socialist Era in Central Asia* (Kiokuno Nakano Soren: *Chyuo Aja no Hitobito ga Ikita Shyakaisyugi Jidai*) (Tokyo: Maruzen/Tsukuba University Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba.

later years, from around the 1950s onward. In addition, in terms of topics, the most inclusive responses dealt with certain traumatic Soviet experiences, relations with the state, issues of linguistic, religious, and ethnic policies, and people's narratives with respect to their nostalgic recollections. The choice of the everyday life experiences of people as the main focus of this study is considered to present a relatively apolitical picture of societal life at that time, one which has been largely ignored in Soviet and post-Soviet studies. In addition, the information provided by those interviewed in the older age group represents unique data, which, if not collected and recorded now, could be lost forever due to the passing of the generation which best remembers the social environment of the Soviet period.<sup>3</sup> The loss of such data would result in false interpretations, assumptions, and speculation without the opportunity for verification as to the reality of everyday lives.<sup>4</sup>

### Recollecting the Past

To facilitate an open and interviewee-friendly environment, the project used the following four techniques during the conducting of interviews.

First, special attention was paid to cultural flexibility and appropriate wording of the questions. Given the choice of structured (with strictly defined questions), semi-structured, and open-ended options for formulating questions, the study opted to use the semi-structured method, due to its better applicability to the realities of the region. Using structured interviews in Central Asia often results in short, non-inclusive, non-comprehensive answers, because of the lack of rapport between the interviewee and interviewer. Furthermore, using an open-ended interview might also have the potential risk of developing into an extensive exchange of opinions and developing in a direction that is unrelated to or far removed from the topic of everyday life experiences of Soviet times. Therefore, the semi-structured interview was used, which included clearly defined questions and some subquestions to clarify the meaning of the main questions, with interviewees given the opportunity to

develop their stories, as long as they did not depart from the main topic of the interview.

Second, interviewers attempted to establish a rapport with the interviewees by first discussing matters unrelated to the project topics, such as the general well-being of those being interviewed and the weather. In addition to establishing trust between the interviewers and interviewee, a long introduction is of deep cultural significance in Central Asia, where people are used to engaging in relatively long introductory conversations before proceeding to the issue at hand. This type of discussion, within the course of this project and daily life in general in Central Asia, develops a basis for smoother conversation and offers the chance for interviewees to become familiar with the other person and form their own attitudes towards them.

Third, following the initial entering into conversation, the interview proceeded with questions concerning topics related to everyday life experiences during the Soviet era. To facilitate an open discussion, the project employed an approach in which, during the course of the interview, interviewees' assumptions were critically assessed, or even challenged on several occasions, in order to provoke them into offering a deeper insight regarding how they came to the assumptions and conclusions they were presenting. However, care was taken not to radically challenge the flow of the talk or discourage the interviewee from stating his or her assumptions.

Fourth, project members attempted to make the process of interviewing more "participatory" for both the interviewee and interviewer by not simply listening to the memories recalled by interviewees, but also by having the family members of interviewees and close neighbors listen and sometimes join in what their own comments, which further encouraged the process of remembering and forced interviewees to use more detailed recollections of the past to support their own logic. This was particularly the case with older generations of interviewees, who, at times, seemed to have problems understanding the essence of questions or remembering the periods in which certain events took place.

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3 For an analysis of life-history as a field of enquiry, see W. Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 179-97.

4 For an approach similar to that of this study, see S. A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1372-85.

## **Narrating the Memory**

Methodologically, this project used critical discourse analysis to answer the above questions and achieve its stated task. The video/audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. These texts/interviews were then treated as elements mediating social events that occurred during Soviet times. In the process of interviews, the topics which respondents touched upon the most related to the analysis of various actors, such as the Communist Party, the Soviet government, religious institutions, local communities and respondents, and their social roles. In discussing these topics, this study joins other studies that analyze Soviet-era social actors using techniques “to include or exclude them in presenting events; assign them an active or passive role; personalize or impersonalize them; name or only classify them; [and] refer to them specifically or generically.”<sup>5</sup>

This study clearly reaches a few conclusions based on public recollections of Soviet times. The first conclusion is related to patterns of history construction and the role of the public in this process. This study argues that the public view of history in post-Soviet Central Asia and particularly Uzbekistan often falls between Soviet historiographies advocating the achievements of the Soviet past, as well as post-Soviet historical discourses rejecting the Soviet past. Public perceptions of history, in contrast to the ideologies and political doctrines of the time, are primarily shaped by and related to people’s everyday needs, experiences, identification, and mentality. As such they often reflect not only the perceptions of people regarding their past, but also their perceptions regarding their present and imagined future.<sup>6</sup>

Second, recollections of traumatic experiences associated with the Soviet past are often placed within the dichotomy of depicting Soviet experiences. For instance, the political violence and state policies of the Stalinist era (such as collectivization and the deportation of ethnic groups) can serve as an appropriate example of the differences between the historical discourses of Soviet and post-Soviet times. Whereas Soviet historiography describes the events of collectivization and displacement of people as a state poli-

cy, one which was painful yet unavoidable and necessary for the development of the country, the post-Soviet discourse on these issues suggests that these were primarily policies of colonization and, in some cases, involved the genocide of Central Asian peasantry and intelligentsia in order to control these republics.

However, these polar opposite perspectives do not always accurately reflect how ordinary citizens regarded these issues at that time. As this study argues, these public memories alone cannot provide a full and impartial picture of public responses to the Stalinist era policies regarding collectivization, political participation, religion, and ethnicity.<sup>7</sup> Rather they represent “another venue of memory and identity transmission ... operated simultaneously and competitively with history,”<sup>8</sup> which may need to be contrasted and counterchecked against archival data and other sources. In this sense, any discussion of how state policies and traumatic experiences of the past have influenced the formation of current political systems in Central Asia, those purely based on “official” historical accounts and “master narratives” without oral recollections by individuals, are incomplete and often inadequate. In terms of public experiences, this article emphasizes that the recollections of individuals concerning traumatic experiences, such as Stalinist repression, often reflect the positions of the narrators and their (in)ability to adapt to the conditions in which they were placed during those years. Different social/ethnic/educational/religious/ideological backgrounds greatly influence the selectivity of these recollections and explain why certain individuals recollect their Soviet experiences with a sense of rejection, while others relate to it with a sense of nostalgia.

Third, in a related manner, although the concept of nostalgia in post-Soviet countries is frequently explained solely by the economic hardships and social pressures of the post-Soviet period, this study argues that such descriptions do not accurately explain this phenomenon. Economic and social explanations for the nostalgia of respondents are obvious. However, such explanations are not the only ones, and there are a number of other nostalgia-inducing

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5 M. Vanhala-Aniszewski and L. Siilin, “The Representation of Michail Gorbachev in the Twenty-first Century Russian Media,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 2 (2013): 223.

6 For details, see T. Dadabaev, “Power, Social Life, and Public Memory in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan,” *Inner Asia* 12, no. 1 (2010): 25-48.

7 For details, see T. Dadabaev, “Trauma and Public Memory in Central Asia: Public Responses to Political Violence of the State Policies in Stalinist Era in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan,” *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* 3, no. 1 (2009): 108-38.

8 Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” 1372.

factors that are rarely discussed in the literature on this subject. From the narratives of senior citizens in Uzbekistan presented in this study, one can conclude that many nostalgic views of the past reflect the respondents' attitudes both to their adaptability to the Soviet realities and also to various aspects of their present lives. In such comparisons, Soviet modernization, freedom of mobility, justice and order, inter-ethnic accords, and social welfare are emphasized as markers that predetermine the respondents' nostalgia. In this sense, the respondents do not appear to long for the Soviet past per se. Instead, the respondents are nostalgic about the feelings of security and hope that they experienced during that era. From the perspective of the respondents' post-Soviet lives, they long to experience such feelings of security and hope again.

Fourth, in terms of specific issues such as ethnicity, this study attempts to contribute to the debate about how people in Central Asia recall Soviet ethnic policies and their vision of how these policies have shaped the identities of their peers and contemporaries. These narratives demonstrate that people do not explain Soviet ethnic policies simply through the "modernization" or "victimization" dichotomy, but locate their experiences in between these discourses. Their recollections again highlight the pragmatic flexibility of the public's adaptive strategies to Soviet ethnic policies.

This paper also argues that Soviet ethnic policy produced complicated hybrids of identities and multiple social strata. Among those who succeeded in adapting to Soviet realities, a new group emerged, known as Russi "*assimilado*" (Russian-speaking Sovietophiles). However, in everyday life, relations between the assimilateds and their "indigenous" or "natives" countrymen are reported to have been complicated, with clear divisions between these two groups and separate social spaces for each of these strata.<sup>9</sup>

Fifth, the hybridity produced as a result of Soviet experiences can be traced not only to ethnic self-identification but also to the attitude of the public towards Soviet and post-Soviet religiosity.

Such hybridity of discourse towards religion is demonstrated by the dual meanings of evaluating

Soviet religious policies in the memories of those who were subjected to those policies. Among the many policies implemented during the Soviet era, it was religious policies that were the most difficult for the general public to accept. The Soviet administration promoted the rejection of religion as an official policy and utilized all means and opportunities to criticize religion and promote secular education. Many religious institutions (mosques and churches) were closed, and the buildings were converted to warehouses or other facilities, or just simply torn down.

However, there were other policies which respondents remember as initially shocking in terms of the impact on indigenous Central Asian society, but which were eventually accepted as positive because they assisted in the process of modernization. These policies are exemplified by the *Hujum* (unveiling) campaign to institutionalize safeguards against underage and forced marriage, the introduction of secular education, and the promotion of the wider integration of non-religious Soviet men and women into public life.

An analysis of the manner in which people have come to terms with their past and their recollections of anti-religious campaigns helps us to understand how life under Soviet rule not only resulted in changes in lifestyles, but also redrew the "boundaries" of "proper"/"modernized" religious life and of what is now considered to be the religious remnants of the past.

Finally, this study reflects on the recollections related to the formation of local identity and its continuity and change, by focusing on the local community of the *mahalla*. The primary message of this part of the study is that the community has historically represented one of only a few effective traditional structures that can unite representatives of various ethnic and religious groups through the creation of a common identity based on shared residence.<sup>10</sup> However, throughout the history of these communities, political authorities have often attempted to manipulate these institutions so as to enhance the state's legitimacy. This type of manipulation has challenged the essential nature of residents' attachment to their communities and called

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9 See T. Dadabaev, "Recollections of Emerging Hybrid Ethnic Identities in Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Uzbekistan," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. (2013): 1026-1048.

10 See T. Dadabaev, "Between the State and Society: Position of Mahallas in Uzbekistan," in A. Segupta, S. Chatterjee, and S. Bhattacharya, eds., *Eurasia Twenty Years After* (Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2012), 153-171.

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the authority and legitimacy of the structures of the *mahalla* into question.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, this manipulation has resulted in a new and pragmatic two-level mindset among the affected populace. In particular, residents increasingly exhibit ritualistic devotion

to public interests (which are allegedly pursued by *mahallas*); however, particularly in the post-Soviet environment, these residents tend to pursue their private interests too, disregarding the interests of other members of their communities.

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<sup>11</sup> See T. Dadabaev, "Community Life, Memory and a Changing Nature of Mahalla Identity in Uzbekistan," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2013): 181-96.

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# Post-Soviet Transformations and the Contemporary History of Uzbekistan

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Mirzokhid Rakhimov<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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## The Paradoxical Soviet Experience

The political borders and organizational structures of the contemporary Central Asian republics inclusive of Uzbekistan were created by the Soviets during the “national delimitation” period from 1924 to 1936 that divided the region into several new ethno-linguistically based units. Still today, interpreting national delimitation is one of the most contentious issues in Central Asian historiography.<sup>2</sup>

From the 1920s until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Central Asian republics were confronted by political, social, economic, and cultural transformations which brought about both positive and negative changes. Industrialization was among one of the more positive aspects of Soviet policy in Central Asia. From the 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s, dozens of large industrial plants were built and industrial production expanded. Like other republics, those of Central Asia made a significant contribution to the USSR's industrialization and strengthened their own economic development, in spite of remaining, for the most part, exporters of raw materials.<sup>3</sup> Such was the case of Uzbekistan, for instance, which had more than 1,500 industrial enterprises, engineering, chemical, construction, light industry, and agro-industrial complexes in operation as of 1985. This industrialization reinforced “Socialist internationalization,” that is, the Soviet policy of artificially increasing the multinational mix—from voluntary to forced migration—of the union republics.

A second positive aspect of Soviet rule was the considerable attention devoted to education, which increased significantly the level of literacy among Central Asians. Soviet educational policy saw the establishment of thousands of high schools and dozens of universities in Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, for example, there were more than 9,000 high schools, and the number of institutes and universities numbered 42 by 1985. As a result, the general educational level of the population rose steadily and the number of qualified specialists also increased considerably. However, such positive changes were fragmentary and were no guarantee of quality. Moreover, language policy saw the imposition of the Russian language—in 1940 the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced by decree—as a tool that served to destroy national consciousness and the national spirit. Measures to raise Russian to the status of official state language further limited opportunities for developing national languages.<sup>4</sup>

During the period of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics were officially considered to be sovereign. Indeed, from 1944 onwards they received the right to establish diplomatic representations in foreign relations. These rights were guaranteed by relevant articles of the USSR and republican constitutions. However, the Central Asian republics were not involved in direct foreign relations: all international contacts were established only with Moscow's permission and under its strict control. In spite of this, Uzbekistan received a privileged status in that it was promoted as an actor by Moscow in its foreign policy toward Asian countries, particularly India, Iran, Afghanistan, and several Islamic countries in the Middle East.

In the Gorbachev period (1985-91), Central Asia saw the birth of national movements which expressed

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2 For more details, see O. Ata-Mirzaev, V. Gentshke, and R. Murtazaeva, *Uzbekistan mnogonatsional'nyy: istoriko-demograficheskiy aspekt* (Tashkent: Meditsinskaya literatura, 1990); A. Gordienko, *Sozdanie Sovetskoy natsional'noy gosudarstvennosti v Sredney Azii* (Tashkent: Central Asian University Press, 1959); G. Giinsburg, “Recent History of the Territorial Question in Central Asia,” *Central Asia Monitor* 3 (1992): 21-29; R. Masov, *Tadzhiki: istoriya s grifom “Sovershenno Sekretno”* (Dushanbe: Heritage Press, 1995); M. Rahimov and G. Urazaeva, “Central Asia Nations and Border Issue,” Conflict Studies Research Center, Central Asia Series. UK. 05(10), 2005; O. Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000); H. Tursunov, *Obrazovanie Uzbekskoy Sovetskoy Sotsialisticheskoy Respubliki* (Tashkent: Akademiya Nauk UzSSR, 1957).

3 B. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia. A Tragic Experience* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 43.

4 I. Kriendberg, “Forging Soviet People,” in W. Fierman, ed., *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder Westview Press, 1991), 219-31.

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demands for national-democratic reforms and cultural sovereignty. Different political and social groups emerged which focused on the restoration of national culture and statehood. Of particular importance in the period 1989-90<sup>5</sup> was the elevation of the Central Asian languages to the status of state languages, the drafting of measures aimed at resolving the most important national economic problems—such as cotton monoculture in agriculture—and reinstating national traditions and customs. Perestroika gave rise to hopes for a way out of the systemic crisis. Gorbachev and his supporters started to cut back the power of the *nomenklatura* elite, allowed relative pluralism in political and economic life, and proclaimed a “new thinking” in foreign policy. However, perestroika, only half-heartedly pursued, failed to come to grips with the fundamental issues. In short, there was little progressive change in the political sphere while the socio-economic conditions of Central Asian societies worsened.

### **Independence and the Creation of a New Political System**

The 1980s in the Soviet Union was a period of systemic demise, aggravated ethnic tensions, and socio-economic crisis. In March 1990, in view of further reforming the Union, the first secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Gorbachev was elected President of the USSR. In the same month, and first among the Union republics, Uzbekistan elected Islam Karimov as president through a vote in the Supreme Council of the UzSSR. In June 1990 the Declaration of Independence of the Republic proclaimed Uzbekistan’s sovereign right to build an independent state. Trying to establish a proper foreign policy, Islam Karimov visited India on August 17-19, 1991, where he met with President R. Vankataraman and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. At the same time, Mikhail Gorbachev was being forcibly removed from office by a conservative putchist group. When Karimov returned to Tashkent, he was met not only by official protocol but also by generals sent from Moscow. The coup failed and the Constitutional Law “On State

Independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan” was adopted just a few days later.

After the disintegration of the USSR, reforming the Soviet political system became one of the most pressing tasks for the new Central Asian republics. As in many post-Soviet countries, Uzbekistan’s drift toward post-post soviet transformation moves forward slowly whilst the country proclaims the creation of a democratic society based on universal values taking into account the particularities of its national culture and historical traditions. As Rue and Ruy pointed out, the paternalistic nature of political culture in Asia is characterized by dependence on authority, overcoming of open conflicts, and an emphasis on stability.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, several years or decades of transition may be necessary to pave the way for a more democratic system. Redemption from totalitarianism demands immense efforts and incremental advancement. As stated by Martha Brill Olcott, “such a whole complex system is quite slow to be transformed.”<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, in the space of two decades of independence, Uzbekistan has created the legal basis for the functioning of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The legislative branch is represented by the national parliament (*Oliy Majlis*) and local bodies of the representative power (*Kengashes*). The 2002 referendum led to the establishment of a two-chamber parliament. The creation of an upper chamber, the Senate, as the representative body uniting the deputies of territorial subjects, consists of 100 members, 16 of whom are appointed by the president while the remaining 84 seats are occupied by representatives of the oblasts (province), districts, and city legislative councils. Six deputies from each of the 12 oblasts, from Tashkent city, and Karakalpakstan has allowed the *Oliy Majlis* to maintain a direct connection with the regions, and to represent and protect their interests. Essential changes have also been made in regard to electoral legislation. According to these changes, candidates for the legislative chamber are put up by political parties and groups of voters and candidates to the local Kengash. A 30 percent quota of women in political parties has been introduced in nominating candidates. The number of deputy seats has increased from 120 to 150—of which 135 deputies are elected from political parties while the

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5 W. Fierman, “Language and education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-medium instruction in Urban schools,” *The Russian Review* 65 (2006): 98-116.

6 L. Rye and M. Ruy, *Asian Power and Politics: Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 6.

7 M. B. Olcott, *Central Asian Second Chance* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2005), 156.



remaining 15 deputy seats in the legislative chamber are given to the deputies elected from the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan; this following the importance and growing urgency of environmental issues in the country.

The president plays a crucial role in the political system of Uzbekistan and his constitutional rights are extensive. Among the many hats that he wears, he acts as the guarantor of respect for the Constitution, represents Uzbekistan in international relations, concludes and observes the signing of international agreements and contracts, and is supreme commander in chief of the armed forces. However, some changes have taken place. While up to 2003 the president was simultaneously Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, this is no longer the case, a change which can be seen as a way of further balancing powers in state bodies. The next presidential election in Uzbekistan is expected to take place at the beginning of 2015 with leaders of the various political parties all being potential candidates for president office.

In November 2010 President Islam Karimov presented and outlined the “Concept of Intensifying Democratic Reform and Development of Civil Society in Uzbekistan” at the joint session of the Uzbek parliament. He proposed several changes in the legislative system for the transformation of the political system of the country. Following this, in March 2011, the legislative chamber and the Senate of the Oliy Majlis approved the law “On Introducing Amendments to Certain Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan.” According to the new changes, a prime ministerial candidate will be nominated by the political party which has secured the greatest number of deputy seats in elections to the legislative chamber; or by several political parties that have received an equal allocation of deputy seats. The parliament now has the right to express a vote of no-confidence in regard to the prime minister. This new regulation decreases the role of the president in forming and managing the executive authority and has introduced a more balanced distribution of powers between the three branches. These changes will facilitate the creation of the legislative bases for further deepening reform of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, strengthen the role of the parliament in the state and political system, support conditions for further increasing of the role of political parties in the formation of executive bodies, implement parliamentary control over their

activities, as well as significantly increase political and inter-party competition.

One of the key priorities of the democratization process is the consistent reforming of the judicial-legal system. The structure of the judicial power of the Republic of Uzbekistan includes the Constitutional, Supreme, and Higher Economic Courts, the Supreme and Economic Courts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as the oblast, district, and city courts. In January 2008, Uzbekistan abolished the law on capital punishment and replaced it with life-long imprisonment (or at least long terms of imprisonment) for two kinds of crimes: intentional homicide under aggravating circumstances and terrorism. In 2008, furthermore, habeas corpus was introduced, that is the civil right to obtain a writ of habeas corpus as protection against illegal imprisonment, thereby transferring the right of giving sanction for taking into custody as pre-trial restrictions from the public prosecutor to courts. Future liberalization of the judicial system will depend on how effectively the rule of law is implemented.

### **Forming Civil Society and Its Challenges**

Establishing a civil society is a process that has been fraught with difficulties in the political, economic, ideological, and geopolitical transformations of post-Soviet Uzbekistan. External influences and domestic factors such as ethnic and religious tensions also contribute to making this formation more challenging or potentially risky.

A multi-party system is important for the growth of civil society. In Uzbekistan new social movements and parties began to form during perestroika and after independence, especially in the 1990s, which included: Erk, Birlik, the People’s Democratic Party, Vatan tarakkiyoti (Fatherland Progress), the Social Democratic Party Adolat (Justice), Milliy tiklanish (National Revival), and the National-Democratic Party Fidokor (Patriot). In 2000 Fidokor and Vatan tarakkiyoti merged, while in 2003, the Liberal-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, representative of a new class of entrepreneurs and businessmen, held leading positions in the parliament. The Constitutional law “On Strengthening the Role of Political Parties in Renovation and Further Democratization of Public Administration and Country Modernization” was adopted in 2006. An Ecological Movement was founded in 2008 but it has

not become yet a powerful political party following the example of the Green parties in European countries. Political parties slowly but gradually have become an integral part of Uzbekistan's social and political life. However, their success depends in many respects on themselves, their modernization, their activities and effectiveness, and above all the overall political liberalization of the country.

The oldest traditional institute of self-autonomy in Uzbekistan, the *mahalla*, functions as a kind of self-government of citizens at the local level. At the same time, mahalla activity is tightly bound with local public authorities. Mahallas carry out various forms of public control, give targeted support to the poor, participate in the organization of public services and amenities, and are involved in the education of the youth. If the country counts officially around 10,000 self-government institutions, mahallas as well as political parties are still largely financed by the state. In the long term, financial support from the state should be reduced and civil society institutions should become more self-sufficient.

Non-governmental organizations (NGO) are also an important element in building a democratic state and civil society, the first of which appeared in Uzbekistan at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. In 1988, for instance, the Republican Children's Fund was established, in 1991 the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan (*Tadbirkor ayol*), and in 1992 the Ecosan Foundation. Moreover, in regard to human rights, the country has an ombudsman—the parliamentary representative on human rights, who is a government appointee charged with investigating complaints by private persons against the government—a National Center on Human Rights, the Institute of Public Opinion, and the Institute of Current Legislation Monitoring. But while more than 6,000 NGOs are registered in Uzbekistan, many of them continue to be undermined by a lack of professionalism, experience difficulties in defining their sector of activities, and have difficult relations with state institutions.

Among other challenges faced by Uzbekistan's civil society is the issue of religion. While the state officially pronounces secularism, there has been a revival of religion in public life and the "rediscovery" of national traditions forbidden in the Soviet period. As of today the country counts over 2,200 religious organizations grouping together some 16 different confessions. Of these organizations 2,046 are Muslim (92 percent of the total number), 165 are Christian,

8 Jewish, and 6 of the Baha'i faith; there is also a society of Krishna worshippers and one Buddhist temple. Nevertheless, for Uzbekistan as for its neighbors, the risk of religious extremism and, to a lesser extent, of inter-confessional tensions is important, and has pushed the country to view cautiously those movements prone to proselytizing.

### **Studying Uzbekistan's Contemporary History**

In such a context studying Uzbekistan's contemporary history is both crucial to understand how society evolves and a challenge as historians are themselves citizens engaged in the same cultural, political, and social processes as their fellow citizens.

Given the need for a comprehensive study of modern history, a presidential resolution was ratified in January 2012 "On [the] establishment of the Public Council on contemporary history of Uzbekistan under the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education," which also saw the creation of the working body of the Public Council, the Coordination and Methodology Center. The Public Council and Center has been tasked with studying the recent history of Uzbekistan, based on the principles of historicism and objectivity, avoiding unilateral approaches and dogmatism in assessing the past and present of the Uzbekistani people. It will contribute to building a new educational and scientific literature on the contemporary history of Uzbekistan.

The study of contemporary history is a relatively new trend in Uzbekistan's historical scholarship. This discipline did not exist in the Soviet period, and does not have a clear methodology or peer-reference system. The thematic field is still relatively narrow, with limited critical approaches. To overcome this limitation, therefore, it should encompass the disciplines of history, political science, international relations, economics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology, as well as be integrally linked with the evolution of current social sciences abroad and need to develop interdisciplinary and comparative approaches.

### **Conclusions**

The experience of the last two decades testifies to the difficult process of forming a democracy and civil society in Uzbekistan. Reforming the political system

is inseparably linked with processes of democratic innovation within society itself, and which also necessitates a profound modernization and better integration into a globalized world. As in other spheres of life, the study of contemporary history is just one element among many others that needs to be devel-

oped, not least through the adoption of more critical approaches informed by new theories and methodologies and international cooperation. It is only in thus doing that the deep transformations Uzbek society has undergone in the last two decades can really be measured and assessed.

# On Methodology and Epistemological Situation in Humanities and Social Sciences in Central Asia

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Valery Khan<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the humanities and social sciences (H/SSs) in Central Asia have undergone changes that can be systemized as follows: many Soviet doctrinal elements have been abandoned; new ideas and methodological approaches have been outlined; new, previously undeveloped areas have become topics for study; and a large body of new archival documents, including those that were previously closed, has become available. In the years following independence, virtually all textbooks and scientific publications embodied a new form of H/SSs based on fundamentally different methodological approaches. Therefore, a discussion of these approaches and epistemology in Central Asian humanities and social sciences is relevant and urgent. The findings of this paper are based on the author's knowledge of the situation in historical science, philosophy, sociology and ethnology. As for regional differences, regardless of what country a specific example refers to, the article's findings are applicable to the entire Central Asian region. In other words, the situation described in this paper has no regional variations, although each of the countries of Central Asia has its own specifics.

## Development of Humanities and Social Sciences in the Transition Period

The main characteristics of the development of H/SSs in post-Soviet Central Asia and the methodological characteristics of transition in H/SSs in a changing socio-political environment can be described as follows:

- A vacuum or methodological uncertainty emerges in the early stages of transition period (abandonment of old paradigms and lack of new ones).

- The methodological vacuum is filled with political and ideological elements (works that serve to move the “wheel of history”—such as those on strategic orientation of the new states, and, most importantly, the ideology of state-building—are considered scientific), therefore, the development of H/SSs becomes linked with the tasks of state-building.
- Scientific criteria are softened and lowered (“revolutionary” and ideological arguments gain more importance as they begin to define basic ideas and empirical material in H/SSs), whereby science becomes a field of public activity (any official may determine what is “correct” or “wrong” in certain scientific views).
- Eclecticism appears as a consequence of theoretical and methodological uncertainties.
- Radicalism or other excessive ideologies appear as a consequence of these same uncertainties.
- Some links with the old science heritage are maintained.

## Relations with Old H/SSs

Recognizing all the changes that H/SSs have undergone, as described in the introduction, more consideration should be given to *what extent* and *in what ways* modern H/SSs in Central Asia have changed from the Soviet sciences. This question is not arbitrary, as the region's the post-Soviet H/SSs are officially alienating themselves from Soviet sciences and even diametrically opposing them. Many concepts have been erased from the academic vocabulary such as socialism, scientific communism, socio-economic system, class approach, proletarian internationalism (or just internationalism), friendship of nations, religious and feudal remnants, and so on. In scientific publications and conference presentations, social scientists emphasize that they have moved away

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from Marxism-Leninism and developed new methodological approaches. The general thrust of these statements is that the H/SSs in the Soviet Union were ideological, while in the years of independence they have been based on “objective” and “scientific” approaches, according to “modern world” science standards.<sup>2</sup>

Because such statements are widespread, it can be questioned whether the methodological approaches and conceptual apparatus of the Soviet H/SSs no longer exist. After all, a declaration of abandonment does not necessarily mean that this has been actually accomplished. It seems that, despite all declarations of opposition to the Soviet science and ideology, clear traces of the Soviet legacy—both in form and content—can be still found in modern H/SSs of the Central Asian countries.

“Marxism”/“Marxism-Leninism” was at core of the Soviet ideology and H/SSs. These concepts are put in quotation marks because the authenticity of Marxism and Soviet Marxism-Leninism is not an easy issue. Marx himself said with regard to the views of a number of his followers who had declared themselves to be Marxists: “All I know is that I am not a Marxist.”<sup>3</sup> As for Soviet Marxism-Leninism, Erich Fromm, one of its competent critics, wrote: “Russian Communists appropriated Marx’s theory and tried to convince the world that their practice and theory follow his ideas ...although the opposite is true.”<sup>4</sup> The same assessment of the Soviet Marxism-Leninism can be found in other works of Western experts.<sup>5</sup> In other words, there are different versions of “Marxism” that are distant enough from each other (western neo-Marxism, Maoism, the North Korean Juche, Christian Marxism, Freudo-Marxism, etc.) that it is questionable whether they are a part of the same doctrine.

Thus, there exist various views of Marx and versions of “Marxism.” This distinction is focused on because when social scientists from Central Asia declare that they have abandoned Marxism/Marxism-Leninism, *most of them* are referring to the entire intellectual tradition, from Marx himself

to the works of Soviet, Chinese, North Korean and other “Marxists.” In other words, Marxism is seen as a *homogeneous tradition* with only slight variations. Anyone who uses Marxist *phraseology* may be interpreted as “Marxist,” regardless of how it is consistent with the views of Marx himself. Although some differences within Marxism are acknowledged, they have no principle value. Thus, Stalin, Kim II Sung, Georg Lukacs, and Theodor Adorno are all in the same boat. Such interpretation of Marxism is usually derived from *non-acquaintance* of the works, which set a certain “Marxist” tradition, whether these are the works of Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Kim II Sung, the Frankfurt School, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, etc.

To take philosophy as an example: even in the Soviet era, many Central Asian teachers of Marxist-Leninist philosophy did not read the works of the founders of Marxism and prepared their lectures using textbooks. This tradition is still maintained, especially as ignoring or criticizing Marxism became a tacit norm. However, Soviet textbooks on philosophy are still in demand; there is a saying that an old horse will not spoil the furrow. Lecture courses in philosophy that have been taught in the years since independence have many topics that are still close to the Soviet textbooks, both in spirit and terminology. Such (undeclared) commitment to the Soviet philosophy is explained by the fact that many university professors did not know and mostly still do not know the works of modern Western philosophers.

In this regard, I recall a story from my experience of teaching philosophy at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Tashkent State University (1988-1997).<sup>6</sup> In the early 1990s, I read a course in Western philosophy of the 20th century to a group of professors from various universities. At the first class I found out that a whole group was present. As I praised this absolute attendance, one of the students explained to me that everyone wants to learn about modern Western schools, since universities were instructed to update lecture courses in accordance with “requirements of the time,” stop teaching Marxist-Leninist philosophy,

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2 No one explains what this notion means, but many have their own interpretations of it.

3 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, 2nd edition, vol. 37 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986), 370.

4 E. Fromm, *Dusha cheloveka* (Moscow: Respublika, 1992), 378.

5 H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism: a Critical Analysis* (New-York: Columbia University Press, 1958); S. Stojanovic, “From Marxism to Post-Marxism,” in E. Deutsch, ed., *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).

6 Every five years, all teachers in the Soviet Union had to take six-month advanced studies courses in the institutes or departments, where they attended the lectures of their qualifications. This system, with some variations, had been maintained in post-Soviet Central Asia.

and provide educational material according to “modern trends in the world of philosophy.”

After a lecture on neo and post-positivism, a group admitted that they did not understand much and asked if there was any “easier” philosophy. After lectures on existentialism, an elderly teacher spoke from a group and asked: “Could you tell us about philosophy, which is similar to Marxism, but is actually not. After all, we were Marxists throughout our lives and taught only Marxist-Leninist philosophy, we do not know other philosophies. It is forbidden to teach it now, but if there was a similar philosophy, but not a Marxist one, it would be easier.”

Thus, people who considered themselves to be followers of a certain philosophy were ready to easily exchange it for another. Therefore, I was curious about the nature of this request and wondered to what extent these teachers were familiar with the Marxists and “first hand” Marxism. I asked the audience if anyone had read the classic works of this doctrine such as “The German Ideology,” “Holy Family,” “Anti-Diiring,” and “Materialism and Empiriocriticism.” Surprisingly, less than a third of the entire group raised their hands. When I asked if those who raised their hands know these works well enough to be able to discuss them, half dropped their hands. Then I asked whether there are people in the group who read “Capital,” Marx’s main work. There were two. When I asked what the first chapter of “Capital” was about, these two hands dropped.

Here is a paradoxical situation. Professors, who had been teaching “Marxist-Leninist philosophy” in the universities throughout their careers, were not familiar or not familiar enough with the works of their classics. As they acknowledged, they taught their classes using the textbooks and occasionally some of the works of Soviet authors.

In fact, a rejection of “Marxist-Leninist” philosophy, which most of the Central Asian philosophers had declared after the collapse of the Soviet Union, had a *formal* character. They just abandoned the use of the names of Marx, Engels, and Lenin as well as the categories of “scientific communism.” However, many of the concepts and methodological approaches, albeit in greatly simplified forms, have been kept

and continue to be used in the style of Soviet philosophy.

On to topic of ethnography/ethnology (cultural anthropology), in Uzbekistan, despite *surface* criticism of the Soviet primordial ethnic theory, this theory is at the core of academic literature. An attempt to study, for example, the origins of Uzbek ethnicity through the prism of constructivism<sup>7</sup>, which is prevalent in Western anthropology, had not only failed, but had been criticized by local academics.<sup>8</sup>

There are at least three main reasons why the teaching of H/SSs continues to maintain its links with the Soviet legacy, even in the period of independence.

The first reason, which has been already mentioned, is ignorance of foreign schools among most H/SSs teachers, especially in provincial universities. Some of them had heard only the names of the Western thinkers, and some had not even heard of these. Teachers do not know foreign languages; there is a deficit of Western literature even in the university libraries in the capitals of the countries, let alone libraries in provincial universities. For this category of teachers, the only way to study is to use Soviet literature or studies from contemporary local authors, which are written primarily on the basis of the Soviet-Russian sources. In most works on H/SSs there are no references to foreign scholars and foreign publications, or their number is negligible and formally present. Additionally, there are very few teachers of H/SSs who have a sufficient understating of the contents of certain Western doctrines.

Because most social scientists are not familiar with Western theories, they do not use them, but play with words. Thus, the debates on well-known theories are not centered on their content, but only titles (“Clash of Civilizations,” “End of History,” etc.), which downgrades the level of academic discussions. At conferences one can often hear a criticism of the clash of civilizations theory by Samuel Huntington. The problem is that the discussants have not read the book itself (a solid work at 368 pages), but have heard about it from other sources. This undermines their “opinion,” because it has no relation to the text of the American theorist. At the same conferences one can often hear from various professors that they are no longer using a formation approach and have

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7 A. Il'khamov, “Arkheologiya uzbekskoy identichnosti,” in *Etnicheskiy atlas Uzbekistana* (Istanbul, 2002), republished in *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 1 (2005).

8 D. A. Alimova, Z. K. Arifkhanova, A. A. Ashirov, and R. R. Nazarov, “Eshche raz o problemakh etnologii v Uzbekistane (v dopolnenie k diskussii),” *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* 3 (2006): 117-119.

embraced a civilization approach instead (note that Samuel Huntington's theory is based on the civilization approach). In reality, it turns out that these professors have a vague idea what the civilization approach is (as well as a formational one, if not simplified to a schematic "five-stage approach") and have not read the works of Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin, or Samuel Huntington.

Ignorance of foreign theories and methodologies stems in part from lack of demand. Many dissertations defended in H/SSs state that their theoretical and methodological basis lay in the works of the presidents of certain countries. For example, how can one discuss foreign theories in studying the history of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan when their presidents (Emomali Rakhmon and the late Saparmurat Niyazov) wrote historical articles and books? These works are devoted to specific historical issues, such as etymology of ethnonyms and toponyms, justification of historical dates, direction and composition of migration flows, and age ranges of origin of a particular people.

Given the authoritarian nature of the political systems of these countries and the fact that the authors are national leaders, similar writings leave no room for discussions, hypotheses, or alternative visions of history. All historians can only confirm the views on history set out by the head of state.

The second reason is that older generations have a special role in local scientific communities, as was typical both in Soviet H/SSs and the knowledge system in pre-Soviet Central Asia. Today's "patriarchs" made their careers in the Soviet era. Many of them did not know Western theories then. Requirements to use unfamiliar Western theories discomfort them and challenge their scientific authority (although even without this knowledge, many mediocre scholars had been able to get high administrative positions in scientific and educational institutions). Pushed by this situation, they may react by either blocking new theories and concepts, or simplifying them. Simplification affects theory's integrity, reduces complexity, and ultimately instills these "simple elements" in its type of conventional (dogmatic) knowledge. Unlike scientific popularization, this simplification dilutes and vulgarizes initial knowledge. In the Soviet era, Marxism fell victim to dilution, vulgarization, and ultimate dogmatization<sup>9</sup>, and similar processes function today with only a change in the subject.

The third reason has to do with specifics of functioning of the education system and H/SSs in Central Asia. It is known that in the Soviet period, H/SSs had carried not only scientific and cognitive but also ideological function. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the elites of the new states needed to legitimize their new ideologies and policies. The old and streamlined method appeared to be best suited for these needs as it formed a loyal and rightfully oriented way of thinking through new concepts in H/SSs and then was implemented in education system and media.

### Characteristics of Methodology and Epistemology in H/SSs

Thus, H/SSs in Central Asia are still affected by the Soviet way of thinking and Soviet environment for functioning of H/SSs. More specifically, the Soviet social science heritage is expressed as follows:

*Scientific standards versus ideology:* As in the Soviet Union, H/SSs in post-Soviet Central Asia are strongly influenced by ideology. The following may result from such close links between science and ideology (in case of the "Ruhnama," one sees a complete substitution of science by ideology):

*First*, this may result in a loss of scientific independence and emergence of predetermined findings of the "scientific search" (of course, when findings are predetermined, scientific search is meaningless). Many works on social sciences in Central Asia, especially on recent history, sociology, and political science, are secondary in nature and mostly provide commentary but not groundbreaking research findings. They also retroactively justify current policies and speeches of the presidents of their country. This leads to the loss of instrumentality in science, making it heuristic and disseminating epigonism and plagiarism. Knowledge of foreign schools and trends is not required, which in turn leads to isolation and hence to provincialism of science in the country.

*Second*, it results in a declarative nature of scientific works, which is reflected in the wording of the dissertation titles.

*Third*, it substitutes research *topics* with research *areas*, making them explicitly conformist to ideological cliché. Therefore, a solution to scientific problems is replaced by empirical data collection in a certain area.

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<sup>9</sup> The works of Joseph Stalin are a typical example of simplification, dilution, and vulgarization of Marxism.

*Fourth*, it implants excerpts from presidential speeches and samples of worldly wisdom into the fabric of scientific reasoning. These are often used as the main arguments. Such forms of “evidence” were common in Soviet social science. From the point of logical form, this is a *direct deduction* of specific findings on specific scientific topics from general postulates (ideological cliché, citations of officials, proverbs), serving to legitimize these findings.<sup>10</sup>

*Fifth*, it undermines categorical apparatus and merges it with public (ideological) and everyday language as well as disseminates the use of stereotyped ideological clichés. Terminological simplicity makes H/SSs widely accessible and enables control of them, even if those who control them do not have the appropriate education.

*Sixth*, it transforms methodological foundations of research (substituting scientific theories by ideological constructs). The basis of any scientific methodology is a certain theory or set of scientific concepts. Their absence leads to the loss of one of the main features of modern science - its theoretical nature. As a result, descriptivism and surface inductive empirical generalizations begin to dominate in H/SSs.

The dissertations defended in Uzbekistan on relations with other countries and international organizations are exemplary in this regard, as their content is comprised of observations of empirical (as well as selective) facts such as signed documents, trade volumes, numbers of joint ventures, visits of government delegations, cultural days, etc. Thus, an extended information article becomes a scientific dissertation. There is no analysis of the problems; it all boils down to cooperation, and development and improvement of cooperation, which deprives this “research” of instrumental and prognostic function. A discussion of the known theories of international relations is usually missing, as is analysis of their applicability (or non-applicability) to foreign relations of Uzbekistan. Dissertations in ethnology suffer from same descriptivism, as they only describe various artifacts and rituals.

*Seventh*, this also leads to ideological selection of empirical material and their adjustment to the tasks set, which is also typical for Soviet science.

Taking an example from sociology, in studies on interethnic relations, a sample is often taken in proportion to representation (or an approximate proportion) of ethnic groups in the population of the country, city, or organization where research is conducted. This approach, where the majority of respondents represent the ethnic majority, which is 70-80% of population, can be justified in the study of transport or utilities services. However, in studies of national policy and interethnic relations, when it is necessary to identify a specific perception across different ethnic groups, this methodology does not suffice.

In one of the surveys conducted in Uzbekistan, the goal was to identify interethnic tolerance in Tashkent (2008). A total of 414 people were interviewed: 74.6% of them were Uzbek, 10.5% Russian, 7% Kazakh, 3.5% Tatar, 2.6% Tajik, and 1.8% other nationalities.<sup>11</sup> The structure of the sample predetermined that any more or less consolidated response from Uzbek respondents would automatically translate to more than 70% of all the responses. On the one hand, this would be acceptable, if it was a study of the roads of the capital. But since the study was about ethnicities, it would be wrong to assume that the opinion of Uzbek respondents on this issue as a whole reflects the public opinion in this *multiethnic* city (here the term “multiethnic” has principal importance), as this sample predetermines. The methodological approach has a built-in distortion of representativeness of the results.

Apparently, the authors of the survey were not so much interested in getting a real picture of the processes, but wanted to convey an ideologically “correct” image. But *accurately* documented perception by ethnic groups of national policy and interethnic relations is a necessary empirical basis on which the analysis of ethno-political processes can be made and an informed national policy pursued.

*Eighth*, as rigorous scientific standards are lowered or erased, quasi-scientific elements and myths increase in quantity. Specifically, they have proliferated in historical studies.<sup>12</sup>

(1) *Past and Present*. The past holds a special place in modern ideological constructs and H/SSs of

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<sup>10</sup> This was used, for example, in justification of elimination of genetic studies in the Stalin era, when scientific discussion of findings of local experiments was replaced by general speculative discussions citing classics of Marxism and Stalin's works.

<sup>11</sup> I. Agzamkhodzhayev and M. Karamyran, “Mezhnatsional'naya tolerantnost' tashkentsev (po rezul'tatam sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniya),” *Obshchestvennoe mnenie. Prava cheloveka* 46, no. 2 (2009).

<sup>12</sup> N. E. Masanov, Z. B. Abylkhozhin, I. V. Yerofeyeva, *Nauchnoe znanie i mifotvorchestvo v sovremennoy istoriografii Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Daykpress, 2007).



independent states. In a “correct” interpretation, it legitimizes the present, e.g. statuses of ethnicities and public policy. This was reflected in the concept of *absolute historic right* of a titular nation to dominate in the country. Although Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmens, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz have lived for centuries on the territory of Central Asia, today the new states—with the help of H/SSs—substantiate an idea of the historical right of a titular nation to a given territory.

The preamble of the Constitution of Kazakhstan states: “We, the people of Kazakhstan, united by a common historic fate, creating a state on the indigenous Kazakh land...” The meaning of this idea of historical ethnic rights to “indigenous” land equates to the legitimization of domination in the modern state.

Discussing Kazakhstan’s state ideology based on the “integrating role of the Kazakh culture” for all other ethnicities of the country, a well-known Kazakh scientist Nurbulat Massanov wrote: “Following this idea, public opinion of Kazakhs had firmly embraced the ideology, according to which Kazakhs being the indigenous ethnicity have an absolute right to political dominance in the territory of Kazakhstan. Their language becomes the official language and Kazakh culture plays an integrative role for “all ethnic groups in the country.” Consequently, representatives of the Kazakh nation have a “natural” and “historical” right to occupy senior government posts and receive preferences in higher education, career promotion, studies of their culture and history.”<sup>13</sup>

Of course, such an approach needs academic justification. In this regard, Japanese researcher Natsuko Oka wrote: “History has been mobilized to help support the idea that only Kazakhs have the right to claim the status of the indigenous people of Kazakhstan.”<sup>14</sup>

To justify the right to dominance, a concept was introduced of “indigenous population” or “indigenous ethnic group.”<sup>15</sup> The age of this ethnic group had to be artificially antiquated. A main argument is sought in the works and speeches of the presidents of the region. Thus, in “Ruhnama” one reads: “The Turkmens are a great people because they have managed to make local and foreign historians acknowledge their age—5000 years.”<sup>16</sup> In Tajikistan, the president said that Tajik history and civilization “is more than 5,000 years old.”<sup>17</sup> It’s not hard to guess that these dates are then widely referenced in the textbooks and scientific publications. In this regard, a well-known Uzbek archaeologist Rtveladze writes: “However, this is completely contrary to all historical data and other scientific research. Until the 7th to 6th centuries BC, there was no confirmed data not only on the language which tribes of Central Asia spoke at that time, but also the names of the peoples who lived there. It first appeared in Avesta, in the writings of Greek historians and rock inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings. As for the names of the modern nations of Central Asia, they appear only in the Middle Ages.”<sup>18</sup>

The past has become a point of contention. The same states of ancient and medieval history of Central Asia have become a subject of fierce debate among neighboring peoples who claim their ethnic origin. The same is observed with respect to prominent thinkers and politicians in Central Asia history. Ethnocentric models of Central Asia history have become basic elements of new state ideologies and academic theories.<sup>19</sup>

(2) *The past and the future.* In the ideological constructions of modern Central Asian states, the past in a certain interpretation acts as a natural and logically justified bridge to an outlined future. The

13 N. Masanov, “Perceptions of Ethnic and All-National Identity in Kazakhstan,” in N. Masanov, E. Karin, A. Chebotarev, and O. Natsuko, “The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan,” *Middle East Studies Series* No. 51. Tokyo: IDE-JETRO, 2002, 25.

14 O. Natsuko, “Nationalities Policy in Kazakhstan: Interviewing Political and Cultural Elites,” in Masanov, Karin, Chebotarev, Natsuko, “The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan,” 111.

15 In a strict sense, distinction between indigenous peoples and migrants is conditional, because the whole history of mankind is a history of migrations. How long should people live in a certain area to be considered as indigenous? The indigenous people who are affirmed today on a certain territory have distant (and not so distant) ancestors who had been migrants at some point. The references made to the fact that a certain ethnicity had originated from a certain territory are not clear either. In Central Asia, there are no “pure” ethnic territories that originally belonged to only one ethnic group. In addition, modern Central Asian nations had been formed involving various ethnicities from the areas outside current borders of the Central Asian states.

16 See for instance <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/ruhnama/ruhnama-rus.html>.

17 See for instance <http://www.prezident.tj/rus/vistupleniy040906.htm>.

18 E. V. Rtveladze, “Bez retushi! Istoricheskaya nauka i psevdostoriya Sredney Azii,” *Centrasia.ru*, September 10, 2006, <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?Month=9&Day=10&Year=2006>.

19 Rtveladze says this concept is based on the principle of ethnic exclusivity, the main features of which are: 1) an ancient state; 2) the antiquity of the nation and its self-proclaimed name; 3) a hypertrophic area or state borders and the territory occupied by the people; 4) excessive exaltation of people and the downplay of the significance of other nations. See Rtveladze, “Bez retushi!”

idea of a *great future* is postulated as a logical consequence of the *great ideas of the past*. Ethnocentric thinking, A. Kusainov writes, is specifically focusing on the past, which has an image of a “bright future.”<sup>20</sup> The past somewhat legitimizes the claims of the nation to “a rightful place in world civilization.”<sup>21</sup> As the president of Tajikistan notes, “Honoring the past is one of our wings and the second wing is our current efforts to build the homeland of our ancestors and secure a peaceful life for the people, and these two wings will raise our nation flying high in a prosperous and dignified future.”<sup>22</sup> This legitimization takes many forms: from the concept of accelerated socio-economic development (Kazakhstan) to concepts of a prosperous and dignified future (Tajikistan), a great future (Uzbekistan), and the “Golden Age” (Turkmenistan).

*Dichotomous thinking*: Historical processes, especially the events of 19th to 20th centuries as well as recent history, are evaluated on the basis of “either - or” through the prism of black and white perception (“positive - negative,” “true - false”). Of course, this method of *assessing* perception was inherent in all historical periods. In the 20th century, it reflected the opposition of two global sociopolitical systems. Thinking from the times of the Cold War is inherently dichotomous. Dichotomy is a very specific feature of Soviet social science, where all historical processes were considered as either progressive or reactionary.

This type of thinking is based on formal logical laws of contradiction and the law of the excluded middle, formulated by Aristotle. However, back in the 17th century, Kant showed that with transition of understanding (empirical thinking) in the sphere of reason (theoretical thinking), the knowing subject encounters antinomies (conjunction of contradictory and at the same time equally reasoned judgments). After Kant it became clear that “there is incompatibility ... not only between the true and false but inside the truth and falsity themselves.”<sup>23</sup>

Hegel’s logic came as the next stage in the development of dialectics of antinomies, where the law of

the excluded middle had been criticized.<sup>24</sup> According to Hegel: “The true ... meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements, consequently to know an object is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations.”<sup>25</sup> Hegel thus showed that the construction of a theoretical system of thought is antinomic in its very nature, which has become one of the tenets of the modern methodology of science.

Studies on the history of science confirm that antinomies and their resolution by synthesis appear as a legitimate stage in the development of natural as well as social science. A classic example is recognition of the wave-particle duality of light. This finding goes beyond empirical thinking, which accepted either the wave or corpuscular nature of light. Later, wave-particle duality was discovered in electrons and other elementary particles. This led to a conclusion, which was impossible in empirical thinking, but which appeared as an important part of modern theoretical physics: a particle is a wave and a wave is a particle. In broader terms, on the level of methodological requirements, a necessity of this type of thinking in physics was postulated in Bohr’s *complementarity principle*.

Modern research shows that thinking along the lines of mutually exclusive dichotomies cannot explain the complexity of historical processes. From the point of view of modern methodology, there could be different answers to the question, what is true and what is not, as well as to the question, what is good and what is bad, as this depends on the system of coordinates (epistemological, axiological, social) in which the issue is being discussed. It also depends on the scale of historical time frame as well as mega- and micro-trends. In other words, while foreign historical science had already embraced the idea of relativity and multi-valued logic back in the 20th century, historical science in Central Asia still operates with categories of dichotomous thinking.

*Soviet phraseology. Expressive and axiological vocabulary*: Dichotomous thinking inevitably generates

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20 A. A. Kusainov, “Istoricheskiy protsess skvoz’ prizmu etnotsentrizma,” in *Rossiya i Vostok: problemy vzaimodeystviya. Materialy konferentsii* (Volgograd, 2003), 86.

21 From the standpoint of modern paradigms, which are based on a humanistic understanding of the prospects of world civilization, such a question seems rather strange, since every nation and every state has the right for “its rightful place in world civilization,” and not just those that had “great past.”

22 E. Rakhmonov, *Arii i poznanie ariyskoy tsivilizatsii*, <http://www.prezident.tj/rus/baromadho.htm>.

23 Z. M. Orudzhev, “Formal’no-logicheskoe i dialekticheskoe protivorechie: razlichie struktur,” in *Dialekticheskoe protivorechie* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1979), 81.

24 F. Hegel, *Entsiklopediya filosofskikh nauk*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Mysl’, 1974), 277.

25 *Ibid.*, 167.

a corresponding emotional and evaluative language. Each positively or negatively assessed fact (historical period, etc.) gets a certain expressive vocabulary.

The style and terminology of modern texts, especially in modern history, sociology, and political science, are very close to the Soviet phraseology. To name few: progressive development, progressive thinkers, in the fraternal family of nations, younger generations, high moral values, true values, certain shortcomings, spiritual oppression, age-old dream, radical changes, social consciousness, world community, peaceful creative labor, selfless work, vigilance, loyalty to the course, and wholeheartedly. It is stylistically normal to use a large number of terms in superlatives: huge, unprecedented, large-scale, prosperity, international recognition, inviolability, tremendous opportunity, all necessary conditions, etc. Scientific texts on modern Russian history and political science that claim to be academic often resemble newspaper editorials.

*Claims of objectivity:* Soviet science sought to obtain ideally objective historical knowledge, while Western historical science realizes that it may wish to obtain it, but practically this is not feasible. Different historians work in different methodological paradigms, be it Marxist, positivist, or postmodernist ones. In principle, it is impossible to have (fully) objective research in a separate work. Objectivity implies going beyond ethnic, geographic, religious, and public paradigms, while most studies are based on them. In the case of Central Asian history, all histori-

ans of the region claim objectivity, which in most cases proves to be their ethnocentric narratives (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek).

Another methodological characteristic of H/SSs in Central Asia is a *lack of interdisciplinary research*.

## Conclusion

This paper describes methodological and epistemological situation, which according to the author's view, reflects the *general* state of the H/SSs in Central Asia. Of course, there are exceptions, as there exists elite stratum of social scientists whose work can satisfy the most demanding reader. The presentations of these scientists at international conferences often attract genuine interest. There also are young scholars in the countries of the region who have been trained or interned abroad, speak foreign languages, read foreign literature, and have managed to develop the skills of truly scientific, creative thinking, free from nationalism, outdated methodological approaches, and ideological clichés. The question is how to raise qualification and methodological level of the social science body in Central Asian countries in general, especially in the provincial universities. This is not a simple process involving political, economic, psychological components, etc. To advance this process, the author considers it most important to set up an effective evaluation and promotion system focused on high standards of scientific and pedagogical work.

## PART II. SOCIETY AND CULTURE

### Navro'z and the Renewal of Uzbek National Culture

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Laura L. Adams<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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I want to begin with a quote:

Throughout history, various rulers have tried to use the people's most beloved holiday, Navro'z,<sup>2</sup> for their own purposes. We can observe this during the eras of conquest by the Arabs, Mongols, and Tsarist Russians. Especially during the Soviet era, Navro'z was in a pitiful state. Since national folk traditions did not serve Soviet purposes, they were attacked both officially and unofficially. They were not interested in whether a particular folk custom or holiday had positive or negative aspects. During the reign of their state, their goal was to transform all peoples into a single family, and to do this they fought against national values. The politics of prohibiting folk traditions grew stronger and stronger. As a result, having been torn out by the roots, the people's national traditions were not able to develop.<sup>3</sup>

I have been writing about the Uzbekistan's showy pop concert holiday celebrations for nearly 20 years now,<sup>4</sup> but I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the work of more serious scholars of Uzbek holidays such as the man quoted above, Dr. Usmon Qoraboev. A leading expert on the history and regional folklore of Navro'z, Qoraboev's scholarship is important for understanding the meaning of the project of cultural renewal in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

In this article I will be quoting Dr. Qoraboev liberally and contrasting his work with my analysis of the meaning of Navro'z in contemporary Uzbekistan. Qoraboev and other scholars in Uzbekistan tend to be puzzled by my interest in the pop culture interpre-

tation of Uzbekistan's greatest, most ancient holiday. Why study the government-commanded fluff-filled concerts rather than the history and folkloric roots of the holiday? My response to such questions, no matter how many different ways I phrased it, never impressed my critics: my object of analysis was not Navro'z per se, but rather was what the people working on these concerts *thought* were the roots of the holiday, what meanings they sought to *project* through the holiday celebration, and very importantly, what ideas were considered and then rejected for ideological reasons. That is, I was approaching the research from a decidedly constructivist stance, one which many Central Asian scholars find fault with. While Qoraboev writes about this topic as part of his cultural renewal work, I attempt to analytically deconstruct what he and his colleagues are doing. I hope that this article serves as something of an apology to Usmon aka and his colleagues for stubbornly insisting on my own point of view!

The main point I want to make in this article is relatively simple: Navro'z is an important holiday in contemporary Uzbekistan not just because of its profound popularity, but also as an exemplary case of a broader phenomenon of post-Soviet cultural renewal. National holidays are often used by states as conscious expressions of national identity, but Navro'z is an especially felicitous case to examine in a post-independence context since, as a New Year holiday, it is inherently a celebration of renewal. Furthermore, the holiday is one that the people themselves would celebrate even without any direction from the state, which is not the case with a wholly invented tradition such as Independence Day. However, this is not to say that the state does

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2 Navro'z is the Uzbek name for the spring equinox holiday celebrated throughout this part of the world. See "Novruz, Nowrouz, Nooruz, Navruz, Nauroz, Nevruz," inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/?RL=00282>.

3 U. Qoraboev, *Madaniy Tadbirdlar* (Tashkent: Toshkent Kartografiya Fabrikasi, 2003), 191.

4 Some of the material in this chapter can be found in my previous writings such as *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan* (Duke University Press, 2010); "Uzbekistan's National Holidays," in J. Sahadeo and R. Zanca, eds., *Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 198-212; and "Invention, Institutionalization, and Renewal in Uzbekistan's National Culture," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2/3 (1999): 355-73.

not put its own stamp on the holiday; there are both political and folk cultural elements to the celebration of Navro'z in Uzbekistan.

Cultural elites in Tashkent talk about Navro'z as a holiday of spring which celebrates the triumph of warmth and light over cold and darkness and the renewal of nature. The first aspect, the triumph of light and warmth, is symbolically associated with the equinox and the lengthening of the day. Some scholars also talk about Navro'z as a time when the forces of evil rise up and must be put down for another year by the forces of good, but these references to the legendary or spiritual sources of Navro'z are not part of the everyday understanding of Navro'z I encountered among acquaintances and in popular culture. Although the 1996 Navro'z holiday concert was in part based on stories adapted from Avesta, in general there wasn't a lot of knowledge about the Zoroastrian aspects of Navro'z among the population in the 1990s. In other parts of the world, Navro'z is linked with the symbol of fire, though fire plays almost no role in Uzbekistan's contemporary Navro'z celebrations and reference to fire rituals was actively discouraged by the government. For example, one director I interviewed described how a fire dance he worked on for the Navro'z 1996 holiday concert was artistically interesting for him, but it had to be cut because of concerns about how it would be understood in different countries.

Mansur aka: [The dance] was interesting in and of itself, but since different viewers would see it, since it would be transmitted by television and tapes would go to different countries, it was an issue of Uzbekistan being a Muslim country, a Muslim state...There are these political nuances. "What are they worshipping? Where are they going with this?" So that we don't give the wrong impression to our neighboring countries, to Muslim governments.<sup>5</sup>

Many others shared this attitude, shrugging off the imperative to be authentic in favor of exploring the new freedom to express some of what had been repressed during the Soviet period, and the opportunity to do more of what had been allowed during the Soviet period.

Although the elites I interviewed did not frame cultural renewal specifically as a postcolonial or anti-colonial movement, it is clear that there was

a backlash against Soviet culture in general and Russian culture in particular, and that people in Uzbekistan resented those Soviet policies that promoted Russification at the expense of Uzbek language and culture. In Usmon Qoraboev's writing on Uzbek national traditions, Navro'z stands for a whole set of cultural practices that were repressed by Soviet power. The repression of Navro'z, however, is seen as especially egregious by Qoraboev and other Uzbeks. Navro'z in Uzbekistan was not a religious holiday, after all, nor was it a celebration of bourgeois values. Just going by Soviet ideology, there was nothing especially objectionable about the holiday except that it was part of the old, national culture.

During the early years of Soviet power, national and religious holidays were prohibited. The prohibition of Navro'z was particularly hard to endure. At first the politicians tried to get Navro'z to serve the purposes of communist ideology by organizing political performances in the city's main squares during springtime.... But by the beginning of the 1930s, the politics had returned to a battle against "hold-overs from the past." Under this campaign, ancient national-spirituality, cultural heritage, customs, ceremonies, and holidays all came under scrutiny. However, local people in out-of-the-way places secretly continued to conduct traditional festivals and rites.<sup>6</sup>

The struggle between those who feared any form of national cultural expression and those who saw Navro'z as a positive social force continued throughout the Soviet era. During the thaw of the 1960s, some discussion of Navro'z was allowed in the press but the openness of the public sphere to so-called national culture contracted again in the 1970s.

During the 1960s, the national question thawed just a little bit and the discussion about national holidays and rituals was allowed a small revival. Articles about folk customs and festivals began to appear in the press. Thanks to the initiative of forward-thinking members of the *intelligentsia* and certain leaders who appreciated culture, efforts began to celebrate Navro'z again locally. However, Navro'z was not allowed to be celebrated at the level of a state holiday. Even though a number of intellectuals and other progressive leaders continually emphasized that Navro'z was a genuine secular, grassroots holiday, keeping in mind the old prohibition, many people were too frightened to support this tradition.

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<sup>5</sup> Interview, theater director, Tashkent, May 5, 1996. Interview excerpts use pseudonyms to conceal the identities of my interviewees.

<sup>6</sup> Qoraboev, *Madaniy Tadbirdlar*, 191.

In the 1970s,

there was more of an unofficial campaign against folk holidays. Local government representatives in the provinces were not given the okay to celebrate national holidays, and party organs gave orders, both openly and in secret, that new Soviet holidays had to be organized in their place. This is because the Soviets were deathly afraid of triggering a national awakening.<sup>7</sup>

In a futile attempt to make concessions to national sentiment without giving up control over public culture, a holiday called Navbahor ('new spring,' to be celebrated on the first Sunday in April) was introduced as a Soviet substitute for Navro'z in 1986, but the holiday never had a chance to take root. Official fears grew stronger in the late 1980s when the discussion about Navro'z grew into a conflict between, on the one hand, advocates of glasnost and national cultural autonomy, and on the other hand, high level functionaries of the Uzbekistan Communist Party and others who were still committed to the "creation of a Soviet people."

In the mid-1980s was the beginning of the end of the Soviet era and they defended their ideology with their last breath. National holidays such as Uzbekistan's folk holiday Navro'z faced new obstacles to their being widely celebrated. Between 1985 and 1987 the mass media organs were given orders not to say anything about Navro'z. If someone organized a street fair in a city square, the roads would be blocked. The tightropes of acrobats were knocked down. The cauldrons for making *sumalak* were knocked over. This caused the hatred of the people to boil up and resulted in many heated arguments. Writers, scholars, and culture workers tried to explain that Navro'z had always been a progressive, truly popular folk holiday, that its essence was not at all religious, that it was a celebration of the laws of nature, and they spoke seriously about how it was based on the best traditions necessary to develop [a culture].

The defense of Navro'z was the catalyst for the defense of national-cultural traditions in general. In scientific assemblies and writers' meetings the supporters of Navro'z broadened their ranks. Educational elites in various localities began to celebrate Navro'z in defiance of prohibitions from

their higher-ups. In the neighborhoods, the streets were all cleaned up, people put on new clothes, people exchanged holiday greetings, prepared *sumalak*, feasted, and partook in merry-making. They couldn't wait for Navro'z to begin.<sup>8</sup>

The result was that in the mid-to-late 1980s, Uzbekistan's cultural intelligentsia took it upon themselves to make Navro'z one of the centerpieces (along with the status of the Uzbek language and the rehabilitation of repressed writers) of their campaign for greater cultural autonomy from Moscow.

In addition to this story of struggle against the cultural domination of Moscow, the way Navro'z is celebrated in Uzbekistan today shows us that there is also an important component of global modernity to the way that cultural renewal took place in Uzbekistan in the 1990s. In short, Navro'z simply isn't what it used to be. Navro'z used to be celebrated in the marketplaces, city squares, and main streets, not unlike contemporary *sayils* (street fairs—which are now just one component of the planning that goes into Tashkent's Navro'z celebration). The entertainment consisted of clowns, musicians, storytellers, and games such as *kopkari*, a game of horsemanship played with the carcass of a goat or sheep.<sup>9</sup> Nowadays, in the era of the renewal of traditional culture, we still see the clowns, musicians, and storytellers, but they entertain us from an elevated stage in a carefully planned and rehearsed Olympics-style show worthy of the most modern nation-state.

In the 1990s, many intellectuals were uneasy with some aspects of the "Olympification" of Navro'z and advocated a greater emphasis on the recovery and propagation of authentic folk songs and rituals, both within the concert and throughout the city on the day of the holiday. But in the years since my original encounter with the planners of the 1996 holiday concert, Navro'z concerts in Uzbekistan have gotten ever more grandiose and cultural authenticity has lost even more ground to folkloric and pop culture kitsch. During the 1990s, the holiday of Navro'z itself became a focal point for discourse about the Soviet repression and renewal of culture, about global versus local, and modern versus traditional. However, the desire of the state to produce a slick, tightly controlled show for the masses has perhaps laid the ground for a new struggle over the meaning of Navro'z.

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7 Ibid., 192.

8 Ibid., 192-3.

9 *O'zbekiston Respublikasi Entsiklopediya* (Tashkent: Qomuslar Bosh Tahririyati, 1997), 540-41; U. Qoraboev, "Navro'zi Olam," *Guliston* (1988): 6.

# Seeking Divine Harmony: Uzbek Artisans and Their Spaces

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Gül Berna Özcan<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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## Introduction

The Fergana Valley is the cultural and spiritual heart of Central Asia. This fertile terrain has long been the most celebrated epicenter of agriculture, crafts and trade between China and Europe. Its past glory is long since gone, swept away by a couple of centuries of economic and spiritual decline along the Silk Road.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, these towns exude a melancholic dignity and an almost surreal, timeworn visage. Although most of its land mass lies within the boundaries of modern Uzbekistan, beyond the Fergana's western gate is the historic city of Khojand (in Tajikistan) and to the east it is embraced by the ancient towns of Osh and Uzgen, on the Kyrgyzstan side of the border. Since the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Valley's people have been predominantly Sunni Muslim. However, Persian, Chinese and Hellenic cultures once intermingled here. After the separation of Eastern and Western Turkic Empires, it came under the domination of Turco-Mongolian dynasties and the westward migration of their tribes.<sup>3</sup> Compared to the sparsely populated mountainous areas and steppe lands, the Valley is dotted with many small and medium-sized towns renowned for their crafts and productive small farms. Today it has a predominantly Uzbek population along with Tajik-speaking villages and other small ethnic communities, including Russians, Meskhetian Turks, Kazakhs and Uyghurs.

The Fergana Valley is unlike other parts of Central Asia. Throughout my travels in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan I came to appreciate the region's distinctive character, resilience and charm.<sup>4</sup> Nowhere in Central Asia had I observed such a powerful sense of belonging and defiance. How did this small oasis

survive the Soviet bulldozer? Many scholars and travelers have pointed out that distinct features of agriculture and trade have long supported an integrated economy and society. This is why the Fergana people have repeatedly shown vocal opposition to external power domination, as seen during the Basmachi revolts in the 1920s against Soviet expansion and most recently in 2005 in Andijon, against state suppression. There is something else to be said about this most densely populated region in the middle of the inhospitable geography of Central Asia. Its soul has been preserved through passion and loyalty to traditional craft forms. Through tireless repetition of time-honored practices, many artisans and families have managed to maintain their crafts as rituals, as well as a source of identity and livelihood. Craft-based enterprises have occupied people's daily routines, created a sense of purpose and evolved into diverse forms of colorful *ikat* silk patterns, glazed pottery, wood carvings, beaten copper vessels and many other craft products. These exemplify a blessed divine harmony transposed to the material world and one also linked to Islamic traditions and crafts.

However, there is no simple uniformity in the Valley: each town has a history to tell. The diversity in artisanal family traditions is also reflected in the social nature, temperament and skill of individual Fergana towns. Kokand, for instance, was the capital of the last khanate before the Russian colonial expansion and became the center of an independent Turkestan movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It still is the de facto cultural capital of the Fergana with long traditions in Islamic teaching and major crafts. Margilan, once a center of Soviet silk production, is known to have a more relaxed attitude to Islamic traditions, with its streets enlivened by women walking in traditional colorful *ikat* dresses. Andijon has long been a trade node between Kashgar (Xinjiang) and Khojand (Tajikistan) but it lost most of its historical center through Soviet urban planning. Russian set-

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2 For an insightful analysis see F. S. Ülgener, *Zihniyet ve Din İslam, Tasavvuf ve Çözülme Devri İktisat Ahlakı* (Istanbul: Der Yayınlan, 2006).

3 S. Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

4 I carried out an enterprise survey with over 200 small and medium-sized business owners in all major towns of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan between 2004 and 2009. Most observations and interviews referred to here are from a fieldwork trip at the end of 2006. See G. B. Özcan, *Building States and Markets: Enterprise Development in Central Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). I have a long interest in craft traditions and support *Anatolian Artisans* as an International Board member. See <http://www.anatolianartisans.org>.

tlers and intellectuals established the town of Fergana near the ancient city of Sim.

Namangan, in contrast, appears to be an introverted city with grim-looking streets. Situated in the northern part of the Valley, it is one of the biggest cities in the country, with almost half a million urban inhabitants and its surrounding district home to almost 2 million people, mostly engaged in small crafts, cotton farming, small-scale trading and food processing. Today Namangan's vernacular architecture has certain similarities to old Mesopotamian buildings, with tall mud-brick walls and houses set along snaking roads. Soviet town planning with its straight wide boulevards and public buildings is juxtaposed against this old fabric along with radiating main intercity axes. The result is a seemingly detached co-habitation of two forms, awkwardly out-of-touch with one another. The one is characterized by elongated concrete blocks, meaningless large open spaces and wide roads, whilst the other comprises smaller blocks of buildings secluded somewhat by the traditional winding pattern of roads with their low-rise houses protected by tall fences and garden walls veiling vivid, colorful, traditional quarters.<sup>5</sup>

Crafts prevailed even under the Soviet Union, when all means of production for private purpose were strictly prohibited. Collectivization and Soviet industrial planning aimed to eradicate the independent artisanal spirit and production entirely. Following the failure of early cooperative experiences during the 1920s, silk and pottery factories were established and all privately held equipment, including looms, were confiscated in order to prevent household production. Artisanal traditions were channeled into Soviet factories, thus deforming the quality and style of craftsmanship. Despite this, traditional techniques managed to survive underground at home. Home-based craft production not only passed from one generation to another but also became a symbol of resistance to the Soviet efforts to annihilate it.

### Artisans and Worship

The rulers and officials may be in charge of streets, bazaars and public spaces, with their power extending into neighborhoods, teahouses and mosques through various forms of hierarchy. However, their

power has failed to eliminate the bonds of family and the sanctity of home. Despite economic hardship and bad management since the fall of the Soviet Union, strong family ties have maintained the vitality of Fergana people. The traditional walled house is a sacred space and as such is a world within worlds. Behind tall ornate wooden gates and walls, multiple rooms often encircle a courtyard. This is where households with extended families carry out their daily routines. Most crafts rest on patriarchal traditions and lineage. However, unlike in the formal separation of modern workplaces, women do take part in the organization of daily tasks and routines, being adept in the use of domestic space. They frequently join in the production of textiles, pottery, and embroidery. The social fabric of the community is nested in craft production, cottage industries and barter trade. Neighbors and relatives frequently cooperate and perform additional tasks. Extensive networks of relatives and friends help with buying and selling. Many time-honored artisanal traditions are transformed into "mundane" routines and economic livelihoods at home; households consent to government authority but resist the intrusion of the state and the market. Some crafts are performed collectively while others, being highly specialized, require specific skills (see Picture 1). In the mostly Tajik town of Rishton, more than 200 households work in the production of pottery and ceramics. They each function as an independent unit, but also cooperate at various stages of glazing and design. This is a form of networked production in which almost all family members take part, including children and the elderly. Houses and courtyards are busy with the activities of production, classification and planning. All are enmeshed with family life and social obligations.

In Kokand there are rich and diverse craft traditions with over 600 members registered with the artisans' association (united through the institution of *Oltin Miras*, "Golden Heritage"). Hundreds remain unregistered as they could not afford to pay the annual fee. For instance, I met Osman, a senior artisan who at the age of 11 began working for a master so as to learn how to shape copper. He now carries on engraving and pounding old delicate patterns on copper samovars, trays and plates with his son and a small team of apprentices. During the Soviet era, state institutions ran courses on copper-work, but,

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<sup>5</sup> Thubron provides useful accounts of some towns in the Valley. See C. Thubron, *The Lost Heart of Central Asia* (London: Penguin Books, 1994). C. Thubron, *Shadow of the Silk Road* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2006).



Picture 2



he says, “they were inferior to age-old teachings.” Osman inherited an extraordinary notebook from his master. This is a hand-written document of 42 pages, which recounts the lineage of coppersmith masters in Uzbek (see Pictures 2 and 3).

Picture 2



Picture 3



This manual documents their names and dates as well as explanations of the drawings of the most revered motifs. The book lists Molla Atulla Muhammad, born in 1796, as the first master copper-smith of Kokand. Masters passed on their teachings first to their apprentices and eventually handed on the honored title to their most accomplished apprentice. This custom ensured both the continuity of skills as well as the craft forms themselves. The manual also notes that after 15 generations, the last master died in 1974. Osman is certainly proud to have inherited such an ordained calling and wishes to pass it on to the next generation. In another quarter of the town, the old master Abdulhak, 78, showed his 26 different patterns of silk *ikat* “atlas.” With trembling hands he gently stroked shimmering textiles hung in the veranda. Abdulhak lived with his extended family in this house consisting of living and work quarters. His beautiful wooden loom was hidden in a small closet for years during Soviet rule and he showed us how he continued weaving at home quietly for decades (see Picture 4).

Picture 4



The Namangan silk factory employed 3,000 people during the Soviet era, according to Arif, who came from a typical artisan-merchant family. His father was a silk weaver as his eight brothers were all involved in different stages of silk production, dyeing, weaving and marketing. One of his brothers served eight years in prison for weaving silk privately; during those years they used to steal materials from the factory and weave at home. Their silk patterns and the quality of weaving were always better than the factory-produced ones, which lacked care, patience and attention. The brothers then used to sell these to black-market traders in Samarkand and

Bukhara. Arif believed in the miracle of silk and emphasized how maintaining family traditions was his first duty to his father and generations of grandfathers, how silk is blessed by God and how he is a “slave of God” pursuing a craft that has such sanctity. But, despite his exaltation of silk, the craft was clearly in trouble. Arif had to weave nylon in addition to silk. Harsh economic circumstances have intensified competition and low incomes fuelled the demand for cheap products. The colorful shades of “adras” (ikat with cotton and silk weave) and atlas are giving way to cheap Chinese imports and lowering the quality of local production (see Picture 5).

Picture 5



I came across one of the last old-style wooden block-printing masters in Margilan. In his courtyard, Rasuljan, 80, showed me a range of exquisite prints (see Pictures 6 and 7).

Picture 6



Picture 7



He was proud to stress that he and his family had not lost the sacred traditions that extended back several generations. Now, he was passing on to his children what his ancestors and father had perfected. Printing on fabric is a laborious process that involves boiling and washing the cloth several times before and after printing. Developing dyes and performing the prints require physical and emotional stamina. Plentiful supplies of dyestuffs are essential. The family used to use only natural dyes, but these have become difficult to obtain due to high customs charges, corruption at borders and state restrictions. Rasuljan explained that to get the color of black they had to boil iron ore for a week until 200 kilograms of water evaporated and grew dense with color. They used many other ingredients, such as resin, minerals and herbs, to obtain the desired colors. These came from as far away as Afghanistan. Many are in short supply. Squeezed between financial hardship, supply shortages and the lack of space in their family home for complex printing tasks, his sons decided to write a petition to President Karimov, begging him to grant at least some workshop space so that they could continue to carry on their own business. In the meantime, the large Soviet silk factory of the town was divided into smaller units and converted into a bazaar. These new trading sites were built across Uzbek cities to generate income for the new owners of urban property. When I visited the bazaar, the whole space looked eerily empty. Small traders took up only a tiny section of it and there was no trade to fill the upper floors.

## Endurance without Splendor

Marxists regarded artisans as an appendage to small property owners. This “nuisance class” was supposed to have been eliminated for the victory of the proletariat. For liberal capitalists they represent pre-modern forms of production, a romantic but disappointing symbol of underdevelopment. In oligarchic Uzbek capitalism their survival is linked to the character of the regime. President Islam Karimov and his government officials praise artisans as symbols of Uzbek national authenticity, sources of pride and generators of jobs. Gulnara Karimov, Karimov’s ostentatious daughter, launches her fashion collection with *ikat* atlas silk patterns in Western capitals. But, there seems to be no real will and structure in place to improve the working conditions of artisans. Ruling elites extract value from all forms of enterprise. Major economic resources and activities in gas, cotton and mining are controlled by a small number of oligarchs. Import and export activities are centralized whilst bribery allows additional rents for a range of players. Moreover, trade restrictions, arbitrary customs rules and corruption suffocate small enterprises.

As part of this command capitalism, craft associations dictate government decrees and controlling measures to localities. Oltin Miras was founded by a presidential decree in 1996, uniting three separate artisans’ organizations. It now has 150 branches, many of them very small, throughout Uzbekistan. Although the association defines itself and is promoted by the government as a nongovernmental organization, it is another example of state co-option. The president has appointed the national secretary of the association and all branch representatives are selected by the secretary with the approval of President Karimov. In order to function and stay on good terms with local authorities, artisans need to be registered with Oltin Miras. However, several interviews I had with the chairpersons of local branches in the Fergana Valley—

as well as in Bukhara and Khiva—showed that these associations were unable to address issues faced by artisans on a daily basis. Leaders acted as civil servants and often felt insecure when asked about their activities and support for crafts.

Customs controls, tax inspections and police surveillance limit business transactions and push the dealings underground. Banks are designed for private interests only. *The Corruption Perceptions Index* of Transparency International shows that Uzbekistan is among the worst countries in public sector corruption after Somalia, North Korea, Myanmar and Afghanistan<sup>6</sup> and artisans face these general problems somewhat worse in the Valley. The region is cut off and especially since the Andijon uprising, it has been isolated. There is a severe trade blockade, while tourism is channeled away by the government and large tour operators to designated sites, mostly to the Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent regions. Merchants from these towns control the prices and marketing channels.

The Fergana Valley belongs to a time and place beyond tablets and mobile phones. China is now producing most of the industrial and consumer goods of the region and dumping them into the ever-growing bazaars in Central Asia. Lack of incentives and low returns dissuade youngsters from taking up crafts as professions: they pick up a small trade or go to Kazakhstan and Russia to become construction workers instead. There is a dual economy, just as in Soviet times. One is the official discourse that has no reflection in reality: it may be publicly endorsed, but everybody knows that it is full of lies. Another is the private realm that is crammed with the naked truth and contempt for poor management.<sup>7</sup> Uzbekistan has a failing economy, its public services are poor, living conditions are dire. Yet, the regime thinks of itself as a strong regional power. At present the story of Fergana artisans stands as an odyssey of endurance, but I fear there is little prospect for future splendor under the current circumstances.

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<sup>6</sup> See, Transparency International’s report on corruption perceptions, [http://archive.transparency.org/publications/publications/other/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2011](http://archive.transparency.org/publications/publications/other/corruption_perceptions_index_2011).

<sup>7</sup> See, T. Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

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# Private Initiative, Religious Education, and Family Values: A Case Study of a Brides' School in Tashkent

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Rano Turaeva<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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## Introduction: Islam in Uzbekistan

The status of Islam in Uzbekistan is complex. The majority of the population is Muslim, but the state promotes secular and democratic principles of governance. Some aspects of Islam, namely those linked to 'national traditions,' have been rehabilitated by the Uzbek government, which sees in Islam an element of its narrative about the Uzbek historical national identity.<sup>2</sup> However, in practice, the state authoritarian rule persecutes extremist religious activities and raises suspicion against anything considered 'too' Islamic, both in terms of ideology and faith practices. The 'good' Islam is submissive to the state authority and limited to irregular visits to officially recognized mosques, while any other means of religious expression is considered a 'bad' and 'false' conception of Islam.<sup>3</sup> Religious education is very strictly controlled and limited. Small scale religious education at home is tolerated to a certain degree, when taught by women. Informal religious gatherings of male religious leaders and ulemas were already well known in the Fergana Valley in early 1970s, and these circles gained even more prominence in the last two decades.<sup>4</sup>

Decades of atheism promoted by the Soviet regime have left their traces in the daily arrangements

and practices of people in post-Soviet Muslim states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the so-called 'return' of religion was visible mainly in family-related and gender issues,<sup>5</sup> and in reassessing the role of religion in defining national and social identity. The contemporary Uzbek Muslim identity is not based on a literal reading of the Quran, but rather on the everyday practice of religious rituals, knowledge from local mullahs, and social practices that are considered to be traditional and therefore respected. The issue of transmitting religion as a faith and knowledge, and as a practice, is at the core of current debates about interpretative and subjective experiences of Islam.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, there is still a gap in the literature, which overlooks practices that take place in more closed, and private spheres of community life. These initiatives remain discreet, as the state authorities often decry them as part of a broader Islamic threat. However, they deeply shape the social fabric at the local level and play a key role in circulating and interiorizing what are considered to be social norms and morality in post-Soviet Uzbek society.

This paper presents a case study of a school for brides that a woman involved in a variety of migrants' networks organized. Migrants who moved from various parts of Uzbekistan to Tashkent have formed their networks and communities in the capital. Sarvinoz educates youth and their parents about Islam and how to become a proper Muslim; in her school she teaches Arabic and one's duties as a proper

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2 S. Akiner, "Kazakhstan/ 'Kyrgystan/ 'Tajikistan/ 'Turkmenistan/ 'Uzbekistan," in A. Day, ed., *Political Parties of the World*, 5th edition (London: John Harper Publishing, 2002), 281-83, 289-91, 456-58, 472-73, 518-19; I. Hilgers, *Why do Uzbeks have to be Muslims? Exploring religiosity in the Fergana Valley* (Berlin: LIT, 2009); J. Rasanayagam, "Informal economy, informal state: the case of Uzbekistan," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 31, nos. 11/12 (2011): 681-96.

3 S. Kendzior, *State propaganda on Islam in independent Uzbekistan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

4 A. Abduvakhitov, "Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan," in D. Eickelman, ed., *Russian Muslim Frontiers. New Directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 79-97; A. Rashid, *Jihad: The rise of militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

5 B. G. Privratsky, *Muslim Turkistan. Kazak Religion and Collective Memory* (London: Curzon Press, 2001); M. Pelkmans, "Asymmetries on the 'religious market' in Kyrgyzstan," in C. Hann, ed., *The postsocialist religious question: Faith and power in Central Asia and East-Central Europe* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006), 29-46.

6 J. Bowen, *Muslims through discourse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); A. Masquelier, "Prayer Has Spoiled Everything": *Possession, Power, and Identity in an Islamic Town of Niger* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); C. Simon, "Census and sociology: evaluating the language situation in Society Central Asia," in S. Akiner, ed., *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia* (London: Kegan Paul, 1991), 84-123; N. Tapper and R. Tapper, "The birth of the Prophet: Ritual and gender in Turkish Islam," *Man* 22 (1987): 69-92; M. Lambek, *Knowledge and practice in Mayotte: Local discourses of Islam, sorcery and spirit possession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); G. Tett, "Mourners for the Soviet Empire," *Financial Times*, 27 November, 1995, 14.

Muslim. This case study sheds light on micro-efforts on the ground to bring the Islam back to daily life.

### A Trajectory of Female Leadership

Sarvinoz is a woman in her early 50s who has two daughters and a son. She was a gynecologist by profession and practiced until she was married. She was the seventh *kelin*<sup>7</sup> (bride) in a large family with eleven sons. Before moving to Tashkent and opening the school, Sarvinoz demonstrated unusual qualities and organizational capabilities, especially considering her status as *kelin* who conventionally would not have enough independence from her husband and in-laws to do anything beyond her household and family matters. The events she organized involved young unmarried and married women getting together for tea and discussing problems, or other similar social activities. Sarvinoz pointed to the fact that all *kelins* lived in the same house as their parents-in-law, which was very challenging for her. She spoke at length about the difficulties, as she put it, of coping with her “very strict” mother in-law and living together with “very different” women under the same roof. She was a very “exemplary” (*obratzoviy*) *kelin* and was respected for that. She had been well educated, was open minded (*ochiq*), and very active in organizing social events with the people around her.

Her experience of being one of many *kelins* helped her to learn diplomacy in order to ‘keep the peace’ in the family and gave her much of the knowledge she now shares with the young women around her. As a result, she initiated social gatherings of young girls among her relatives and friends to talk about different matters that were of primary concern for any future *kelin*. Parents— especially mothers— were happy to send their daughters to attend those social gatherings. First of all, girls would get to know each other better and secondly, they would be noticed in the environment of families with ‘good standing’, such as the in-laws of Sarvinoz herself. In turn, being seen in ‘good’ or ‘elite/higher class’ circles of families, and learning such ‘important’ matters, would offer better chances for a successful marriage. Finally, the

knowledge these girls acquire at Sarvinoz’s gatherings is one thing that their busy mothers must teach them.

As for Sarvinoz, she was interested in enhancing her reputation among the parents of the girls, which would earn her recognition as somebody more than a *kelin* in a family within her immediate social surroundings. Her new social engagement also gave her incentives to spend her free time in a more interesting way than merely sitting at home and serving her parents-in-law, deprived of a job. In addition, she did not have her own children for more than ten years, which left her freer than others who were busy rearing children from the first year of their marriage. Sarvinoz had to adopt a child after ten or twelve years. Immediately after the adoption, she became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter. After another five or six years she gave birth to a son.

### A Brides’ School...for All

Sarvinoz gained popularity as an organizer of the brides’ school already in her hometown and the number of her listeners grew. She continued her school in Tashkent in her little office—a two room flat on the first floor of an apartment house in Tashkent, situated in front of her husband’s office.<sup>8</sup> The school was now open not only for girls, but also for boys and mothers. It aimed to prepare good *kelins*, husbands and mothers in-law. For the girls, the stakes are high. A *kelin* has a very low, if not the lowest status, in the family and kinship networks as well as in her neighborhood of residence. She is never called by name and only recognized as a ‘*kelin* of so and so’. Later when she lives separately from her in-laws, she will be called a wife of so and so. Only after she has already married off her daughters and sons, and became a mother in-law herself, will she finally be called by name and given a full social status.

Although the school widened its range of listeners and attendees, they were all part of Sarvinoz’s surrounding networks (*faqat ozlarimiznikilar/only our own people*).<sup>9</sup> She stated that “there are no strangers (*chujoylar*) in the classroom.” I attended several classes for both girls and boys, but did not have a chance

7 A *kelin* is a young woman who has a mother-in-law and does not have her own daughter-in-law. A *kelin* usually has a very low status in families or even kinship networks. It can be seen in the labor distribution during bigger or smaller family and other social events, as well as their roles and influence in the decision making processes of different importance. Often these circumstances make *kelins* of different families within one or several kinship networks unite and do some things together, although it can be quite difficult if a *kelin* lives together with her parents-in-law.

8 She bought those two room flats on the first floor with her own savings, she said. She also owned the flat above, which has three rooms.

9 Interview with Sarvinoz, April 4, 2006.

to attend those for mothers-in-law. During classes both boys and girls learned how to write Arabic, what it means to be a proper Muslim, and the duties of children to their parents and of wives to their husbands. She also explained, mostly to girls, how it was to live in a family and to take care of a husband and children and at the same time respect elders and please parents-in-law (*qaynota-qaynana*). She often talked about the life stories of others in order to bring up positive and negative examples. Mothers-in-law attending the classes mostly talked about how to keep peace at home and live together with daughters-in-law. That class provides many chances to chat and gossip since the 'students' were Sarvinoz's friends. They met at her office, made tea, talked about their everyday life and children, planning events, and gossiping about others. This is also a good opportunity for mothers to shape the future of their children in terms of marriage and, for boys, careers.

Sarvinoz could be compared to the *otin-oyi* described by Habiba Fathi,<sup>10</sup> i.e. those women providing Islamic education for youths, mostly girls in their neighborhoods. Sarvinoz is more than just an *otin-oyi*, as she has multiple social identity: she is also a business woman, a care provider for newly arrived migrants, a match maker, and an ethnic entrepreneur. Unlike *otin-oyi*, who is limited to religious education and often as a healer function, Sarvinoz can promote religious education outside a purely religious frame, through chats, meetings, and events in which learning and understanding the Quran is not necessary. She is not proselytizing Islam *stricto sensu*, but "brings religion back into the peoples' lives" as she has stated herself.

Sarvinoz estimates that people define themselves as Muslims but do not practice Islam before entering an elder age, conventionally between 50 and 60 years old. The aim of her school is to do something good in a religious sense (*savab*<sup>11</sup>). *Savab*, in her understanding, is "to do something good for someone for free and to give something to someone who needs it."<sup>12</sup> She explained during my interview with her that every Muslim should do *savab* as much as possible and that it was a duty<sup>13</sup> for each Muslim. Another 'holy mission' (*niyat*) is to educate people about Islam as a devoted Muslim herself. She said that it was import-

ant for each Muslim mother to bring up her children with awareness and good knowledge of Islam, but recognized with regret that she had not yet reached that goal, and that she was the only person in her family who did not drink alcohol, prayed five times a day, and kept *roza* (fasting).

### Some Concluding Remarks

The bride school I presented is a very informal one. Some are more formal and officially registered—the *kelinlar maktabi*—and offer courses for young women on cooking, sewing, and other craft work that can be useful not only for the household but also as a profession. Sarvinoz's bride-school is also unusual since its doors are open for both young people of both sexes, as well as their mothers. This school thus serves as a space not only for basic moral and religious education of the youth, who are considered to be spoiled and threatened by a low level of morality, but also for other useful things such as matchmaking, networking, and starting up business initiatives.

Charismatic leaders such as Sarvinoz are exceptional cases. Not so many people take a private leadership of their communities with a particular focus on the youth in terms of their family values and religious knowledge. Sarvinoz denounced a rising gap in the current educational system as well as education at home, as parents became either too busy or are living too far away from their families (due to labor migration) to manage moral education. She thinks that there is an urgent need for those elders, or younger women who have additional time outside of their household, to contribute into additional education of the youth. There are also other interests involved in 'elders' educating youth about Islam. The religion serves as a medium through which elders would like to strengthen, regain, and support their legitimacy and status in their communities. Young people who have sufficient or strong beliefs in Islam are easy to guide in the name of the religion. These people are more obedient and not rebellious when it comes, for example, to following one's traditions and culture.

The private initiatives briefly presented in this paper are important to study in order to understand

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10 H. Fathi, "Gender, Islam, and social change in Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 3 (2006): 303-317.

11 From the Arabic, 'savab' (reward also in religious sense).

12 Interview with Sarvinoz, April 4, 2006.

13 From the Arabic, 'niyat' (intention).

local perceptions of morality and religion as well as youth education. These local charismatic leaders play a key role in creating new spaces for private initiatives: they dramatically shape the life of their com-

munities, but they are also able to build economically profitable structures. They constitute a new form of both religious and economic entrepreneurship, social reach of which is still largely underestimated.

# Hayrullo Hamidov and Uzbekistan's Culture Wars: How Soccer, Poetry, and Pop-Religion Are 'a Danger to Society'

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Noah Tucker<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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In late April 2010 a closed trial took place outside Tashkent for a group of young observant Muslim men; it proceeded like dozens of others that go unnoticed, resulting, as always, in foregone convictions for every defendant. This one drew the attention of the world, however, because Hayrullo Hamidov—Uzbekistan's first religious celebrity—sat in the defendant's cage.

Hamidov's fate is representative of hundreds of other young, religiously-active Uzbeks caught up in this latest wave of mass trials and repression, but it has also stirred a wave of anger and resentment among his followers and fans that has never fully subsided. Hamidov is one of the most popular living Uzbek public figures, respected among many young Uzbeks not only in Uzbekistan, but in neighboring countries and abroad as well. His work has daringly addressed issues and concerns that many in his generation share but about which the regime actively represses discussion.

Long in prison, his work resonates widely across Uzbek social media and is curated on dozens of pages and YouTube channels devoted to him. Though the government of Uzbekistan seemed to hope to silence him by charging him with religious extremism and putting him away, he was clearly not an extremist and, what is more, represents a popular movement to return Islamic values to a central place in Uzbek culture and national identity and address very real social and economic problems the country faces. He has become a symbol for a generation of Uzbeks increasingly interested in expressing their personal and

national identity in religious terms—from nominal Muslims to Sufi mystics and reformist Salafis alike—and of the contradictions in the Uzbekistani government's simultaneous promotion and persecution of religious expression.

Hamidov's voice represents a much larger rift between the Uzbek government and an important part of the society it rules. Even though his arrest and trial failed on its own to spark a public backlash in a country where the memory of Andijon lingers, persecution of popular cultural figures like Hamidov increases popular resentment among a population already dissatisfied with the pace of economic development and frustrated about strict limits on the public expression. The ubiquity of his work online years after it was proscribed shows that he has become a symbol of those values, of that resentment, and of the will of Uzbeks to think for themselves, no matter how little they can speak.

When police in Tashkent arrested Hayrullo Hamidov in his home in January 2010,<sup>2</sup> the limited international reporting and media analysis focused on his career as a sports journalist and soccer commentator.<sup>3</sup> Nationally famous as a successful young sportscaster, focus on this aspect of his life obscured an inspired change of direction in his career known very well to his Uzbek audience. Especially in the years since his imprisonment, he is known almost exclusively now as a revivalist religious teacher, popular nationalist poet, and prominent disciple of one of Uzbekistan's most influential independent Muslim clerics.<sup>4</sup> His religious programs, both video and audio, and his poetry in particular are widely disseminated and popular on the internet and social media in the Uzbek language and available for sale in local bazaars across the region.<sup>5</sup> His arrest prompted a

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1 Managing Editor, Registan.net/CAP Associate.

2 "Toshkentda taniqli jurnalist Xayrullo Hamidov hisbga olindi," *Ferghana.ru*, January 24, 2010, <http://uzbek.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=7529&mode=snews>.

3 "Sports Journalist Arrested for Religious Activity," *Forum 18*, February 17, 2010, [http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php7article\\_id=1410](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php7article_id=1410).

4 "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*, September 29, 2008, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929\\_hayrullo\\_hamidov.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929_hayrullo_hamidov.shtml).

5 "Xayrullo Hamidov sudni kutmoqda," *Ozodlik Radiosi*, March 9, 2010, <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/1978454.html>.



spike in his fame and popularity and outpourings of anger, grief, and prayers by the hundreds on social media that has never ceased in the years since.<sup>6</sup>

Hamidov's religious and popular nationalist work interweaves the two categories so tightly that it would be impossible to make a distinction between them, and this appears to be at the heart of his popularity for many of his readers and listeners. His work clearly resonates with young Uzbeks in particular. His sophisticated blended use of old and new media (newspapers, magazines, radio, the internet, video, MP3) and high production values in all his media work, coupled with his ability to shift seamlessly from sports to religion to the great works of Uzbek literature, make him a highly appealing figure to young Uzbeks whose lives bridge the experience of the Soviet Union and independent Uzbekistan.<sup>7</sup>

The Uzbek authorities have a long history of repressing independent religious or cultural production, particularly when someone gains a popular following. Hamidov's work, however, contains no controversial religious content. Moreover, he appears to have been extremely careful in cooperating with the state-sponsored religious authorities.<sup>8</sup> His work frequently broached "taboo" topics on which the official media keeps a stony silence, and he challenged the government's own statements about Uzbek nationalism and the place of religion in the Uzbek national myth in ways that his fans and supporters find extremely appealing. These, and not his religious beliefs, are more likely the reasons the Uzbek regime finds him most threatening.

Exploring his life, the content of his work and the way it is received by the Uzbek public can give us important insights into the lives of many in his gener-

ation and what they want for their society, and highlight the fault lines of tension between the Karimov regime and the society it rules.

### A Post-Soviet Life

Born in 1975, Hayrullo Hamidov studied journalism and broadcasting at Tashkent State University (TSU) in the mid-1990s.<sup>9</sup> He came of age in the post-Soviet era as the citizens of his newly independent country struggled with what it meant to be Uzbeks and Muslims. His is the first generation to begin university education that is no longer forced to twist every subject into a Marxist worldview, use Russian words for technical terms or neologisms, or frame their country's destiny in terms of what was best for the Soviet Union and ultimately for Moscow. Hamidov also began to study Arabic and Persian at TSU. Early in his career as a sports journalist covering Uzbek national football (soccer) leagues, he was encouraged by his producers to model Arab media and use Arabic loan-words to replace Russian terms that had crept heavily into Uzbek media in the Soviet period.<sup>10</sup>

This language study appears to have facilitated his interest in also studying the Qur'an and other Islamic religious texts. Many young men and women of his generation followed a similar path. As newly independent Uzbeks began to recover their heritage, culture, and literature, like Hamidov many also became deeply interested in Islam and recovering the rich religious heritage of their country as a critical and defining part of their national or ethnic identity.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the late 1990s through the middle of the 2000s, Hamidov's career as a journalist focused

6 "Xayrullo Hamidov Hisbga Olindi!" *Arbuz forum*, <http://www.arbuz.com/showthread.php?t=55470&page=16>; "Xayrullo Hamidov Hisbga Olindi," *Ozodlik Radiosi*, January 22, 2010, <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/1936484.html>; H. Hamidov, "O'zbeklarga Nima Bo'lyapti?," YouTube.com, no date, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V\\_PZ2dMZX2w&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_PZ2dMZX2w&feature=player_embedded).

7 In a September 2008 interview, Hamidov confirms that the content of all of his religious programs was submitted for pre-approval to the state's religious authorities, whose work he credited for preventing divisions among Uzbek believers. "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*, September 29, 2008, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929\\_hayrullo\\_hamidov.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929_hayrullo_hamidov.shtml).

8 One of Hamidov's especially poignant religious nationalist poems can be found reposted, for example, on a website right next to a song by Uzbekistan's most famous pop star (Yulduz Usmanova) and the Uzbekistan national anthem. H. Hamidov, "O'zbekning Iqrori," no date, <http://reader.blogger.uz/>.

9 "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*, September 29, 2008, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929\\_hayrullo\\_hamidov.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929_hayrullo_hamidov.shtml).

10 Ibid.

11 A. Abduvakhitov, "Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan," in D. F. Eickelman, ed., *Russia's Muslim frontiers: New directions in cross-cultural analysis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); A. Khalid, *Islam After Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 116-39. For a closer examination of the mixing of nationalism and religion (to make religious nationalism) in Central Asia, see: N. Tucker, "Wives Submit to your Husbands? Revivalist Movements and Religious Nationalism from Texas to Tashkent" (MA thesis, Russia, E. European and Central Asian Area Studies Department, Harvard University, 2008).

primarily on sports, as a popular football commentator for both radio and television. Sometime in this period, however, he began to study religion more formally under the guidance of clerics affiliated with Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf.<sup>12</sup>

Muhammad Sodiq is by many accounts the single most popular and influential religious figure in Uzbekistan, though he is independent of the religious structures (the Muftiate) controlled by the Uzbek government. In fact, he is himself a former Mufti and retains popular authority as such in the eyes of many Uzbek believers. Forced into exile by the Karimov regime in 1993, he was allowed to return in 1999 and has since worked privately as a teacher, scholar, and popular author in a somewhat uneasy live-and-let-live agreement with the regime.<sup>13</sup> Hayrullo Hamidov appears to have shown promise in his religious studies, and at some point before he embarked on his career as a public religious figure he began to study with the Shaykh himself in personal sessions and became a frequent and welcome guest in the Shaykh's home.<sup>14</sup>

Sometime around late 2006 Hamidov's public career began to reflect his religious beliefs. He initiated two extremely popular new ventures: an independent newspaper called *Odamlar Orasida* (Among the People) and a radio program called "Xolislik sari" ("Towards Fairness") that broad-

casted on the privately owned Tashkent FM station Navruz.<sup>15</sup>

Both of these projects were short-lived in their official run and quickly came under pressure from the authorities. They also both exploded with popularity almost overnight, which seemed to alarm both officials and the rest of the Uzbek media world. Though they were quickly closed down, both live on thanks to digitization.<sup>16</sup> The popular radio program was also produced on CD and is widely available not only in Uzbekistan, but also in Uzbek-speaking areas of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan<sup>17</sup> and has spread virally across the Internet.

At some point in or around 2007, Hamidov appears to have come under direct pressure from the police, who warned him to cease his religious work and return to sports or suffer consequences.<sup>18</sup> He eventually complied in the sense that he did not attempt to return to producing religious material for the public airwaves or start another newspaper, and instead accepted a position as deputy editor of a major sports publication.<sup>19</sup> His religious education programs continued in new format on CD and MP3, however, and older programs from "Towards Fairness" continued to be widely distributed. He also produced a series of videos about the basic teachings of Islam for Muhammad Sodiq's popular Internet portal, Islam, uz, where some of his other

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12 For Hamidov's own description of his relationship with Muhammad Sodiq, whom he calls "the greatest living Islamic scholar in Uzbekistan," see his interview: "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*. One commenter, whose information cannot be verified, notes that one of the other men (named Bahodir) recently arrested in connection to Hamidov's case is Hamidov's teacher and one of the close disciples of Muhammad; "Xayrullo Hamidov Hisbga Olindi!," *Sodiq.Arbus.com*, <http://www.arbus.com/showthread.php?t=55470&page=16>.

13 B. Babadjanov, "Debates over Islam in Contemporary Uzbekistan: A View from Within," in S. Duduignon, ed., *Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China through the 20th Century* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2004).

14 "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*; "Uzbekistan: nachalsya zakrytyy sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym. Ego i eshe 14 chelovek obvinyayut v sozdanii nezakonnykh religioznykh organizatsiy," *Ferghana.ru*, April 29, 2010, <http://www.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=14633&mode=snews>.

15 "V Tashoblasti nachalsya sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym," *Uznews.net*, April 29, 2010, [http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?In\\_g=ru&sub=hot&cid=3&nid=13514](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?In_g=ru&sub=hot&cid=3&nid=13514). Commentary on *Odamlar Orasida* and links to some of the issues in PDF form (which were hidden/protected on sites outside of Uzbekistan) were available here: "Thread: "Odamlar Orasida: Haqparvar gazeta (bosh muharrir—Hayrullo Hamidov)," *Arbus.com*, <http://www.arbus.com/showthread.php?t=36364>. Episodes of "Xolislik Sari" are widely available on the Internet on both Uzbek file-sharing sites as MP3s and on sites like YouTube. Many of the popular poems by Hamidov that are also widely available (and frequently referenced and quoted by his supporters) appear to have been first broadcast/published on the radio program.

16 As of late 2008, Hamidov denied that *Odamlar Orasida* was closed by censors or because of concerns about content. He speculated that the sheer explosive popularity of the paper had made its backers nervous and they had effectively pulled the plug under pressure from competitors, etc. This statement, like a number of others he makes in that interview, seems overly cautious and politically conscious. That said, it remains unclear exactly why *Odamlar Orasida* was closed. See: "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*, September 29, 2008, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929\\_hayrullo\\_hamidov.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/news/story/2008/09/080929_hayrullo_hamidov.shtml).

17 Since the mid-1980s, taped sermons and programs on audio tape and now on CD and MP3 are one of the most important and popular formats for religious teaching in Central Asia, especially for material that is censored or disapproved of by authorities. "Toshkentda taniqli jurnalist Xayrullo Hamidov hisbga olindi," *Ferghana.ru*, January 24, 2010, <http://uzbek.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=7529&mode=snews>.

18 "Uzbekistan: nachalsya zakrytyy sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym," *Ferghana.ru*.

19 Hamidov's own account of his return to full-time sports journalism at the end of 2008 indicates that he was still producing religious radio programs, only for publication on CD and the internet instead of the public airwaves: "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*.

work continues to be distributed as well, in spite of his imprisonment.<sup>20</sup>

In the years between his media programs and his arrest, even as new production of materials appears to have ceased, Hamidov continued to appear frequently in large private speaking engagements at traditional venues such as weddings and other festivals.<sup>21</sup> This revived tradition of inviting a popular or influential religious figure to give a talk for religious edification at weddings and other life-cycle feasts is itself indicative of the kind of religious revival that Hamidov represents, returning overtly religious elements to Uzbek cultural traditions that had become in many ways secularized during the Soviet era.<sup>22</sup>

### **"A Threat to Public Safety and Social Order"**

The police raid on his home and his subsequent arrest in late January 2010 was supposedly justified by the content of a talk at a life-cycle celebration in a village near Tashkent, at which police sources claim that Hamidov participated in some kind of discussion of Salafism.<sup>23</sup> Whether such a discussion actually took place or not is unclear, but it would not be unlikely. The debates about how Uzbek Hanafi Islam relates to Arab-based reformist movements have been common among young Uzbek Muslims since at least the 1970s.<sup>24</sup> Some sources claim that Hamidov had been recruited by his teacher Muhammad Sodik to partic-

ipate in an educational campaign to dissuade young Uzbek Muslims from interest in Salafism and Salafist groups.<sup>25</sup>

Though the Uzbek regime would seem to want to support such efforts and has used Muhammad Sodik in the past to speak out against groups or movements it opposes, none of this seems to have helped Hamidov's defense.<sup>26</sup> After a quiet investigation, his trial began four months later in tightly closed secret proceedings at a remote district courthouse in a village outside Tashkent. He was charged along with 14 others with the "illegal formation of a civic or religious group" and "preparation or distribution of materials which constitute a threat to public safety and social order."<sup>27</sup>

The court refused to provide details about the evidence on which the charges were based or other details of the case for independent evaluation by defense attorneys, human rights organizations, the media, or Hamidov's family. As in similar trials, access to the court itself was blocked up to two kilometers from the courthouse, which was surrounded by heavy guard.<sup>28</sup>

Sentenced to six years in prison on terrorism charges and unable to contact his relatives or external organizations that might assist him, Hamidov has now found himself in the same position as thousands of other young "religiously active" men over the past 15 years, in wave after wave of secret closed trials in multiple cities and regions across the country.<sup>29</sup>

20 Hamidov's poetry and religious education materials appear in several places in the currently available content at Islam.uz, and one reader asking Shaykh Muhammad Sodik a question about which brands of meat in Uzbekistan were truly halal references input from Hamidov. For an example of Hamidov's work on Islam.uz, see: H. Hamidov, "Duoning Qabul bo'lish shartlari," *Islam.uz*, no date, <http://islom.uz/content/view/275/137/>; H. Hamidov, "Universitetga kirmay olim bo'lish mumkinmi?" *Islam.uz*, no date, <http://islom.uz/content/view/640/137/>.

21 "Toshkentda taniqli jurnalist Xayrullo Hamidov hisbga olindi," *Ferghana.ru*.

22 For more information on the revival of the tradition of the "wedding speaker," see J. McBrien, "Listening to the Wedding Speaker: Discussing Religion and Culture in Southern Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 3 (2006): 341-57.

23 Several sources indicate that the occasion was an *akika*, a large traditional dinner held to celebrate the birth of a new child, held in the town of Chinoz outside Tashkent in the home of someone acquainted with Hamidov personally. Some sources allege that a neighbor was recruited by the secret police to videotape the dinner and the talk, which took the form of a question and answer session in which someone asked a question about Salafism and Hamidov responded: "V Tashoblasti nachalsya sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym," *Uznews*.

24 Hamidov's teacher, Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf, has played an active role in these debates since the 1980s, participating in them and chronicling and commenting on them. See, for example: Babadjanov, "Debates over Islam in Contemporary Uzbekistan: A View from Within."

25 Author's direct correspondence with an Uzbek human rights lawyer monitoring the Hamidov case and others like it (March 2010). A more recent story confirms that one source claims Shaykh Muhammad Sodik himself has told police that he had tasked Hamidov with combating Salafi ideology and that the discussion of Salafism at the January event was part of this mission. See: "Uzbekistan: nachalsya zakrytyy sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym," *Ferghana.ru*.

26 M. B. Olcott, "A Face of Islam: Muhamad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf," *Carnegie Papers* No. 82, March 2007.

27 These charges are, respectively, articles 216 and 244—1 of the Uzbekistan Criminal Code, the more serious of which, 244—1, carries a sentence of up to eight years in prison: "Xayrulla Hamidov ustidan mahqama boshlandi," *Ozodlik.org*, April 29, 2010, <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/2028059.html>.

28 "Xayrulla Hamidov ustidan mahqama boshlandi," *Ozodlik.org*; "Uzbekistan: nachalsya zakrytyy sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym," *Ferghana.ru*.

29 "Uzbekistan: srazu v trekh oblastyakh prokhodyat zakrytye sudy nad sotnyami obvinyaemykh v religioznom ekstremizme," *Ferghana.ru*, no date, <http://www.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=14094>.

It is perhaps partly because Hamidov's life story, including his ultimate arrest and prosecution, is so typical of many in his generation that his work resonates so strongly for many young Uzbeks. His writing and audio programs, particularly their critical and nationalist elements, also sets him apart, however, from other popular religious teachers like Adbuvali Qori Mirzoyev or Obidxon Nazarov, who were actively persecuted by the Karimov government.<sup>30</sup>

Though his teaching has a similar broad following and his recordings have a wide distribution that invites comparisons to these imams, both of them were trained clerics whose work concentrated heavily on controversial theological issues.<sup>31</sup> Hamidov, on the other hand, is an educated layman whose poems and prose express deep frustrations common to many Uzbeks from all walks of life. A closer examination of the content of his work allows us to reach some conclusions about what these frustrations are and why the Uzbek government finds talking about them at all to be "a threat to public safety and social order."

#### **"An Uzbek's Declaration": Hayrullo Hamidov's Work**

The research for this project examined a number of primary sources, including Hamidov's poems, stories, issues of his newspaper *Among the People*, video and audio recordings of his poems and programs, and one lengthy interview in which he took questions from BBC Uzbek presenters and from BBC Uzbek listeners in Uzbekistan and abroad. Additional information about the content of his work was taken from comments and forum posts on Uzbek-language Internet sites, from interviews with his fans and followers, and from secondary reports published by Uzbek or Russian language media.

Based on these materials and interviews, three distinct themes from Hamidov's work appear to resonate with his readers and parts of the Uzbek public at large. These are:

- A willingness to talk frankly about taboo topics and politically incorrect social problems that are of deep concern for many Uzbeks. This includes expressing desire for genuineness in public discourse, that is, for openness, fairness (justice), and free speech.
- Expressing frustration with the sense of collapse, decay, corruption, and backwardness. Many Uzbeks share this frustration in regard to the current state of Uzbekistan (and by proxy the leadership of the Karimov regime).
- Islamic revivalism (not to be confused with Islamism),<sup>32</sup> stressing the importance of "Muslimness" as a part of Uzbek identity and advocating religious education and a revival of Muslim values as a solution for collapse and corruption. Unlike Islamist fundamentalism, however, this includes a push for development and progress, rooted in Muslim values but including technological and economic development (combining "the best of the West with the best of the East").

#### **Prophet, Poet, and Journalist "among the People"**

Several independent evaluating organizations judge the Uzbek media one of the least free in the world.<sup>33</sup> Not only is political dissent or criticism actively repressed, but so is "bad news" in general, which leaves most people in an information vacuum when it comes to important issues of daily life like health education, crime, or consumer safety. Heavy censorship and the climate of fear that prevails in the Uzbek media deny the public an open forum in which to discuss things that are important to them.

As Hamidov's career branched out from sports journalism, this desire for frank discussion of social issues seems to have been one of his primary motivations. Both of his public productions—the newspaper *Among the People* and his radio program "Towards

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30 For the most thorough analysis of the works of Mirzoyev and Nazarov available in English, including a number of primary source texts with English translation, see A. Frank and J. Mamatov, *Uzbek Islamic Debates: Texts, Translations and Commentary* (Springfield, VA: Dunwoody Press, 2006). For a broader account of the popular following of Mirzoyev (also spelled Mirzayev) and Nazarov and the reaction to their disappearances (Mirzoyev presumed murdered by Uzbek authorities in 1995; Nazarov disappeared in 1998 and reappeared in exile only in 2006), see M. Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River: The Untold Story of Central Asia* (New York: Thomas Dunn Books, 2003), 149, 198-265.

31 Frank and Mamatov, *Uzbek Islamic Debates*.

32 Islamism, in the generally accepted definition, is a philosophy that rejects secular government and calls for the transformation of society from the top down (by a theocratic government) rather than from the bottom up or on an individual basis.

Fairness”—tried in different ways to fill this void without crossing the censor’s lines.

“Towards Fairness” primarily addressed religious and moral issues that will be discussed in other points below, but it should be noted that open discussion of these issues from a religious perspective, particularly by a non-cleric, was a daring puncture in the wall of media censorship. Opening public discussion of religious issues outside of the mosque or scripted government-sponsored programs that typically draw bland and predictable moral lessons (“respect your elders, obey your government”) was an exciting development for many listeners, and helps explain the runaway and lasting popularity of the program.

The issues of *Among the People*, for which Hamidov served as a writer and editor-in-chief, however, fall more directly into this category. A number of articles written since his arrest have speculated that it was this content that may have led to Hamidov’s persecution even more directly than his religious material.<sup>34</sup>

The weekly paper, which ran for only 26 issues, quickly became one of the highest circulating periodicals in the country.<sup>35</sup> It raised a broad variety of issues untouchable in “traditional” publications but deeply important to much of the public: risks and problems with popular medical treatments or theories,<sup>36</sup> the dangers of ultra-nationalism, abortion, the spread of religious cults,<sup>37</sup> the influence of foreign missionaries,<sup>38</sup> the omnipresence and openness of prostitution, pedophilia,<sup>39</sup> and other issues that could not be openly acknowledged or independently discussed as social problems in most publications.<sup>40</sup>

While some of these issues may seem mundane to a Western audience, it is important to understand that discussion of many of them is precluded in the Uzbek press for the simple reason that reporting on

any social problem requires *admitting* that there is a problem in the first place. Discussion of issues like infant mortality, botched medical treatments, or pedophilia, for example, is forbidden because they acknowledge a problem. Other issues, such as the openness of illegal prostitution, stir a different kind of official anger because prostitution operates in the open precisely because mid-level officials and police frequently take a cut from the profits or run the rings themselves.<sup>41</sup> In addition to its controversial content, the newspaper also included a variety of popular interest sections on poetry, literature, history, and even a cartoon section for children.<sup>42</sup> As late as September 2008, more than a year after the paper was forced to shut down, Hamidov publicly and probably strategically denied that *Among the People* was closed by official censorship. Instead, he bitterly cited the suffocating internal censorship and climate of fear among writers and journalists in Uzbekistan, saying:

There’s another issue here—something that I don’t personally like. It is part of our national mentality, and especially a shortcoming of people in our own profession [journalists]: if one person stands up and wants to have a voice, when one person starts to speak clearly above the fray, no one stands with him ... most people think that in Uzbekistan somebody keeps everything under control, someone keeps a lid on things, that’s what’s always thought. But the situation among the people themselves is that their own internal censor is so extremely strong that this can be deceptive. In several of the places I’ve worked I heard someone say, “Hey, wait, think about what you’re saying!” ... It’s not bosses or people in high places saying this, it’s other journalists ... I came to the conclusion that this is how things are, that’s the price we have to pay.<sup>43</sup>

33 Reporters Without Borders, for example, ranks only 15 countries in the world worse than Uzbekistan, which according to their evaluation is even less free than Libya and Sudan; only Turkmenistan is rated worse in the former USSR. Uzbekistan was ranked 160 out of 175 in 2009: “Press Freedom Index 2009,” Reporters Without Borders, no date, <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2009,1001.html>.

34 See, for example: “V Tashoblasti nachalsya sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym,” *Uznews.net*.

35 For circulation details see: “V Tashoblasti nachalsya sud nad zhurnalistom Khayrullo Hamidovym,” *Uznews.net*. For information about the number of issues that ran and Hamidov’s own comments on the reasons for their instant popularity, see: “Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov,” *BBC Uzbek*.

36 “Toshkentda taniqli jurnalist Xayrullo Hamidov hisbga olindi,” *Ferghana.ru*.

37 Articles on these issues are from a single volume accessible in PDF format at *Odamlar Orasida*, no. 11/12, April 26, 2007, [http://www.htmw.de/truziboy/forum/Odamlar\\_orasida\\_-\\_12son.pdf](http://www.htmw.de/truziboy/forum/Odamlar_orasida_-_12son.pdf).

38 “Thread: Odamlar Orasida: Haqparvar gazeta (bosh muharrir—Hayrullo Hamidov),” *Arbuz.com forum*.

39 “Toshkentda taniqli jurnalist Xayrullo Hamidov hisbga olindi,” *Ferghana.ru*.

40 A number of articles from *Odamlar Orasida* were also available on a popular Uzbek literary site with ties to the Islamic University in Tashkent.

41 “Toshkentda taniqli jurnalist Xayrullo Hamidov hisbga olindi,” *Ferghana.ru*.

42 See for example: *Odamlar Orasida*, nos. 11/12.

43 Translation by the author; “Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov,” *BBC Uzbek*.

Hamidov's willingness to be the person who "stood up and had a voice" and the courage that this step demanded fuels his popularity and inspires his supporters. His imprisonment appears to only have enhanced his legitimacy and support among Uzbeks at home and in exile, who yearn for openness and honesty in public dialogue—whether connected to religious or purely secular issues.

### "What is Becoming of the Uzbeks?"

Hamidov's most broad popularity, however, comes not from his formal media productions, but from his poetry. It was in his poems that Hamidov dropped the careful, measured criticisms of his journalistic voice and let loose the raw emotions shared by millions of Uzbeks deeply frustrated with a feeling of collapse, degeneration, and corruption in the post-Soviet era.

Unsparing in condemning the social conditions the post-Soviet government had created and uses of double-entendres or ambiguous terms or symbols that could easily be implied to directly denounce the Uzbek regime in harsh terms. One of the central themes of his most popular poems is the decline of Uzbek society, questioning the disappointing path the country is currently on, one that was supposed to lead to development. His frustrations are echoed by many in Uzbekistan who have become bitter and increasingly angry as the promises of independence have led instead to intolerably low wages for educated professionals, declining educational standards, and a massive drain of human resources as the human capital of the country, educated and uneducated alike, has had to seek work abroad.

In stark contrast to the difficulties of post-independence, development is the almost constantly growing embellishment of the Uzbek national myth propagated by the current regime. Official propaganda and cultural production has attempted to proj-

ect Uzbek cultural identity much further back into history than was actually the case. This propaganda appropriates great cultural and historical figures of early and medieval Islamic science, art, and literature and world historical figures like the conquerors Tamerlane and Tumaris, a long-forgotten warrior queen who defeated

Cyrus the Great in battle in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>44</sup>

The Uzbek regime attempts to use these cultural and historical figures to enhance its own legitimacy and convince the society it rules that this past greatness is proof that a great future lies ahead. As many of his readers do under their breath, Hamidov turns this nationalist propaganda on its head. Claiming this immense cultural heritage for the Uzbek people themselves, he turns it as a weapon against the status quo and, by implication, against the government itself.

In his most popular work, "What is Becoming of the Uzbeks?" he cites the lost greatness and achievements of this nationalist history as a rhymed lament about the current state of the country and its chosen path. "My country was free for centuries/but now instead in total debasement/the leading one is completely corrupted/What is becoming of the Uzbeks?"<sup>45</sup>

Like many of his other works, the poem avoids placing direct blame on politics or policies, but openly blasts the apathy of the people themselves and their perceived moral decline.<sup>46</sup> As in the interview above, the poem again complains that the people around Hamidov try to discourage him from speaking out, to keep silent and keep his observations to himself. He refuses, and instead tries to use shame to motivate his listeners to action. The Uzbek national image created by the nationalist myth is supposed to show that Uzbeks are heirs to the greatest heritage in the region and far superior to their nomadic neighbors. While championing the notion that this was true in the past, Hamidov writes that this only shows the height from which the Uzbek nation has fallen: "everyone laughs at our sorry state ... even the Turkmen mocks [us]."<sup>47</sup>

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44 For fairly exhaustive historiography of the creation of the Uzbek national mythology, A. Ilkhamov, "The Archaeology of Uzbek Identity," *Central Asian Survey* 23, nos. 3/4 (2004): 289-326.

45 It should be noted that this line reflects one of the ambiguous opportunities for double meaning described above. "The leading one is completely corrupted" most likely refers both to Uzbekistan as the former cultural leader of the region, but also to President Karimov, the current self-declared leader of the Uzbeks. H. Hamidov, "O'zbeklarga nima bo'lyapti?," no date (likely between 2007-2009); The poem is widely available on the internet in both written and audio form, though many of the written examples are clearly privately transcribed from the audio and contain typographic errors or mis-transcriptions. The language of this poem is literary and heavily Persian, in the style of much of the great classic poetry of Uzbek literature.

46 Hamidov frequently presses home the point that individuals have to take control of their own moral destinies and that the country's moral collapse is the collective result of individual choices. For other examples, see: H. Hamidov, "Majnuntol," no date; H. Hamidov, "Qusur," no date.

47 Hamidov, "O'zbeklarga nima bo'lyapti?."

Connected to this superiority to their neighbors in official propaganda is the notion that Uzbekistan, and specifically its government, is first and foremost independent and sovereign. Supposedly justified by this great cultural history and the peoples' will for independence, the Karimov regime can therefore thumb its nose at international opinion, advice, or allies. A central national propaganda slogan, especially after the barrage of international criticism following the Andijon massacre in 2005, was "The Uzbeks will never depend on anyone." Hamidov is especially damning in this dire assessment of contemporary Uzbekistan's status in comparison to other countries in the second-to-last stanza:

*Any kind of foreign-born person  
Who accidentally stumbles into Uzbekistan  
Is like a candle shining in the darkness  
What is becoming of the Uzbeks?*<sup>48</sup>

#### **"The Day the Prophet Came Is the Day I Was Born"**<sup>49</sup>

Hamidov's work explicitly calls for a revival of religious education and a return to moral principles grounded in Islam as the cure for society's problems. He firmly roots the cause of society's decline in the lack of attention to these values— in paying too much attention to being Uzbek and not enough to being Muslim.

Though Hamidov makes strong statements about the centrality of Islam to the country's moral and cultural identity, this should not be interpreted out of context and used to construe him as an Islamist opposed to secular government, or as an Islamic fundamentalist. He is clearly a conservative Muslim and a religious revivalist who strongly believes that society's morals should be drawn from Islam. However,

he carefully avoids politics or making political statements. He reserves his harshest criticism for society itself, constantly emphasizing the importance of individual moral choices.<sup>50</sup>

His strong sense of Uzbek national pride, careful emphasis on the necessity of adapting religious principles to both modern and local contexts, and frequent references to famous Sufi mystics all set him apart from the rhetoric of fundamentalist groups like Hizbut Tahrir or the Salafi movement. These characteristics also put him clearly within the guidance likely given to him by his teacher Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq and show his influence and authority, to which Hamidov openly defers.<sup>51</sup>

This desire to return to Islam and to recover the rich heritage of Islamic culture, art, literature, spirituality, and moral guidance is one shared by, and resonates with, millions across the region and is a central aspect of Hamidov's message. The impressive reach of his religious programs and poems and the overwhelming proportion of comments and statements of support for him since his arrest that contain religious language (e.g. "May Allah keep our brother Hayrullo safe and preserve his family!" "God grant him salvation!" etc.)<sup>52</sup> indicates that he reflects this much broader trend in Uzbek society in an important way.

Assessments of the Soviet legacy in Central Asia that focus on "ideological vacuums" left by the collapse of communism tend to reflect the terms and understandings brought to the situation by outside analysts rather than what Central Asians say about themselves. In their own words, as in those of Hamidov, Central Asians and Uzbeks in particular speak often of a sense of loss, of chaos, moral, physical and economic disorder, and of a religious heritage that was a central part of their identity taken from them by the Soviet regime.<sup>53</sup>

48 The literal translation of the third line of the stanza is "... a candle lit for everyone in the night." It was paraphrased slightly here to make the meaning more clear in English; Hamidov, "O'zbeklarga nima bo'lyapti?."

49 Hamidov, "O'zbeklarga nima bo'lyapti?."

50 Ilkhamov, "The Archaeology of Uzbek Identity."

51 Hamidov displays an impressive ability to use reasoned theological arguments to defend things common in Central Asian Hanafi Islam (like the use of music in his religious programs) against accusations by fundamentalists that this is against *sharia*. See: "Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov," *BBC Uzbek*. For more information about the life and teaching of Muhammad Sodiq, see M. B. Olcott, "A Face of Islam."

52 These kinds of comments are scattered all over the forums both reporting the news of his arrest and trial (especially *Ozodlik.org*, which encourages comments) and those also simply featuring his work (YouTube and other Uzbek specific file sharing sites), not to mention discussion forums specifically related to the topic. See for example the comments at "Xayrullo Hamidov Hisbga Olindi!" *Arbuz.com*.

53 For an excellent description of this feeling, see M. E. Louw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (New York, London: Routledge, 2007), 21-41. See also F. Heyat, "Re-Islamisation in Kyrgyzstan: Gender, New Poverty and the Moral Dimension," *Central Asian Survey* 23, nos. 3/4 (2004): 275-287.

Hamidov combines this desire for a return to Muslim values with a passion for progress and education. His form of Islamic revivalism is conservative and perhaps not entirely compatible with some Western values, but he speaks eagerly of a desire to combine the “best of the East with the best of the West” and is clearly open to adapting religion to modernity in positive ways that preserve the basic moral imperatives of Islam.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

Hayrullo Hamidov's life story is tragically typical of many in his generation. It begins with an increased interest in religion and exploring the deep Islamic heritage in Uzbek history and ends in a mass trial where he is accused along with hundreds of others of participation in a vague plot to overthrow the government or harm society.

What makes him stand out, however, is that he has a unique voice that rose “above the fray” as he put it, and gives expression to a large group of others in his generation who feel that no one listens to them. As a journalist he has shown a remarkable versatility in different issues of popular interest to his generation, from sports and religion to controversial debates of great concern to Uzbek society.

His popular resonance and respect comes perhaps first from this willingness to stand up and discuss topics that the climate of censorship and repression refused to allow, and just as importantly to give others a space in which they could air their opinions on these same issues.

Secondly, he gives voice to a feeling of deep frustration and disappointment that many Uzbeks share about the broken promises of independence and of

moral chaos, collapse, and corruption that has accompanied the new post-Soviet order.

Finally, he represents a popular desire to revive Islamic values and norms as a solution for these problems and sense of moral disorder. Although not a formal cleric, with a successful media career and guidance from one of Uzbekistan's most respected independent clerical authorities, he quickly established himself by becoming the country's first religious celebrity, advocating the popular push to return Islam to a central place in Uzbek culture and identity.

Any one of these facets by itself would likely have been enough to draw the persecution of Uzbek authorities. Combined together they appear to have created enough fear on the part of the government that they may lose control of the nationalist narrative to independent voices like Hamidov's, that they are willing to risk popular backlash by jailing Hamidov in an attempt to silence him.

Putting Hamidov in jail, however, has done little to silence his message and certainly does nothing to improve the situation that made his harsh criticism resonate so strongly. Hamidov's popularity illustrates important rifts between the government of Uzbekistan and the population it rules, and his work helps us understand the concerns of many Uzbeks of his generation.

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54 “Bi-bi-si mehmoni: Xayrullo Hamidov,” *BBC Uzbek*.



# Evolution of Russian Language in the Urban Space of Tashkent Region

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**Yulia Tsyryapkina<sup>1</sup> (2014)**

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Close to Tashkent, the city of Angren is one of the main coal producing centers of Uzbekistan. Despite the Uzbekification of public life since independence, and dramatic changes in the ethnic composition of the city—the share of the Russian population decreased from 31.4% in 1989 to 2.6% in 2013—Russian language had maintained very strong positions in Angren public space. This phenomenon can be explained because Russian is still indispensable in the industrial sector. With the ongoing modernization of Angren extraction combines, and the new status of special industrial zone (SIZ) given to the city, the demand for Russian language could increase.

Although important, ethnic and cultural processes in modern Uzbekistan continue to be understudied. In the nation-building period following the collapse of the Soviet Union, particular consideration and interest was given to the study of the national culture, state language, and history of the Uzbeks. Consequently, little research and analysis addressed issues surrounding minorities in the region, including ethnic and cultural processes among the minorities in the new sociopolitical and economic context of independent Uzbekistan. Among ethnic minorities Russians stand apart, but they can be included in a large ethnolinguistic group of the Russian-speaking population (including Koreans, Tatars, Germans, Ukrainians, Jews, and others).

To date, there are almost no comprehensive studies of the ethnic and cultural processes among Russians and Russian-speaking populations in the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region. Those few studies that do touch upon the changes in the en-

vironment for the minorities in Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet period have mainly been produced by Western researchers. Perhaps the only work that specifically studies the Russian population of the Tashkent oblast is the study done by the American political scientist Scott Radnitz,<sup>2</sup> who analyzed the factors leading to the emigration of minorities, primarily Russians/Russian speakers. According to the author, in deciding to move to Russia these groups are primarily motivated by economic reasons, not by the context of a ‘nationalizing’ state. These findings are based on interviews the author conducted with focus groups in the small town of Chirchik in the Tashkent region, but Radnitz extrapolated his findings for the entire territory of Uzbekistan.

The British anthropologist Moya Flynn published a similar study in 2007 in which she investigated the identity of the Russian-speaking population in Tashkent.<sup>3</sup> The author’s conclusions appeared to coincide with the general perspective of Western anthropological studies on minorities in Central Asia: Russian-speaking people are part of the Uzbek society; they are anchored to Uzbekistan as their home and are concerned about socioeconomic problems. This study was based on interviews with people but unaccompanied by statistical and analytical data analysis, the information for which is usually not available in Uzbekistan.

Recent years have seen a number of anthropological studies producing complex analysis of the urban space in Tashkent. In one of his English-language publications, Artyom Kosmarski traces the history of Tashkent from a colonial city to a socialist metropolis.<sup>4</sup> Along with an analysis of the city’s diverse architectural heritage, the author notes important ethnic and cultural changes in the environment of the capital of independent Uzbekistan. While looking at

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2 S. Radnitz, “Weighing the Political and Economic Motivation for Migration in Post-Soviet Space: The Case of Uzbekistan,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 5 (2006): 653-77.

3 M. Flynn, “Renegotiating Stability, Security and Identity in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Experience of Russian Communities in Uzbekistan,” *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 2 (2007): 267-88.

4 A. Kosmarski, “Grandeur and Decay of the ‘Soviet Byzantium’: Space, Peoples and Memories of Tashkent, Uzbekistan,” in T. Darieva, W. Kaschuba, and M. Krebs, eds., *Urban Space after Socialism: Ethnographies of Public Places in Eurasian Cities* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2011), 33-56.

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the social fabric of Tashkent, Kosmarski came to the unique conclusion that the Russian-speaking population enjoys a high degree of comfort in the capital city. The author argues that it is the “Europeans,” or the Russian-speaking populations, who fully support the policies of Islam Karimov and his uncompromising struggle against Islamists that secures their perception of safety in Tashkent.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted that ethnic and demographic processes in Uzbekistan are the subject of numerous studies by Uzbek analysts.<sup>6</sup> Among them, one can highlight the work of Evgeniy Abdullayev,<sup>7</sup> a philosopher, poet, and current editor-in-chief of the spiritual, literary, and historical magazine *Vostok svyshe*. His works offer an analysis of all the processes of nation building in Uzbekistan and the changing role and importance of the Russian language in the 2000s. While there is neither much empirical basis nor detailed analysis of the situation across different regions of Uzbekistan, the author is a witness to these developments and records common shifts in the identity of the Russian population in Central Asia.<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult to find distinguished new research on minorities in Central Asia in Russian historiography. Natalia Kosmarskaya's monograph on the Russian population of Kyrgyzstan,<sup>9</sup> which was grounded on a rich empirical foundation, represents something of a breakthrough. Some of the author's conclusions can be extrapolated to cover ethnic and cultural processes among the Russian-speaking population of Uzbekistan.

The availability of fragmented research on the ethno-cultural peculiarities of the Russians/Russian-speaking population of Uzbekistan is a start. However, scholars have not yet produced generalizing, comprehensive research covering all aspects of life for the Russian-speaking population in the regions of Uzbekistan in the context of a ‘nationalizing’ state. Moreover, field studies suggest that the way the Russians adapt to this context differs from the conventional perceptions of discrimination against

Russians in Central Asia, and the question of the role of the Russian language in social and cultural life of the republic is overly dramatized.

### **Ethnic and Social Background of Angren in 1946-80**

Angren is located approximately one hundred kilometers from Tashkent in the Akhangaran valley between the Chatkal and Kurama mountain ranges in the floodplain of the Angren river. Historically, the Angren valley links Tashkent with the pearl of Central Asia, the Ferghana valley. Today Angren is the last city of the Tashkent region on the way to the Ferghana valley, located on a strategically important highway. The city was developed after lignite deposits were discovered there in 1933 as part of a comprehensive exploration and development of natural resources in Central Asia. The exploration of the Angren valley began in 1940, and a year later construction of the Angrenugol mine was launched with an emerging village called Angrenshahtostroy nearby.<sup>10</sup> Archival documents indicate that exploration efforts in the Akhangaran valley were led personally by Josef Stalin and Lavrentiy Beria. On the eve of the Second World War, the Soviet Union was speeding up the pace of industrialization in Central Asia and Kazakhstan and actively engaged in the development of new mineral deposits in order to turn the region into an independent national economic complex.

From 1940-43 several coal-producing mines were developed and the first coal trains arrived in Tashkent during the war. Angren had actually become the second Donbass. In 1946, it was transformed into a city subordinated to a region. A new industrial city was added to the map of the Tashkent region. Workers from many areas of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Russia came to take part in the construction of this new industrial coal site.

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5 Ibid., 54.

6 O. Ata-Mirzayev, V. Gentshke, and R. Murtazayeva, *Uzbekistan mnogonatsional'nyy: istoriko-demograficheskiy aspekt* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo meditsinskoy literatury im. Abu Ali Ibn Sino, 1998) and *Uzbekistan mnogonatsional'nyy: istoriko-demograficheskiy aspekt* (Tashkent: Yangi asr avlodi, 2011).

7 S. M. Rakhmatullayev, “Nekotorye aspekty demograficheskikh kharakteristik russkoyazychnoy diasporoy Uzbekistana v postsovet'skiy period,” *Ethnography of Altay and Adjacent Areas: Materials of the 8th International Conference* 8 (2011): 54-59.

8 Y. Abdullayev, “Russkie v Uzbekistane 2000-kh: identichnost' v usloviyakh demodernizatsii,” *Diaspora*, no. 2 (2006): 6-35; and “Russkiy yazyk: zhizn' posle smerti. Yazyk, politika i obshchestvo v sovremennom Uzbekistane,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 66, no. 4 (2009).

9 Y. Abdullayev, “Ob identichnosti russkikh Sredney Azii,” *Etnographicheskoe obozrenie* 2 (2008): 7-10.

10 N. Kosmarskaya, “*Deti imperii*” v postsovet'skoy Tsentral'noy Azii: adaptivnye praktiki i mental'nye svigi (russkie v Kirgizii, 1992-2002) (Moscow: Natalis, 2006).

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The city became home to many large industrial facilities such as coal mines, a rubber plant, Angren State District Power Plant (GRES), Novo-Angren GRES, a ceramic factory, machine-building plants, a gold-processing plant,<sup>11</sup> cement, asphalt, concrete, chemical, and metallurgical production, Podzemgaz, and others. The history of Angren, according to the remembrance of its residents, suggests that the city was flooded with immigrants from various regions of the Soviet Union, including many mining experts, sinkers, miners, builders, etc.

The majority of the city's population was Russians or Russian-speaking. A Soviet source recorded that during the process of Angren's industrial development in the late 1950s and early 1960s it was difficult to urbanize the Uzbek population.<sup>12</sup> Uzbeks had been less engaged in industrial development and less urbanized, as the data in table 1 below indicates.

Therefore, the cities of the Akhangaran valley—Angren and Almalyq—were predominantly “European” in their early years of development. In Angren there was a high proportion of Russians, Tatars (Crimean Tatars and Volga Tatars are most likely combined in Table 1), Ukrainians, and Koreans. At the same time, Angren had traditional-

ly hosted a high number of Tajiks (in 1959, 7.4 percent of the population). The Akhangaran valley has many place names derived from the Perian language (Akhangaran means for instance “a master blacksmith”).<sup>13</sup>

The census data from Angren in 1979 and 1989 (see Table 2) underlines the trends that had become common to all Central Asian republics for that period. By the end of the 1980s, the share of autochthonous groups (Uzbeks, Tajiks) had increased, while the share of Russians and Russian-speaking populations had gradually decreased with the slowdown of natural growth and increasing emigration out of the region. It is difficult to analyze the ethnic statistics of industrial cities like Angren because the headcount methods for determining individual administrative units are not quite clear. It is most likely that in 1979 and 1989 Angren's population would have included the population from nearby villages (Abylk, Dzhigiristan, Karabau, Teshiktash, Apartak, Saglom, Gulbag, and Katagan), which were predominantly Uzbek. Even now most of the population in Karabau is Tajik. Therefore, according to the statistics, the share of the urban Uzbek population had increased, but in reality Uzbeks were living in the villages out-

Table 1. Nationalities of the Cities in Tashkent Region in 1959  
(Given as a Percentage of Total Population)

Cities	Uzbeks	Russians	Kazakhs	Kyrgyz	Tajiks	Tatars	Ukrainians	Koreans
Tashkent	33.8	43.9	0.9	0.05	0.5	6.7	2.7	0.4
Almalyq	10.5	53.8	1.1	0.05	0.2	18.4	4.9	6.0
Angren	15.7	42.9	0.6	0.03	7.4	17.9	3.7	2.6

Source: E. A. Akhmedov, “Novye goroda Tashkent - Chirchiq - Angrenskogo promyshlennogo rayona” (PhD diss., 1962), 25

Table 2. Population of Angren by Nationality in 1979 and 1980  
(Overall Population and Percentage of Total)

Years	Total	Uzbeks	Russians	Crimean Tatars	Tajiks	Tatars	Ukrainians	Koreans
1979	105,757 (100%)	30,248 (28.6%)	36,011 (34%)	3,613 (3.4%)	13,142 (12.4)	9,967 (9.4%)	2,181 (2%)	2,065 (1.9%)
1989	137,615 (100%)	43,374 (31.5)	43,218 (31.4%)	4,912 (3.5%)	18,163 (13.1%)	11,503 (8.3%)	2,794 (2%)	3,266 (2.3%)

Source: E. A. Akhmedov, “Novye goroda Tashkent - Chirchiq - Angrenskogo promyshlennogo rayona” (PhD diss., 1962), 25

11 “Angren rudoupravlenie,” office of Almalyk Mining and Metallurgical Combine (AMMC), which specializes in gold mining.

12 *Istoriya novykh gorodov Uzbekistana. Tashkentskaya oblast'* (Tashkent, 1976).

13 *Ibid.*

side of the city proper. In one interview a respondent noted that in the Soviet period almost no Uzbeks lived in Angren itself.<sup>14</sup>

The data in Table 3 proves that the main population of the city and surrounding villages inscribed within the city limits was Russian-speaking. A similar situation was observed for all industrial centers. Russians (97.8 percent) did not speak a second language, which was explained by their “status of extra-territoriality,” a concept introduced by the Norwegian researcher Pål Kolstø. In one of his articles he stressed that during the Soviet time, Russians in any of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union, even where there were few of them (as in the case of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic), felt free to use their native language, with was spoken in all Soviet administrations.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, in the Soviet Union, nationality was territorialized for all except Russians. Russians did not speak the language of the titular population and did not aspire to learn it.

Similar processes had been taking place among other Russian-speaking groups: 66.8 percent of the Volga Tatars spoke Russian fluently. Crimean Tatars demonstrated a higher level of proficiency in Russian (79.8 percent), and the vast majority belong to the Russian-speaking group. 47.3 percent of the Koreans spoke Russian fluently. These statistics show that the

urban environment was predominantly Russian-speaking, forcing the indigenous Uzbek population to learn Russian. In Angren 56.8 percent of Uzbeks spoke Russian fluently, while 41 percent did not speak a second language.

Industrialization in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan was led by Moscow, developing the use of Russian language and engaging skilled workers from the European parts of the Soviet Union. In the first years of Soviet power, the indigenous peoples of the region had been little engaged in the processes of industrialization. For the Uzbeks of Angren to urbanize meant to join the Russified lifestyle through adoption of the Russian language, without which it was impossible to participate in industrial production. Accordingly, middle-aged and younger generations of Uzbeks and Tajiks in the 1980s generally learned the Russian language.

#### **Changes in Ethnic and Social Processes of the Tashkent Oblast in the 1990s and Early 2000s**

According to the data from 1991, there were about 132,000 people living in Angren, mostly Russian, Tatars, Crimean Tatars, Germans, Koreans, and Ukrainians, who were employed by local industries.<sup>16</sup>

*Table 3. Population by Nationality and Knowledge of the Second Language in Angren in 1989 (Overall Population and Percentage of Total)*

Nationality	Total	Including Those Who Speak Fluently the Second Language of the USSR Nations					
		Native Language	Russian	Uzbek	Tajik	Tatar	No Second Language
Total Population	137,615 (100%)	771 (0.5%)	49,359 (35.8%)	8,293 (6%)	695 (0.5%)	97 (0.07%)	77,747 (56.4%)
Uzbeks	43,374 (100%)	171 (0.3%)	24,657 (56.8%)	—	654 (1.5%)	46 (0.1%)	17,800 (41%)
Russians	43,218 (100%)	15 (0.03%)	—	596 (1.3%)	14 (0.03%)	77 (0.17%)	42,292 (97.8%)
Ukrainians	2,794 (100%)	101 (3.6%)	841 (30%)	42 (1.5%)	3 (0.1%)	2 (0.07%)	1,748 (62.5%)
Tajiks	18,163 (100%)	118 (0.6%)	5,294 (29.1%)	6,666 (36.7%)	—	6 (0.03%)	6,039 (33.2%)
Tatars	11,503 (100%)	259 (2.2%)	7,688 (66.8%)	348 (3%)	7 (0.06%)	—	3,181 (27.6%)
Crimean Tatars	4,912 (100%)	23 (0.4%)	3,921 (79.8%)	227 (4.6%)	4 (0.08%)	13 (0.2%)	718 (14.6%)
Koreans	3,266(100%)	—	1,546 (47.3%)	50 (1.5%)	—	1 (0.03%)	1,622 (49.6%)
Germans	4,766 (100%)	—	2,335 (48.9%)	25 (0.5%)	2 (0.04%)	1 (0.02%)	2,355 (49.4%)

*Source: Author's field materials. Angren, March 29, 2013*

<sup>14</sup> Population Census 1979, Angren; Population Census 1989, Angren.

<sup>15</sup> Population Census 1989, Angren.

<sup>16</sup> P. Kolsto, “Territorialising Diasporas: The Case of Russians in the Former Soviet Republics,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, no. 3 (1999): 613.

Angren was built in quarters and the Russian-speaking (multiethnic) population was prevalent within the city limits. Several rural settlements surround it: Dzhigiristan (in 1940 this was a settlement of workers), Ablyk, Guram, Teshiktash, Apartak, Saglom, Gulbag, Katagan (a predominantly Uzbek and Tajik village), Karabau (currently part of the city), a settlement of geologic explorers (*Geologorazvedchikov* or geologists), as well as the German village.

Between 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s most businesses in Angren ceased to function except for the Angren office of the *Almalyk* Mining Metallurgical *Combine* (AMMC) and the coal mines, as well as the Angren and Novo-Angren power stations (GRES). The stagnation of core industries had seriously affected the ethnic and social composition of the city as well as the living standards of the Russian-speaking residents. Widespread unemployment caused by economic crisis and the shutdown of the core enterprises along with processes of ethno-political mobilization in Uzbekistan contributed to the rapid outflow of the Russian-speaking population. Angren had become populated by the residents of nearby villages.

Economic growth in Uzbekistan had had a weak effect on Angren in the 1990s and 2000s, and as a result the city had lost its industrial status and the structure of employment had changed. The years from 1995 to 2003 had been particularly challenging for the city as the Soviet system of urban infrastructure collapsed, entailing year-round shutoffs of electricity, heating, and hot water. Everyday problems aggravated the difficult situation: lack of available jobs, decay of the old structure of employment, and shifts in the information and communication environment. Employment in various sectors went through serious deformation. By the 2000s sectors such as the service industry and trade gradually began to develop, partly due to the fact that Angren is located along the trade route for goods from the markets of Kokand headed to Tashkent. In 2008, a new bazaar, “5/4,” was built in one of Angren’s quarters, featuring modern shopping pavilions.

The changes of the 1990s-2000s in Angren brought about a ruralization of the urban space and the appearance of sheep, goats, and cows on the streets. For the population of nearby villages, cattle became one reliable source of income (every day women from villages come to the city market and sell homemade dairy products). Yet none of fifteen

individuals interviewed during 2011-13 fieldwork mentioned that everyday rural practices are moving into the urban space along with the spontaneous market trade. There is no visible tension between the Russian-speaking population and the new city residents, while these tensions are common in Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan. The Russian-speaking community seems more concerned with the massive emigration of Russians from Uzbekistan, which drastically impacted its local communication environment.

Today Angren is undergoing important changes, particularly in regard to its status: In April 2012, President Islam Karimov signed a decree on the establishment of the special industrial zone (SIZ). The city of Angren was not chosen accidentally: the important industrial complex built there during the Soviet period still has valuable potential. Additionally, Angren also has a gas-production station, the only one in the country that operates using the underground-angle pyrolysis method. The cities of the Tashkent region also have a large untapped labor pool.

Changes related to this new SIZ status are already noticeable today. A new pipeline plant has been built in the city, along with factories for the production of silicon tiles, sugar, flour, cardboard, etc. But modern mechanized production did not have a noticeable effect on the employment situation. Major construction projects use foreign labor; the Angren-Pap railroad (Pap district is located in the Namangan region), for instance, is being constructed by the Chinese and will be the first railway linking the cities of the Tashkent oblast with the Fergana valley. According to unofficial sources, this construction involves one thousand Chinese workers. The Spanish firm Isolux Corsan is leading the reconstruction of a seventy-six-kilometer span of the road running from the checkpoint at Kamchik to the checkpoint at Chinor, which is entirely located in the mountains. It employs about two hundred Spaniards. Major construction projects from 2012-14, as a result, did not radically improve the employment situation in the city itself.

Large-scale socioeconomic changes in the 1990s-2010s led to fundamental transformations of the ethnic composition of the city. According to the official data of the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, the population of Angren on January 1, 2013, was 172,880 people, of whom 126,247 were Uzbeks (73 percent of the city’s total population), 28,653 Tajiks (16.8 percent), 4,621 Russian (2.6 percent), 1,284 Tatars (0.7 percent), and 8,282

Koreans (4.7 percent).<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the share of the “European” population, which was formerly dominant in the city, is now less than 10 percent. Since its independence, Uzbekistan had not held a census and the headcount of its residents had significant errors. For example, the official statistics did not include residents of Angren who received Russian citizenship and have residence permits in Uzbekistan—so-called returnees— whose numbers are significant.

### **Russian Language in the Sociocultural Space of Angren**

Due to the outflow of the Russian-speaking population during the period of independence, the use of Russian language in the urban public space dramatically evolved. However, Russian still has a strong position in Angren’s social and cultural arenas. Demand for Russian education remains extremely high. Currently there are five schools in Angren that provide education in two languages, both Russian and Uzbek. This is impressive given the fact that there are only 4,621 Russians left, and few of them are children. By comparison, as of January 1, 2013, there were 28,653 Tajiks living in Angren (16.8 percent),<sup>18</sup> while there are only five schools that instruct in Tajik.

In an interview Lucia Shamilevna Rebechenko, director of school no. 33 and chairperson of the Angren branch of the Russian Cultural Center, suggests that the indigenous population developed a high demand for children’s education in Russian. Russian-instructed classes are overcrowded; in a school with five classes, four classes are instructed in Russian and only one in Uzbek.<sup>19</sup>

The reasons for such a high demand for education in Russian are:

- Perception of the quality and benefits of education in Russian;
- Education in Russian is a prerequisite for career opportunities both in Uzbekistan and abroad;
- The socioeconomic orientation towards Russia due to labor migration. Evgeny

Abdullayev had rightly noted that Russia in the 2000s has regained a symbolic status as “big brother,”<sup>20</sup>

- Russian-Uzbek bilingualism maintained from the Soviet era.

It would seem that because of the change from Cyrillic to Latin alphabet for Uzbek in the 1990s and the ongoing ‘Uzbekification’ of public life the position of the Russian language had been completely undermined, but it turns out that Russian is booming in the cities of the Tashkent region.

The officers of Rossotrudnichestvo (an agency working under the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in Uzbekistan mentioned that representatives of the country’s elite seek to improve their Russian-language skills to better take advantage of Internet resources, and specialized literature. In Tashkent, the Russian Cultural Center and Rossotrudnichestvo provide courses to train students at community colleges (in Uzbekistan schooling continues until ninth grade, followed by three years of specialized school) to enroll in Russian universities. For example, for the 2011-12 academic year the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation had allocated 297 places for these students.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, it should be noted that the popularity and dissemination of the Russian language does not necessarily entail its widespread use. The younger generation, born in the late 1980s and early 1990s, has been educated in schools with state language, while Russian might have been maintained as an elective language. As a result, Russian is used in domestic spheres and the media in a rather simplified way.

For the Russian-speaking residents of Angren it remains unclear how best to educate their younger generation. Currently, the Tashkent region is the only one in the country that has no higher education institution. Out of Angren’s postsecondary-education institutions there is only one with a “European group” (i.e. with Russian-language instruction), the Medical College. In July 2011, on the eve of entrance exams, the Tashkent Regional Pedagogical Institute, named after Mahmud Kashgari (TOGPI), closed its

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17 Angren City, <http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ruwiki/252029>.

18 Materials provided by the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan 112/4, August 6, 2013.

19 Author’s field materials. Angren, April 18, 2014.

20 Abdullayev, “Ob identichnosti russkikh Sredney Azii,” 9.

21 Memo on quota for education in Russian universities for 2011-12 academic year, allocated to support compatriots. Materials provided by the office of Rossotrudnichestvo in Uzbekistan, 2012.

doors unexpectedly.<sup>22</sup> The Pedagogical Institute provided training not only for educators, but also for city law-enforcement agencies. Because of the TOGPI closure, the opportunities to obtain higher education dropped dramatically for all Angren residents. A branch of the Navoi Mining and Metallurgical Institute operates in Almalyq, forty-five kilometers from Angren.

Overall, higher education in Uzbekistan is gradually becoming elitist, as the system of stipends acts on a case-by-case basis and the majority of students enroll on a contract basis, with a high tuition fee. In this system, only those who can afford to pay tuition get education and most of the Russian-speaking population of Angren— industrial workers, teachers, drivers, etc.—miss out on such opportunities. It must be noted that it is this ‘closed’ system of higher education that acts as a major factor pushing the middle-aged Russian-speaking residents to participate in the repatriation program in Russia, where access to higher education is significantly easier.

During twenty-three years of independence, dramatic changes have occurred in Angren’s urban space, including shifting ethnic composition and transformation of the industrial and manufacturing sector, but the use of Russian in the public space seems largely unchanged. This phenomenon can be explained by the functional stability of the Russian language in industrial production.

This is confirmed by three interviews recorded with the employees of Angren’s leading industrial enterprises. A driver for a local logistics company confirmed that internal documentation is kept entirely in Russian.<sup>23</sup> An electrician from one of Angren’s gold-processing plants also confirmed that all internal documentation is compiled in Russian, and that company regulations are also maintained in Russian: “For example, I worked in energy management. All negotiations there between the controllers had been led in Russian. Because a dispatcher does not know many electrical terms in Uzbek, while he, for example, must pass the instruction to disable or enable any line, his colleague may not perceive the Uzbek properly, can make a mess and may bring the people under death, so everybody is forced to speak in

Russian.”<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere in that interview the following exchange took place:

A: “My whole shift must be fixed in the log.”

Yu.Ts.: “In Russian?”

A.: “In Russian, yes, and Uzbek shift, who work with me, they also write in Russian. Firstly, nothing is recorded in Uzbek. Secondly, we have two Russians, one Tatar, and three Uzbeks. They write in bad Russian, but this is Russian. They usually can write everything in Russian. He writes in bad language and it is funny to read, of course, when you take the shift, but this is clearer than their Uzbek.”

The third example is related to the activities of an employee from an Angren coal mine. He too confirms that the managers give all commands to load and unload the coal in Russian and that the technical documentation is compiled entirely in Russian.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, since Angren retains its industrial status, employees of big enterprises, including Uzbeks and Tajiks, must be bilingual. With the ongoing modernization of local industries, the demand for Russian will probably increase as the Russian language remains the language of the industrial world. In this regard, it would be useful to further investigate the issues surrounding new businesses built in the Angren industrial zone after 2012. In what language would production be directed in the new facilities? For example, a cardboard factory purchased a huge workshop and new equipment, but while the project was supervised by Czech entrepreneurs, the head engineers were invited from Novosibirsk, Russia.

## Concluding Remarks

To conclude, it is worth noting that, despite the Uzbekification of all spheres of public life and the introduction of the Uzbek language in the official documentation, Russian retained its central position in the public space of Angren. William Fierman suggests that the Russian language in Central Asia plays a much more important role than in the Baltic states or even the South Caucasus, where the Russian pop-

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22 M. Muhamedov, “Kuda teper’ podat’sya abiturientam? Nakanune vstupilnykh ekzamenov zakryt Tashkentskiy oblastnoy gosudarstvennyy pedagogicheskiy institut,” *Centralasia.ru*, July 12, 2011, <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1310494980>.

23 Author’s field materials. Angren, March 28, 2013.

24 Author’s field materials. Angren, March 25, 2013.

25 Author’s field materials. Angren, August 9, 2013.

ulation is small.<sup>26</sup> Tightening immigration legislation in Russia, in particular a requirement demanding Russian-language proficiency for migrant workers, will further consolidate the perception that is still valuable to learn Russian. These changes entail shifts in values and priorities, as a choice for the fu-

ture becomes associated with obtaining education in Russian. As a result, the cities of the Tashkent region may preserve a Russian information and communication environment even in the context of a 'nationalizing' state.

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26 W. Fierman, "Russian in Post-Soviet Central Asia: A Comparison with the States of the Baltic and South Caucasus," *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 6 (2012): 1077.

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# Emigration of “Crème de la Crème” in Uzbekistan. A Gender Perspective

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**Marina Kayumova<sup>1</sup> (2015)**

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International migration displays two interesting tendencies: the increasing migration of the highly skilled workforce and the growing feminization of migration flows.<sup>2</sup> This type of human capital flight mostly affects developing and low-income countries.<sup>3</sup> It is also an important challenge faced by Central Asian states. The World Bank estimates that the total number of emigrants from Uzbekistan since 1991 is 2 million people.<sup>4</sup> However, exact statistics are not available, and there is speculation that the real number of migrants is closer to 6 million. Data for the level of education of emigrants is similarly unreliable. The World Bank has estimated that one in three Uzbeks living abroad has a tertiary education degree. This would mean that around 1 million Uzbeks with higher education live outside the country.<sup>5</sup> That said, Docquier and Rapoport<sup>6</sup> report that between 1990 and 2000 the highly skilled emigration rate more than doubled in eight post-Soviet countries, with Uzbekistan displaying one of the highest

rates (59.5%), of highly skilled emigrants of the total emigration stock.<sup>7</sup>

The gender aspect of highly skilled emigration has only recently started to receive attention.<sup>8</sup> Since the 1990s, experts have witnessed a steady increase of women emigrating. The literature explains this in terms of the transformation of labor, changing gender roles, including increased gender equality.<sup>9</sup> That said, the study of highly skilled female migration is complicated because of the lack of reliable statistics and harmonized gender-disaggregated data on emigrants' educational background.<sup>10</sup>

This paper examines the consequences of the emigration of the “crème de la crème” from Uzbekistan. I use the “brain drain/brain gain” debate as my analytical framework. The first section of this paper describes the methodology of my study. The second section explains why it is important to examine highly skilled female emigration in Uzbekistan. Drawing on the empirical data, I collected through a series of in-depth interviews, I examine both negative and positive consequences of the emigration of highly skilled professionals. The final section concludes with recommendations on how to turn “brain drain” into “brain gain.”

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2 J. Dumont, J. Martin, and G. Spielvogel, “Women on the Move: The Neglected Gender Dimension of the Brain Drain,” *IZA Discussion Paper* No. 2920. Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Bonn, 2007.

3 Y. Kuznetsov and C. Sabel, “International Migration of Talent, Diaspora Networks, and Development: Overview of Main Issues,” in Y. Kuznetsov, ed., *Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills, How Countries can Draw on Their Talent Abroad* (Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2006), 3–19; F. Docquier and H. Rapoport, “Quantifying the Impact of Highly Skilled Emigration on Developing Countries,” in T. Boeri, H. Brucker, F. Docquier, and H. Rapoport, eds., *Brain Drain and Brain Gain: The Global Competition to Attract High-Skilled Migrants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 209–302.

4 “Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Uzbekistan,” Report No. 65028-UZ. World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2011.

5 “Uzbekistan. Modernizing Tertiary Education,” Report No. 88606-UZ. World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2014.

6 Docquier and Rapoport, “Quantifying the Impact of Highly Skilled Emigration on Developing Countries.”

7 F. Docquier and A. Marfouk, “International Migration by Educational Attainment, 1990-2000,” in Ç. Özden and M. Schiff, eds., *International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank and Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 151–99.

8 N. M. Nejad and A. T. Young, “Female Brain Drains and Women's Rights Gaps: A Gravity Model Analysis of Bilateral Migration Flows,” *IZA Discussion Paper* No. 8067. Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Bonn, March 2014, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8067.pdf>.

9 L. Beneria, C. Deere and N. Kabeer, “Gender and International Migration: Globalization, Development and Governance,” in L. Oso and N. Ribas-Mateos, eds., *The International Handbook on Gender, Migration and Transnationalism: Global and Development Perspectives* (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2013), 45–66.

10 J. Dumont, J. Martin, and G. Spielvogel, “Women on the Move: The Neglected Gender Dimension of the Brain Drain,” *IZA Discussion Paper* No. 2920. Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Bonn, 2007; Beneria, Deere, and Kabeer, “Gender and International Migration”; Docquier and Marfouk, “International Migration by Educational Attainment.”

## Methodology

This study is based on 18 in-depth interviews with emigrants from Uzbekistan holding PhD degrees in natural (physics, chemistry, biology), social (economics, education, law, political science) and applied sciences (medicine, engineering, computer science).<sup>11</sup> The pool of respondents have the following characteristics:

- They have resided outside of Uzbekistan for 4 to 19 years.
- The majority of them left Uzbekistan, on their own, without their family members.
- All of them still have family members in Uzbekistan.
- Most of the respondents got their undergraduate education in Uzbekistan and their Master and PhD degrees abroad.
- Most of the respondents' current occupation is directly relevant to the areas of expertise obtained in the course of their studies.

The respondents were selected through the use of stratified snowball sampling and through the online network of Uzbek professionals abroad. First contacts were made through personal networks within immigrant communities in the UK, Belgium, Germany, France, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, and Japan.

To control for gender differences, the sample was composed of an equal number of female and male respondents. The interviews lasted on average for about one hour. Although interviews followed a semi-structured guide with predetermined themes that uncovered the behavior and intentions of the emigrants, we also allowed for a free-flowing discussion. In order to minimize gender biases, we initially did not tell the respondents that we focused

on the question of highly skilled female migration in Uzbekistan. Respondents were informed only at the very end of the interview. In the interviews we asked female respondents to reflect on their gender roles. Our male respondents were also asked to reflect on their gender roles. In addition, we asked whether if they had been a woman their situation and motivations would have been different. This study is to be seen as a probe that offers some promising avenues for more in-depth research.

## Feminization of Highly Skilled Migration

The increasing number of women emigrating, including highly skilled women, has generated a growing interest by scholars and policymakers in the gender dimension of migration flows. According to the United Nations, between 1960 and 2005, the share of women in international migration increased from 46.8% to 49.6% and outnumbered the number of male emigrants from developing countries.<sup>12</sup> This trend is particularly noticeable for highly skilled women from developing countries.<sup>13</sup> Dumont<sup>14</sup> found that the average emigration rate of tertiary-educated women from non-OECD countries exceeded that of men by 4.5%, whereas there was no gender gap in emigration rates of men and women with primary and secondary education.<sup>15</sup>

Those worldwide tendencies also hold true for the post-Soviet space. The proportion of women emigrants from the former Soviet Union increased dramatically over the past 25 years.<sup>16</sup> Docquier et al.<sup>17</sup> found that in 2000 the share of skilled female emigrants from Central Asia stood at 50.2% as opposed to 46.5% for their male counterparts. In Central Asia, the increase of the rate of skilled women emigrating as compared to the number of skilled men emigrating or the total number of women emigrating is particularly high.<sup>18</sup>

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11 Because of the lack of reliable and comprehensive statistics on the share of female and male emigrants with tertiary degrees, the present study is based on in-depth interviews.

12 See: Nejad and Young, “Female Brain Drains and Women’s Rights Gaps”; C. Spadavecchia, “Migration of Women from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe: The Role of Highly Skilled Women,” *Sociologia y tecnociencia/Sociology and Technoscience* 3, no. 3 (2013): 96–116; J. Bang and A. Mitra, “Gender bias and the female brain drain,” *Applied Economics Letters* 18, no. 9 (2011): 829–33; Ç. Özden and I. Neagu, “Immigrant Women’s Participation and Performance in the US Labor Market,” in A. Morrison, M. Schiff, and M. Sjoblom, eds., *The International Migration of Women* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank and Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 153–83; F. Docquier, A. Marfouk, S. Salomone and K. Sekkat, “Are skilled women more migratory than skilled men?!” *World Development* 40, no. 2 (2010): 251–265.

13 Docquier, Marfouk, Salomone, and Sekkat, “Are skilled women more migratory than skilled men?!?”

14 Dumont, Martin, and Spielvogel, “Women on the Move: The Neglected Gender Dimension of the Brain Drain.”

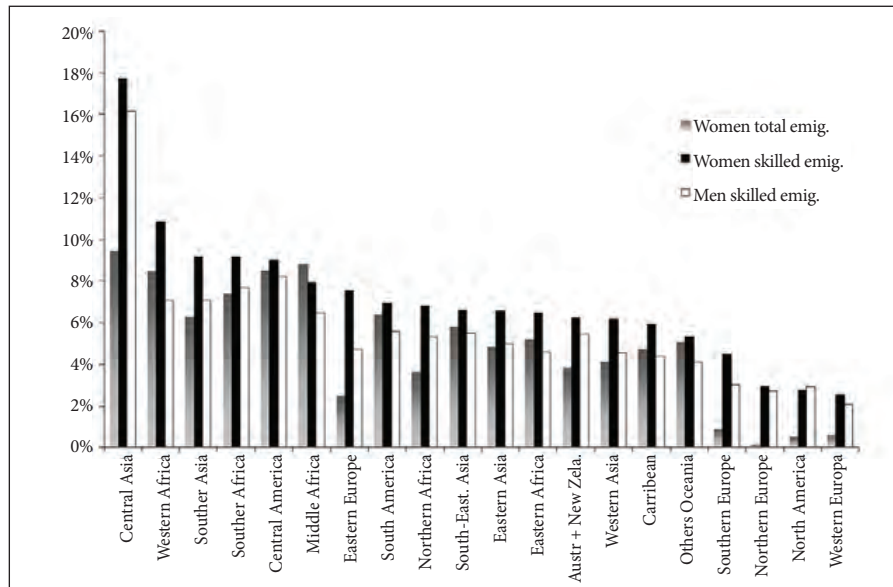
15 Beneria, Deere, and Kabeer, “Gender and International Migration: Globalization, Development and Governance.”

16 A. Morrison, M. Schiff, and M. Sjoblom, “Overview,” in A. Morrison, M. Schiff, and M. Sjoblom, eds., *The International Migration of Women* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank and Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1–10.

17 Docquier, Marfouk, Salomone, and Sekkat, “Are skilled women more migratory than skilled men?!?”

18 F. Docquier, L. Lowell, and A. Marfouk, “A Gendered Assessment of the Brain Drain,” *IZA Discussion Paper* No. 3235. Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Bonn, 2007.

Figure 1. Annual Average Growth Rate of Total/Skilled Stock of Emigrants. Data by Region (1990-2000)



Source: Adapted from Docquier et al.<sup>19</sup>

Based on the data of Brücker, Capuano, and Marfouk I constructed a graph depicting the emigration of highly skilled labour as a percentage of total emigrants of Uzbekistan.<sup>20</sup>

The graph clearly depicts the growing number of women emigrating and the widening gap between highly skilled female and male emigrants from Uzbekistan. These statistics suggest the need for an in-depth analysis of the gendered aspects of highly skilled emigration in Uzbekistan.

The literature points to two major motivations for highly skilled women to emigrate:

- Traditional and conservative gender roles,
- The lack of professional opportunities resulting from gender inequalities.

Gender differences in migration patterns are most likely to emerge from gender discrimination in the

country of origin.<sup>21</sup> Uzbekistan is a country and society with very traditional gender roles. Such traditional gender roles are also part of a new “nationalistic” narrative and a response to “westernization” be it in a Russian or global variant.<sup>22</sup> Independent female migration is not encouraged and is not in tune with the image of a “traditional woman.”<sup>23</sup> Most female respondents who took part in this study, while being supported by their families in their decision to independently move away from Uzbekistan, were also subject to many negative reactions from distant relatives, friends and acquaintances. To quote one female participant of the study: “They were trying to convince me that for a girl from Uzbekistan it is very important to get married and give birth to a child. If I left the country, the chances of me getting married would decrease.” Similarly, another woman explained: “Some of my relatives were telling my parents: “How come? You went crazy... How can you allow your un-

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.15.

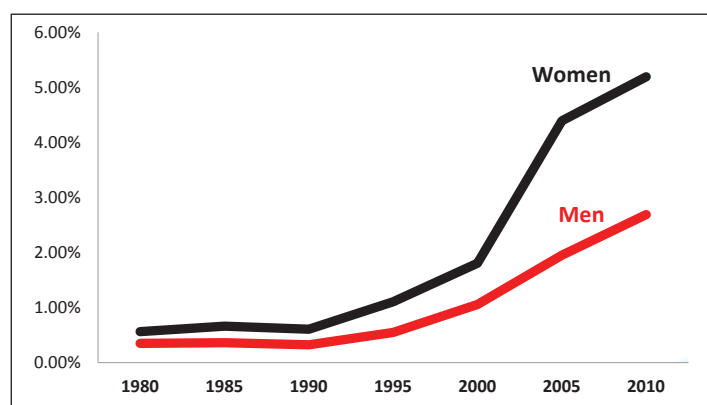
<sup>20</sup> In 2013, Brücker, Capuano, and Marfouk constructed a dataset of international emigration by origin, gender and education level for the years 1980–2010. The data was compiled through harmonizing national censuses and population registers statistics from 20 OECD receiving countries. Pre-1991 data for Uzbekistan was derived from the estimation of the immigrant stock from each origin by multiplying the total migration stock of the Soviet Republic by the gender and skill-specific share of the independent country population over the total Soviet country migration stock. The database covers only adults over 25 to exclude students.

<sup>21</sup> Nejad and Young, “Female Brain Drains and Women’s Rights Gaps.”

<sup>22</sup> E. Fayzullaeva, “Labor Migration in Central Asia: Gender Challenges,” in L. Racioppi and K. O. See, *Gender Politics in Post-communist Eurasia* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 237–61; M. Tlostanova, *Gender Epistemologies and Eurasian Borderlands* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> A. Cieslik, “Transnational Mobility and Family-Building Decisions: A Case Study of Skilled Polish Migrant Women in the UK,” in Oso and Ribas-Mateos, eds., *The International Handbook on Gender, Migration and Transnationalism*, 453–68.

Figure 2. Emigration of Highly-Skilled Labor as a Percentage of Total Emigration Stock for Uzbekistan



Source: Graph constructed based on data developed by Brücker, Capuano, and Marfouk<sup>24</sup>

married daughter to go somewhere abroad to study?” “If she goes abroad she may fall in love, she may never return, when she comes back to Uzbekistan, it will be difficult to arrange her marriage because a groom’s family would not want a bride who is much more educated than their son.” Even married women were subject to such opprobrium: “There were too many accusing remarks when I was leaving... According to our traditional cultural belief system, a daughter does not abandon her mother and a wife does not abandon her husband; it was against the flow. My mother in law is very traditional they simply do not understand... And I know what people are saying about me in Uzbekistan.”

In sum, there are strong cultural pressures on women in Uzbek society to stay put. For many highly educated women the decision to emigrate is motivated by a desire to escape those conservative social norms. These norms dictate that women have children soon after marriage and that the dominance of husbands in a household is a given.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, in Uzbekistan, like in many other post-Soviet Central Asian states, we also see a return to very traditional, and conservative views with regard to the roles of men and women in society. One female participant of the study explained: “Life in Uzbekistan is satisfactory for men, because the whole society is created for men... For many men, here I should say traditional Uzbek men, it is difficult to accept knowledgeable women or independent wom-

en. Such a woman can be an intimidating factor for a man. The space for women is restrictive and that’s why women leave the country.”

Another woman told us: “In life there are always gender dynamics. Even in more liberal thinking groups life is constrained; a woman can’t do this and that because people will think this and that... people were asking how my husband was reacting to my career development... So my husband became a frame of reference, they were nurturing a sense of guilt: But it is not a choice of either career or family—my children never suffered. I think they win when they see both parents working. I do not see that they suffer.”

These traditional and unequal cultural gender norms also translate into unequal economic gender norms. Indeed, another major reason why highly qualified women decide to emigrate is the lack of professional opportunities. The literature shows that developing countries, including countries with higher levels of gender inequalities, are more affected by highly skilled female emigration. Such countries have fewer professional opportunities for educated women.<sup>26</sup> Studies also show that countries with high fertility rates, restricted access to education for women, and strong labor market bias towards women face higher rates of female highly skilled emigration.<sup>27</sup> Many Uzbek female participants of the study are convinced that a woman can succeed in Uzbekistan professionally, but they also agree that she faces many

24 H. Brücker, S. Capuano, and A. Marfouk, “Education, Gender and International Migration: Insights from a Panel-Dataset 1980–2010,” mimeo, IAB, Nuremberg, 2013.

25 Ibid.

26 Dumont, Martin, and Spielvogel, “Women on the Move.”

27 Bang and Mitra, “Gender bias and the female brain drain.”

obstacles. They acknowledged that *“Everything is very difficult for women in Uzbekistan. It is very difficult for women to succeed in Uzbekistan. Women will not be promoted...If you are a woman you will need the support and patronage of a man (husband, father, brother).”*

Many men seemed to concur. The male respondents who took part in the study all recognized the unequal position of women in Uzbek society. All male respondents were asked what they believed would have happened to them if they had been a woman. They all agreed that their projected life scenarios would not be the same: *“I think I would not be able to achieve what I achieved in life as a man. This is one of the problems of our society. I know the environment in Tashkent; as a woman she must have a family. After she has a family, it is not her decision: it is up to the family and husband to decide. I know for sure that if I were born as a girl, I would not be able to do what I did.”* In a similar vein, another male respondent elaborated: *“I never thought I would be answering such a question. I don’t know how my career would develop in this case. In our patriarchal, very conservative society, of course it is much more difficult for a woman career-wise. Many husbands do not favor a situation when their wife works. For a woman it all depends on her partner and his position. In many cases a woman just cannot decide and does not have the freedom of choice. Family plays a huge role in our society of course, and it influences women’s career choices.”* Some of the responses were sharp: *“If I were a woman there would be no career plan in Uzbekistan for me.”*

Hence, if policymakers want to counter the emigration of highly skilled women they would do well to pay attention to gender discrimination not only in the domestic labor market,<sup>28</sup> but also in society at large. The increase of highly skilled female emigration should be a warning signal for policymakers.

## Brain Drain or Brain Gain

There is an ongoing debate in the literature on the consequences of highly skilled emigration on the country of origin. There are two schools of thought. One highlights the negative consequences also known as “brain drain” The other emphasizes the possible positive outcomes and “brain gain.”<sup>29</sup> When examining the consequences of highly skilled emigration five main factors have to be taken into consideration. These factors include: (1) remittances; (2) diaspora networks; (3) investments; (4) return migration; and (5) occupational shortages.<sup>30</sup>

### Remittances

Many experts argue that the negative effects of emigration may be offset by remittances sent by migrants.<sup>31</sup> According to a UNDP report<sup>32</sup> in many developing countries remittances exceed the level of direct foreign assistance and positively influence economic development. Indeed, remittances are a direct source of foreign exchange. They provide investment funds and contribute to GDP growth. They also allow for increased consumption as they are received directly by households.<sup>33</sup> It is generally believed that the more qualified migrants will remit more as they are expected to earn more.

However, my study reveals that the extent of remittances coming from highly skilled migrants from Uzbekistan is quite insignificant. While these findings cannot be generalized due to the small sample size and the qualitative nature of the present research, this finding might call into question some of the conventional wisdom and theories with regard to remittances. My respondents, when asked if they send money to support their families or relatives in Uzbekistan, explained: *“I have a big family and many siblings who take care of my parents. All of them are in Uzbekistan, so there is no pressure on me to send money to Uzbekistan.”*

28 F. Docquier and H. Rapoport, “Documenting the Brain Drain of “La Crème de la Crème”: Three Case-Studies on International Migration at the Upper Tail of the Education,” *IRES Discussion Papers* No. 2009031. Institut de Recherches Economiques et Sociales, Université Catholique de Louvain, 2009.

29 Spadavecchia, “Migration of Women from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe.”

30 During the course of my primary data collection no significant gender differences were displayed with respect to those factors. Hence, the findings presented below are not gender disaggregated.

31 Spadavecchia, “Migration of Women from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe.”

32 “Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development,” UNDP, New York, 2009.

33 Beneria, Deere, and Kabeer, “Gender and International Migration.”

Most respondents expressed similar opinions. They explained that they would send money back home if there is an emergency or a special need in their family. But their remittances do not have a systematic character and are rather ad-hoc. The reason why the higher skilled migrants remit less than the lower skilled ones may be because highly qualified Uzbek emigrants come from families with higher social status. Unlike labor emigrants, they are driven to immigrate for reasons other than the desire to financially help their families left in Uzbekistan<sup>34</sup> in relying on statistically significant econometric analyses across 82 countries, found that the growth in the share of highly skilled migrants negatively influences total and per capita remittances. In sum, it seems that the negative consequences of highly skilled emigration cannot be offset by the fact that qualified emigrants remit more than labor emigrants.

#### *Diaspora Networks*

There is a widely held view that emigrants positively influence their home countries through diaspora networks that generate flows of goods, capital and ideas. Emigrant diasporas abroad strengthen investment linkages, technology transfers and knowledge circulation, thus fostering productivity growth in sending countries.<sup>35</sup>

Uzbek diasporas abroad are relatively young since the history of Uzbek emigration started only in the beginning of the 1990s and intensified in the 2000s. My research revealed that most of the highly qualified respondents from Uzbekistan do not belong to any formal or informal Uzbek communities, networks or organizations in their new countries of residence. Many of them do not even communicate with other fellow Uzbeks. This disconnect from fellow Uzbeks can be explained by the fact that highly qualified people are capable to integrate well into new societies, they speak foreign languages, hold good positions and easily make friends with citizens of the host population and hence they do not feel a strong need to connect with a “home” community.

There even seems to be a tendency not to look for contacts with other Uzbeks abroad and distance themselves from fellow Uzbeks. For instance, one

female respondent explains: “At this moment, I have little contacts with Uzbeks... When I was a student, I met some fellow Uzbek students almost every day. They were from different regions of Uzbekistan and had a different mentality; they were thinking differently and it was a culture shock for me. Sometimes, you do not want to communicate with fellow Uzbeks.” Another woman elaborates about the reasons why she keeps her distance with other Uzbeks abroad: “I try to keep distance. I have burned my fingers already ...When you meet people from your country there is a tendency of exaggerated familiarity. Sometimes there are judgments and controlling aspects, especially from the side of men from Uzbekistan, and it wasn't pleasant. Even my brothers and my father didn't have this tendency to tell me what's right and what's wrong and how I should behave.” Male respondents have the same attitude towards fellow Uzbeks: “I am not looking for them (Uzbeks) specifically. I do not see a need to look for fellow Uzbeks and communicate with them.”

When probed about communities, networks or organizations uniting Uzbeks abroad, many respondents were not even aware of their existence: I never heard that someone unites Uzbeks,” “No, no, I have not heard about networks or organizations.” “I do not know, to be honest, I do not have many contacts, only a few close friends.” “I don't know, I've never looked for them. Maybe there are some.” At the same time many respondents mentioned different social initiatives and activities they heard about or took part in. These initiatives can be described as purely social gatherings to celebrate traditional holidays such as Navruz<sup>36</sup> or Eid<sup>37</sup>: “On Navruz and Eid we gather to make plov. But it happens from time to time, not often.”

The embassies of Uzbekistan play a role in uniting Uzbek communities abroad. Several respondents mentioned that the only Uzbek events they attend are organized by the embassies. To quote one female participant: “We gather only at specific big events organized by the embassy of Uzbekistan, such as the Independence Day, Navruz.”

In sum, highly qualified Uzbeks tend not to unite in the form of diasporas. Hence there is no critical mass of people and, therefore, at present the positive effect of diasporas on Uzbekistan is negligible.

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34 Y. Niimi, Ç. Özden, and M. Schiff, “Remittances and the Brain Drain: Skilled Migrants Do Remit Less,” *IZA Discussion Paper* No. 3393. Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Bonn, 2008.

35 Docquier and Rapoport, “Documenting the Brain Drain of “La Crème de la Crème.”

36 The spring “New Year” public holiday in Uzbekistan.

37 Muslim holiday.

### Investments

Experts also point to the possible positive aspect of highly skilled emigration, namely the potential for investments into the country of origin by people residing abroad. Many highly qualified respondents would like to contribute to Uzbekistan in the future. When asked, “Are you thinking about investing into Uzbekistan in the future?” one male respondent said: “I’m already doing that... I’m not getting any profit perhaps other than getting a prosperous country in which I would like to retire one day... Everyone who is out of Uzbekistan for a long time, like me, has families there, has memories, and is still emotionally connected to Uzbekistan.”

Education is an area of particular interest for highly qualified emigrants. Many of them would like to improve the quality of education in Uzbekistan, to ensure that their co-citizens can become more competitive in the international arena. One female respondent suggested she “would (happily) develop educational programs in science and academia, develop science in universities, launch exchange programs and contribute to professional development.”

Other respondents mentioned the possibilities of creating community-based businesses or encouraging social entrepreneurship. One female participant stressed: “I wanted something that is community based, something that can move people somewhere. And I, for example, have an idea to open something that can bring together several entrepreneurs that would also link farmers to market, have some societal impact...a social entrepreneurship, something that can sustain itself economically, but also have a social impact.” Other sectors in which highly qualified emigrants want to invest are real estate, healthcare, R&D and renewable energy.

There are certain doubts about the current investment climate in Uzbekistan, which make highly skilled emigrants wary of investing or launching a business in their home country. To quote one female respondent: “... too many barriers... All emigrants are homesick and they would invest with pleasure considering that many of them still have relatives there. Uzbeks like to help...but it is difficult to have business there.”

Another area of uncertainty concerns the desire and demand coming from Uzbekistan. Although many respondents believe that Uzbek emigrants would like to invest into Uzbekistan, they doubt that such investments will be welcomed. One female respondent questioned the current situation: “You can’t impose help. You help when people need it, when you see an aspiration...I would help. Why not? I know many people would and I would encourage it. There should be the need and demand from Uzbekistan, though.” Thus, it seems that highly qualified emigrants are more likely to make nonmonetary contributions rather than direct financial investments in the current environment.

### Return Migration

The literature suggests that because of the restrictive immigration policies of developed countries and other factors such as family, social relationships and emotional ties, the emigration of highly skilled labor is often temporary.<sup>38</sup> Hence, human capital acquired abroad is readily transferred to the country of origin through return or circular migration, also known as “brain circulation.”<sup>39</sup> Some of the brightest professionals are willing to move back after successful careers and education abroad in order to launch businesses and boost local economies.<sup>40</sup> In developing countries, return migration can also lead to the formation of elites.<sup>41</sup>

Many respondents who have taken part in the present study continue to display very strong emotional and cultural ties to Uzbekistan, which inform their thoughts about moving back permanently to their country of origin. For example, as one of the female respondents observed: “Everyone wants to come back to his/her home country. This wish is always present.” “You know the thought of no return is very scary for me. I haven’t given up on my country and on myself, I think I can contribute, I think I should contribute and I hope I will have all the courage soon enough to go back.”

The question arises, how realistic are those intentions of return? When probed further, it turns out that the issue of return to Uzbekistan is conditional upon many different factors for both men and wom-

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38 Cieslik, “Transnational Mobility and Family-Building Decisions: A Case Study of Skilled Polish Migrant Women in the UK.”

39 Boeri, Brucker, Docquier, and Rapoport, eds., *Brain Drain and Brain Gain*.

40 J. Evans, “Watch out for the reverse brain drain,” *Euromoney*, April 2014, <http://www.euromoney.com/Article/1001871/Watch-out-for-the-reverse-brain-drain.html?copyrightInfo=true>.

41 Boeri, Brucker, Docquier, and Rapoport, eds., *Brain Drain and Brain Gain*.

en. Employment perspectives are one of the most important conditions of moving back to Uzbekistan. A male respondent explains: *“I simply need employment... Why I am here? Because I have a place, a job, and that’s why I’m paying their tax and contribute to their science. If I had the same opportunity in Uzbekistan, I would go just like that and live near my family. It would save me so much money, because I won’t have to travel each time to see them. It will save me nerves. There is a huge assumption that people abroad are enjoying themselves. Probably they are. However, it’s still has its own minuses. If I had a job in Uzbekistan, I would go back.”* Similarly, another woman respondent argues: *“I always tell if they [Uzbek employers] call, I’ll come. As soon as our country needs ‘cadre’, they will find a way to find me, to make a job offer and I go immediately as soon as it happens. If I am offered a job and they invite, I’ll come back.”*

Some of the respondents also talked about the difficulties of reintegration into academia after studies abroad and in particular about the need to validate foreign degrees. For some of the respondents, the process of foreign degree validation took a long time and turned out to be complicated and difficult. *“There was a need for degree validation, which was very difficult. Career progression was not possible without it. My foreign PhD degree was not automatically valid in Uzbekistan in order for me to work in academia.”*

When asked further if the respondents believed their knowledge, skills and expertise could be valued by potential employers in Uzbekistan upon their return, they expressed some doubts. To quote one female respondent: *“I doubt that my skills will be valued by local employers. They always tell ‘you have spent so much time abroad; you do not have any idea of what is happening in Uzbekistan and the peculiarities of the local market. You do not know our reality.”* Respondents who are deeply involved into scientific fields and research and development express even more hesitation: *“My skills will be demanded; some parts of my expertise, but not the scientific side. There are very few people who understand it. Employers will underestimate my skills...My scientific skills will not be valued in Uzbekistan, they will not be understood.”*

The above analysis shows that the issue is more complicated than a mere job offer in Uzbekistan. Conventional wisdom suggests that economic and

financial factors are the main determinants of Uzbek emigrants working abroad. Many emigrants, however, cite the intellectual environment as a primary motivator. Highly skilled people are motivated by self-esteem and the ability to contribute and work in a stimulating environment. One male participant of the study explains: *“It’s not about the salary and it has never been... It’s about environment. Fresh ideas should be welcomed. In Uzbekistan sometimes they are not. They tell you: ‘your initiative will be punished’ or ‘you are too young to make a judgement.”* People also matter. *“Here, although I remain a foreigner, (it is not an easy country to live in, there are many disadvantages, it’s completely different culture), I feel valued for my ideas and as professional.”*

Respondents realize that the same level of salaries cannot be expected in developing countries such as Uzbekistan and they are willing to accept that. *“Now it is very difficult to come back, you can’t work in a golden cage, environment is very important. Even if I am offered a good salary, there are no smart people to discuss my research with.”* Such a discouraging work environment, especially for scientists, is amplified by the fact that more and more highly qualified people are leaving Uzbekistan. Respondents also pointed to favoritism based on kinship during hiring processes.

While many respondents have a strong desire to return and recognize nostalgic feelings and homesickness, over time it becomes more difficult to go back. Indeed, their children who often are born in the new country of residence have little or no attachments to Uzbekistan.

Some women mentioned gender aspects while elaborating on a possible return to Uzbekistan: *“Realistically, nobody needs me there [in Uzbekistan], I won’t be feeling myself there. There were times when I was dreaming about returning. As a woman I can only realize myself in Uzbekistan through giving birth to children, having a family. A single, strong, independent woman who is almost 40 years old is not acceptable there.”*

Return and circular migration are conditional upon many factors and may or may not happen depending on future developments in Uzbekistan.

#### Occupational Shortages

The literature on “brain drain” argues that sending countries lose valuable human capital and experience negative effects in terms of economic development.<sup>42</sup>

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42 J. Bhagwati and K. Hamada, “The Brain Drain International Integration of Markets for Professionals and Unemployment: A Theoretical Analysis,” *Journal of Development Economics* 1 (1974): 19–24.



Indeed, because of the exodus of talent, highly skilled labor becomes scarce,<sup>43</sup> and a lack of highly skilled professionals hinders productivity growth.<sup>44</sup>

Highly skilled emigration is particularly negative for sending countries in the short term when it involves a large group of people of a specific profession.<sup>45</sup> Human capital flight adversely affects sending countries when professionals, who are either a key input for the human capital sector (e.g. teachers, physicians) or essential for technology adoption (e.g. engineers, scientists), decide to leave. R&D and innovation are key to productivity growth. Therefore, losing scientists can be particularly detrimental.<sup>46</sup> Over time “brain drain” may increase the risks of becoming poor, this is particularly true for resource-exporting, and developing countries, such as the Central Asian states. Brain drain denies them the chance to develop competitive skill-intensive industries. In addition, relying on the export of natural resources and remittances in the absence of highly skilled professionals undermines a country’s competitive advantage. Consequently, there is a significant risk of becoming dependent on foreign experts to address domestic issues.<sup>47</sup> This risk is aggravated when a state is in the process of developing competitive skill-intensive economic sectors and lacks a pool of highly educated professionals.

Uzbekistan has already started to experience a mismatch between skills on the labor market and occupational shortages. In 2014, the World Bank commissioned a survey of 232 employers in Uzbekistan to learn more about the skills deficits in the labor market. They found that 35% of all employers, including 49% of industrial enterprises, had difficulties in hiring sufficient numbers of qualified professionals with tertiary degrees, because of the lack of specialists in the labor market.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Uzbekistan is experiencing some of the negative consequences of the emigration of its elite—the “*creme de la creme*.” There is no doubt that it hampers the state’s economic and social development. Thus far little thought has been given to the fact that more highly educated women are leaving the country than highly educated men. The implications in terms of future human development challenges for Uzbekistan have been understudied.<sup>49</sup>

A key element of the economic and social development of a country is women’s human capital.<sup>50</sup> Female education influences the human capital formation of future generations. Promoting the education of women improves their ability to raise more educated and competitive children. They also contribute additional income to the household, which may be invested in children’s education. Indeed, female “brain drain” has specific negative effects on sending countries.<sup>51</sup> The absence of highly skilled women impacts remaining family members and communities.<sup>52</sup> In addition, highly skilled female emigration negatively affects human capital indicators, such as infant mortality and secondary school enrolment rate. The fact that more and more highly qualified women are leaving Uzbekistan may have serious negative social impacts on the society and its future development.

These immediate drawbacks are off-set by the more general longer term positive consequences of highly skilled emigration. Greater mobility provides more opportunities for citizens of Uzbekistan in terms of education, skills development, and living standards. People constitute the greatest asset for any country. When the citizens of Uzbekistan prosper and develop individually, so does the country. Undeniably, more highly skilled

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43 Docquier and Rapoport, “Documenting the Brain Drain of “*La Crème de la Crème*.”

44 M. Nakamuro and K. Ogawa, “Mobility of Skilled Labor in Transition Economies: The Perspectives from Brain-Drain, Brain-Waste, Brain-Circulation and Brain-Gain,” *Journal of International Cooperation Studies* 18, no.1 (2010): 71–83; Beneria, Deere, and Kabber, “Gender and International Migration.”

45 Spadavecchia, “Migration of Women from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe.”

46 F. Docquier and H. Rapoport, “Quantifying the Impact of Highly Skilled Emigration on Developing Countries,” in Boeri, Brucker, Docquier, and Rapoport, eds., *Brain Drain and Brain Gain*, 209–302.

47 R. Abazov, “Central Asia’s Skilled Migrants: Brain Drain or Brain Gain?” CACI Analyst, 2010, <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5372>.

48 “Uzbekistan. Modernizing Tertiary Education,” *Report No. 88606-UZ*. World Bank: Washington, D.C., 2014.

49 Highly skilled female emigration can be particularly damaging for the economic and social development of sending countries (Docquier and Rapoport, 2012). In contrast, scholars have not found the same relationship between economic/social development and emigration for women with lower levels of education (Dumont et al., 2007).

50 Docquier, Marfouk, Salomone, and Sekkat, “Are skilled women more migratory than skilled men?!”

51 Docquier, Lowell, and Marfouk, “A Gendered Assessment of the Brain Drain.”

52 Dumont, Martin, and Spielvogel, “Women on the Move.”

migrants abroad constitute a soft power potential for Uzbekistan and help promote the state and its culture globally. Moreover, there are many avenues for policy makers to benefit from the fact that highly qualified people work abroad. In the long run, highly skilled emigration can transform into “brain gain” for Uzbekistan, and it should not be viewed as entirely detrimental to the country. To make sure that the brain drain is turned into a brain gain I recommend the following:

#### *To the Government*

*Gender mainstreaming* - strengthen the implementation mechanisms of policies directed towards women empowerment within the existing legal framework on gender equality and the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan.

*Increase research investments* - emphasize R&D and science in order to increase competitiveness in the international arena. Financial flows into these spheres might stimulate brain circulation and consequently lead to “brain gain” from highly skilled professionals who leave Uzbekistan.

*Support scientific collaboration* - set up scientific collaboration mechanisms, including research grants, guest-professorships, and cross-national research projects between Uzbekistan and Uzbek scientists/researchers abroad to stimulate brain circulation.

*Provide incentive grants* - support the most talented and brightest returning professionals by introducing incentive grants directed for the delivery of specific projects, that are critical for the economic development of Uzbekistan.

*Reintegration of professionals* - simplify the procedure of degree validation and the recognition of professional qualifications obtained abroad to stimulate “brain gain.” Foreign expertise has a potential to advance Uzbek economy through the implementation of best and most innovative practices from other countries.

*Creation of centers of excellence* - these centers will attract the most talented and brightest professionals providing them with a standard of quality and environment similar to those which they would be able to find in developed countries.

*Internationalization of curricula* - national education needs to be more competitive in the international arena. There is some progress with the launch of universities with foreign partners, such as Westminster International University in Tashkent. However more attention should be given to local universities.

*Creation of public-private partnerships* - strengthen the local labor market by promoting collaboration between universities, academies of sciences, governmental institutions and industry and the private sector. Public-private partnerships encourage the quest for the most qualified professionals and increase competition based on merit and market needs.

*Streamlining visa procedures and citizenship* - promote the mobility of highly skilled emigrants residing abroad to facilitate their desire to invest in Uzbekistan in both monetary and nonmonetary terms. At the same time, exit visas regulations pose a limitation on the ability of professionals residing abroad to move back and forth to Uzbekistan. The circulation of highly skilled human capital can be facilitated by the introduction of fast-tracking procedures for exit visas and exit visas issuance in the consulates of Uzbekistan when a resident is registered with the embassy.

#### *To the Embassies of Uzbekistan Abroad*

*Strengthen the Uzbek diasporas*-Uzbekistan’s embassies abroad have a big role to play in reinforcing the links among highly skilled emigrants in host countries and their ties with the country of origin. This may be achieved through the organization of social events related to main Uzbek holidays, thematic workshops, conferences, and networking events targeted at specific scientific fields or professions. Embassies of the Republic of Uzbekistan should serve as a catalyst of building stronger diasporas, which could contribute to Uzbekistan.

#### *To International Organizations and Donors*

*Gender mainstreaming* - emphasize capacity building programs directed towards the empowerment of women in Uzbekistan and their professional development.

# Labor Migrant Households in Uzbekistan: Remittances as a Challenge or Blessing?

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Farrukh Irnazarov<sup>1</sup> (2015)

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Uzbekistan tops the list of both the number of migrants in Russia in absolute terms and volume of remittances sent from Russia. The majority of Uzbek labor migrants state that the ultimate goal of their migration campaigns is to earn enough money to open up their own business back home. However, very few can reach that goal, for several reasons I will discuss below. One of them is the expectation for celebrating lavish cultural ceremonies, among other weddings, that reinforce social bonds and belonging to the group. Cognizant of the fact that it takes at least 2-3 years of hard work in Russia (as well as in other popular destinations) to earn the amount required for arranging a wedding back home, it comes as a surprise that wedding costs have been increasing during the last decade without local populations showing any sign of cutting expenses on such events. Ironically, people keep complaining about the expensive wedding rituals, but nevertheless try to meet the so-called 'wedding standards' within their communities.

The major goal of this study is to explore the possibility of transforming parts of this "unproductive" (from an economic perspective) spending into a more "productive" one. Here I examine the issue from an economic standpoint and do not consider the anthropological standpoint, which may have different definitions of the productive/unproductive dilemma. This study is based on 1,500 household surveys and a series of focus group discussions in Uzbekistan that were conducted within the framework of GIZ project

"Impact of Remittances on Poverty in Central Asia" in 2013-2014. It is important to note that the surveys had been completed before the Russian economic crisis and, therefore, this study does not explicitly account for it. The paper starts with a general debate and analysis of literature on remittances and economic growth. It then introduces the country-specific background, research questions, and hypothesis. The empirical part of the study portrays key characteristics of Uzbek labor migrants, remittances, and spending patterns. The study ends with conclusions and policy recommendations.

## Remittances and Economic Growth

Due to the increasing volume of remittances sent in the world since the end of 1990s, the issue of labor migrants sending money back to their home countries has been studied with renewed interest. Remittances are an important and growing source of foreign funds for several developing countries. In 2010, officially recorded remittances to developing countries reached \$334 billion.<sup>2</sup> In 2009, in some developing countries economic remittances had "become as large as foreign direct investment" and represented a resource inflow that often exceeded a variety of other balance of payments flows.<sup>3</sup>

A wide range of empirical evidence shows positive impact of remittances on economic development. In particular, remittances provide financial resources for poor households, decrease poverty and increase welfare through indirect multiplier effects, and facilitate macroeconomic growth.<sup>4</sup> Remittances also

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2 "Global Migration and Remittances," World Bank, Washington D.C., 2012.

3 A. Barajas, R. Chami, C. Fullenkamp, M. Gapen, and P. Montiel, "Do Workers' Remittances Promote Economic Growth?," *IMF Working Papers*, Washington D.C., 2009.

4 See: H. Rapoport and F. Docquier, "The Economics of Migrants' Remittances," in S. C. Kolm and J. M. Ythier, eds., *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, vol. 2 (North-Holland: Amsterdam, 2006); "Republic of Uzbekistan. Public Expenditure Review," Report No. 31014-UZ. World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005; D. Ratha and S. Mohapatra, "Increasing the Macroeconomic Impact of Remittances on Development," Development Prospects Group, World Bank, Washington D.C., November 26, 2007.

complement national savings to form a larger pool of resources available for investments. Additionally, remittances have been associated with higher and more quality consumption, increased household investments in education, health, and entrepreneurship—all of which have a high social return in most circumstances. Findings by Vargas-Silva indicate that a 10 percent increase in remittances as a portion of GDP should lead to about a 0.9 to 1.2 percent increase in growth of output in an economy.

However, scholars argue that the outflow of migrants can create long-lasting negative effects in the country of origin, including continuing a culture of dependence on remittances by both the beneficiary families and the country itself. Remittances create a moral hazard or dependency syndrome that could impede economic growth as receiving countries reduce their participation in productive activities. The large-scale outflow of highly educated workers from developing to developed countries can also create brain drain, taking away some of the best and brightest workers from the countries of origin. Such a situation can undermine domestic service delivery and reduce the countries' capacity for long-term growth and human development. From a fiscal standpoint, the availability of foreign exchange incomes from remittances might postpone government induced reforms, while at the family level migration can create social disruptions.

Many researchers, however, argue that the way migrants and household recipients spend their money is what determines economic growth. In the 1970s until the late 1980s, the economic literature had not found a positive relationship between remittances and development, arguing that remittances were mainly used for subsistence consumption (food, clothing...), nonproductive investments, repayment of debts, and that these kinds of expenditures tend to have little positive impact on local economies' development. Rempel and Lobdell note that remittances are mainly devoted to daily consumption needs. Lipton<sup>5</sup> estimates that purchases of consumer goods related to daily needs absorb sometimes about 90 percent of remittances received. For Massey et al., 68 to 86 percent of the Mexican migrants' remittances are used for consumption. A number of studies in

Bangladesh also claim that migrants spend most of their remittances on consumption of goods and that such a pattern of expenditure is believed to have little positive effect on local economies. After surveying Egyptian migrant families, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) revealed that 79 percent of migrant-sending families do not invest for a variety of reasons. The largest proportion (28 percent) of answers indicated financial difficulties or economic constraints which households face. A further 20 percent of responses reflect the previously stated desire for safety, arguing that investment in Egypt is too risky, 11 percent related to having no access to cash or credit, 10 percent had no idea how or where to start the process, 7 percent said they were too busy with their daily duties and activities.

After investigating the available literature, Chami et al.<sup>6</sup> revealed three "stylized facts" pertaining to the end use of remittances. The first 'stylized fact' is that a significant proportion, and often the majority, of remittances are spent on consumption that is status-oriented. The second one refers to the remittance funds, although a smaller portion, which go into savings or investment. The third fact constitutes the end uses of remittances which go into housing and land purchase or even jewelry. As many researchers put it, such investments can be referred to as "unproductive" or "consumption-oriented" since they do not absorb much labor for employment.<sup>7</sup> Barai classified the use of remittances as productive and non-productive. Productive uses are those that have been used on assets that "increase productive capacity and bring income to the households." As non-productive uses the researcher defines the remittances that do not help accumulate capital or generate further income for households.

Nonetheless, recent studies conducted in most cases for Latin America and Asia found that migrants and households spend a share of remittances on investment goods (i.e. education, housing, and small business), and that these types of expenses may strengthen the human and physical capital of the recipient countries. Adams et al. found that households in Ghana treat remittances as any other source of income and there is no disproportionate tendency to spend them on consumption. Mesnard finds that

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5 M. Lipton, "Migration from Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The Impact on Rural Productivity and Income Distribution," *World Development* 8 (1980): 1–24.

6 R. Chami, C. Fullenkamp, and S. Jahjah, "Are Immigrant Remittance Flows a Source of Capital for Development?," *IMF Staff Papers* 51, no. 1. International Monetary Fund, Washington, D.C., 2005.

7 Ibid.

migration, through enrichment of some Tunisian workers abroad, allows for investment in more productive activities in their home country. Tests conducted by Leon-Ledesma and Piracha for 11 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Drinkwater et al. on 20 developing countries show that remittances contribute significantly to increasing the level of investment in migrants' home countries.

As the literature review shows, there is an abundance of remittance-relevant research taking place in developing and low-income countries. However, the locus mainly revolves around the following research areas:

- Causal effects of remittances on economic development and poverty reduction (and the opposite);
- Remittances general trends, inflows, channels, migrants characteristics, banking sector;
- Remittances and associated household consumption patterns/productive use;
- Remittances and their impact on savings, investments, and capital formation.

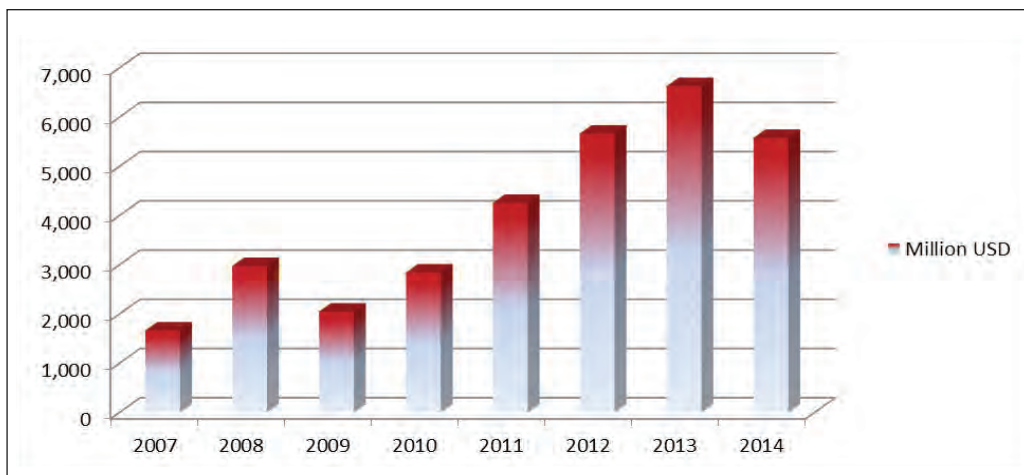
Although practically all remittance-receiving countries were extensively studied by scholars investigating how migrants and their respective families make use of remittances, the individual focus on the items in the consumption list was largely overlooked. In particular, the literature fails to concentrate on expenditures of remittance funds on traditional and

cultural ceremonies and status-oriented activities. Such kinds of expenditures do not create any jobs or generate income for households and therefore could be referred to as “unproductive” investment in economic terms. Nonetheless, excessive expenditure on, for instance, wedding ceremonies that are deemed “unproductive” in economic terms can be perceived “productive” from a socio-cultural perspective since families can, through them, cultivate their social networks.

### Hypothesis and Research Questions

As the largest labor migrant exporting country in Central Asia, Uzbekistan enjoys a significant inflow of remittances. Taking into account the informal nature of most of them, it is hard to quantify the exact amount of remittances, as well as the exact number of migrants. According to various estimates there are 3-5 million Uzbek migrants worldwide, mostly in Russia. According to the Central Bank of Russia, Uzbekistan is ranked first among all CIS and non-CIS countries in terms of the volume of received remittances from Russia. In 2014 the total amount of remittances constituted \$5.6 billion (Central Bank of Russia, 2015), The volume of remittances has been growing since 2009, reaching its peak in 2013 (\$6.6 billion), and slightly slowing down in 2014 due to the Russian rouble crisis. Currently, remittances make up 11.7 percent of Uzbek GDP (World Bank, 2014).

Figure 1. Remittances from Russia to Uzbekistan, 2007-2014



Source: Central Bank of Russia, [http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/crossborder/print.asp?file=Rem\\_countries\\_14\\_e.htm](http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/crossborder/print.asp?file=Rem_countries_14_e.htm)

This study aims at focusing on households with and without labor migrants in order to define the true scope of remittances and their impact on poverty in the country. While Uzbekistan is not represented in top ten remittance receiving countries in the world, the dependence on remittances, especially in rural areas, is rather high. It is therefore interesting to consider the impact of remittances on labor supply and income inequality which might translate into further changes within the economy and household structures. Last but not least, the remittance pattern may help elicit the consumption and investment behavior of households. For instance, remittances spent on consumption may represent the bulk of all received remittances, leaving little room for investment and savings. This, in turn, would depict the long-term prospects of poverty within the country. Thus, this research is guided by the following questions:

How do remittances shape the behavior of private households vis-à-vis households without labor migrants in Uzbekistan?

Apart from socio-cultural factors, what influences households' decision-making and make them

reluctant to search for “productive” investment opportunities for their remittances?

How can “unproductive” remittance spending be transformed into “productive” spending to facilitate economic growth in Uzbekistan?

The major hypothesis is that there are important cultural factors that should be identified and addressed in order to transform the pattern of unproductive to productive spending.

### **Migration, Remittances and Spending Rational**

The geography of migrants in Uzbekistan's regions is demonstrated in Table 1. The highest number of migrants can be observed in the Samarkand and Kashkadarya regions, the smallest number in the capital city, Tashkent, and in the main industrial city, Navoi, where the mineral extraction industry still guarantees tens of thousands of jobs. Most remittances are sent to the Syrdarya and Samarkand regions, while Tashkent and the autonomous province of Karakalpakstan have the smallest numbers.

*Table 1. Number of Migrants per Viloyat (Region), in Thousand People*

Region	Migrants	Percentage of Migrants % Total Population	Total Population	Urban Population
Samarkand	140	16,9	3365,3	1309,3
Kashkadarya	137	16,5	2813,8	1218
Khorezm	96	11,6	1645,3	547
Andijan	84	10,1	2744,8	1448,3
Ferghana	79	9,5	3316,8	1897,4
Surhandarya	73	8,8	2248,3	816,5
Bukhara	51	6,2	1723,5	650,7
Namangan	47	5,7	2448,8	1565,2
Karakalpakstan	40	4,8	1704,4	843
Jizzakh	29	3,5	1200,2	572,4
Tashkent region	17	2,1	2689,7	1325,9
Syrdarya	15	1,8	747,6	308
Tashkent city	11	1,3	2339,6	2339,6
Navoi	10	1,2	886,5	428,1
Total	829	100	29874,6	15269,4

Source: GIZ 2013 Survey

Table 2. Remittances per Household and Household Member

Province/Region	In Thousand Soums		In USD	
	Remittances per Hh	Remittances per Hh Member	Remittances per Hh	Remittances per Hh Member
Syrdariya	1676,771	162,0208	798,46	77,15
Samarkand	1616,367	190,2294	769,70	90,59
Ferghana	1563,831	262,7748	744,68	125,13
Khorezm	1295,047	200,6184	616,69	95,53
Surhandarya	1238,288	202,3423	589,66	96,35
Navoi	1041,818	124,0909	496,10	59,09
Andijan	929,015	136,647	442,39	65,07
Kashkadarya	855,6858	122,6245	407,47	58,39
Namangan	733,7933	121,7644	349,43	57,98
Tashkent city	695,145	99,306	331,02	47,29
Bukhara	638,263	105,849	303,93	50,40
Jizzakh	460,600	71,133	219,33	33,87
Karakalpakstan	207,449	36,487	98,79	17,37
Tashkent region	76,56566	14,34343	36,46	6,83

Source: GIZ 2013 Survey

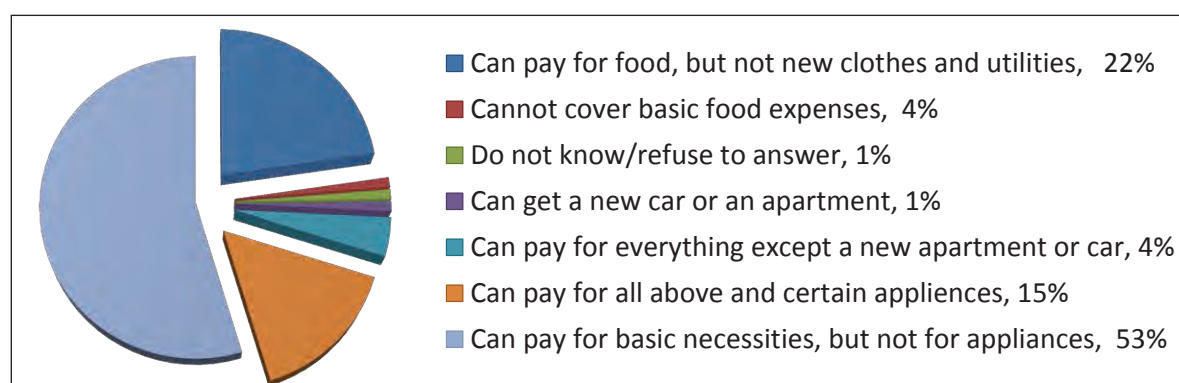
According to the survey, about 4 percent of households cannot cover basic food expenses, while 22 percent cannot afford new clothing and utilities. The largest chunk represents those households that can cover basic necessities but not appliances—about 53 percent. Only 1 percent of households can be defined as ‘rich’ in the sense they can afford a new house and automobile.

In Uzbekistan the percent of the population living below the poverty line is still significant: About

16 percent, 75 percent of whom live in rural areas.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the productive and rational spending of received remittances is crucial both for the economic development at macro and household welfare at micro levels. However, as we can see in Figure 3, after food and housing the main spending category pertains to traditional rites, even before clothing, education, and health.

Traditional ceremonies include—but are not limited to—weddings. Knowing the average cost of a

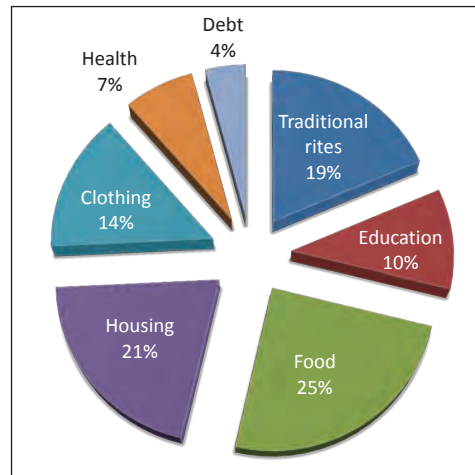
Figure 2. Subjective Assessment of Current Financial Situation of Households



Source: GIZ 2013 Survey

<sup>8</sup> “Uzbekistan,” United Nations Development Program, 2014, <http://www.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/countryinfo.html>.

Figure 3. Expense Items of Migrants as a Percent of Their Total Earnings



Source: GIZ 2013 Survey

wedding in Uzbekistan (about \$10,000) and applying simple math, we can conclude that an average labor migrant should work six years to pay for a wedding of a member of his household. Two family members working abroad can arrange to fund a wedding in three years. However, as experience shows, households at the threshold of a wedding change their spending patterns (spending less on housing, clothing, and even food) and borrow the missing amount from their extended families, neighbors, and friends. Weddings are thus very costly acts for a household, accelerate the debt process, and seem unproductive from the perspective of a market economy. The following table intends to describe the above-mentioned claim in a comparative perspective.

Compared to other Asian countries, Uzbekistan is doing relatively well. The average wedding costs in Uzbekistan are higher than in Tajikistan and lower than in Kyrgyzstan—two other remittance-dependent countries in Central Asia. However, the time required to save up money for a wedding ceremony is lower in Uzbekistan than in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The difference is not as striking as compared to other remittance-dependent countries in Asia such as Bangladesh and Nepal: it takes 14.2 and 23 years to save up money for a wedding ceremony in Bangladesh and Nepal, respectively, and only 2.26 years in Uzbekistan.

However, the spending magnitude on traditional ceremonies in the developing countries is more vivid if compared to that of the developed world. While their average salaries are times higher than salaries in the developing world, the British on average spend

around GBP 21,000 (or \$33 800) (Guardian, 2010), and their American counterparts spend around \$27,000 (Reuters, 2012). According to Mir24 (2012), around \$1 billion is spend in Kyrgyzstan on weddings and traditional ceremonies yearly (the same figure for the United States would equal \$72 billion).

## Conclusions

High expenses for weddings and other traditional ceremonies in the developing world should raise concerns over the roots and causes of such behavior not only for the migrant families but also their societies and respective governments. First of all, this issue is crucial to understand since there is much at stake for a labor migrant including social and economic costs; secondly, from the market economy point of view the research world refers to this kind of “lavish” spending as “unproductive investment” due to its inability to generate profit, increase welfare, or create additional jobs; thirdly, unproductive use of remittances can hardly impact economic growth. Addressing research questions, this study has not found any correlation between spending patterns on cultural ceremonies, such as weddings, in households with labor migrants (remittances) a vis-à-vis households without labor migrants. In other words, households without labor migrants spend almost the same amount on weddings as households with labor migrants. This could explain the rationale behind the desire to become a labor migrant for those households that cannot otherwise afford lavish weddings.



Table 3. Comparison of Costs on Wedding Ceremonies in the Developed and Developing World

Country	GDP per Capita in USD (IMF)	Pop. Living Below Poverty Line Percent (WB, 2012)	Average Income Of Labor Migrant (USD) per Year*	Average Income of Native Population (USD) per Year**	Average Wedding Costs (USD)	Average Time Required to Save up (Costs/Income)
Bangladesh	700	31.5	3,120-3,600 <sup>9</sup>	1000 <sup>10</sup>	14,290 <sup>11</sup>	14.2 years
Nepal	623	25.2	3,000-3,360 <sup>12</sup>	930	21,500 <sup>13</sup>	23.0 years
Kyrgyzstan	1,070	33.7	5,600-7,560 <sup>14</sup>	2,088 <sup>15</sup>	12,250 <sup>16 17</sup>	5.8 years
Tajikistan	831	46.7	5,600-7,560 <sup>18</sup>	1,236 <sup>19</sup>	5,000 <sup>20</sup>	4.04 years
Uzbekistan	3500	17	5,600-7,560	4,418	10,000	2.26 years
UK	38,591	—	—	33,500 <sup>21</sup>	33,800 <sup>22</sup>	1 year
USA	48,386	—	—	42,000 <sup>23</sup>	27,000 <sup>24</sup>	0.4 year

Source: Author's own compilation

Certainly, so-called unproductive (from the economic perspective) investment behavior of households does not occur in a vacuum, but is influenced rather by cultural and social factors. In particular, families feel pressured by the communities they belong to, and quite often have to stick to their traditions and celebrate expensive weddings to demonstrate their belongingness. However, “unproductive” spending is also shaped by:

- *Unfavorable financial infrastructure.* Households are reluctant to make bank deposits as there is a lack of trust in financial institutions. Uzbek banks do not produce any financial packages for labor migrants, especially in rural areas.
- *Lack of knowledge/awareness.* Households are ill-informed of existing investment op-

portunities. They also do not have a tradition of planning their expenses and are driven by short-term rationale.

- *Lack of experience/credibility regarding the environment in which to set up a business.* Without having any prior experience in business and aware of the problems businessmen face, households give a second thought before getting involved in business activities.
- *Weak law enforcement and public institutions.* As many businessmen praise legislation, to the same extent they complain about law enforcement. Selective law enforcement and different interpretations of the tax code by tax inspectors also prevent households from setting up businesses.
- *Lack of government interventions/control to mitigate or discontinue “unproductive” invest-*

9 “Bangladesh Household Remittance Survey, 2009,” International Organization for Migration, 2009.

10 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010.

11 Global Voices, 2012, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2008/07/14/bangladesh-an-expensive-wedding/>.

12 Himalayan Times, 2011, <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Nepali+migrants+earn+over+Rs+400+billion&News-ID=293800>.

13 <http://sajha.com/sajha/html/index.cfm?StartRow=21&PageNum=2&forum=1&threadid=88611>.

14 [www.migrant.ru](http://www.migrant.ru).

15 <http://eng.24.kg/business/2011/08/10/19663.html>.

16 Mir24, 2012; <http://mir24.tv/news/society/4840764>.

17 Polit, 2012; <http://www.polit.kg/newskg/246>.

18 [www.migrant.ru](http://www.migrant.ru).

19 <http://news.tj/en/news/average-monthly-wage-tajikistan-stands-nearly-us103>.

20 <http://www.bashkoda.com/articles/traditsii/psn/>.

21 OECD, 2012; <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/50/43948033.pdf>.

22 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2010/aug/08/wedding-day-costs-savings>.

23 OECD, 2012; <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/50/43948033.pdf>.

24 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/23/us-wedding-costs-idUSBRE82M11O20120323>.

*ment practices.* The Uzbek government tries to influence the spending pattern on traditional ceremonies, such as weddings, by limiting the number of people (250 per wedding) attending the ceremony. However, the initiative is often stuck to weak law enforcement. Moreover, the government tries to fight consequences rather than causes of the issue.

- *Sense of fatalism or satisfaction with the status quo.* Many Uzbek people believe that they cannot change the existing pattern, transform their routine and, therefore, continue following the footsteps of what is said to be ‘the national customs’.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the obtained findings the policy recommendations should be distinguished into short-term and long-term solutions. The short-term solutions are those solutions that could be arranged rather quickly without requiring capital-intensive projects. The long-term solutions require a more systematic way and more attention from the government.

Short-term recommendations are as follows:

- *Banks in Uzbekistan have to create special financial packages in rural areas,* where most labor migrants originate from. These packages should be widely available, easy to understand and the deposits should be guaranteed by the government, which has to be unequivocally communicated to people.
- *The Chamber of Commerce and Industry has to play a more active role in rural areas* by providing business related information on opportunities, trainings, etc. The Chamber will also have to clarify to the people how to receive a loan, write a basic business plan, and other basics of business conduct.

- *The Uzbek television has to produce and broadcast programs that will focus on rationalizing spending patterns and creating business opportunities* within their communities. It also has to depict success stories of entrepreneurs who created employment opportunities within their communities.

The long-term recommendations should embrace the following initiatives:

- *Introduction of basic financial education at schools.* Basic financial education will include budgeting, planning, and monitoring of expenses. In this regard, a curriculum should be developed which will match the grade of the student.
- *Strengthening law-enforcement mechanisms.* If there is legislation stipulating the number of attending guests at a wedding, this has to be strictly observed without exceptions by organizations arranging weddings at their premises. Otherwise, they have to be subject to fees and penalties. These penalties should be adequate enough to prevent a payment of the fee by the wealthier members of communities.
- *Identification of one or two regions for a pilot initiative* (for instance Kashkadarya and Navoi regions) on expanding business opportunities and decreasing wedding costs. Successful results should be extensively broadcast on major Uzbek channels to provoke a spillover effect. Certainly, using the role-model image of one region in Uzbekistan is not an easy task and may not yield anticipated results at the expected pace. However, it may trigger other regions to learn from success cases and adopt a similar pattern of behavior within their own communities.



# PART III. THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ORDER UNDER ISLAM KARIMOV

## Explaining Political Order in Uzbekistan

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Lawrence P. Markowitz<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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Uzbekistan is regularly listed among the world's weak states. And, like many in this category, it is often described as sitting on the threshold of state failure. Yet, Uzbekistan not only continues to defy these predictions of imminent collapse, but it has constructed one of the largest state security apparatuses in post-Soviet Eurasia.<sup>2</sup> How has it done this?

I contend that Uzbekistan's state infrastructure is underpinned by a complex intersection of corruption and coercion. Drawing on extensive fieldwork in Uzbekistan and my earlier study of state politics in Central Asia,<sup>3</sup> I advance an explanation focused on unlootable resources, rent seeking, and unruly elites. During the 1990s, Uzbekistan's state security apparatus centralized its personnel system, modernized its facilities, and extended its reach into communities through village and neighborhood organizations. Uzbekistan's law enforcement and security offices enforce highly extractive demands upon local citizens, impose unrivaled coercive controls across the country, and remain the primary institutions for adjudicating disputes in society. Its security and law enforcement agencies, moreover, have been entrusted with broad responsibilities in maintaining social order and promoting economic development. But critical to this "success" in empowering Uzbekistan's state security apparatus has been a strategy of linking coercion to rent-seeking activities, which has undermined the rule of law, hindered economic growth, and fostered popular discontent. Uzbekistan has

certainly preserved its monopoly on violence (i.e., avoided intra-state conflict), but over time it has led to the long-term erosion of its state institutions. As the experience of Uzbekistan suggests, state security cohesion built on the shaky foundations of rent-seeking elites can avert state failure in the short term, but it may be unsustainable in the long run.

This paper explains the cohesion of security institutions as a consequence of resource rents that critically influences how local elites leverage local offices of state security. It examines economies with low capital mobility—where resources cannot be extracted, concealed, or transported to market without state patronage and involvement. In countries defined by immobile capital (such as cotton, coffee, or cocoa producers), local elites commanding farms and factories face a fundamental problem: how to convert their hands-on control over resources into rents. In order to generate a worthwhile profit, bales of cotton or loads of grain are simply too large and too heavy to extract, transport, and sell outside state surveillance. Local elites, working under constraints that prevent them from independently exploiting the resources under them, are therefore forced to seek out political patrons.

This embeds rent-seeking within state politics, raising age-old questions of corruption, favoritism, and political protection.<sup>4</sup> To explain how cash crop rents paradoxically reinforce state cohesion, I explore the consequences of rent-seeking opportunities available to local elites. I argue that open rent-seeking opportunities—which promote the cooptation of local elites to the regime—lead elites to differentially mobilize security institutions in their locality.

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1 Assistant Professor at Rowan University, has his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He recently published *State Erosion: Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

2 By 2003, the number of police per population in Uzbekistan exceeded that of all other Central Asian republics, Russia, as well as states such as Sri Lanka and Jordan. Author's interview with TACIS Team Leader, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, April 2003; See also A. Cooley, *Logics of Hierarchy: The Organization of Empires, States, and Military Occupations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

3 Much of this paper contains condensed sections of my book, *State Erosion: Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

4 Rent-seeking is defined here as any attempt to maximize income from a resource in excess of the market value. R. D. Tollison, "Rent seeking: A survey," *Kyklos* 25 (1982), 30.

In localities with densely concentrated resources and easy access to patrons, available rent-seeking opportunities promote the cooptation of local elites to the regime, encouraging them to use local law enforcement and security bodies as tools of extraction to exploit those lucrative rent-seeking avenues. This leads to cohesive state security institutions, since local elites and security officials collude to exploit resources in the locality. When promoted across localities, as in Uzbekistan, these activities produce the macro-political outcome of a coercive rent-seeking state, whose security institutions continue to apply coercion to extract resources as long as it receives a steady inflow of rents. But how did this work in Uzbekistan?

### The Emergence of Coercive Rent-Seeking

By the mid-1990s, the repercussions of Uzbekistan's weakened state infrastructure began to be felt at the national level, and the central leadership increasingly took steps to prevent its further loss of control over the regions. In 1994, President Karimov summoned all district, city, and provincial governors to Tashkent to foster greater allegiance and provide them with a sense that they too had a stake in Uzbekistan's political and economic development.<sup>5</sup> By 1995, Karimov was organizing commissions and dispatching his closest advisors to conduct inquiries into the disappointing economic performance of collective farms. The reports from these inquiries would provide support for his dismissal of several provincial governors in the second half of the 1990s. In 1997, the central leadership initiated a concerted effort to strengthen state capabilities at local and regional levels. An array of measures were applied—including economic, political, and coercive controls—in Uzbekistan's first experiment in post-independence state building. At the core of this effort was a broader mandate granted to law enforcement organs that focused their surveillance and control functions on the very agents that had acquired influence over them—local elites and their patronage ties to regional politicians. Though comprehensive in scope, this experiment has failed to achieve its goal of constructing a more effective state infrastructure.

Instead, these state building initiatives unintentionally reinforced the pursuit of rents by territorial elites in three ways. First, economic and fiscal reforms centralized control over economic activity in many areas, reducing the amount of rents available to elites outside the purview of provincial governors. Second, a policy of appointing more provincial governors from the center or other regions to direct anti-corruption “cleanup” campaigns reinforced efforts by local and regional elites to resist an intrusive central government and reassert their influence over local rent-seeking activities in the wake of these campaigns. Third, institutional reforms developing more robust coercive powers of the state inadvertently put a stronger coercive apparatus in the hands of regional politicians—providing territorial elites with a new instrument of resource extraction and rent-seeking. Together, these reform initiatives interlocked the coercive power of the state with processes of rent-seeking, institutionalizing them within the state apparatus. I address each in turn.

After several years of loosened economic controls as a strategy of opening rent-seeking opportunities to local elites, the central leadership instituted economic policy changes in the late 1990s that included retrenching economic reforms, closing off the country's borders, and tightening state controls in the economy. By 1997, import controls were applied through the newly-created Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations (established in 1994), countering earlier concessions that granted *de facto* control over cross-border trade to provincial governments. At the same time, bank offices in Tashkent took over regional branches' roles in the state's new credit scheme as a means of regulating the distribution of credit to local agricultural enterprises,<sup>6</sup> and credit to small and medium-sized enterprises through Uzbekistan's *Biznes-Fond*—averaging 130 projects per region and totaling an annual of 4.68 billion so'm (\$5 million) by 2003—was also centralized through central offices.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the center's control over state monopolized cotton and grain exports was enforced more systematically.

The center also reduced regions' autonomous fiscal bases. In 1997, Tashkent cut subsidies to regional budgets to half of what they were in 1996, though

<sup>5</sup> “Otvetsvennost' rukovoditelya,” *Kashkadarinskaya pravda*, March 31, 1994, 1.

<sup>6</sup> A. Andersen, “Specialized joint stock commercial bank ‘Pakhta bank,’” *Financial Sector Development Agency Long Form Audit Report*, December 31, 1999; Interview, Deputy District Governor, Tashkent City, August, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Data obtained from *Biznes-Fond*.

losses varied across regions. A number of regions lost subsidies altogether in 1997 and only regained them incrementally in subsequent years. Calculated as a percentage of each region's expenditure, the mean went from 26.6 percent in 1996 to 13 percent in 1997 and 1998. This abrupt drop in subsidies from the center was an attempt to weaken regional patronage bases by starving regions of funds. It had the effect of making rents scarce, giving territorial elites an incentive to seek out alternative strategies of rent-seeking. District and regional governor office staff later confirmed that the loss of fiscal support from the center reflected broader trends in resource distribution and many viewed the late 1990s as a period of difficulty.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the 1990s, access to easy rents under provincial administrators was far more limited, cutting into local elites' ability to convert their resources into rents. While useful in reining in local elites, these policies essentially concentrated rent-seeking under provincial governors. Tightened economic controls in the name of reform effectively ensured that provincial governors would be the gatekeepers of rent-seeking opportunities for the local elite.

The second change was a more aggressive approach to the selection of regional governors. In response to continued losses of state resources in procurement, financing, and export, President Karimov directed First Deputy Prime Minister and head of the country's Agro-Industrial Complex, Ismail Jorabekov, to create and chair a commission to investigate the shortcomings in agricultural production in the regions.<sup>9</sup> The commission's findings led to two waves of dismissals of provincial governors between late 1995 and 2003 for mismanagement and corruption.<sup>10</sup> While poor weather conditions contributed to low crop yields, the dismissals constituted the center's first attempts to assert authority in the regions. From the perspective of local elites, however, these appointees' anticorruption programs were a familiar challenge by the center to be resisted and waited out. A well-worn method of political control during the Soviet period, cadre reforms in post-independence

Uzbekistan did not last and merely left behind displaced elites who redoubled their efforts to recover lost positions of influence—setting in motion a scramble for rents after the center's appointees were removed.

In the wake of these appointees, a scramble for political influence and rents ensued, either to recover lost rents under the previous provincial administration or to protect against future shakeups by building a support base. After anticorruption campaigns in Samarkand Province and Ferghana Province, for instance, each region's communal services debts to the center tripled, from 2 to 6.5 billion so'm in the former and 2.5 to 7.1 billion so'm in the latter.<sup>11</sup> As part of its broader state building initiative, the central leadership employed fiscal and cadre controls to reassert state power in the regions. However, these measures were by no means sufficient on their own to strengthen the state's infrastructure and enhance its capacity to enforce rules at regional and local levels. To supplement them, the center naturally turned to one of its most prominent resources of political control—the successor agencies of the Soviet-era coercive apparatus.

Despite its mixed record of institutional performance during the Soviet period, the government of Uzbekistan viewed its prosecutorial and police apparatus to be a potential instrument of state building.<sup>12</sup> Over the 1990s, these offices were refashioned to serve as an internal check on concentrations of power within the executive branch, particularly against provincial and district *hokims*. In what follows, I focus on the role of *prokurators* as an example of broader trends occurring across Uzbekistan's coercive apparatus.

Reforms began in the late 1990s, when orders were issued within the *Prokuratura* and resolutions were passed by Parliament attempting to strengthen the institution internally. In May 1997 and November 1998, the Procurator General issued orders specifying the role of the Department of General Control in the defending of property rights and strengthening

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8 Interviews, Samarkand and Ferghana Provinces, April-July 2003.

9 "Uzbekistan," *Central Asia Monitor* 2 (1996): 11-12. For more on Jorabekov, including his position as the "Gray Cardinal" within the republican political elite, see K. Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Change in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

10 Those dismissed in the first wave included Polat Abdurahmonov (Samarkand Province); Temur Hidirov (Kashkadarya Province); Abduhalik Aydayqulov (Navoiy Province); Marks Jumaniyozov (Khorezm); Burgutali Rapighaliev (Namangan) - elites who had ushered Uzbekistan through the turbulent Soviet collapse and first years of independence. See "Uzbekistan," *Central Asia Monitor*, vol. 2 (1996): 11; Author's database.

11 S. Husainov, "Muammo yechimidan darakyoq," *Zarafshon*, December 10, 2002, 2; "Iqtisodiy islohotlarini chukurlashtirish bugunning bosh vazifasi," *Zarafshon*, May 9, 2001, 2; "Chorak yakunlari qanday bo'ladi?," *Ferghana haqiqati*, May 17, 2003, 3.

12 For a discussion of issues on reforming the procuracy in the post-communist context, see S. Holmes, "The Procuracy and Its Problems," *East European Constitutional Review* 8, nos. 1-2 (Winter/Spring 1999).

the controls that provincial prokurators could exercise over their subordinates at the district level. In October 1998 and June 2001, Parliament established the Department of Tax and Customs Crimes and the Department on Economic Crimes and Corruption within the Prokuratura.<sup>13</sup> Similar changes were encoded in a 2001 revision to the law “On the Prokuratura,” which also emphasized new functions of prokurator surveillance in protecting the rights of small and medium entrepreneurs, independent farmers, and private businesses.<sup>14</sup> Invested with state authority and given an expanded scope of responsibilities, the Prokuratura has become, in informal terms, one of the most powerful offices within Uzbekistan’s state apparatus.

Yet, rather than promote effective and transparent bureaucratic practice within local infrastructures, reforms to the Prokuratura have deepened forms of predation and corruption at the local level— often in ways that run counter to the central government’s interests.<sup>15</sup> As one journalist wrote in 2002, prokurators’ considerable influence over various stages of the judicial process had provided them with “extremely wide functions of a repressive nature,” including the “the right to supervise the implementation of laws, to launch criminal proceedings, to conduct investigations, issue an arrest warrant, arrange prosecution on behalf of the state at trials, and has the right to protest if the prokurator finds the verdict unsubstantiated or too lenient...”<sup>16</sup> With their expanded powers and a broad mandate to monitor local economies, coercive institutions quickly became instruments of extraction and rent-seeking used by provincial administrators so that local law enforcement bodies were

often serving the very offices they were supposed to monitor. This infused a high degree of coercion into local rent-seeking operations.

### The Consequences of Coercive Rent-Seeking

Over time the center became increasingly dependent upon the state’s coercive apparatus— ultimately fusing coercion and rent-seeking by empowering state security organs that were already enmeshed in rent-seeking relationships with local and regional elites. One political commentator went so far as to state that “Uzbekistan’s political system is best described as feudal ... The center only rarely, very rarely, countermands regional elites.”<sup>17</sup> Within the central leadership itself, there are indications of a concern about the “growing power of governors” and frustration over the failures of the center to undermine that power.<sup>18</sup> In the personal opinion of a senior staff member within the president’s apparatus, district and regional governors constituted the foremost problem for the central leadership in the country.<sup>19</sup> It was the rural poor in particular who bore the brunt of coercive rent-seeking; especially populations of women and children who are transformed into mobilized labor forces during the late summer and fall when the crops are harvested.<sup>20</sup>

While coercion and rent-seeking had come to predominate within the state apparatus, it varied in important ways across provinces. Thus, while Uzbekistan’s agricultural sector remains part of a largely untransformed command economy in which cotton and grain are part of a state monopoly, meth-

13 Local *prokurator’s* manuscript on the history of the *Prokuratura* in Uzbekistan (author’s name withheld); E. S. Ibragimov, *Prokuratura suverenogo Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Akademiya Ministerstva vnutrennikh del Respubliki Uzbekistan, 2000), 70.

14 *Pravo* database.

15 For example, prokurators’ protests in defense of small entrepreneurs and private farmers rose only slightly after the introduction of the 2001 law “On the prokurator”—from 193 protests (1.8 percent of total protests) in 2000 to 256 protests (2.4 percent) in 2001 to 593 protests (5 percent) in 2002. Office of the Prokurator General of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “Mahlumotnoma. O‘zbekiston Respublikasi prokuratura organlari tomonidan tadbirdorlar huquqlarini himoya qilish borasida kiritilgan protestlar tahlili yuzasidan,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Diplomatic Note, No. 20/13024 to U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan, August 30, 2003 (facsimile).

16 S. Yezhkov, “Faktor ustrasheniya,” *Pravda Vostoka*, October 2, 2002, 2. Before 2008, police could detain individuals up to three days without reason, up to six days if declared a “suspect,” and it was only through an order from a prokurator that an arrest warrant can be issued (American Bar Association and Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative 2003:14). Consequently, prokurators are in a position to use an arrest warrant as an instrument of extortion once someone has been detained. Interview, Journalist, Tashkent, March 2003. Although Uzbekistan adopted *habeas corpus* in 2008, it is rarely properly implemented. “No One Left to Witness: Torture, the Failure of Habeas Corpus, and the Silencing of Lawyers in Uzbekistan,” Human Rights Watch, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uzbekistan1211-webwcover.pdf>.

17 Interview, Sergei Yezhkov, Tashkent, March 2003.

18 Interview, Head, Political and Economic Section, U.S. Embassy, Tashkent, August 2003.

19 Interview, Department Head, Apparatus of the President, Tashkent city, May 2003.

20 For an overview of the social impacts of Uzbekistan’s (and Tajikistan’s) labor-repressive system, see *What has changed? Progress in eliminating the use of forced child labour in the cotton harvests of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan* (London: The School of Oriental and African Studies, 2010); D. Kandiyoti, “Rural livelihoods and social networks in Uzbekistan: Perspectives from Andijan,” *Central Asian Survey* 17, no. 4 (1998), 561-78.

ods employed in rent-seeking at the regional and local levels differ in important and substantive ways. In Uzbekistan, prokurators in some localities engage in rent-seeking, in which only a portion of income is extracted from the population so that residents retain sufficient financial resources to reinvest in the local economy and generate more revenue that will be taxable in the future. In other localities, rent-seeking resembles a model, in which the population is taxed to the fullest extent possible, leaving little capital and little incentive for residents to produce or accumulate anything of value.

Moreover, the long-term consequences of coercive rent-seeking carry potential pitfalls. For example, coercive rent-seeking played a central role in the 2005 Andijon Uprising. Rent-seeking was prevalent in Andijon Province, where the regional leadership under Governor Kobiljon Obidov remained unchanged for 11 years—the longest tenure of any governor in Uzbekistan at the time of his dismissal in 2004. Obidov's longevity in office allowed him to construct a long-term, sustainable system of coercion, extraction, and rent-seeking that was unrivaled in any region. As a result, Obidov and his supporters were able to operate without much interference from the center for over a decade. Having allowed Obidov to stay in office—largely because he maintained social order and generated consistently high cotton yields—the center had enabled his patronage base to become too extensive.

While the regime dismissed Obidov without incident, it faced a series of small but well-organized protests when it attempted to remove the region's well-entrenched elites. Protests that followed the arrest and trial of some of the elite's most prominent members suddenly opened the way for mass demonstrations that harnessed the discontent among the population. Because coercive rent-seeking created cohorts of powerful and predatory regional elites in Andijon, it created conditions for local elites to drift outside the center's control while simultaneously fostering economic inequalities and social injustices that provided fuel for mass protest. As long as these conditions are perpetuated in other regions of Uzbekistan, this mix of coercion and rent-seeking

will continue to generate challenges to the regime in the future.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has investigated how Uzbekistan's state building initiatives in the 1990s have led to interlocking coercion and rent-seeking within its territorial apparatus. Across the country, rent-seeking opportunities were opened to local and provincial elites. While these avenues enabled local elites to convert their resources into rents, it also made them dependent on the regime, opening them to cooptation and enabling Uzbekistan to avoid the processes of fragmentation within its local security services (such as those that were at the center of Tajikistan's state failure). Alongside the expansion of its rent-seeking opportunities to local elites, however, the regime developed its coercive capacity, investing heavily in its law enforcement and security services and granting them broad responsibilities over administrative, political, and economic affairs.

While promising in the short term, these initiatives had long-term detrimental consequences: they enabled provincial patrons and local elites to draw state security bodies into resource extraction and rent-seeking activities. This has produced a highly coercive state apparatus, but one that is held together at the local level by mutually beneficial resource exploitation and rent-seeking. The cohesion present in Uzbekistan's state apparatus is in fact rooted in the provision of rent-seeking opportunities to local elites. So far, this has made the regime highly resilient against mass protests and international pressure to initiate political and economic reform. The weak spot within this formula for stability, however, is the government's deep dependence on using rents to rein in local elites. Uzbekistan's revenue resides mainly in cotton, gas, oil, and some mineral wealth. Should these commodity markets cease to provide revenue, the government will find itself confronting the consequences of a collapsed system of coercive rent-seeking: eroded state institutions, unruly elites, and a disaffected public.



# Uzbekistan at a Crossroads: Main Developments, Business Climate, and Political Risks

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## Overview of Main Political and Economic Developments

On September 1, 2013, President Islam Karimov presided over lavish festivities celebrating the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence. The celebrations, featuring a pompous speech by Karimov and ostentatious performances by Uzbek singers and dancers, were used by Uzbek authorities to showcase the political stability and economic progress that Uzbekistan has achieved since 1991.

Uzbek officials' triumphant mood in September stemmed from several factors. Firstly, unlike its neighbors such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Russia, Uzbekistan emerged from the onslaught of the 2008-9 global financial crisis unscathed, largely because of the country's relative isolation from global financial institutions. Secondly, the domestic political situation appeared stable after the 2008 constitutional changes enabled the incumbent president to run for presidency indefinitely. Thirdly, Gulnara Karimova, president Karimov's mistrusted eldest daughter—whose growing political and business interests clashed with business interests of rival clans and threatened political stability—had been sent away in 2010 and then politically sidelined in 2013. Finally, Uzbekistan's international reputation, which was significantly damaged because of the May 2005 Andijon events, improved after a number of Western states and international organizations lauded Tashkent for hosting Kyrgyz refugees on Uzbek territory during the June 2010 interethnic unrest in neighboring Kyrgyzstan, and because of Uzbekistan's key role in the Northern Distribution Network.

Despite the festivities, however, not everything in Uzbekistan was progressing smoothly—economically or politically. The Uzbek government's Soviet era-like control over the country's natural resources and currency reserves, along with its surveillance of the

activities of local and foreign investors, slowed down the privatization process, damaged the country's business climate, and drove away existing and potential investors. And despite the existence of numerous policies and decrees against corruption, Uzbekistan was ranked 168 out of 177 countries in Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Uzbek officials claimed that the global financial crisis (GFC) did not affect Uzbekistan. Prospects for economic growth, however, appear bleaker as the country faces the indirect negative consequences of the GFC. For examples, a reduction in the demand for Uzbek labor migrants in Kazakhstan and Russia has resulted in a decrease in remittances. Karimov's administration adopted an anti-crisis program that sought to increase expenditure on infrastructure modernization and investment in small and medium-sized businesses; beef up the export-oriented sectors of the economy by offering reduced-interest government loans; reform banks and restructure their debts; and increase government spending on social welfare projects. Many Uzbek financial analysts, however, have questioned the effectiveness of the government's anti-crisis measures. Such observers claim that corruption and favoritism hampered the anti-crisis measures, including the process of distributing government funds to key economic industries.

In the realm of politics, Karimov's decision to dispatch his daughter to Geneva, and then to Spain as Uzbekistan Ambassador, may have been motivated by his desire to stabilize the political situation and to protect her from covert attacks by rival clans. But rather than bring an end to elite infighting, however, her departure broke a tenuous balance in relations between elite groups. In the aftermath of her political exit, Uzbek prosecutors launched numerous investigations into the firm Zeromax she was supposedly controlling and other holdings associated with her. These actions destroyed Zeromax and spurred various influential political patronage networks to clash over what was left of Karimova's assets. Moreover, the dismantling of Zeromax and other fuel-supplying

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<sup>1</sup> Independent Scholar.

conglomerates associated with her plunged the country into a deepening fuel shortage, thus contributing to growing public frustration at the regime's economic policies. In what seems to be an act of retaliation, Karimova returned to Uzbekistan in July 2013 and, relying on social media networks, launched a media campaign designed to undermine her political and business rivals. Gulnara's revelations about insider squabbles and corrupt practices have proved to be politically damaging for the political elites in Tashkent.

Uzbekistan now finds itself at a crossroads. The financial crisis and political challenges have offered President Karimov and various elite groups a unique chance to drastically overhaul the country's political and economic systems, transforming the informal patronage politics into a formal and more transparent decision-making process. Karimov's call in November 2010 for expanding the powers of political parties and the parliament vis-à-vis the president, had raised hopes of a more democratic government. A sizable number of Uzbeks, however, remain skeptical of Karimov's call because similar political promises were made in the past - but with no visible effect. The president's unwillingness to move from words to actions in the pursuit of political reforms indicates that the decision-making processes will remain far from transparent.

### **Key Political and Economic Actors in Uzbekistan**

A salient feature of Uzbek politics is the country's woefully weak formal state agencies and disproportionately influential informal institutions. Historically, regional and tribal affiliations played a prominent political and economic role. Uzbek identity in public and private life is traditionally determined by an individual's belonging to five distinct geographic areas that make up separate provinces: Tashkent, Samarkand, Fergana, Surkhandarya-Syrdarya, and Khorezm. During the almost seventy-year Soviet period, members of the so-called Samarkand and Tashkent clans established dominant key economic and political positions, leaving other groups with dwindling opportunities. These clans, as some Uzbek commentators claim, have preserved their control of the government and the economy after Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991.

Patronage politics is in constant flux. The current elite hierarchy consists of two tiers. The top tier

is composed of three influential groups, whose leaders are members of President Karimov's inner circle: Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoev; National Security Service (SNB) chief and former specialist KGB officer Rustam Inoyatov; First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov, and Elyor Ganiev, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade. Because power and wealth are intricately linked, these officials have developed reputations as the country's major oligarchs. The lower-tier is made up of oblast governors, wealthy industrialists, land-owners and informal powerbrokers. Leaders of these lower-tier groups are subordinate to those in groups linked to the major oligarchs.

Some analysts believe that patronage groups are primarily based on regional affiliation, as was the case during the Soviet period. Mirziyoev is said to represent the powerful Samarkand clan, Azimov and Ganiev the Tashkent clan, and Inoyatov the Surkhandarya clan. But the reality is far more complex and fluid. Regional affiliations do play a role in Uzbek politics; however, due to numerous purging campaigns, patronage groups are now built on several factors, including individual loyalty to officials, common pragmatic interests, regional ties, family ties, and professional ties.

In a clear sign of pragmatism, Uzbek officials maintain their membership with multiple patronage networks to hedge their bets and defend their economic and political resources.

The political power and influence wielded by Uzbek's oligarchs varies depending on the issue. Mirziyoev is chiefly responsible for agriculture and regional development (enabling him to keep a close eye on *oblast* governors). Azimov reportedly controls the industrial sector, and in particular, the lucrative Navoi Mining and Metallurgical Combinat (NMMC), a multi-industry enterprise employing over 67,000 people and producing various products, from gold to uranium. Meanwhile, Ganiev controls all foreign trade and investment relations. Inoyatov is in charge of state security and of digging up the dirt on various officials, as well as his own rivals. He also controls borders through the Border Protection Service attached to the SNB, and tax collection. Bakhodir Parpiev, the chief of the State Committee on Taxes, is reportedly Inoyatov's relative.

The oligarchs' influence is also linked to what is currently President Karimov's pet project. In recent years, Karimov has been focusing his attention on urban renewal, and has presided over massive

construction projects designed to change the outlook of Tashkent, Andijon, Samarkand, and Fergana. This means that elites with a background in urban planning and finance have had more access to Karimov than other officials.

Nevertheless, given the rank and profile of their government positions, Mirziyoev and Inoyatov carry greater weight than Azimov and Ganiev. Both are viewed by Uzbek officials as Karimov's potential political heirs, but Mirziyoev is believed to have several advantages in the leadership contest. Some Uzbek insiders suggest that Mirziyoev is Karimov's clone in many respects: his views on the economy, his reliance on ruthless methods of control, and his personal tastes are very similar to Karimov's. Insiders say that Mirziyoev is keenly aware of what Karimov likes and dislikes, and he makes sure to refrain from anything that would displease him. As Prime Minister, Mirziyoev has gained solid experience in running the country on a day-to-day basis. He has built up powerful alliances with various groups through allies in patronage networks. In May 2009, his niece married the nephew of the Russian-British tycoon Alisher Usmanov. Although Usmanov's nephew died in a road accident in May 2013, the marriage conveyed political influence and wealth, and is likely to have profound implications for Uzbek politics in the near future. Finally, Mirziyoev, born in 1957, is much younger and healthier than Inoyatov, born in 1944, who is said to suffer from pancreatic cancer.

President Karimov has been known for pursuing a nuanced policy of rewards and punishments that plays various patronage networks off against each other in an effort to keep his hold on power. Countless cadre purges and dismissals have meant that except for Karimov himself, no single Uzbek leader enjoys nation-wide recognition and support.

#### *Gulnara Karimova*

Born in 1972, Gulnara Karimova has been one of the most influential people in Uzbekistan after Karimov. A graduate of the Tashkent University of the World Economy and Diplomacy and then Harvard University, she had built a vast business conglomerate. Until its demise in early 2010, her Switzerland-registered Zeromax holding operated oil and gas companies, gold mines, a national mobile telephone network, TV and radio companies, health care centers, tourist resorts, and nightclubs, all in Uzbekistan. According to the Swiss magazine *Bilan*, Karimova is one of the world's richest women—her

estimated \$600 million are reportedly kept in Swiss bank accounts. A diplomatic cable from the U.S. Ambassador in Uzbekistan, released by WikiLeaks in late 2010, depicted her as a "robber baron," claiming that, supported by her father's influence, she "bullied her way into gaining a slice of virtually every lucrative business" in Uzbekistan.

Apart from her vast financial interests, Karimova is also known for her social activism. She is the president of Fund Forum Uzbekistan, a national association of young people modeled after the Soviet-era Komsomol organization. Karimova sits on the board of directors of numerous Uzbek government supported GONPOs (Government affiliated non-profit organizations). The Social Initiatives Support Fund (SISF) and Women's Council Public Association (WCPA) that are affiliated with her provide micro-credits for women farmers in rural areas of Uzbekistan. She is also the president of the Center for Political Studies, a think-tank affiliated with 25 academic institutions worldwide.

Karimova has considerable government experience as well. In 1998, she served at Uzbekistan's Mission to the United Nations. From 2003 to 2005, she was a counselor at the Uzbek Embassy in Moscow. In February 2008 she became Deputy Foreign Minister for International Cooperation in Cultural and Humanitarian spheres, and in September 2008, was appointed as Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. In January 2010, President Karimov sent her as the Uzbek Ambassador to Spain. Some analysts have suggested that Karimov's decision to dispatch Gulnara to Spain was dictated by his wish to protect her and her business empire from attacks by rival groups. Karimova reportedly used her time as Uzbek Ambassador to transfer much of her remaining assets to banks and property across Europe, and particularly Switzerland.

In July 2013, Karimova was forced to return to Tashkent after her diplomatic immunity was revoked by the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Upon her return, she said that she would focus on charity work (through Fund Forum Uzbekistan) and show business (she developed her own line of clothing and jewellery). Two months later, she emerged at the center of a political scandal after she publically accused the SNB and some members of her family—her sister and her brother-in-law— of conspiring to bring her down. Following the accusations, Fund Forum Uzbekistan and several of her businesses were closed

down by authorities. As of early 2014, Karimova is seen by many analysts as a spent political force in Uzbekistan.

#### *Shavkat Mirziyaev*

Born in the Jizzakh province in 1957, Mirziyaev was appointed by Karimov as Prime Minister in December 2003. From 2001 to 2003, he served as governor of the Samarkand province, and from 1996 to 2001, as governor of the Jizzakh province. Although Mirziyaev maintained a low public profile, he developed a reputation of being a brutal and hard-line official who advocated for Soviet-style controls of the economy, political life, and public sphere. As governor of the Jizzakh province,

Mirziyaev reportedly adopted punitive agricultural policies, such as the requisitioning of private land from farmers and forcing high school children to engage in government-enforced cotton collection campaigns. He also reportedly ordered violence against farmers who objected to the government's repressive agricultural policies.

Mirziyaev's reliance on punitive measures in the economy and his intolerance of political opposition have reportedly made him Karimov's most favorite official. Some Uzbek analysts suggest that the president is grooming him as a potential successor. Although Mirziyaev is politically dependent on Karimov, Uzbek observers suggest that his long tenure in top government positions has allowed him to build up a network of loyal supporters in the Jizzakh and Samarkand provinces.

#### *Rustam Azimov*

Born in Tashkent in 1958, Rustam Azimov is a graduate of the Tashkent Institute of Agricultural Engineers. Since 2002, Azimov has served as Deputy Premier, Minister of Economy, and Minister of Finance. From 2000 to 2002, he was Deputy Prime Minister, and in charge of macroeconomics and statistics. Before joining the ministerial ranks, Azimov was Chairman of the National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan from 1991 to 1998, and in 1994, served as a Member of Parliament.

Due to his extensive experience in Uzbek government, Azimov holds considerable influence regarding decisions affecting the economy, the national budget, and foreign investment. He has been portrayed by some Western observers as a technocratic official who favors liberalizing the Uzbek economy and opening up trade to the outside world. Insider

accounts by Uzbek analysts, however, suggest that Azimov is similar to other hardline Uzbek officials who advocate policies that seek to strengthen the state's centralized economy.

Azimov is reportedly a member of the influential Tashkent clan, which is a rival of the Samarkand clan led by Mirziyaev. Gulnara Karimova attacked Azimov indirectly through a series of 25 blog posts in March 2013, hinting at his involvement in corrupt deals. In particular, she wrote that the Navoi Free Economic Zone, overseen by Azimov, awarded lucrative contracts for solar panel production to several foreign companies in a non-transparent way.

#### *Rustam Inoyatov*

Born in the Surkhandarya province in 1944, Rustam Inoyatov graduated from the Tashkent Institute of Persian philology. He began his career in the Soviet KGB and was involved in covert operations in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-89). From 1991 to 1995, he served as deputy head of the SNB, and was appointed head in 1995.

Similar to many long-serving top government officials, Inoyatov has maintained a low public profile since the early 1990s. He is, however, considered to be one of President Karimov's most trusted security officials. According to exiled Uzbek opposition activists, Inoyatov spearheaded the Karimov regime's campaign of the early 1990s to silence political dissidence by kidnapping, jailing, torturing, and even killing those critical of the government. Inoyatov also reportedly played a decisive role in suppressing public protests in the city of Andijon in May 2005.

Inoyatov represents the interests of the country's security service within the Uzbek government hierarchy. In Uzbekistan's behind-the-scenes bureaucratic squabbles, the Inoyatov-led SNB is often pitted against the Ministry of Internal Affairs headed by Adkham Akhmedbayev, an ally of former Minister of Interior Bakhodir Matlyubov. Akhmedbayev has a reputation as President Karimov's loyalist, and he is not allied to any of the three upper-tier groups. Appointed as Minister of Interior in December 2013, Akhmedbayev is yet to achieve the level of political influence enjoyed by leaders of the upper-tier groups.

#### *Elyor Ganiev*

Born in the Syrdarya province in 1960, Ganiev is a graduate of the Tashkent Polytechnic Institute.

He had a long and illustrious government career: he served as Minister of Foreign Economic Affairs and Trade, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Deputy Prime Minister. Ganiev currently serves as Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade. Along with Mirziyaev, Azimov, and Inoyatov, Ganiev is a member of Karimov's inner circle, and has a deep personal loyalty to the President. Ganiev reportedly represents two types of actors in the Uzbek government. On one hand, as a former Soviet KGB official, he represents the interests of the country's formidable SNB. On the other hand, he represents the interests of the country's business elite. Some Uzbek economic analysts see Ganiev as a crisis manager, mainly due to his vast experience in both security and business.

### **Political Risks in Uzbekistan**

#### *Weak State Institutions and Cadre Instability*

One paradoxical attribute of Karimov's rule is that a dramatic expansion of the government bureaucracy in the past two decades has coincided with a steep decline in its capacity to effectively implement policies. In 2007, the Brookings Institution and the Center for Global Development labeled Uzbekistan as one of the weakest post-Soviet states based on its performance in four core areas: economy, politics, security, and social welfare.

The executive branch of the current Uzbek government is composed of seven deputy Prime Ministers, 14 Ministers, and the heads of 28 other government agencies. The several thousand employees who staff these government agencies are woefully underpaid, and the average monthly salary in the Ministry of External Relations and Trade is less than \$300. Middle-level officials are hired mainly on the basis of personal connections and patronage, and reportedly often bribe higher-ranking officials in order to obtain a government job. Such bribes reportedly range between \$200 and \$500. Along with low salaries, insiders within the Uzbek government say that professional training opportunities for young specialists are limited.

President Karimov has been keen to centralize power and reluctant to delegate authority to other government officials. Cadre reshuffles at central, regional, and local levels are frequent. The frequent rotation of cadre points to another problem in the Uzbek government: pervasive corruption.

#### *Corruption*

Islam Karimov regularly claims that eliminating corruption is among his top policy priorities. A special committee under the president was created to oversee the activities of the Customs Committee and other law enforcement agencies, and to collect the complaints and grievances of the public. The common public view in Uzbekistan, however, is that such anti-corruption measures have been used by elite groups more often as a tool to undermine rival groups, than as an opportunity to make genuine attempts to address corruption.

According to both local and international observers, corruption is an endemic problem in Uzbekistan. As mentioned above, Uzbekistan currently ranks 168 on Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index. Because of the enormous revenues generated, corruption is most rampant in the extractive sector, and in mining and railway transportation. Government officials reportedly extort bribes when awarding lucrative contracts. Uzbek economic analysts suggest that bribes make up around 10-15 percent of the total cost of a contract.

Corruption also has adverse effects on foreign investors and their investments. Foreign investors are pressured to hire sub-contractors and local staff from among the relatives of influential officials. Extortion begins at Uzbekistan's border checkpoints. Seeking bribes, customs officers engage in harassment of foreign nationals, creating various hurdles for the transportation of goods and equipment. In 2009 and 2010, for example, foreign truck drivers who operate in Uzbekistan openly urged authorities to stop the frequent extortion practices by the Uzbek Customs Committee and traffic police.

### **Threats to Stability: Public Protests, Ethnic and Religious Insurgency**

President Karimov's repressive political and economic policies have worsened public opinion and resulted in some isolated public protests. The most significant outpouring of public frustration occurred in May 2005 in Andijon, where protesters demanded greater political and economic rights. Rather than deal with the demands of protesters in a constructive manner, the regime ordered Uzbek military units to open fire, a move that resulted in the deaths of more than 700 peaceful demonstrators. The government's harsh re-

sponse to the Andijon events has since served as a powerful deterrent for civil society and social groups. The memory of the events, however, is unlikely to stop Uzbeks from protesting, should the government fail to address socio-economic conditions, which are continuing to deteriorate. For example, demonstrations protesting against electricity cuts and rising food prices have occurred in every large city in Uzbekistan since the 2010s. Although these protests have lacked unity, political analysts suggest that this may change.

Along with political protests, Uzbekistan has also seen a rise in ethnic tensions. This has been most palpable in the Samarkand and Bukhara provinces located on the Uzbek-Tajik border. The area is home to a large ethnic Tajik population that has long complained of political discrimination and of being badly treated by Uzbek officials. The fear of harsh government reprisals has so far prevented the Tajiks from organizing themselves into taking decisive action to claim Tashkent's attention, and to demand a response to their grievances. Their marginalization, however, has led many people to find an outlet in other areas, including radical Islam.

Karimov's intolerance of secular political opposition groups has meant that underground religious groups have emerged as the government's major opponents. Two Islamic groups that the government views as a major security threat are Hizb ut-Tahrir, a pan-Islamic movement that seeks to build a global Islamic state, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Hizb ut-Tahrir is largely non-violent, and its activities are generally limited to distributing leaflets and proselytizing. In contrast, the IMU, formed in 1999, was known for its violent operations in the Fergana Valley. Faced with a strong military response from both the Uzbek and Kyrgyz governments, many IMU members escaped to Afghanistan through the porous Tajik-Afghan border, and joined the Taliban in 2001. The operational capability of the groups was, however, effectively destroyed following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Despite this, security services in the Central Asian republics warn of new IMU terrorist attacks.

## **Succession of Power after Karimov's Departure**

An important political risk is the uncertainty surrounding the succession of power that will follow Karimov's departure. The Uzbek president will turn 76 at the end of the year. The constitution enables him to run for presidency indefinitely, but Karimov has not indicated yet whether he would run for another term or step down, and has not designated a successor.

Under these uncertain circumstances, there are three power succession scenarios for Uzbekistan.

### *The 'Turkmenistan'<sup>2</sup> Scenario*

Under this scenario, President Karimov's sudden departure from office—for example due to sudden death or the sudden onset of a debilitating medical condition such as stroke—would likely prompt key power groups to reach a tentative power-sharing agreement. In particular, this could mean an alliance between Inoyatov and Mirziyayev. But the behind-the-scenes struggle would continue until one of the groups is powerful enough to destroy the opposing faction, thus emerging as the ultimate winner. Under this scenario, the struggle would take place only at the elite level and would not cause political instability at any other level.

### *The 'Yeltsin-Putin Succession'<sup>3</sup> Scenario*

In this scenario, President Karimov, due to poor health or old age, would transfer power to his hand-picked successor—most likely Mirziyayev—and resign. The country would probably avoid political turmoil at even the elite level.

### *The '2011 Arab Spring'<sup>4</sup> Scenario*

Under this scenario, protests caused by deteriorating socio-economic conditions would attract thousands of Uzbek citizens, forcing President Karimov and his regime to use military force against the protesters. With the number of protesters swelling to the hundreds of thousands despite violent repression, Karimov and his entourage would be forced to transfer power to a care-taker government and face legal prosecution. Under this scenario, the country would

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2 Turkmen President Saparmurad Niyazov's sudden death in December 2006 allowed his successor Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov to seize power after a protracted behind-the-scenes rivalry with opposition elite factions.

3 Due to poor health, Russian President Boris Yeltsin voluntarily transferred presidential powers to his hand-picked successor Vladimir Putin in 2000.

4 During the so-called Arab Spring, widespread, popular protests across the Arab world toppled dictatorial regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.

likely enter a politically and socially unstable period, and face the prospect of protracted civil conflict and possibly even civil war.

If the issue of presidential succession is important, it is not the *most* important topic for Uzbek politics—at least for now. President Karimov is 75 years old, but some insiders say that he is likely to remain in power for at least another decade. Karimov appears to be in very good physical shape for his age, and maintains an exceptionally busy schedule. He has built a political system in which various political factions are hugely distrusting of each other. Although originally a representative of the Samarkand clan,

Karimov himself is not a member of any patronage network. Within the system that he created, he is the ultimate arbiter and the focal center of power, and he is almost irreplaceable. This means that it is in the best interests of powerful groups to keep him in power. The Soviet Politburo leaders is a good analogy: despite being very old, Leonid Brezhnev continued to nominally rule the Soviet Union until he died because his subordinates did not trust each other enough to build a stable power base. According to a number of Uzbek political analysts, the so-called Brezhnev scenario is the most likely one under the current circumstances.

# Doing Business in Uzbekistan: Formal Institutions and Informal Practices

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Erica Marat<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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Uzbekistan offers vast market opportunities to both foreign and domestic investors. Yet more than two decades after gaining independence from the Soviet Union, it remains neither economically prosperous nor politically free. The country's informal politics are far more influential than the formal state, forcing foreign investors to navigate the web of complex paternalistic relations. A small group of political elites uses state structures to control the country's abundant natural resources for their own benefit, while president Islam Karimov's influence is felt far beyond the formal realm of the presidency.<sup>2</sup> His decisions and preferences override all political and economic laws and regulations. Much of his influence is wielded indirectly with the sole intention of protecting the interests of his family members and a few of his closest political allies. Karimov's shadow authority is so pervasive that the formal legal institutions of governance have become irrelevant in political decision-making.

This paper analyzes a number of common methods employed by the ruling regime elites to obtain foreign and local business in Uzbekistan. Using the example of several foreign companies that have been expelled from Uzbekistan over the past decade, this paper demonstrates the mechanisms behind advancing the political regime's economic interests with the help of formal institutions or by simply intimidating businesses with the security forces. Violence, extortion, and intimidation of regime rivals and entrepreneurs are common occurrences in Uzbekistan. There have been a number of reports of the unwarranted arrest of foreign nationals, as well as cases in which

local employees of foreign firms are arrested and forced to testify against their foreign employers.

## Economic Outlook

With a population of 28 million, Uzbekistan is Central Asia's largest market, offering transit routes to all countries in the region, as well as to Afghanistan. The country's GDP has been growing consistently, averaging 8% annually over the past two decades. In 2012, Uzbekistan's estimated GDP sat at \$51.17 billion, or \$3,600 per capita.<sup>3</sup> The growth, however, has been generated primarily by rising prices for gas, oil, cotton and gold. Wealth is spread unequally, with a small group of well-connected elites controlling the bulk of the economy. Most of Uzbekistan's population lives in rural areas, and Tashkent has blocked urbanization by requiring restrictive residence permits and registrations. Uzbek citizens are not allowed to travel to some border areas, and those living outside Tashkent need a special government permit to go to the capital. Over 2.5 million Uzbek citizens work in Russia and Kazakhstan on a seasonal basis, sending remittances back to Uzbekistan.<sup>4</sup> The president routinely announces ambitious development programs, however these have never led to greater prosperity for the majority of Uzbeks.<sup>5</sup>

Uzbekistan's Central Bank maintains strict currency controls, deeming it illegal for Uzbeks to possess US currency. But because of a large gap between official and black market exchange rates, most people prefer US currency. In 2003 Uzbekistan implemented Article 8 of the International Monetary Fund Treaty that enforces domestic currency convertibility, but since then has broken the regulation several times.

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1 Expert on security issues in Central Asia, with a focus on military, national, and regional defense, as well as state-crime relations in Eurasia; Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

2 For more on the rent-seeking behavior of political elites, see M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse, *Globalizing Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Challenges of Economic Development* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2013), 203, 140-41; L. P. Markowitz, *State Erosion: Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 104-11.

3 "The World Factbook: Uzbekistan," CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>.

4 D. Trilling, "Uzbekistan's President Attacks 'Lazy' Labor Migrants," *Eurasianet.org*, June 21, 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67157>.

5 "Uzbekistan - Rotten to the Core, but Number One in Some Important Categories," *Uznews.net*, February 18, 2012, [http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=en&cid=31&nid=19128](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&cid=31&nid=19128).



All foreign investors are required to open accounts in local currency in addition to contributing hard currency investments. Furthermore, all businesses must convert half of their hard currency earnings into local currency.<sup>6</sup> The government monitors any transaction exceeding \$100,000 in order to prevent money laundering, however the reality of this means that only transactions for lower sums are monitored, while elites with political connections are able to make large foreign transactions without Central Bank oversight.

The government attempts to promote local producers ahead of imported goods. Uzbekistan has double taxation avoidance agreements with a number of its international trading partners, but refuses to join regional or international trade organizations. Indeed, Uzbekistan's exports have always exceeded its imports. In 2011, for instance, exports were valued at \$15 billion compared to \$10.5 billion for imports.<sup>7</sup> Most export items are not taxed in Uzbekistan, but there are levies of up to 30% on imports. There is also a 20% VAT in local currency.<sup>8</sup> Uzbekistan survived the negative effects of the global economic downturn in 2008-9 mostly thanks to its closed economy.

Transparency International ranks Uzbekistan 168 in a list of 177 countries, indicating that it is one of the most corrupt regimes in the world. Likewise, on the World Bank's ease of doing business scale, Uzbekistan is rated number 146 out of 189 countries. It scores the lowest in terms of "trading across borders," "getting credit," and "paying taxes." Finally, Uzbekistan is considered among the "worst of the worst" countries for civil liberties and political rights, according to Freedom House's democracy rating.

### Formal Institutions and Informal Control

Uzbekistan welcomes foreign investors - so long as they agree to play by the political regime's informal rules. The regime is particularly interested in securing the cooperation of businesses that are involved in the country's strategic sectors (energy, minerals,

cotton) or that generate high profits because of a large consumer market. Some foreign companies are expected to make payments to offshore regime accounts in Europe. In return, foreign investors can expect "macroeconomic stability, favorable nature and climate, [a] convenient geographic location in the center of major regional markets [that are] integrated into the network of land and air communications, transportation and logistics system [sic], [and a] diversified manufacturing base and intellectual and human capacity."<sup>9</sup>

Several international companies have shown a readiness to play by the regime's rules. The Swedish TeliaSonera telecommunications company admitted in 2012 that it paid a bribe to Gibraltar-based Takilant Ltd in order to receive 3G licenses in Uzbekistan. TeliaSonera has been criticized for allowing Uzbek authorities access to its network so as to keep tabs on anti-government activists.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the Israeli Metal-Tech Ltd was found guilty in December 2013 of making corrupt payments in order to obtain investment opportunities in the Uzbek molybdenum industry, according to White & Case LLP, the law firm representing the Uzbek government before the World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.<sup>11</sup>

The government's strict control of business in Uzbekistan is not limited to foreign investors or foreign companies. Sometimes as part of wider anti-corruption programs, the government will purge Uzbek businesses and persecute Uzbek entrepreneurs who have not breached any laws. In 2010, Karimov declared a war on oligarchs, blaming them for the huge gap between rich and poor, and for the resulting social tensions.<sup>12</sup>

Karimov accused oligarchs of tax evasion and illegal appropriation of expensive goods. The president's hardline approach led one oligarch, Dmitry Lim, to flee the country, leaving behind a chain of bazaars and supermarkets. Another oligarch, Dmitry Dotsenovich, the owner of Royson, a company specializing in air conditioners, was accused of illegally importing goods from China and of fail-

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6 More on this here: "Doing business in Uzbekistan," [http://www.norton-legal.com/pub/DOING\\_BUSINESS\\_IN\\_UZBEKISTAN\\_%202010.pdf](http://www.norton-legal.com/pub/DOING_BUSINESS_IN_UZBEKISTAN_%202010.pdf).

7 As described in "Cost of Doing Business in Uzbekistan," UNDP, Tashkent, 2012, <http://www.undp.uz/en/download/index.php?type=publication&id=303&parent=5798&doc=11334>.

8 Ibid.

9 As described in "Cost of Doing Business in Uzbekistan," UNDP.

10 "Nordic telecom TeliaSonera defends Uzbek deal," *Reuters*, September 20, 2012.

11 "Landmark Victory for Uzbekistan in World Bank Dispute," December 4, 2013, <http://www.whitecase.com/>.

12 "Prezident Uzbekistana likvidiruet imushchestvennoe neravenstvo grazhdan," *Uzmetronom*, March 9, 2010.

ing to meet Uzbek production standards. His business was stripped of its license. The most scandalous arrest was that of Batyr Rakhimov, the (owner/CEO/head) of Kapital Bank, the 9<sup>th</sup> largest bank in Uzbekistan. Rakhimov was accused of committing financial crimes through the Kapital Bank, which had collaborated with Germany's Commertzbank AG, Austria's RZB AG, Turkey's Garanti Bank, and Russia's Sberbank.

Over the past decade, several other Uzbek entrepreneurs were arrested and had their businesses stripped, while others fled the country to escape prosecution. Most of those who were arrested or escaped Uzbekistan had foreign business partners, but this did not shield them from prosecution. Aside from arresting business owners, Karimov's regime also prosecuted their aides and managing directors. The anti-oligarch campaign was conducted very fast—and most Uzbek entrepreneurs were arrested within ten days. This led to further centralization of political power and control over the country's economy.

Karimov's regime has begun fostering closer political ties with other countries so as to boost economic and trade opportunities for itself. In 2011, during U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton's visit to Tashkent, General Motors announced plans to open a second factory in Uzbekistan (25% belongs to GM, 75% owned by Uzbeks).<sup>13</sup> The announcement came following a thaw in US-Uzbek relations after several years of friction that had been caused by Tashkent's decision to expel the U.S. military base in Karshi-Khanabad in 2005 and U.S. Congress's decision to prohibit assistance to the Uzbek government. Projections for the new GM plant in Tashkent include the annual production of 225,000 fuel-efficient Ecotec 1.2L and 1.5L engines for use in small GM passenger cars to be sold worldwide.<sup>14</sup> GM's positive experience operating inside Uzbekistan must be largely credited to the improvement in U.S.-Uzbek relations that came about following the establishment of the Northern Distribution Network. By 2012, U.S. investors had poured over \$2 billion into Uzbekistan. There are 241 U.S. companies registered

in Uzbekistan, including GM, Boeing, and Lockheed Martin.<sup>15</sup> To date, GM is probably the most successful U.S. businesses operating in Uzbekistan. GM launched its operations 2007 after forming a partial alliance with Daewoo, a car manufacturer based in South Korea. By 2007 Daewoo had a near monopoly on car sales in Uzbekistan, producing several affordable models running on natural gas.

However, should a foreign investor not follow the regime's informal requests, they will likely encounter significant punishment from the Uzbek government, even if the retribution itself is likely to tarnish Uzbekistan's international image. Karimov's primary motive is to consolidate his power and possibly that of his close political allies—whoever that may be. If the regime feels threatened in any way by the presence of foreign business, or if the Uzbek partners of foreign companies develop political ambition, the regime will shut down that business. Roughly a dozen foreign companies have been expropriated by the Uzbek government within the past ten years. Among these was Spentex Industries, an Indian textile firm that launched Spentex Tashkent Toytepa, which was shut down before it even began operations in Uzbekistan in 2006. The company maintains that the Uzbek government made unilateral changes to the agreement that eventually forced Spentex Tashkent Toytepa into bankruptcy.<sup>16</sup> Indian investors lodged a claim for \$100 million in compensation, but it was not even processed by the Uzbek government. The regime uses the National Security Committee (KNB) to expropriate the funds and assets of foreign companies operating in Uzbekistan.

Wimm-Bill-Dann, a Russian dairy company, argued that the Uzbek government “de facto nationalized” the company in 2010.<sup>17</sup> The company also claimed to have been approached by the KNB, who were intent on investigating its financial records. Wimm-Bill-Dann had entered the Uzbek market in 2004, but began experiencing troubles with the authorities in 2009, and was accused of tax evasion, embezzlement, and organized crime. The dispute over Wimm-Bill-Dann escalated into an internation-

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13 C. A. Fitzpatrick, “Uzbekistan: Clinton Visits GM Plant; Activists Say Workers Forced to Pick Cotton,” *Eurasianet*, October 24, 2011, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64362>.

14 “GM Opens Engine Plant in Uzbekistan,” *Media.gm.com*, November 11, 2012, [http://media.gm.com/media/us/en/gm/news.detail.html/content/Pages/news/us/en/2011/Nov/1115\\_uzbek.html](http://media.gm.com/media/us/en/gm/news.detail.html/content/Pages/news/us/en/2011/Nov/1115_uzbek.html).

15 “Islam Karimov Receives Representatives of U.S. Firms,” *Uzdaily.com*, August 17, 2012, <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-19822.htm>.

16 “Uzbekistan: Indian investor lodges US\$ 100 Million complaint against the Uzbek Government,” *Fergana.ru*, May 31, 2012, <http://enews.fergananews.com/news.php?id=2294&print=1>.

17 “Uzbekistan Nationalized Business from WBD,” *RIA Novosti*, September 21, 2010, <http://en.ria.ru/business/20100921/160664693.html>.

al affair, with the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister addressing the Uzbek government on the matter. Kremlin pressure, however, did not convince the Uzbek leadership to change its mind.

UK's Oxus Gold Pic, a gold mining venture affiliated with Uzbekistan's Amantaytau Goldfields, was similarly charged with tax evasion in May 2011. According to British investors, these allegations constituted "an ongoing campaign to fabricate a reason to steal the last foreign assets in the mining industry in Uzbekistan."<sup>18</sup> Similar to other cases involving foreign firms, the Uzbek government refused to discuss the issue with Oxus, and charges are still pending.

US Newmont Mining, a former joint gold mining venture with Uzbek Zaravshan Newmont, and US mobile phone operator MCT Corp were both forced out of the Uzbek market in the mid 2000s.

Both companies were accused of tax evasion shortly after Tashkent ousted the US military base at Karshi-Khanabad in 2005. Newmont is the world's second largest gold mining company and had operated in Uzbekistan since 1992.<sup>19</sup> MCT Corp had invested \$250 million in Uzbekistan, but was able to have some of its funds returned after pressuring the Uzbek government with prosecution in international courts and through negotiations with Richard Boucher, the assistant secretary of state and top U.S. official for Central Asia, during his visit to Uzbekistan in 2006.<sup>20</sup>

In 2010 Zeromax GmbH, a Swiss-registered company, abruptly declared bankruptcy and shut down. The company had positioned itself as a conglomerate managing a range of commodities and services, including transportation, oil and gas sales, and agricultural products. There are numerous rumors around the company's sudden demise, but the most common is that Karimov's family decided to strip Zeromax of its assets. Zeromax left behind \$500 million in unpaid credit.<sup>21</sup> Its German investors

lost 130 million Euros, equivalent to 40% of the total trade between Germany and Uzbekistan.<sup>22</sup> Over 100 of Zeromax's creditors urged the company to pay off its debt in 2012, but to no avail.

### The Case of MTS

The Russian mobile phone operator MTS has become the latest victim of this extortive business politics. In 2012 the company's Uzbekistan-based subsidiary, Uzdurobita, was accused of providing poor quality service, breaking anti-monopoly laws, and tax evasion to the tune of \$264 million. The company's managing directors were also accused of forming a criminal syndicate. MTS headquarters in Moscow insist that the company's local staff were forced to sign false confessions to substantiate these charges.<sup>23</sup> MTS was initially fined \$80 million by Uzbek authorities, but later the penalty grew to \$370 million.

The government suspended MTS's license for a few days in July 2012 and later for three months, leaving its roughly 10 million Uzbek subscribers - 38% of the total population - without mobile connectivity. On the black market, prices for SIM cards from other mobile service providers skyrocketed, with some going for several hundred dollars. In the same month, Uzbek law-enforcement officials arrested the head of Uzdurobita, a Russian citizen named Radik Dautov. The Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry expressed concern over the development around MTS's Uzbek subsidiary, saying that it was watching the developments closely.<sup>24</sup> Dautov's wife wrote a letter to Russian president Vladimir Putin pleading for him to help her husband, who, she says, has been stripped of any legal protection in Uzbekistan.<sup>25</sup>

In August 2012 Uzbek courts stripped MTS of all license to operate in Uzbekistan. In return, the

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18 "The Government of Uzbekistan Targets Foreign Investor Oxus Gold Pic With Resource Nationalism," *PR Newswire*, May 9, 2011, <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/news-releases/the-government-of-uzbekistan-targets-foreign-investor-oxus-gold-plc-with-resource-nationalism-145353235.html>.

19 "Uzbekistan: Government Takes on U.S. Gold Mining Company," *RFE/RL*, April 15, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1070586.html>.

20 Alisher Sidikov, "Uzbekistan: RFE/RL's Uzbek Service - U.S. Business Ventures Provide Valuable Lessons," *RFE/RL*, August 15, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1078168.html>.

21 D. Tynan, "Zeromax's Woes in Tashkent: GooGoosha's Swan Song from Politics," *Eurasianet.org*, May 20, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61110>.

22 C. A. Fitzpatrick, "Uzbekistan Owes Germany 130M Euros after Zeromax Building Spree," *Eurasianet.org*, November 7, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62327>.

23 "MTS Says Employees in Uzbekistan Pressured to Sign False Confessions," *RFE/RL*, September 9, 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/content/mts-says-employees-in-uzbekistan-pressured-to-sign-false-confessions/24672408.html>.

24 "MID RF: situatsiya vokrug 'dochki' MTS v Uzbekistane stanovitsya vse bolee ostroy," *RBC.ru*, July 30, 2012.

25 "Zhena top-menedzhera MTS v Uzbekistane prosit pomoshchi u prezidenta," *Izvestiya*, July 20, 2012.

company openly stated that it was a victim of the Uzbek government's deliberate interference in foreign business, which reflected a "decade-long pattern of inviting foreign investors into the country, creating profitable ventures, and then seizing those businesses based on false charges."<sup>26</sup> This included freezing the company's bank accounts, cutting Internet services to MTS offices, and conducting "illegal audits." MTS estimated that Uzbek authorities were hoping to seize up to \$1 billion of MTS's assets.

Because 30% of MTS was owned by American shareholders, the state of MTS in Uzbekistan was brought to the attention of the U.S. government. U.S. heads of the company urged the State Department to intervene in the process and to protect MTS's rights in Uzbekistan. Local MTS staff faced prosecution - a method used by Tashkent to extort bribes from the company. An official statement released by MTS says that actions against its Uzbek division constitute an "attack" on foreign business in Uzbekistan.<sup>27</sup> In the evolving saga involving MTS, Tashkent ignored negative international coverage and seemed indifferent to the plight of domestic consumers. The decision to revoke MTS's license came after several months of backdoor attempts to extort bribes from the company. The scandal could have been triggered by the deterioration of relations between Gulnara Karimova and MTS-Uzbekistan's head, Bekhzod Akhmedov.

The charges launched against MTS, however, were not a matter of Uzbek-Russian relations. Another Russian mobile service provider, Beeline, continued to function during the period in which MTS was being persecuted. In mid-August 2012

Russian Foreign Affairs minister Sergey Lavrov made a telephone call to his Uzbek counterpart, Abdulaziz Kamilov, to discuss a number of issues. During the conversation MTS was mentioned and both sides expressed hope that the issue would be solved as soon as possible.<sup>28</sup> In 2004 Karimova, who at that stage owned a controlling 74% stake in Uzdurobita, sold her shares to MTS for \$121 million.<sup>29</sup> At that time Uzdurobita had roughly 150,000 customers. In 2007, MTS acquired the rest of the shares for \$250 million.

## **Conclusion**

In Uzbekistan, it is often difficult to identify which legal actions against foreign and local businesses are politically motivated. Once the regime decides to focus on a specific profit-making enterprise or a politically disloyal entrepreneur, it will find a way to appropriate or destroy the business. Both local and foreign investors can fall victim to the regime's extortion practices.<sup>30</sup> The regime regularly uses courts, government licensing agencies, and law-enforcement institutions to extort bribes and expropriate businesses. Often, foreign investors who come from countries on good political terms with Tashkent enjoy more favorable conditions inside the country, but if bilateral relations sour, the government will shut down that country's business interests in Uzbekistan. Foreign investors will encounter severe legal and financial problems, even if this harsh reprisal damages Uzbekistan's international image or bilateral relations with the investor's country.

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26 "Update on MTS in Uzbekistan," *Mtsgsm.com*, August 14, 2012.

27 *Ibid.*

28 "Karimova, Gulnara," *Lenta.ru*, <http://lenta.ru/lib/14178596/>.

29 "Gulnara Karimova khochet 'Uzdunrobitu' nazad," *Uznews.net*, August 22, 2012.

30 "Uzbekistan's Half-Hearted War on Corruption," *IWPR*, October 18, 2011, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/uzbekistans-half-hearted-war-corruption>.

# Digital Memory and a 'Massacre': Uzbek Identity in the Age of Social Media

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Sarah Kendzior and Noah Tucker<sup>1, 2</sup> (2014)

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On June 11, 2010, over 100,000 ethnic Uzbeks crossed the border from southern Kyrgyzstan into Uzbekistan.<sup>3</sup> They were fleeing riots that had overtaken the city of Osh, killing nearly 500 people, destroying over 2800 properties, and leaving tens of thousands homeless. Though the causes of the violence were manifold and remain debated, the political and economic grievances behind it played out along ethnic lines.<sup>4</sup> Nearly all the victims were Uzbek; the perpetrators, Kyrgyz.

The year 2010 was not the first time Uzbeks crossed the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border to escape persecution. In May 2005, the government of Uzbekistan fired on a public protest in the city of Andijon, killing over 700 Uzbek citizens. Thousands more fled over the border to Osh—the very city from where Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks would flee to Andijon five years later. These parallel journeys speak to the Uzbek search for a reprieve from state surveillance and public persecution, a mission that so far has proven futile. Even abroad, Uzbeks have been targeted for political assassination.<sup>5</sup>

Uzbek political rights have been trampled for as long as “Uzbek” has been an ethnic category.<sup>6</sup> But while repression endures, the way Uzbeks are able to discuss their plight has changed. Once separated by geographic borders, Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and around the world are now able to share their grievances through the Internet—in particular, through social media, which has transformed

narratives of the 2010 violence. Though Uzbek activists had previously attempted to mobilize scattered co-ethnics to mount international political pressure for issues affecting Uzbeks—like the 2005 Andijon violence—these attempts failed to achieve broad resonance. Social media made the plight of Uzbeks in Southern Kyrgyzstan resonate with Uzbeks around the world in a way that earlier outbreaks of civil or state violence never did.

This paper examines the transnational effort by ethnic Uzbeks to document the 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan and mobilize international support—first for intervention to stop the conflict as it unfolded, and then to preserve evidence of alleged injustices suffered by the community.<sup>7</sup> Combining analysis of digital media with recent ethnographic fieldwork in Southern Kyrgyzstan, the paper addresses questions about how “digital memory” of violence influences how people adapt to post-conflict everyday life. It also addresses how narratives produced by the global community—most of whom did not experience the conflict itself—shape, and sometimes conflict with, the understanding of the conflict for those who experienced it.

As soon as the riots began, Uzbeks around the world began discussing them on Uzbek-language websites. In these forums, the scope, brutality, and savagery of the June violence was communicated without restraint—in marked contrast to the international media, which portrayed Uzbeks as voiceless, passive victims; and to the Kyrgyzstani and Uzbekistan state media, which responded with tepid, carefully measured statements. Few leaders in Kyrgyzstan acknowledged that the violence target-

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1 Al-Jazeera English; Central Asia Program associate.

2 Managing Editor, Registan.net; Central Asia Program associate.

3 “Kyrgyzstan: Widening Ethnic Divisions in the South,” *Asia Report* No. 222, International Crisis Group, March 29, 2012, <http://www.crisis-group.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/222-kyrgyzstan-widening-ethnic-divisions-in-the-south.pdf>. The conflict temporarily displaced up to 400,000 total, approximately 100,000 of which went to Uzbekistan temporarily.

4 M. Reeves, “The Ethnicisation of Violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” *Open Democracy Russia*, June 21, 2010, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/madeleine-reeves/ethnicisation-of-violence-in-southern-kyrgyzstan-o>.

5 S. Kendzior, “A Reporter without Borders: Internet Politics and State Violence in Uzbekistan,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 57, no. 1 (2010): 40-50; N. Atayeva, “The Karimov Regime is Accused of Terrorist Activities: An Attempt on the Life of Political Emigre Obidkhon Nazarov,” February 29, 2012, <http://nadejda-atayeva-en.blogspot.com/2012/02/karimov-regime-is-accused-of-terrorist.html>.

6 A. Ikhamov, “Archeology of Uzbek Identity,” *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 44, no. 4 (2006): 10-36.

7 The effort continues and most of the digital archives created to store evidence of the conflict are still online; however, the scope of the analysis of online materials presented here focuses mostly on things published by mid-2011.

ed Uzbeks at all, while calls for investigation by the Uzbekistani government played lip service to public discontent. In both countries, coverage of the events was censored.

Online works on the 2010 violence range from materials unique to the internet age—such as cell phone videos, blog entries, digital photo graphs, and Mp3s—to classic literary forms like poetry that contributors believe both reflect the uniqueness of Uzbek culture and unite the ethnic community. Many Uzbeks struggled with how to rally the support of co-ethnics while also attracting international concern. While the desire for international intervention led some to translate their works or publish them in more widely understood languages, the bulk of the discussion took place in Uzbek and therefore tends to be inaccessible to those outside the Uzbek community.

The intense dialogue catalyzed by digital technology has transformed ethnic and state relations in Central Asia. Perhaps more than any other event since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reaction to the violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan hardened the lines of the Uzbek ethnic community. Ethnic Uzbeks appear to increasingly think of themselves as a group transcending the geographic, political, and religious boundaries that once divided them.

### **Building a Digital Community**

The emergence of Uzbek online communities in which the reaction to the Osh violence took place threatens the Uzbekistani government's idea of territorial nationalism. Uzbek online communities consist not only of Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, but ethnic Uzbeks born in neighboring states such as Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan as well as Uzbeks living abroad. Until roughly a decade ago, it was very difficult for these groups to communicate with each other on a regular basis. The collapse of the Soviet Union had transformed soft borders between republics into hard lines between states, blocking Uzbeks in Uzbekistan off from fellow Uzbeks in Central Asia. Uzbeks who were exiled abroad in the 1990s were effectively silenced, with little ability to share their ideas in a public forum or communicate with other Uzbeks who shared their views.

After the May 2005 violence in Andijon, every thing changed. During the crackdown that followed, many of Uzbekistan's journalists, poets, and activists were driven from the country. They fled to neighboring Kyrgyzstan—from Andijon to Osh in many cases—and most were eventually given asylum in Europe and North America. The Andijon massacre, and the widespread exile of dissidents in its aftermath, was intended to silence critics of the Uzbek government. Yet this was the opposite of what happened. Refugees from Andijon dramatically increased the number of Uzbeks living abroad, many of whom were critical of the government, and nearly all of whom now had regular Internet access for the first time.<sup>8</sup>

At the exact moment Uzbeks were fleeing Uzbekistan, digital media was undergoing a transformation. The Andijon events coincided with the emergence of blogs and free blogging services—in particular Ucoz.ru, a Russian-language blogging service launched in 2005—that made it easy for Uzbeks with little internet experience to publish their works and respond to them. Scattered around the world, Uzbeks developed a community through commentary—in which language, not citizenship, is the passport for entry.

At the center of this community's efforts was Andijon. The unprecedented violence brought once feuding activists together to expose the truth behind the massacre and seek justice. It also prompted Uzbeks to go online to look for uncensored Uzbek-language information about the events, thus expanding the audience of opposition websites beyond the opposition. Though the websites often focused on critiquing the Uzbek government, the people behind them were often not from Uzbekistan. One of the most popular sites, *Isyonkor* was founded by an Uzbek from Tajikistan who described himself in an interview as a "child of Turkistan" whose efforts were geared toward getting Uzbeks to reject artificial boundaries created by borders and unite with each other online.<sup>9</sup>

Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan also played an active role in these online political spaces long before 2010. One of the best-known journalists to write about the Andijon violence, Alisher Saipov, was an Uzbek born in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. He also died in Osh, at the age of 26, assassinated by men presumed to be agents of the Uzbek government.

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8 S. Kendzior, "Digital Distrust: Uzbek Cynicism and Solidarity in the Internet Age," *American Ethnologist* 38, no. 3 (2011): 559-75.

9 *Isyonkor* was closed in 2007. A successor site, *Yangi Dunyo*, became very popular among Uzbek political exiles before closing in 2012.

Saipov's death revealed how threatening the Uzbek government found this new online community and what measures they would take to control it.<sup>10</sup>

Saipov's death also heralded an era marked by an increasing sense of futility surrounding the Andijon events and the prospect of political reform in Uzbekistan. Uzbeks had created dozens of websites documenting the violence, including interviews with witnesses and survivors, photos from the scene, and articles and poems commemorating the victims and condemning the government. They lobbied international organizations and posted petitions online, but these efforts yielded no pragmatic results. The Uzbek government remains strong to this day.

Online, Uzbeks expressed frustration over their inability to bring about political change. As the years went by, their focus on Andijon became less, and their online conversations turned into internal feuds over who was responsible for their own failure.

### Social Memory and New Media

Though Uzbeks writing online did little to alter the political structure in Uzbekistan, their efforts show how effective the Internet is in building a counter-narrative of a tragedy. Their version of the Andijon events was radically different than the one the Karimov government portrayed to its citizens, and difficult for the government to remove. Digital memory challenges the state directive to forget. By 2010, Uzbeks had become experts at tragedy preservation. They had also incorporated Andijon into a broader narrative of Uzbek identity. Andijon was portrayed as yet another chapter in the saga of centuries of oppression, whether by khans, tsars, the Soviets, or Karimov. Victimhood and persecution—and a longing for justice—were portrayed as inherent to Uzbek life.

In June 2010, Uzbeks around the world watched online video of Uzbeks from Osh crossing the border into Andijon, a reverse of the journey taken five years prior. Once again, Uzbeks were being targeted by

brutal force, and once again it was being documented—but this time in far greater detail. New technologies like cell phone cameras and social media networks allowed Uzbeks to disseminate evidence far more widely and quickly than they could during the Andijon events.

The 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian mass casualty conflict to take place in the era of social media. Reactions to the atrocities were published in real time but preserved for all time, usually retrievable through a Google search. This paradoxical quality of digital media—in which instantaneous and often heated reactions are preserved for posterity, often outside their original context—is changing how citizens react to mass violence in ways social scientists do not yet fully understand. Digital memory has created a catalogue of sins, searchable and accessible, impervious to the human desire to move on.

### Ethnicity as the Critical Factor:

#### "Today I Was Found Guilty of Being an Uzbek"<sup>11</sup>

Uzbeks use digital media not only to convey what happened, but also to attempt to understand why they were singled out for attack. Though many conflicting arguments emerge, most believe that regardless of what initially spurred the violence, ethnicity was what perpetuated it.

Perhaps surprisingly, Uzbeks rarely discuss the political or socio-economic factors that many outside experts cite as probable causes. Uzbeks feel that they were victimized for their ethnicity, with more specific agendas—targeting based on wealth or political affiliation, for example—irrelevant.<sup>12</sup> They see their future as arbitrary and uncertain, because there is little that can be done to change their position or to predict when the violence will begin anew. This sense of unpredictable, inevitable persecution unites the Uzbek online community, even if individual discussions happen to live far from the areas where the violence took place or across state

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10 Kendzior, "A Reporter Without Borders."

11 "O'zbekligim ayb bo'ldimengabugun," *Adolat*, July 2, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=1321&lang=uz>.

12 Subsequent outside analysis concluded that economic and sometimes political factors indeed seem to play an important role in determining the patterns and locations for violence, particularly of physical property destruction. While these themes are sometimes present in the online discussion, they seem to be almost downplayed in order to emphasize the apparent randomness and ethnic-only based targeting of physical (person to person) violence, which is given more weight and importance than economic and physical damage. This is also likely a conscious or unconscious strategy to rally other Uzbeks to the cause and expand the sense of real or potential victimhood.

borders that had long divided Uzbeks into separate groups.<sup>13</sup>

In online forums, many Uzbeks argued that the 2010 events were part of an officially sanctioned ethnic cleansing program.<sup>14</sup> Accounts of ongoing harassment and small-scale attacks emphasize the alleged role of Kyrgyzstani police and security forces in either abetting the violence or directly causing it.<sup>15</sup> A year after the events, discussants believed that neither the conditions that led to the June violence nor official attitudes from Kyrgyz authorities had significantly changed. New stories emerged about attacks against Uzbeks and their families, as well as official harassment from Kyrgyzstani law enforcement.

These events were contextualized as part of a long-term systematic repression<sup>16</sup> of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks that could be traced back to the late Soviet period and endured to the present day, meaning similar outbreaks of violence would likely occur in the future. In a short, brutal poem, one Osh resident mourned:

*My body is a sack full of black charcoal  
Sooner or later I'll be burned  
What are you to do now, my Uzbeks?<sup>17</sup>*

Attention to the 1990 Osh violence also increased as online discussants revisited and reinterpreted regional history.<sup>18</sup> Discussants identified similar themes and patterns, and sometimes accused the same ethnic Kyrgyz officials of "planning" and funding both riots.<sup>19, 20, 21, 22</sup> In a detailed analysis tweeted and reposted on several forums, one Uzbek academic studying in the United States describes the resemblance between the two bloody episodes as "two volumes written by the same author."<sup>23</sup> Uzbeks outside of Southern Kyrgyzstan expressed deep regret for "failing to recognize" what now seemed to them to be an institutional, systemic potential for violence and discrimination.<sup>24</sup>

Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan denounced what they describe as an information war waged against them in the Kyrgyz press.<sup>25</sup> They believed that the Kyrgyz media and Kyrgyz political elites blamed them for

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13 See M. Fumagalli, "Ethnicity, state formation and foreign policy: Uzbekistan and 'Uzbeks abroad,'" *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 1 (2007): 105-22; M. Y. Liu, "Recognizing the Khan: Authority, space, and political imagination among Uzbek men in post-Soviet Osh, Kyrgyzstan" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2002).

14 A. Mannapov, "Davom etayotgan insoniylikka qarshi jinoyat haqida," *Yangi Dunyo*, August 30, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=14454> (A. Mannapov, a US-based Uzbek academic and (anti-Karimov) opposition activist); M. Zakhidov, "Ne otmayvayushchayasya zachistka na yuge Kyrgyzstana," *Yangi Dunyo*, November 10, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15729> (Zakhidov is an Uzbekistan-based independent human rights activist sponsored by a German NGO).

15 "Yurak bardosh berolmas bunga," *Yangi Dunyo*, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15716>.

16 The word used for "repression" in Uzbek (*lqatag'in*) has direct connotations with the repression of native culture and peoples during Stalin's purges in the 1930s. The Uzbek government has only recently begun to permit speaking openly and publicly about the Stalin era repression, opening a much talked about museum to victims of the Soviet policies that uses this same word in its title.

17 "O'zbekligim ayb bo'ldi menga bugun," *Adolat.com*, July 2, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=1321&lang=uz>.

18 It is sadly ironic, or according to some conspiracy speculation in the Uzbek community "no coincidence," that the 2010 Osh pogroms began only a week after the 20th anniversary of the 1990 violence. The publication of articles and histories commemorating the 20th anniversary of the violence likely contributed to the frequency with which actors in this discussion connect the two. See, for example, this article, published only two days before the new violence began: See: "Oshskaya reznya 1990 goda. Khronologiya tragedii," *Ferghana.ru*, June 8, 2010, <http://www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=6601>.

19 "Ikkinchi Kirg'inga Karimov Aybdor," *Yangi Dunyo*, October 2, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15120>.

20 S. Burlachenko and K. Batyrov, "Slezhy Kyrgyzov, gore Uzbekov," *Yangi Dunyo*, September 18, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=14862> (source is an interview with Kadryjon Batyrov, a controversial social and political, and economic leader of the Uzbek community in Kyrgyzstan currently hiding in exile).

21 "Leaders of the Uzbek Community in Kyrgyzstan" and "Obrashchenie k narodu Kyrgyzstana," *Yangi Dunyo*, September 19, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=14887> (source is an anonymous open letter that appears to be from members of the Uzbek cultural association previously headed by Batyrov).

22 R. Gapirov, "Prezidentu Respubliki Uzbekistan I. A. Karimovu," *Yangi Dunyo*, September 30, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15075> (Gapirov is an ethnic Uzbek human rights activist in Osh, source is an open letter published on *Yangi Dunyo*, a Europe-based Uzbek and Russian language website).

23 "Qirg'iziston Janubidagi Qonli Voqealar Qiyosi Tahlili: 1990 va 2010," *Kundalik Bitiklarim*, <http://kundalik.wordpress.com/2010/08/20/qirgiziston-janubidagi-qonli-voqealar-qiyosi-tahlili-1990-va-2010-yillar/#more-849>.

24 "Ikkinchi Kirg'inga Karimov Aybdor" and "O'sh shaxridan Bahrom." "Bahrom" is an anonymous guest contributor who self-identifies as an Osh resident. See also: *Musulman O'zbekistan*; U. Avvob, "Mu sibatva Munosabat: Didagiryon Dardnoma," *Yangi Dunyo*, August 8, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=13851>; B. Musaev, "Bez viny vinovaty i Kirgizskiy Mankurtizm," *Yangi Dunyo*, September 18, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=14857>.

25 Gapirov, "Prezidentu Respubliki Uzbekistan I. A. Karimovu."



inciting the violence in collusion with international Islamic terrorist groups.<sup>26</sup> In an open letter to an Uzbek dissident website, one Osh resident said he had become so frustrated with the bias in the Kyrgyzstan-based media that he eventually smashed his television in anger.<sup>27</sup> Even further, the Uzbek commentators often accused Kyrgyz nationalist activists of distributing videos and photographs of dead ethnic Uzbeks or their burnt-out homes that reverse the ethnicity of the victims and falsely claim to be evidence of Uzbek violence against ethnic Kyrgyz.<sup>28</sup> Though specific cases were rarely presented, Uzbek websites give weight to these claims by translating and republishing reports from international human rights investigators that find Uzbeks were overwhelmingly the victims of the June violence, rather than the perpetrators.<sup>29</sup>

The sense that the majority ethnic Kyrgyz population of Kyrgyzstan suspects all Uzbeks of supporting of Islamic terrorism or ethnic separatism has long made Uzbeks feel excluded from Kyrgyzstani society.<sup>30</sup> Uzbeks saw the late November 2010 announcements by Kyrgyzstani Security Services that they had uncovered a group of “nationalist-separatist” terror cells inside Kyrgyzstan as an attempt to whip up popular hysteria against ethnic Uzbeks. When the existence of the cell was first announced, the government emphasized that the group was composed of criminals of various ethnicities. But after a special forces operation in Osh on November 29 that left four Uzbeks dead, the story changed to reflect anti-Uzbek sentiment. Kyrgyz government officials justified the raid by claiming that the men in both Bishkek and Osh were members of international Islamic terrorist

26 “O‘zbekistandagi va boshka barcha O‘zbeklarga,” *Adolat/Oshlik*, July 8, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=1587&lang=uz> (*Oshlik* (“Osh resident”) is an anonymous source who self-identifies, the substance of the letter is an angry complaint directed at the Uzbek government for turning away tens of thousands of Uzbek refugees and failing to intervene to protect the Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. In reference to the Kyrgyz side of the situation, he says: “Uzbeks are oppressed, Uzbeks are shot, Uzbeks’ homes are turned to ashes, but the Kyrgyz government is blaming it all on Uzbeks, as if we’re all raving lunatics. They are telling the rest of the world that we’re all terrorists and extremists... It’s absurd, we had nothing more than sticks and pieces of pipe to defend ourselves with, and now they’ve even taken those away from us. After the way they slandered Uzbeks on the news yesterday, I smashed my television.”).

27 *Ibid.*

28 “V Oshe za \$1 prodaetsya fil’m pro zverskikh uzbekov,” The Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, September 12, 2010, <http://uzbektragedy.com/ru/?p=316> (the Association for Human Rights in Central Asia self-identifies as a Kyrgyzstan-based human rights organization, no confirmation of their location or ethnic makeup was given). S. Kamchibekov, “Kyrgyzstan: kak dal’she zhit’? Oshskikh natsionalistov mir ne берет,” *Parus.kg*, August 25, 2010, <http://www.pa-ruskg.info/2010/08/25/31148>; “Razzhiganie natsionalnoy rozni v Oshe po-myrzakmatovski,” *Uznews.net*, August 25, 2010, [http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=ru&sub=usual&cid=32&nid=14878](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=ru&sub=usual&cid=32&nid=14878); “Iznanilovaniy v obshchezhitii Osha ne bylo,” *Adolat*, July 30, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=3087&lang=ru>.

29 Below are three recent examples of this trend, but the instances on only the larger and more popular websites are in the hundreds. In addition to translating reports originally published in English or Russian, many sites frequently repost or reference news originally published by Ozodlik Radiosi (RFE/RL Uzbek), BBC Uzbek, and Amerika Ovozi (VOA Uzbek). These sites have a wide following and are frequently quoted even on Uzbek language Islamist websites. Drawing from a common (apparently trusted) source of information this way, in addition to the frequent inter-referencing and linking that the sites cited here do with one another, seems to build a stronger sense of identity and shared purpose in the community. It also reveals that USGOV funded projects like Ozodlik Radiosi may play a larger role in influencing the discussion than might have been assumed. “Korrespondent Eurasianet ne smog nayti v Oshe bezdomnykh kirgizov,” *Adolat*, September 20, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=4072&lang=ru> (source is a translation of an article originally published on *Eurasianet* written by D. Trilling; the article recounts how the reporter attempted to verify Kyrgyz claims that thousands of ethnic Kyrgyz were also made homeless by the June violence, though each location activists or members of the public indicated to him were resettlement camps providing temporary housing to Kyrgyz victims proved to be empty, and no evidence was found that they had ever been occupied for temporary housing); “Inson huquqlari tashkilotlari Azimjon Asqarovga chiqarilgan hukmdan norozi,” *Uzbek Tragedy*, September 17, 2010, <http://uzbektragedy.com/uz/?p=174> (source article is a reprint of a USGOV-sponsored Uzbek language news service report that indicates a number of human rights organizations around the world have issued statements condemning the life-sentence verdict given to ethnic Uzbek human rights activist Asqarov, whom many claim has been accused of inciting inter-ethnic conflict based on falsified evidence in retaliation for his attempts to document attacks by KG government forces on unarmed Uzbek citizens); “Qirg‘iziston: O‘sh va Jalalobod Voqealari Yuzasidan Halqaro Tekshiruv Boshlandi,” *Yangi Dunyo*, October 18, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15469>.

30 Liu, “Recognizing the Khan.” This stereotype arises in part because radical Islamist groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was founded by a small group of disaffected Ferghana Valley Uzbeks, but it also comes in large part from long-held stereotypes that both groups hold about the other’s attitudes towards Islam. Uzbeks are often considered the “most religious” ethnicity in Central Asia, in no small part because of the important role the cities of Bukhara and Samarqand (in today’s Uzbekistan) played in the history of Islamic civilization. In reality, however, the distinction between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks (and Persian speakers, who were for most of his tory the dominant group in the settled oasis cities like Bukhara and Samarqand in spite of the fact that these are now considered Uzbek cities) depends more on the differences in urban vs. nomadic cultural patterns, in both the way the two groups understand their religious identity and the other cultural characteristics that separate these very closely related Turkic groups. Regardless of its origins, the stereotypes about religious differences hold that Uzbeks, as the more traditionally Muslim group, will therefore be more prone to being influenced by foreign religious missionaries and extremist groups, and their identity as more traditional Muslims somehow conflicts with loyalties to the Kyrgyzstani state or their membership as Kyrgyzstani citizens, in spite of the fact that Kyrgyz are also a majority Muslim society.

organizations pursuing nationalist-separatist goals and that they planned to kill “at least 12,000 people” in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>31</sup>

The arrest and exile of Uzbek community leaders, the wildly disproportionate prosecution of ethnic Uzbeks on charges of inciting the violence, and the intimidation of human rights advocates or Uzbeks defense attorneys were seen by many as a sign of institutional change in Kyrgyzstan, a redefinition of citizenship based on ethnicity. Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan described this ethnicization of the country and accompanying violence as a loss of brotherhood—a betrayal on the part of trusted neighbors—resulting in a lost homeland.<sup>32</sup> Contrary to separatist accusations that fly in the Kyrgyz language press, Uzbek discussants say that Kyrgyzstan is their homeland. In being driven out of Kyrgyzstan they do not feel they are “returning home” to Uzbekistan or other places—as the Kyrgyz description of Uzbeks as a “diaspora” would indicate—but are losing their homes, being scattered to the wind.<sup>33</sup>

### Fire, Rape, and Murder: “No One Can Remain Indifferent”

As Uzbeks documented the violence of June 10–14 online, common symbols and themes began to

emerge. These symbols informed both the creative works inspired by the events and the political campaigns of those seeking reparation.

The primary symbol of the violence is fire. Videos, photographs, and descriptions of Uzbeks being burned alive and of Uzbek neighborhoods or businesses in flames dominate the discussions across all mediums, from amateur blogs to formal religious addresses.<sup>34</sup> Self-publication and participant documentation allowed Uzbeks to spread video and photographic evidence and archive it even after attempts at deletion.<sup>35</sup> Cellular phone videos of victims being burned alive, apparently filmed by ethnic Kyrgyz onlookers, became the primary symbols of the violence for Uzbeks, shared repeatedly and discussed on a range of forums.<sup>36</sup> In one video, a teenage Uzbek boy is beaten brutally by a crowd of Kyrgyz teens in Osh and then set on fire. The crowd looks on and yells, “Don’t put him out!” as his assailants hold back several onlookers who halfheartedly try to extinguish him as he slowly dies in front of the crowd.<sup>37</sup>

Another dominant theme is rape, particularly the rape of young girls and children. As above, amateur video documentary evidence of women and girls and their relatives recounting their own stories spread virally across the Internet and are often referenced in text discussions about the events. Discussants de-

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31 “Eks-parlamentarii finansirovali terakty v Kyrgyzstane? Zaderzhannyye v Oshe dayut ‘sensatsionnye’ pokozaniya,” *Belyy Parus*, November 30, 2010, <http://www.parusk.info/2010/11/30/36159> (*Belyy Parus* is an independently owned web-based opposition publication based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan); “V Bishkeke proizoshel vzryv: pod podozreniem ‘separatisty,’” *Ferghana.ru*, November 30, 2010, <http://ferghana-blog.hvejournal.com/121251.html>; Y. Mazykina, “Miroslav Niyazov: My yavlyaemsiya svidetelyami togo, kak v Kyrgyzstane ochevidnyy separatizm vyshel za ramki ekstremizma i prevrashchaetsya v terrorism,” *24.kg*, November 29, 2010, <http://24kg.org/community/87793-miros-lav-niyazov-my-yavlyaemsiya-svidetelyami-togo.html>.

32 “Muhtoj” and O. Q. Nazarov, “Oshdan Hijrat Qilsa Bo’ladimi?,” *Islam Ovozi*, June 25, 2010, <http://www.islomovozi.com/?p=663> (source is an Osh resident’s open letter to Obidxon Qori asking his opinion, as a religious authority, on whether or not it is permissible to flee a Muslim country for a non-Muslim land when the conditions become unbearable).

33 S. Hakimov, “O’zbeklar Kelgindi Mlllat Emas,” *Yangi Dunyo*, November 7, 2010, <http://yangi-dunyo.com/?p=15712> (Hakimov self-identifies as a shaded ethnic Uzbek activist; this is likely a pseudonym). “Painkiller” and “Letters to the Editor: Kirgyzy i uzbeki: bratskie narody,” *Adolat*, June 17, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=194&lang=ru>; see also website Musliman O’zbekistan; U. Awob (Muniyb), “Musibatva Munosabat: Didagiryon Dardnoma,” *Yangi Dunyo*, August 8, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=13851>.

34 See website *Musulman O’zbekistan*; U. Awob (Muniyb), “Musibatva Munosabat: Didagiryon Dardnoma,” *Yangi Dunyo*; “Painkiller” and “Letters to the Editor,” *Adolat*; S. Ravoniy, “Prosti, esli kto byl dovelen,” *Yangi Dunyo*, September 13, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=14769>; Bahoroy “O’zbekligim ayb bo’ldi menga bugun,” *Adolat*.

35 Though the most violent video clips originally posted to YouTube are taken down by moderators because of their graphic content, at least one new website has been created specifically devoted to archiving and chronicling the graphic documentary content and videos are mirrored and stored on multiple file sharing sites all over the internet. Sometimes this is done overtly and legally, but Uzbek dissidents have long mastered the ability to hack video and audio archive and sharing sites and store their content there unbeknownst to the actual owners of the sites. For an example of a legal website dedicated to archiving graphic documentary content in Uzbek, Russian, and English, see website: *The Uzbek Tragedy*.

36 “Zazhivo sozhzhennyye uzbekskie deti,” *Adolat*, August 2, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=3241&lang=ru>; “Kirgyzy zhgut Uzbekov—muzhchinu i odnu zhenshchinu zazhivo,” *Adolat*, July 25, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=2963&lang=ru>.

37 For a detailed description of this and other videos and more information about digital archiving of these events, see: S. Kendzior, “Digital Memory and a Massacre,” *Registan.net*, June 23, 2010, <http://www.registan.net/index.php/2010/06/23/digital-memory-and-a-massacre-2/>. A graphic description of another video in which two Uzbek boys are murdered by a crowd of Kyrgyz was included in an open letter to the Kyrgyz government from an influential Uzbek imam, translated into Russian and English for a wider audience. “Qirg’iz Rahbarlari, halq bilan birga bo’ling!,” *Islam Ovozi*, June 21, 2010, <http://www.islomovozi.com/?p=661>.

scribe the sexual violence in terms that emphasize inhuman brutality, citing gang-rapes of young children and virgin girls, frequently with the humiliating detail (sometimes symbolically, sometimes literally) of their fathers being forced to watch.<sup>38</sup>

The graphic nature of the content provoked a strong reaction in the community. Many expressed feelings of horror, shock, and profound helplessness in the face of what they called “an inhuman savagery.”<sup>39</sup> Discussants gave their own accounts of elderly men and women being thrown into flaming homes to burn to death, of attackers cutting fetuses out of the wombs of pregnant women, of relatives finding the bodies of their loved ones partially eaten by stray dogs, and of women’s bodies found with their breasts cut off.<sup>40</sup> Though these most anecdotes are not usually accompanied with documentary evidence and may be apocryphal, a substantial amount of documentary material of similar deadly violence gives weight to these stories.

The attacks are interpreted as a direct assault on the survival of Uzbek communities and Uzbek culture. Discussants emphasized the murder of community elders and pregnant women, the physical destruction of Uzbek neighborhoods and photographic evidence of the murder of some entire families to make this clear.<sup>41</sup> They believe the attacks were directed against the values that Uzbeks hold most sacred

and that exemplify their culture and community: protection of unmarried women, conservative sexual mores, respect for elders, the importance of the home as the center of family life, the reproduction of family and culture, Islam, and the neighborhood (*mahalla*) as a center of mutual ties and obligations that protects Uzbek culture in a country where Uzbeks are a minority.<sup>42</sup>

In their online commentary, Uzbek authors extend the fire imagery to describe the scale of the destruction and discrimination against Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. In contrast to the way the sudden outburst of violence is portrayed in international media and commentary—as an explosive event that inflicts a great deal of damage quickly but then fades away—the Uzbek narrative characterizes the violence not as an explosion but as a conflagration.

Saidjahon Ravoniy, an Uzbek poet and activist from Andijon, was one of several commentators who compared the fire in Osh to the Russian forest fires that burned through much of that summer. Ravoniy laments that while everyone could see the massive destruction in Russia, few understood the extent of the fires that burned in Kyrgyzstan, and the world seemed more upset over snakes and insects burning in Russian forests than the human beings who were consumed, and continued to be consumed, in the Kyrgyzstan persecution.<sup>43</sup>

38 See “O‘zbekligim ayb bo‘ldimengabugun,” *Adolat*, July 2, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=1321&lang=uz>; “Zo‘rlanganlar hikoya qiladi,” *O‘zbekFojea*, July 27, 2010, <http://uzbektra-gedy.com/uz/?p=134>; see websites *Musulman O‘zbekistan* and *Legendy i istorii Vostoka*; U. Awob (Muniyb), “Musibatva Munosabat: Didagiryon Dardnoma,” *Yangi Dunyo*, August 8, 2010, <http://yangi-dunyo.com/?p=13851>; A. Taksanov, “Ya etogo ne proshchuy i ne zabudu,” June 21, 2010, <http://alisher1966.livejournal.com/127664.html> (Alisher Taksanov is an influential academic, literary critic, and writer from Tashkent who publishes commentary on Uzbek current events from exile in Europe); Behzod “Qirg‘iziston Janubidagi Qonli Voqealar Qiyosi Tahlili: 1990 va 2010,” *Kundalik Bitiklarim*, <http://kundalik.wordpress.com/2010/08/20/qirgiziston-janubidagi-qonli-voqealar-qiyosiy-tahlili-1990-va-2010-yillar/#more-849> (*Kundalik Bitiklarim* is a private, independent website published in the U.S.).

39 The word probably most commonly used in Uzbek to describe “violence” that took place is *vahshiylik*, which is best rendered in English as savagery or butchery, connoting an animal or barbaric kind of violence. The attackers are frequently described as *vahshiyilar*, that is, savages or butchers (a person who commits *vahshiylik*). Russian and English texts about the violence, even when written by Uzbek respondents, tend to be more formal and less evocative, and use analytical terms that are more common to the language of human rights or the international community (*reznya*, massacre, or *nasilie*, violence).

40 S. Hakimov, “Oshdan Maqtub: Bir Fojea Tarixi,” *Yangi Dunyo*, November 17, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15837>.

41 See “Painkiller,” “Letters to the Editor,” “Expertnaya rabochaya gruppa,” and “Oshskaia gar,” *Yangi Dunyo*, August 16, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=14098>; “Photos,” *Uzbek Tragedy*, July 26, 2010, [http://uzbektragedy.com/?page\\_id=1312](http://uzbektragedy.com/?page_id=1312); “Foto bezpariyadkov v Oshe,” *Musulman O‘zbekistan*, no date, <http://www.muslimuzbekistan.com/ru/special/photofacts/osh2010.php>; B. Tashmukhamedov, “Poroki kirgizskoy gosudarstvennosti,” *Yangi Dunyo*, September 11, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=14744>; “Abdullo Toshkandi,” *Islam Ovozi*; O. Q. Sobitxon O‘g‘li “O‘zbeklar referedumga qatnashishlari kerakmi, yo‘qmi?” *Islam Ovozi*, June 26, 2010, <http://www.islomovozi.com/?p=665>.

42 These include things like religion (dialogues often accuse Kyrgyz collaborators of betraying their religion and sometimes include salient but likely apocryphal or symbolic details like attackers throwing Qur’ans into the toilet), the protection and seclusion of girls and unmarried women, the boundaries and tight-knit community of the *mahallas* (traditional Uzbek neighborhoods that have inbuilt institutions of self-governance and community obligations), cultivation of the land (in contrast to nomadic traditions of their neighbors), an emphasis on family honor, and religious brotherhood across ethnicity. None of these traits are necessarily unique to Uzbeks in an objective sense, but family values especially are given a great degree of stress in the dialogues, and discussants are especially upset by their communities being scattered and families separated.

43 Saidjahon Ravoniy; *Yangi Dunyo*.

### Shared Victimhood: "To All Uzbeks in Uzbekistan and Everywhere Else"<sup>44</sup>

Many of the discussants—especially those writing from Kyrgyzstan where they reported that oppression and both official and officially tolerated harassment, attacks, and physical abuse continued—felt they were abandoned by the world. The systems that they hoped would provide security or justice failed them. Many authors felt that the Uzbek online documentation of the tragedies presented ample evidence that the violence took place and that Uzbeks were overwhelmingly the victims (and not the aggressors, as the Kyrgyz government and media claimed).

One of the most common ways Uzbek discussants expressed these views was through open letters. These were written to each other (as in the letter quoted above in the subheading) or to regional and international political leaders, though these latter addresses are usually written in Russian or English for a wider audience, but published online.<sup>45</sup> The internal conversations within the Uzbek community often argue that the pleas for help from the outside world had failed. From this betrayal emerged a stronger sense of Uzbek communal responsibility, that they had no one to look out for them but themselves.<sup>46</sup>

Participants in this conversation included Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and exiles across Europe and the United States—a mix that once again indicates the internet's role in strengthening ethnic bonds. Yet within this online community, sentiment varied. Letters from Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan were of-

ten resentful towards Uzbeks in Uzbekistan or the government of Uzbekistan for not coming to their aid during the violence. Letters from Uzbeks outside Kyrgyzstan often express regret, remorse, and sometimes criticism of the Karimov government on those same grounds.<sup>47</sup>

With little help coming from Kyrgyz officials or the international community, Uzbeks living in Kyrgyzstan turned to Uzbeks abroad for help and advice. In one instance, they turned to the famous exiled Muslim scholar and cleric Obidxon Qori Sobitxon O'g'li (Nazarov) in Sweden for questions about the meaning of their suffering, for advice about whether or not they should remain in Kyrgyzstan, whether they should participate in Kyrgyzstan's political system, and whether or not it would be a sin to take vengeance for their suffering.<sup>48</sup> In February 2012, Nazarov was shot in an attempted assassination that many analysts assume was ordered by the Uzbek government.)

Sometimes Uzbeks abroad offered help and advice to Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks that reached so far into the intimate details of their lives that some felt it crossed the boundaries of what was appropriate. An Uzbekistani refugee living in Idaho was so moved by accounts he had read online of women being shunned by their male relatives or husbands they were raped during the violence that he wrote an open letter upbraiding his suffering co-ethnics for their behavior and what he criticized as religious illiteracy. Quoting a recent sermon by the influential Kara-Suu imam Rashod Kamalov—who declared that the women were victims in God's eyes and their purity and honor was intact—the Idaho-based author publicly offered

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44 "O'zbekistandagi va boshka barcha O'zbeklarga," *Adolat*, July 8, 2010, <http://www.adolat.com/?p=1587&lang=uz>; "Osh resident" is an anonymous source who self-identifies, the substance of the letter is an angry complaint directed at the Uzbek government for turning away tens of thousands of Uzbek refugees and failing to intervene to protect the Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.

45 "Spasite prozhivayushchikh v Kyrgyzstane uzbekov ot genotsida," *Yangi Dunyo*, July 22, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=13375>. This is an excellent example of a more extreme version of this kind of "open letter," it describes itself as being from "the numerous, patriotically-inclined representatives of the Uzbek ethnicity residing in Kyrgyzstan," and is addressed to "all living patriots of world civilization." Broad, desperate appeals like this one were fairly common in the weeks following the worst of the violence and seem to become less common as Uzbeks began to give up on this method and turned the conversation to one another.

46 S. Mahmudov, "Oshdan maqtub: Dunyoda Haqiqat Bormi?" *Yangi Dunyo*, November 12, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15777> (source is an ethnic Uzbek activist based on Osh, the document is an open letter detailing continued persecution of Uzbeks that the author describes as having re-intensified after Osh Mayor Myrzakmatov returned from a short leave of absence). See site *Musulman O'zbekistan*. U. Avvob, "Musibatva Munosabat: Didagiryon Dardnoma," *Yangi Dunyo*, August 8, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=13851>.

47 "O'sh shaxridan Bahrom," "Ikkinchi Kirg'inga Karimov Aybdor," *Yangi Dunyo*, October 2, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15120>.

48 "Muhtoj" and O. Q. Nazarov, "Oshdan Hijrat Qilsa Bo'ladimi?," *Islam Ovozi*, June 25, 2010, <http://www.islomovozi.com/?p=663> (source is an Osh resident's open letter to Obidxon Qori asking his opinion, as a religious authority, on whether or not it is permissible to flee a Muslim country for a non-Muslim land when the conditions become unbearable). "Abdullo Toshkandi," and O. Q. Sobitxon O'g'li (Nazarov), "O'zbeklar referendumga qatnashishlari kerakmi, yo'qmi?," *Islam Ovozi*, June 26, 2010, <http://www.islomovozi.com/?p=665>; "Qirg'in uchun qasos olish farzmi?," *Islam Ovozi*, November 12, 2010, <http://www.islomovozi.com/?p=4080>.

to marry one of the victims himself and bring her to America to live with him.<sup>49</sup>

Posted comments in response indicated that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks did not always appreciate this level of interest in their private lives. Nonetheless the incident is a good illustration of the extent to which many living outside of Kyrgyzstan felt personally affected by the tragedy, and willing to take great measures to alleviate the pain of the victims.

### Searching for Justice, in This World or the Next

“...Then [on the Day of Judgment] the little children whose cries were cut short when they were murdered in Osh will have a chance to say: “Oh, Lord! Why did this evil person kill me?” They will make their appeal to the Creator [himself], *inshallah*.”<sup>50</sup> - Muniyb, *Suffering and Misfortune*

Though some early responses were full of rage and threats, promises of physical vengeance, and occasional rumors of an organized armed resistance, the dominating concern of online discussants was justice. Most were deeply disappointed that despite all the means available to seek justice— whether Kyrgyzstani courts, Uzbek security forces, the UN, or international law—Uzbeks continued to face unfair treatment in the Kyrgyzstani media, courts, and politics. Online Uzbeks of all backgrounds pondered the theme of justice—both in the here and now and divine justice on Judgment Day.<sup>51</sup>

The emphasis on finding a religious meaning for the tragedy and a religiously based appeal to justice seems to be linked to the frustration with the lack of justice by other available means. Many appeal primarily to a sense of ultimate morality, to the hope for divine justice, and the importance of the concept of *qiyomat* (Judgment Day) in the traditional Muslim worldview. Despite the emphasis on divine judgment, actors continued to seek justice in the here and now as well.

Uzbeks “initiatives” to investigate and document the June tragedy and its ongoing aftereffects are a key part of the community effort to seek justice. These initiatives united activists, investigators, victims and refugees across state borders and included Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Europe, and the United States. Together they published research drawing from the websites that had been created by the broader Uzbek community to bear witness to the violence.<sup>52</sup>

Secular civic efforts such as these provide an important outlet for the Uzbek community to tell its story to the rest of the world, and they often tailored these reports to the international community by publishing them in Russian, English and other languages. Engaging in a secular and civic discussion of justice, however, does not preclude many of the authors from also locating the tragedy in an Islam-based religious morality and eschatology.<sup>53</sup> This hope for divine justice, the sense that— as victims of oppression—they have God on their side, and the struggle to understand the senseless violence of human tragedy and

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49 S. Ahmadjonov, “Uylanadigan Bor,” *Yangi Dunyo*, November 7, 2010, <http://yangidunyo.com/?p=15691>. The author insists that he attempted to have his letter published on a number of different sites, and was upset that some of them refused to publish it (apparently because he wanted widest possible dissemination of his offer).

50 U. Avvob (Muniyb), “Musibatva Muno sabat, Birinchi Qism: Didagiryon Dardnoma,” *Musulman O‘zbekistan*, August 2010.

51 “Kyrgyzga O‘lim!,” *Yangi Dunyo*, August 7, 2010, <http://yangi-dunyo.com/?p=13815> (this source is a long poem that claims to be a response to the Kyrgyz nationalist slogan “Death to the Sarts” that was infamously spray painted on a number of houses and businesses in Osh and Jalalabad and this poem indicates may be the title to poem written in Kyrgyz. The author indicates that he wrote the poem in Uzbekistan, his likely pseudonymous name that he uses to sign the poem could be interpreted something like “exiled commander” Ho‘ja Sharhrixoniy. However, “Sardor” is also a reasonably common first name, so this doesn’t necessarily represent a militant connotation. The poem itself is dark and threatening, however, and calls Uzbeks to train their children that Kyrgyz are an enemy who must be fought).

52 “Doklad po rezultatam nezavisimogo obshchestvennogo rassledovaniya iyun’skikh sobytiy v Kirgizstane, January 2010,” Association Droits De l’Homme en Asie Centrale— Groupe d’Osh; *Journal du Groupe d’Osh*, June 2010, <http://journalosh.wordpress.com/> (source is the website for the France-based Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, Osh Group/Initiative, led by Nadezhda Ataeva. At date of publication (January 2010) the group had not released a full report on its investigation, but direct correspondence with Ms. Ataeva indicated that a significant report is planned for release in early 2011); S. Ismoilov, “Otchet— Oshskaya Initsiativa— Iiun’ 2010 Kyrgyzstan,” *Yangi Dunyo*, January 7, 2011, <http://yangi-dunyo.com/?p=16477> (Sukhrobjon Ismoilov is the director of the Osh Initiative, he posted the report on Yangi Dunyo the same day it was released to embassies and other civic organizations in Tashkent).

53 R. Gapirov, “Sobytie posle vzryva v mahalle Majnun-tal g. Osh,” *Uzigabek*, December 3, 2010, [http://uzigabek.ucoz.ru/publ/sobytie\\_posle\\_vzryva\\_v\\_makhalle\\_mazhnun\\_tal\\_g\\_osh/1-1-0-251](http://uzigabek.ucoz.ru/publ/sobytie_posle_vzryva_v_makhalle_mazhnun_tal_g_osh/1-1-0-251) (Gapirov is a the head of the human rights organization *Pravosudie—Istina* based in Osh. His open letter to President Otunbaeva complains that he and another human rights activist were badly beaten by a group of men in public in Osh that week and the police refuse to investigate. He cites this as a typical example of the situation of Uzbeks in Osh, and though he references civil and secular law and international norms through most of the letter, at the end he specifically ties his view of justice and an acceptable, peaceful life with an Islamic worldview).

find meaning for suffering in an Islamic worldview pervades much of the writing about the events and their aftermath.

In many cases, it appears that the redefinition of pan-Uzbek identity through shared victimhood also reinforces the idea that being Muslim is a vital part of being Uzbek. This could be one of the most important lasting effects of the June violence, particularly if legal or civic efforts to achieve some kind of justice continue to fail and no secular alternatives can be found.

## **Conclusion**

For many after the June 2010 events, the Internet intensified a sense of belonging in a broader Uzbek community. The central aspect of this communal identity is a feeling of shared victimhood and suffering. Having followed economic hardships and widespread disappointment with post-Soviet “transitional democracies” the June 2010 events may shape Uzbeks’ perceptions of themselves as an aggrieved or oppressed minority even though they are the largest and most militarily powerful ethnic group in Central Asia. This “victim” identity could likely make Uzbekistani Uzbeks in particular more sensitive to perceived slights from neighboring states or other ethnic groups in the region.

Here a contrast emerges between perspectives of people who felt drawn into the conflict from afar—that is, mainly through online interaction—and those who lived through it personally. As time passed, interview respondents living in Osh (based on fieldwork conducted in 2011 and 2012) stressed the importance of moving on from the conflict and of shifting the victim identity onto the city as a multi-ethnic community. Some argued that Uzbeks should accept ethnic Kyrgyz discourses of blame in order to return to peaceful everyday life, even if they disagreed with the Kyrgyz views. Many expressed a desire to move on, and shifted the rationale for the attacks away from ethnicity and onto economic and criminal motivations, often stressing that they were not attacked by their neighbors, but by outsiders, hired thugs, or “*jigits* come down from the mountains.”

Yet for the broader Uzbek public and particularly for the Uzbekistani political opposition, who

founded many of the websites where the initial discourse took place, the pursuit of justice for coethnics attacked on the basis of their common identity remains the dominant paradigm through which the events are viewed.

The Andijon violence in May 2005 provoked a similarly strong online public reaction and discussion among Uzbeks. Because the Andijon violence was “Uzbek on Uzbek” (however it was spun or interpreted), and because the Karimov government launched an official narrative explaining that violence and took strong measures to punish dissenting voices, discussion of Andijon has been both forced “underground” and stigmatized as an opposition cause. Discussants are forced to take a political stand regarding Andijon: voicing doubt about any of the Uzbekistani government’s contradictory explanations of the violence is automatically an oppositional act. Though it is an issue of great importance to many Uzbeks and citizens of Uzbekistan in general, the politicization of the Andijon events prevented it from gaining traction as a popular movement.

This discussion of the Osh events has a very different character. The government of Uzbekistan has made no strong statements creating any official stance and provided an unusual amount of leeway for Uzbeks to discuss an emotionally charged issue, notably allowing collaboration with international organizations and committees, cooperation between actors across borders, and participation of Uzbekistan’s intellectual and creative elites in what appear to be unscripted forums and artistic works.

Popular anger and dissatisfaction on this issue are primarily directed towards outside actors (ethnic Kyrgyz, Kyrgyzstani politicians, foreign instigators, etc). The Karimov government has structured its legitimacy on claims to authentic ethnic Uzbek nationalism. For these reasons it seems likely that relatively open discussion of these issues may be allowed to continue, especially if current events drive interest in the plight of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere. This unusually permissive environment combined with the new communicative capacity of digital technology may have created the broader ethnic Uzbek community’s first international public debate since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Whether a publicly debated issue can help create a genuine public sphere—and how that might affect the region—remains to be seen.

# The Visa Regime in Uzbekistan: A Failed Attempt at Balancing Regime Interests and Freedom of Individuals

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**Yevgenia Pak<sup>1</sup> (2014)**

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The concept of ‘national security’ extends beyond the traditional concerns of military security.<sup>2</sup> It also involves “the ability to navigate safely through the global commons” such as the oceans, the atmosphere, outer space and cyberspace.<sup>3</sup> Human security implies the free movement of individuals—inside their own states, when crossing state borders, and when migrating to other countries.

On paper, Eurasia is a liberal region in terms of freedom of movement, mostly due to post-Soviet agreements that allow for a unified space for the movement of people. However, in practice, crossing state borders remains challenging for a large part of the population both in terms of logistics and in terms of formal procedures. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are especially problematic in this regard. Uzbekistan is one of the few countries in the world that requires those wanting to travel abroad to obtain an exit visa—that is, travelers need to get a “passport sticker,” from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Uzbek authorities have offered little in the way of explanation for the exit visa. In the 1990s, they claimed the introduction of the exit visa was a measure to ensure security and order. In the 2010s, Uzbek officials argued that the exit visa was necessary to help prevent human trafficking.

This paper examines to what extent the exit visa has helped maintain public order and prevent human trafficking. It begins by investigating the issue of foreign travel from a historical perspective by exploring rules and regulations in both the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet eras. In the latter era I distinguish

two periods—a first wave of travel restrictions instituted in 1995 that were said to be necessary to protect public order and a second wave of travel restrictions instituted since 2011 that were said to be necessary to prevent human trafficking.

I critically examine these justifications and argue that the first wave of restrictions had more to do with controlling the domestic political opposition and ensuring the security of the regime. The second wave of restrictions was less politically motivated and spurred by the desire to stop the expansion of transnational criminal groups. Unfortunately, these restrictions have not stopped human trafficking and have had the unintended consequence of increasing undocumented labor migration to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) states. The third part of this paper argues in favor of the abolishment of the visa regime and provides recommendations to Uzbekistan and international actors on how to move forward.

## **Travel Restrictions: A Long History for Uzbekistan**

### *The Soviet Era*

#### *1) Controlling Mobility inside the Country*

The Soviet Union introduced the need for travel documentation in 1932 the Central Executive Committee of the Council of People’s Commissars adopted a resolution establishing a single passport system in the USSR and a compulsory residential permit.<sup>4</sup> The newly established regime restricted the movement of citizens within the country through the *propiska*, that is, mandatory registration of residency and the use of internal passports.<sup>5</sup> The introduction of the passport

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2 F. Flournoy and S. Brimley, “The Contested Commons,” *Proceedings Magazine* 135 (2009), 7.

3 T. Murphy, “Security Challenges in the 21st Century Global Commons,” *Yale Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (2010).

4 Resolution of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR and Council of People’s Commissars “On establishing single passport system in the USSR and compulsory residential permit of passports” No. 1917 (December 27, 1932).

5 N. Rubins, “The Demise and Resurrection of the *Propiska*: Freedom of Movement in the Russian Federation,” *Harvard International Law Journal* 39 (1998), 546.

system was justified as a measure: “to ensure better control of people in cities and towns, and to remove from these localities refugees, i.e. kulaks, criminals, and other antisocial elements.”<sup>6</sup>

The very wording of the resolution clearly emphasizes the police function of the Soviet passport system. Kulaks (a rich peasants classified in the Soviet ideology as bourgeois and anti-regime elements) seeking refuge in cities were fleeing the social violence following the collectivization that began at the end of the 1920s. The removal of people in cities and towns not involved in the production process or “community service” meant forced relocation of those people to places in distant regions in need of laborers.<sup>7</sup> The restrictive residence permit, or *propiska*, was used by the Soviet government to restrict migration to the country’s most livable regions: cities, towns, and urban workers’ settlements. It also restricted migration to settlements within 100 kilometers of Moscow and Leningrad, within 50 kilometers of Kharkov, Kiev, Minsk, Rostov-on-Don, and Vladivostok, and within a 100-kilometer zone along the western border of the Soviet Union. Residence permits were generally not available for “undesirable elements” and ex-convicts, who were prevented from making their homes in Russia’s largest cities. Without a *propiska*, citizens could not work, rent an apartment, marry, or send their children to school.<sup>8</sup>

One of the main features of the 1932 system was that only residents of cities, workers settlements, state farms, and new building sites were given passports. The collective farmers were denied passports, and therefore bound to remain on their farms.<sup>9</sup> They could not move to a city and reside without passport, which would incur a fine up to 100 rubles, and repeated violations would lead to a criminal charge.<sup>10</sup> In 1953, rural residents were finally allowed to get a “temporary *propiska*,” but for no more than thirty days. Even then they needed to also obtain a separate permit from the local administration. Farmers had to wait until 1969 to be able to obtain passports, and it was not until 1974 that they were able to freely travel inside the country. Between 1974 and 1980 over

50 million passports were issued to residents of rural areas.<sup>11</sup>

## 2) *Controlling Travel Abroad*

To travel abroad, all citizens of the Soviet Union had to obtain special permission to cross the Soviet border—i.e., an exit visa and a permission from a foreign country to enter its territory,—i.e., an entry visa.

While largely closed to the outside world during the Stalinist decades, the Soviet Union significantly expanded its connections with the outside world in the 1960s. The Soviet Union entered into multiple agreements regarding visa-free travel (including private business trips) with other socialist and Eastern Bloc countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Mongolia, Romania, and North Korea). Given the increased demands to allow some categories of citizens to travel abroad, legislation became more complex. In 1959, the Soviet Council of Ministers issued a number of regulations and departmental instructions to control movement across the Soviet border. These new regulations preserved the old rules, but were supplemented by a list of persons who were given diplomatic and service passports and also allowed entry and exit with documents other than passport, such as certificates and internal passports. Henceforth, overseas business or private trips to member countries were regulated through special identity documents (the AB or NJ serial number), and inserts in the Soviet internal passports.<sup>12</sup>

Trade with foreign countries played an important role in reshaping Soviet visa policy. Despite the relatively limited nature of trade between the United States and the Soviet Union in the early 1970s, the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which the US Congress adopted as a part of the Trade Act of 1972, curtailed trade even more by linking trade relations to a country’s emigration policy. Jackson-Vanik essentially stated that if a country denied its citizens the right or opportunity to emigrate, imposed more than a nominal tax on emigration or emigration documents, or imposed more than a nominal tax, levy, fine, fee, or other charge on any citizen as a consequence of the

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6 Resolution of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR and Council of People’s Commissars “On establishing single passport system in the USSR and compulsory residential permit of passports” No. 1917 (December 27, 1932).

7 M. Matthews, *The Passport Society: Controlling Movement in Russia and the USSR* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

8 N. Rubins, “The Demise and Resurrection of the *Propiska*.”

9 Ibid.

10 Article 192a of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR envisages up to two year imprisonment.

11 K. Lyubarsky, “The Abolition of Serfdom,” *New Times International*, October 6, 1993, 10.

12 S. P. De Boer, E. J. Driessen, and H. L. Verhaar, *Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents in the Soviet Union: 1956-1975* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 652.



desire of such citizen to emigrate, then that country was ineligible under U.S. law for Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status.

The Jackson-Vanik amendment was originally aimed at penalizing the Soviet Union for its restrictions on Jewish emigration and was intended to encourage Moscow to lift these limits. The Soviet authorities denounced Jackson-Vanik as “a flagrant attempt by the United States to interfere in the Soviet Union’s domestic affairs.”<sup>13</sup> Despite these tensions U.S.-Soviet trade rebounded in 1975 and expanded over the next few years. U.S.-Soviet trade and Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union peaked in 1979, and Congress adopted a new Export Administration act which loosened U.S. trade and export restrictions.

Soviet citizens who campaigned for their right to emigrate in 1970s were known as *refuzniks*, or *otkazniki*. In addition, according to the Soviet Criminal Code, a refusal to return from abroad was treason, punishable by imprisonment for a term of 10-15 years or death with confiscation of property.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the loosening of travel regulations in 1988 and 1990, the *propiska* and exit visa systems remained in place and continued to tightly restrict Soviet citizens’ right to move for more than six decades. No significant changes were made to this system until 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Jackson-Vanik amendment was repealed in December 2012.

#### 1991-1995: Free Movement of People

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a range of measures were undertaken to ensure freedom of movement in the newly established Republic of Uzbekistan. They included the abolition of restrictions on the movement of people and their choice of domicile. The new draft laws were developed and finalized in 1992.<sup>15</sup>

The constitution of the newly established independent Republic of Uzbekistan solemnly declared

that “any citizen of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have the right to freedom of movement on the territory of the Republic, as well as a free entry to and exit from it, except in the events specified by law.”<sup>16</sup> Other resolutions further elaborated that citizens “shall enjoy the right to freedom of travelling abroad for private purposes, common purposes, for permanent residence, as tourists, to study, to work, to receive medical treatment, [and] for business purposes” and that documents needed to travel abroad should be limited to the possession of an entry visa for the targeted state.<sup>17</sup>

The new regulations clearly stated that the new order applied to travel to all states with the exception of the CIS member states, where no visa documents were necessary.<sup>18</sup> Indeed “open borders and freedom of movement of citizens” were guaranteed by Article 5 of the Agreement on Creation of CIS, signed on December 8, 1991. In order to implement it in 1992, the majority of newly independent states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, with Georgia joining in August 1995) signed the Bishkek Agreement on Free Movement of Citizens of CIS States, which guaranteed the freedom to move to all cosignatories’ territories, provided a person was a citizen of one of the parties to the agreement.<sup>19</sup>

However, economic crises and political instability started to compromise CIS freedom of movement. CIS leaders tried to contain these forces in January 1993 by adopting the Charter of the CIS, with Article 2 encouraging the “Member States’ assistance to the citizens of the CIS states with regard to free movement within the Commonwealth.” The charter also states that “questions of social and migration policy lie in spheres of joint activity of the Member States, in accordance with obligations undertaken by the Member States under the framework of the Commonwealth” (Art. 4) and that member states “shall exercise a joint activity in the formation

13 K. M. Cowan, “Cold War Trade Statuses. Is Jackson-Vanik still relevant?,” *University of Kansas Law Review* 42 (1994), 742-43.

14 De Boer, Driessen, and Verhaar, *Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents in the Soviet Union*.

15 Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “On citizenship of the Republic of Uzbekistan” No. 632-XII (July 2, 1992); Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “On measures on introduction of the passport of the citizen of the Republic of Uzbekistan” No. 533 (November 13, 1992).

16 Article 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

17 Resolution of the Cabinet of Minister, “On order of travelling abroad of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan” No. 141 (March 17, 1994). Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “On measures on further strengthening of economic reforms, protection of private property and entrepreneurship development” No. UP-745 (January 21, 1994).

18 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On order of travelling abroad of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan” No. 141 (March 17, 1994).

19 “Soglashenie o bezvizovom peredvizhenii grazhdan gosudarstv SNG po territorii ego uchastnikov ot 9 oktyabrya 1992 goda” (Agreement on Visa-free Movement of Citizens of the CIS Members within the CIS, October 9, 1992).

of common economic space on the basis of market relations and free movement of goods, services, capital and labor” (Art. 19). The charter thus became the first document of its kind to unequivocally stress the importance of freedom of movement in the post-Soviet economic and social contexts.

#### *1995-2011: A First Wave of Restrictions*

Legislation on freedom of movement within the CIS began to lose its momentum in the second half the 1990s. In 1995, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “On establishing the procedure of exit for citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan,” No. 8 dated February 6, 1995, approved and launched the so-called exit visa. This resolution was accompanied by several other documents, “On additional measures to improve the passport system in the Republic of Uzbekistan,” “Statutes on the passport system in the Republic of Uzbekistan,” “Instructions on the implementation of the passport system in the Republic of Uzbekistan,” and “On measures to further improve the passport system in the Republic of Uzbekistan,” which introduced a new order affecting Uzbekistanis’ freedom of movement.

According to the above-mentioned resolution, citizens of Uzbekistan wanting to travel abroad needed to obtain an exit visa, that is, a permit sticker in their passports (hereinafter, the sticker). The sticker was valid for a period of two years, and grants multiple exits. The sticker validity period was limited to the passport validity.<sup>20</sup> Uzbeks who wanted to travel abroad, (except to CIS states which do not require an exit visa) were forced to apply to the local OVIR offices (Local Departments of Exit, Entry, Citizenship) according to their place of registration of residency (*propiska*). The applicant had to provide a passport and pay the state a fee (about US\$20). According to the law, OVIR had to consider the application within 15 business days, and “grant the sticker in the absence of grounds to refuse the right to travel abroad” (Section 2). According to the resolution, the right of a citizen of Uzbekistan to leave the country was to be provisionally restricted if he/she:

- a. Has access to especially important data or top secret data constituting a state secret and concluded a labor agreement (contract) stip-

ulating a provisional restriction of the right to leave, until expiration of the period of restriction established by the labor agreement (contract);

- b. Has been detained on suspicion of having committed a crime or has been accused, until the court’s decision on the case;
- c. Has been ruled by the court as an especially dangerous recidivist or is presently under administrative supervision of militia, until the sentence has been served or lifted or the termination of the administrative supervision;
- d. Evades the fulfillment of obligations imposed on him/her by a court of law until the obligations have been fulfilled or the sides have reached an agreement;
- e. Has presented deliberately false information when legalizing documents for exit from Uzbekistan;
- f. If a civil claim has been instigated against this person, until the court makes a decision on the case; or
- g. In accordance with the Republic of Uzbekistan’s legislation, has been called up to the military service, until the termination of the military service or on the grounds of the law. (Section 3).

Moreover, Article 223 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan clearly stated “exit from or entry in the Republic of Uzbekistan, or crossing the state border, which violates the duly set procedures shall be punished with a fine from fifty to one hundred minimum monthly wages, or imprisonment from three to five years.” Violation of set procedures to exit from or enter into the Uzbekistan should be interpreted as:

- a. Crossing the border with an invalid or void passport.
- b. Illegally crossing the border, or
- c. Crossing the border without proper documents.

Laws against crossing the border with an invalid or void passport aim to prevent criminals and other violators, along with persons indebted to the state

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20 Para h, Section 2, Appendix 1, Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the establishment of procedure for exit of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan and regulations on diplomatic passports of the Republic of Uzbekistan” No. 8 (January 6, 1995).

or any other legal or natural persons, from leaving Uzbekistan.

### *2011: A Second Wave of Restrictions*

In 2011, a new resolution of the government of Uzbekistan, No. 200 dated July 7, 2011, introduced a new procedure, “On the establishment of procedure for exit of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan and regulations on diplomatic passports of the Republic of Uzbekistan.” According to it, restrictions to exit the country now included the following:

If certain information has been received by the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from competent authorities that the applicant, while abroad, violated the law of the host country (list of offenses defined by the relevant authorities), or if certain information has been received indicating non-expediency of granting permission to exit from Uzbekistan— until the termination of a two year period since the registration of this person.<sup>21</sup>

The law fails to provide an explicit definition of “relevant authorities” who are to define the list of “offenses” that might be used by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to refuse the right to exit. It also introduces a very broad and confusing term—“non-expediency”— that might cover a multitude of undefined violations. The blurry nature of this terminology allows overly expansive leeway as to the interpretation of what can be deemed non-expedient by the above-mentioned ministries. Therefore, this ground for refusal leaves open a great deal of room for local administrative discretion. The regulations do provide for appeal of refusal of the exit visa through the courts or superior administrative bodies. However, should this restriction of the right to exit be imposed privy to Clause H, the amended Resolution No. 8 denies the applicant the right to appeal against such a decision.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, in 2012 President Islam Karimov approved amendments to the Criminal Code aimed at strengthening the legal ramifications for illegal entry and exit from the state. According to the amendments to Article 223 of the Criminal Code, exit from

or entry into the Republic of Uzbekistan, or crossing the state border, in violation of the duly set procedures is punishable with 5-10 years imprisonment<sup>23</sup> if committed by state officials, persons that require special approval to travel abroad, or if committed repeatedly. This measure also applies to foreigners, whose right of entry into Uzbekistan is limited in accordance with the procedure for entry and exit from Uzbekistan of foreign citizens and stateless persons, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. The law took effect on January 4, 2013.

### **Rationales of the Visa Regime: Two Hypotheses**

The Uzbek authorities have offered little in the way of explanation for the visa regime. However, two major hypotheses can be put forward.

#### *Hypothesis 1. To Ensure Domestic Security ... and Eradicate Opposition*

The 1995 law introducing the permit sticker affirms that the new order was introduced “to ensure the protection of rights, freedoms, and lawful interests of citizens, as well as to ensure security and order.” It is therefore crucial to analyze the political and social environment in Uzbekistan in the mid-1990s in order to understand the reasons behind this decision.

In the transition to independence, the Uzbek government adopted a set of domestic policies built upon the twin pillars of stability and consolidation of the country’s independence. In numerous speeches, President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov argued that, given Uzbekistan’s domestic and international circumstances, the country’s first priority should be stability.<sup>24</sup> The result was a set of domestic initiatives designed to forge a strong centralized state, promote Uzbek national self-identity and suppress all potential sources of opposition (particularly those inspired by political Islam).<sup>25</sup> The attempts to eradicate any potential opposition movements, especially those that emerged in 1988-1992, during the *glasnost* and *perestroika* years, resulted in Soviet-style tactics of

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21 Para h. Section 3, Appendix 1, Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the establishment of procedure for exit of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan and regulations on diplomatic passports of the Republic of Uzbekistan” No. 8 (January 6, 1995) amended by new Resolution of the government of Uzbekistan No. 200 (July 7, 2011).

22 Ibid.

23 Disposition of Article 223 as amended by the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-345 (December 29, 2012).

24 N. Melvin, *Uzbekistan. Transition to authoritarianism on the Silk Road* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 29.

25 J. Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A soviet republic’s road to sovereignty* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 17.

using fear and coercion. Political activists were denied the right to assemble, advance their views, meet with foreign journalists, and distribute publications.<sup>26</sup> The main independent organizations were the Birlik (Unity) People's Movement and the associated Birlik Party, which promoted principles of independence and national rebirth.<sup>27</sup> The Birlik movement was officially recognized in 1991, but denied registration as a party. Several activists, notably Muhammad Salih, left Birlik and formed the Erk party as the "official opposition" in April 1990.

In 1993, the government issued a decree requiring all officially recognized public organizations and political parties to re-register or face suspension. On October 1, 1993, the government used technical pretexts to prevent both Birlik and Erk from registering with the Ministry of Justice, which resulted in the permanent ban of both parties.<sup>28</sup> The government began to actively persecute members of the Birlik party, and a number of opposition leaders disappeared or were assaulted or imprisoned.<sup>29</sup> The Members of both parties, including the Birlik chairman, fled the country. As a part of a political crackdown, conspiracy charges were issued against five Erk leaders who had been living in exile since 1993. In June 1994, Uzbek security services seized dissidents Murod Zurayev and Erkin Ashurov from exile in Almaty and took them to Uzbekistan to stand trial along with other dissidents. The Supreme Court found the seven dissidents guilty of "participating in a conspiracy to forcibly overthrow the constitutional government." The government used this trial as a part of an ongoing effort to discredit opposition groups by linking them with extremism.<sup>30</sup>

It is hardly a coincidence that the exit visa was launched in a time of political repression, when many opposition figures fled to Russia, Turkey, and the United States, and continued to be active abroad. In 1995, the Uzbek authorities closed seven major newspapers on the grounds that they were "disloyal to the current regime."<sup>31</sup> Some publications were banned outright, such as *Mustaqil Haftalik* and *Erk*, the news-

papers of the *Birlik* and *Erk* opposition groups respectively. Individuals have been imprisoned for merely possessing one of these newspapers.<sup>32</sup> However, both movements continued to operate from abroad. In addition to the new law on the media, a law on political parties introduced in January 1997 imposed further obstacles for political party registration and "justified" the government's full control over political life.<sup>33</sup>

The introduction of a visa exit regime in 1995 can therefore be understood in the context of the political struggle between the Karimov regime and its first generation opposition. The authorities were afraid of the possibility of opposition leaders creating dissident cells abroad, and being able to travel freely to and from Uzbekistan. Subsequent years have shown evidence of the regime's attempts to prevent activists and independent journalists from traveling abroad and developing contacts with foreign groups and institutions that could provide support. In the second half of the 1990s, the Government also restricted cross-border travel with some of its Central Asian neighbors.

#### *Hypothesis 2. To Prevent Human Trafficking... and Make Labor Migration More Difficult*

The second round of restrictions, in the early 2010s, seems more of a response to new social dynamics than to any change in the political agenda of the authorities.

Although the Uzbek authorities remain discreet on the topic, the idea that the exit visa prevents human trafficking is widespread among Uzbek experts and official circles. Human trafficking has increased immensely since the collapse of Soviet Union.<sup>34</sup> Due to its declining economy and rising poverty, Uzbekistan, as Central Asia's most populous state, has become a growing source country for human trafficking and the sex industry. Uzbek women and children are subjected to sex trafficking, often through fraudulent offers of employment in the United Arab Emirates, India, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey, Thailand, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, Indonesia, and

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26 A. Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), 10.

27 Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 35.

28 Ibid., 35.

29 Ibid., 36.

30 Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 36.

31 Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy*, 15.

32 Ibid.

33 Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 38.

34 "Anti-trafficking Activities in Central Asia Financed by SIDA," SIDA evaluation 06/30, SIDA, Stockholm, 2006.

also within Uzbekistan.<sup>35</sup> Small numbers of victims from Uzbekistan were identified in the United States, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Georgia.

The government of Uzbekistan has raised awareness of this issue and ostensibly taken measures for its prevention, such as the introduction of the law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “On Combating Human Trafficking,” and the presidential decree, “On measures to improve the efficiency of the fight against human trafficking,” on July 8, 2008. The same year the country ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It should be noted that prior to adoption of the law, the only provision to entail criminal responsibility for human trafficking was Article 135 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, stating that “engagement of people for sexual or any other exploitation by deceit,” as well as “with a purpose of traffic of such persons outside the Republic of Uzbekistan” shall be punished with imprisonment from five to eight years.

However, the expansion of transnational criminal groups and the emergence of new global strategies to combat trafficking in humans encouraged the Uzbek government to develop more targeted legal instruments.

It is also safe to assume that Uzbekistan’s domestic and international policy at that time was heavily influenced by its preoccupation with relations with the United States. After September 11, 2001, the United States was sometimes seen an ideal international partner, not only as an ally against the Islamist threat but also as a source of financial aid and investment.<sup>36</sup> The establishment of close ties between the United States and Uzbekistan, however, proved to be more challenging than Tashkent expected. Despite the importance of the security agenda, the Clinton

and both Bush administrations were concerned with human rights and democracy as determining factors in relations between Washington and Tashkent, and human rights violations could be sufficient to merit a cut-off of US assistance.<sup>37</sup> As of the FY2003 foreign operations appropriation, Congress has prohibited foreign assistance to the government of Uzbekistan unless the Secretary of State determines that Uzbekistan is making substantial progress in meeting commitments to respect human rights.<sup>38</sup>

After the US Department of State gave the lowest possible grade (Tier 3: country does not fully comply and is not making significant efforts to do so) to Uzbekistan on the trafficking of people in its 2003, 2006, and 2007 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) country reports, Uzbekistan became very keen to gain US approval and change its image as one of the worst human rights violators.<sup>39</sup> Tashkent developed a special National Work Plan to increase efficiency in combating human trafficking for 2008-2010.<sup>40</sup> In all regions of Uzbekistan, interdepartmental commissions were set up to prevent the threat.<sup>41</sup> As a result, Uzbekistan’s rating was moved to Tier 2 (Tier 2: country does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to comply).<sup>42</sup> In 2008, an official US Department of State communication acknowledged that “[the Uzbek authorities have] a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute making significant efforts to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.”<sup>43</sup>

The national Work Plan imposed responsibility upon and granted additional discretion to the National Security Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to “strengthen border control against persons [who could] become potential victims of human trafficking.”<sup>44</sup> The obvious link between this provision and the aforementioned restrictions (i.e., the amendments to the exit visa introduced in 2011) indicates

35 “Case Data on Human Trafficking: Global Figures and Trends,” IOM, 2012, <http://www.humantrafficking.org/uploads/publications/IOM-Global-Trafficking-Data-on-Assisted-Cases-2012.pdf>.

36 S. Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington’s Security Agenda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 56.

37 *Ibid.*, 68.

38 J. Nichol, *Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 3.

39 “Trafficking in Persons 2013 Report: Country Narratives,” US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2013/215647.htm>.

40 Decree of the President “On measures to improve the efficiency of the fight against human trafficking” No. PP-911 (July 8, 2008).

41 “Human trafficking issues considered in Muynak,” *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, January 3, 2011, <http://uza.uz/en/society/1747/>.

42 “Trafficking in Persons 2013 Report.”

43 *Ibid.*

44 Appendix 1 to Decree of the President “On measures to improve the efficiency of the fight against human trafficking” under No. PP-911 (July 8, 2008).

that the government of Uzbekistan saw the exit visa as the first and most effective tool to prevent human trafficking.

Although Tashkent seems ready to discuss human trafficking and is implementing new laws, travel restrictions have also major consequences with regard to labor migration. This unfortunately is an issue the Government is not keen to address. Unlike its Kyrgyz and Tajik neighbors, which recognize the numerical importance of labor migration and its key role in sustaining households through remittances, Uzbekistan seems to ignore that there is a problem.

Estimates of labor migration from Uzbekistan to Russia between 2004 and 2008 vary widely. Official figures estimate that 250,000 Uzbek migrants traveled abroad in that period, while more realistic estimates put those numbers at about three million. According to the official statistics published in December 28, 2012, by the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan is now the primary source of labor migration to Russia with approximately 2.3 million people.<sup>45</sup> In other words, every fourth labor migrant in Russia is a citizen of Uzbekistan.<sup>46</sup> However, the regime refuses to recognize the large numbers of this emigrating workforce and President Karimov has been very negative about them, stating “I call lazy those people who disgrace all of us by wanting to make a lot of money faster there.”<sup>47</sup> Labor migration shines a harsh light on the growing difficulties of Uzbekistan’s rural population and accentuates the country’s dependency on Russia. In 2013, Russia’s Central Bank calculated that \$5.7 billion in remittances were sent to Uzbekistan, the equivalent of 16.3 percent of Uzbekistan’s GDP at the black-market exchange rate.

Even if the exit visa does not apply to Russia, which does not require an entry visa for the majority of CIS countries, the structures created to supervise cross-border flows and criminalize them is part of the Uzbek state’s strategy to hamper labor migration.

## **Rationales for the Abolishment of the Exit Visa**

### *The Exit Visa Is Going against a Basic Human Right, the Freedom of Movement*

The exit visa is a violation of the right to freedom of movement. In visa regulations are at odds not only with Uzbekistan’s international obligations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but also with its own constitution, whose Article 28 states that “a citizen of the Republic of Uzbekistan has the right to freedom of movement across the state, to enter the Republic of Uzbekistan and exit from it, except for in cases restricted by law.”

### *The Exit Visa Is a Political Tool Against Human Right Activists*

The exit visa is also used to prevent human rights activists from engaging in international activity or, simply, going abroad. At the end of 2013, for instance, Surat Ikramov, the leader of the Independent Human Rights Workers Initiative (IGNPU), was prevented from leaving the country for an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) conference.<sup>48</sup> He told Uznews.net that he was not allowed to board his flight to Istanbul because he did not have an extension for his exit visa for Uzbekistan.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Exit Visa Fails to Combat Human Trafficking*

The exit visa has not helped in the fight against human trafficking. According to the International Migration Organization (IMO), in 2011, Uzbekistan was ranked fifth in countries of origin for victims of human trafficking. It had 292 recorded victims (the undocumented numbers are probably at least of several thousand more), falling behind only Ukraine (835), Haiti (709), Yemen (378), and Laos (3 5 9).<sup>50</sup> The most immigrants falling under the trafficking category are women who travel to the CIS states (Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan) and to Turkey, Thailand, UAE, and Israel.<sup>51</sup> Most of them are recruited by private tour agencies or bridal agencies, and are

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45 “Data on migration situation in the Russian Federation in 2012,” Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/statistics/data/>.

46 “International Migration 2013: Migrants by Origin and Destination,” UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Population Division, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/pdf/International%20Migration%202013\\_Migrants%20by%20origin%20and%20destination.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/pdf/International%20Migration%202013_Migrants%20by%20origin%20and%20destination.pdf).

47 D. Trilling, “Uzbekistan’s President Attacks ‘Lazy’ Labor Migrants,” *Eurasianet*, January 21, 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67157>.

48 “Surat Ikramov prevented from leaving the country to attend OSCE conference,” *UzNews*, October 24, 2013, accessed at [http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=en&cid=3&nid=24166](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&cid=3&nid=24166).

49 Ibid.

50 “Case Data on Human Trafficking,” IOM.

51 Ibid.

taken abroad illegally under the promise of highly paid jobs as bartenders, dancers, babysitters, etc. The overly optimistic numbers reported by Uzbek law enforcement agencies say they conducted 1,013 trafficking investigations and 531 trafficking cases in 2012 (compared with 951 investigations and 444 cases in 2011).<sup>52</sup>

However, the State Department's annual Global Trafficking in Persons report for 2012 downgraded Uzbekistan to the lowest category, Tier 3. Although in 2008, Uzbekistan presented a written plan to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, it failed to attain the standard set by Congress in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA).<sup>53</sup> In the 2011 and 2012 TIP reports, Uzbekistan was granted consecutive waivers from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3 based on the 2008 plan. TVPA authorizes a maximum of two consecutive waivers. A waiver is no longer available to Uzbekistan, which is therefore deemed to be not making significant efforts to comply with minimum standards.<sup>54</sup>

#### *The Exit Visa Is a Discriminatory Instrument Used against Women*

Various reliable sources have also documented the use of the exit visa as a discriminatory measure targeting women. Under the guise of curtailing prostitution and "criminality" and ostensibly in an effort to combat trafficking in persons, the government introduced regulations in 2011 that require male relatives of women between the ages of 18 and 35 to submit a statement pledging that the women would not engage in illegal behavior, including prostitution, while abroad.<sup>55</sup> These measures are obviously discriminatory because they do not target prostitution per se, or criminality, but women as a class (or at least women between the ages of 18-35). Even though the above mentioned regulations concerning the exit visa have never been officially codified and exist only at the level of "confidential" internal reg-

ulations and instructions for law enforcement bodies, they have, in fact, turned into a common practice. A clear illustration of this is the case of Yelena Bondar, a 22 year old journalist who was denied an exit visa on the grounds of age and insufficient proof of non-criminal intent.<sup>56</sup>

It is worth noting that it is not the only discriminatory provision found in the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Since the beginning of 2004, women's NGOs working for women's equality and empowerment have come under increasing pressure from the Uzbekistan government with the proclamation of decrees and the issuing of secret directives to banks that have obstructed the activities of women's NGOs and at times made their work impossible.

The example of such regulations is the decree issued on May, 25 2004 requiring all women's NGOs to apply for re-registration and that only those that are recommended by the Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan can be re-registered. The mere existence of such discriminatory regulations contradicts both national legislation and numerous international agreements. Indeed, Uzbekistan has signed and adopted several international instruments that condemn discrimination and protect the rights of women. Amongst these are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and most importantly the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Like many other Muslim countries and most Central Asian states, Uzbekistan is a male-dominated society. Gender discrimination is common practice in all facets of life, especially in relation to family and gender issues. In the name of protecting women from human trafficking—a more than legitimate concern—the exit visa regime is also a way to institutionalize the refusal of empowering young women in their professional and personal autonomy. High proportions of

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52 "Trafficking in Persons 2013 Report."

53 Ibid.

54 "Testimony by Brian Campbell, Director of Policy and Legal Programs before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations," International Labor Rights Forum; "Tier Rankings in the Fight Against Human Trafficking and the government of Uzbekistan," Hearing, April 16, 2013, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA16/20130418/100697/HHRG-113-FA16-Wstate-CampbellB-20130418.pdf>.

55 "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012," United States Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204629.pdf>.

56 "Uzbekistan restricts women's freedom of movement amid concerns over prostitution," *Uznews*, May 4, 2011, [http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=en&cid=3&nid=17106](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&cid=3&nid=17106).

women, especially those at the grass roots level, face negative traditional beliefs that put them in disadvantaged position on a daily basis. Furthermore the nature and extent of discrimination against women in Uzbekistan varies considerably from other parts of the world, in that it is legally sanctioned and reinforced by existing practices.

*The Exit Visa Fosters Undocumented Migration to CIS States*

In refusing to recognize the significance of labor migration, Uzbekistan is doing its own citizens no favors. Although Uzbek migrants can enter Russia and Kazakhstan without entry visas, and thus without an exit visa from Uzbekistan, they then must find the means to legalize their status. Getting a work permit remains challenging. Tashkent cannot just put pressure on these two neighbors and demand legislation that would force them to respect the rights of Uzbek migrants (legal work permits, health insurance, housing, pensions, and fair work contracts). Uzbekistan's denial thus indirectly contributes to fostering undocumented migration and puts migrants in a permanent state of fear, increasing the likelihood that they will resort to engaging in illegal activities. Moreover, this permanent status of illegality has a financial counterpart, which is that the supervision of labor migration feeds the rent-seeking mechanisms of the Uzbek security services in charge of borders.

**Recommendations**

*Uzbekistan must sign interstate agreements with Russia and Kazakhstan protecting the interests of its citizens abroad.* One of the first steps would be to send specialized diplomats representing the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population to Uzbekistan's embassies in Moscow and Astana. A second step would be to work closely with both countries to ensure the rights of Uzbek migrants in terms of work permits and conditions. Specific documents need to be signed, as Uzbekistan is not part of the Customs Union and suspended its membership in the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc), which warrants freedom of movement among member states.

*The World Bank and the IMF should initiate a cost analysis of the exit visa regime's economic ramifications.* Both institutions should assess the cost of the current visa regulations and their impact on domestic situations, the investment environment, and international trade. The research should include detailed statistics on the number of people applying for an exit visa, and should be disaggregated in terms of gender. The endemic corruption of the services in charge of migration should be included in this cost analysis in order to explore one of the least known financial aspects of the exit visa regime.

*Embassies operating in the Republic of Uzbekistan should not base their decisions on granting/refusing entry visas on the status of the exit visa.* Only the US and German embassies currently do not do so.



# Public and State Responses to ISIS Messaging: Uzbekistan

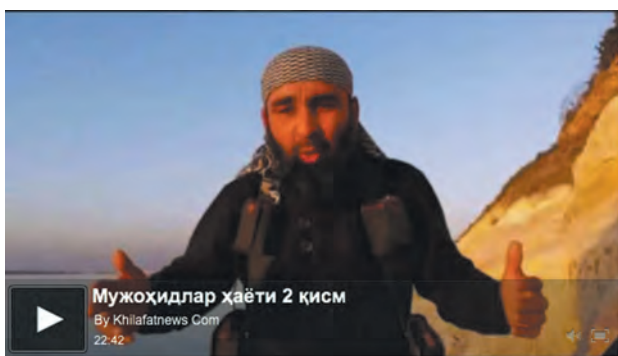
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Noah Tucker<sup>1</sup> (2016)

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## Overview: Messages, Narratives, and Social Media Presence

In spite of the fact that more ethnic Uzbeks fight in groups allied against ISIS, their place in the discourse of Central Asians about the conflict in Syria is not an accident. For roughly a year between 2013 and 2014, just as many in the region were becoming aware for the first time that their compatriots were participating in the bloody Syrian war, for a short time ethnic Uzbeks became the most visible Central Asian contingent inside ISIS and remain the only group from the region to have developed its own sophisticated messaging operations targeted at co-ethnics in their own language. The Uzbeks in ISIS created a media service called KhilofatNews, several video studios, and related social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Odnoklassniki and video-sharing sites including YouTube and Vimeo. ISIS Uzbeks reject secular state borders in the region and target co-ethnics in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and those working in Russia or other



*The former ISIS Uzbek spokesman, “Abu Usmon,” whose appearances ceased sometime in the fall of 2014 at roughly the same time other ISIS Uzbek recruiting operations went offline. Usmon identified himself as a former high-ranking police officer from Andijon who came to regret his participation in what he described as a culture of abuse and corruption in Uzbekistani law enforcement.*

countries. The videos the media operators released never made concrete claims about the number of Uzbeks who had joined the group, but they triggered a wave of alarm across the region and helped put a Central Asian face on the organization for the first time. Most of these services ceased to function by late 2014 and the early Uzbek spokesmen for ISIS have all disappeared in the fog of war - based on observation for the past three years, the average lifespan of Central Asian militants in the conflict zone is perhaps six months. ISIS messaging continues to spread in jihadist sympathizer networks in Uzbek, however, shared in groups popular with migrant laborers by militants operating personal profiles on social media and by sympathizers—including IMU supporters—who promote ISIS official messages in Russian (sometimes offering their own translations), and share materials that have already been created, including abundant mainstream media coverage of the group’s military operations.

Evidence available from social media continues to fail to support claims of thousands of Central Asians fighting for ISIS, but could likely support estimates made by the Uzbek Muftiate that several hundred Uzbekistani citizens have joined the group. Although official Uzbek-language messaging has been disrupted or shut down, their brand presence on social media remains ubiquitous and messaging in Uzbek is widely available. Messages targeted at Uzbeks by ISIS social media operators and sympathizers highlights the spectacular violence the group engages in to advance its goals and the participation of Uzbeks in it. Widespread coverage of media operations by ISIS’s official media wing, al-Hayat, and international and local media attention on ISIS military operations in both Iraq and Syria help the ISIS brand to dominate online discussions of the conflict and its potential effects on Central Asia. The overwhelming majority of Uzbeks on social media reject ISIS narratives and are appalled by graphic content advertising the group’s violent tactics. But attention on ISIS rather than on multiple other groups in the

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Syrian conflict that include Uzbeks in their ranks facilitates ISIS claims that they have replaced al Qaida as the vanguard of the Salafi-jihadist movement and are a political embodiment of a transnational Sunni Muslim identity.

Uzbek language coverage of the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts—including international outlets like BBC Uzbek and RFE/RL's Uzbek service as well as popular Uzbekistan-based media—for example, focuses almost exclusively on ISIS and ignores other Uzbek-led groups and battalions that appear to have larger numbers of Uzbeks in their ranks and conduct more active messaging operations on social media in narrow jihadist sympathizers networks. Wide coverage of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's pledge of *bayat* (allegiance) to ISIS further enhances the public impression that ISIS dominates the Uzbek jihadist movement and that Central Asians who join the Syrian/Iraqi conflict join ISIS almost exclusively, arguably distorting the public's already limited information on the nature of the Syrian conflict and the ways in which their compatriots are drawn into it.

Although the vast majority of Uzbeks online avoid jihadist sympathizer or Salafist networks, they continue to be exposed to ISIS messaging through coverage in the mainstream media. Even the vast majority of organized Salafist networks online, led by Uzbek emigres living and working primarily in the Middle East, rejects terrorism and ISIS and challenge its supporters and sympathizers online.

In spite of this general trend, ISIS has had some notable success in winning individual sympathizers among Uzbeks online even without its organized media outlets. In early and mid-2015, for example, a highly-networked and high-betweenness centrality hardline Salafist figure who identifies himself only as "al-Kosoniy" on several platforms changed from cautiously supporting jihadist ideas to actively promoting ISIS and advancing theological justification for conflict with Shias and other non-Sunni religious groups on Facebook. Although he reveals very little about his real identity, al-Kosoniy is a respected member of some Salafist networks and has a larger - and broader - Facebook network than any of ISIS's now-defunct official profiles ever gained. While he does not advertise any official position in an Islamic institution, to date al-Kosoniy is the most influential Muslim figure on social media to adopt a position supporting ISIS from perhaps any of the Central Asian states.

## State Responses to ISIS Messaging

The overwhelming focus on ISIS in mainstream media coverage is likely also related to the fact that regional states with significant Uzbek populations (including Russia, where Uzbeks make up the largest group of labor migrants) primarily respond to ISIS messaging by exaggerating the group's threat to the region. This approach appears to be designed to pressure the public to support incumbent regimes and current policies or, in the case of Russia, to support an argument that the Central Asian states need to join Russia-led international organizations to protect their security. State-supported media and state responses do little to acknowledge or address the problem of recruiting among migrant laborers - where the states admit that most recruiting takes place - but instead often portray ISIS as an imminent existential threat to their territorial sovereignty that should be countered by military means, arrests and assassination. Exclusive attention on ISIS allows Central Asian governments with Uzbek populations to argue that they are part of a grand coalition that faces a common enemy and to demonize the rest of the Syrian opposition, other Islamic groups and figures, and, in the case of Kyrgyzstan, ethnic Uzbeks as a group.

In the months before the March 30, 2015 presidential election in Uzbekistan, for example, state-approved media regularly reported unsubstantiated rumors that ISIS was actively targeting Uzbekistan and was gathering an invasion force on the border of Turkmenistan. Several popular Uzbekistan-based publications republished and translated Russian articles that initiated these rumors. Uzbekistani authorities frequently claimed to uncover "ISIS flags" inside Uzbekistan, including reports that one was allegedly installed on the roof of the parliament building in Tashkent during a wave of what the government claimed were ISIS-related arrests of up to 200 people in and around Tashkent. State-approved media interpreted these events as signs that the group was already active inside the country, but upon closer examination the evidence supporting many of these claims became deeply problematic and had drawn indignation and mockery from some Uzbek social media users.

Throughout the second half of 2015, reports emerged in state-approved and Russian media attempting to link Hizb ut Tahrir—the non-violent political Islamist group that Tashkent authorities have accused of involvement in nearly every incident of



A cartoon circulated on social media by independent satirical website *El Tuz*, mocking the rumors that an ISIS flag had been flown from the roof of the parliament. The figure on the right responds (in Uzbek): "Uncle, that's not an ISIS flag, that's our own flag. It just turned black from the pollution caused by all these cars!"

domestic political violence since 1999 – of cooperating with the Islamic State or its members of leaving the country to join ISIS in Syria. These reports ignore the detail that HT and ISIS mutually reject one another and HT in particular rejects ISIS' claim to have the authority to declare and a rule a Caliphate – ample evidence shows that ISIS militants follow a policy of executing members of any other Islamic group that reject their authority. Multiple studies and outside expert assessments have shown that the Uzbekistan security services frequently use allegations of membership in a banned organization to fill arrest quotas or to prosecute anyone targeted by local authorities because of political opposition or even economic rivalry. In January 2016, for example, the trial began for an Armenian Christian businessman who was accused, along with several of his employees, of ISIS membership based on no more evidence than a beard he grew as part of an Armenian mourning ritual after the death of his younger brother and a retracted confession that Avakian stated had been made while being tortured during interrogation. His family and neighbors confirm that local authorities had been trying to pressure him to sell a successful farm that he owned for several months before his arrest.

Overall, Uzbekistan's response to the threat of suspected Islamist extremist groups has been consistent for the past decade and a half - the tactics adopted by the National Security Service (NSS) have not been significantly adapted to counter a specific threat from ISIS. Migrant workers returning from Russia are frequently arrested on suspicion of supporting extremist groups and popular ethnic Uzbek imams living outside the borders of Uzbekistan have been targeted for assassination in plots that much of the

public believes are initiated by the Uzbekistani security services. These include widely respected imam Obidxon Qori Nazarov, who was shot in exile in Sweden in 2012 but survived; Syrian opposition supporter "Shaykh" Abdulloh Bukhoriy, who was shot to death outside his madrasah in Istanbul in December 2014; and Kyrgyzstan-based imam Rashod Qori Kamalov, who announced in December after the Bukhoriy attack that he was warned by Turkish security services that they had uncovered evidence of an assassination plot against him - his father, prominent imam Muhammadrafiq Kamalov, was killed in an Uzbekistani-Kyrgyzstani joint security services operation in 2006 that sparked significant public protest in Southern Kyrgyzstan.

The second-largest ethnic Uzbek population in the region resides in Kyrgyzstan, where they have been frequently targeted in ethnic violence and are commonly associated with Islamic extremism by nationalist politicians. Kyrgyzstani state responses have similarly focused almost exclusively on ISIS in addressing the Syrian/Iraqi conflict and targeted the ethnic Uzbek minority in the south on charges of collaborating with ISIS. In January 2016 Kyrgyzstani security services alleged they had uncovered several cases of citizens traveling to fight in Syria with ISIS, at least one of whom proved to be an ethnic Uzbek who fled the country after serving three years in prison on false murder charges following the 2010 ethnic conflict. In 2015 Osh authorities arrested above-mentioned Rashod Qori Kamalov, the most prominent ethnic Uzbek imam remaining in the country after the 2010 conflict, originally on charges of supporting militant groups in Syria. Kyrgyzstani authorities provided no evidence beyond "expert testimony" interpreting the imam's "physical gestures" and facial expressions to support only lesser charges including "inciting religious extremism." Nevertheless, two courts convicted Kamalov, sentencing him first to five years in a modified prison regime and then increasing the sentence to 10 years in a high-security prison on appeal in November 2015.

Finally, Russia-based media targeted at Central Asia, particularly state-owned and supported outlets and official statements, consistently present ISIS as a pressing threat to the region's borders: reports through most of 2015, for example, claimed that ISIS had recruited "thousands" of supporters in Northern Afghanistan and was preparing to attack the region; separate articles feature Russian "security experts" who speculate that an ISIS invasion will force Russia

to intervene militarily in the region - only to defend members of the Eurasian Economic Union, however. Russian online media reports stress that Uzbek migrant workers are heavily recruited in Russia and that these groups are tied to organized crime, sometimes offering specific details about alleged recruiting organizations and locations but typically reporting no law enforcement response.

### Public Responses:

#### 1) Conspiracy Theories and Anti-US Sentiment

Public responses on social media to stories about ISIS are overwhelmingly negative, and many take the group seriously as a threat to the region. Comments in response to stories about ISIS atrocities or even in response to material promoted by ISIS supporters express fear of an ISIS advance and often cite “peace” (*tinchlik*) as the most important aspect of the status quo in the country. A significant number of these responses also tie the potential advance of ISIS to conspiracy theories that claim the group is a puppet of the United States and Israel and an American plot, often citing al Qaida as a “precedent.” Fueled by Russian and Uzbekistani government messages, as well as conspiracy theory material from Middle Eastern networks, users cite these conspiracies perhaps more often than any other response and often connect Russian media reports about alleged U.S. attempts to “destabilize” the region to the rumored advance of ISIS toward Central Asia. These arguments resonate with messages promoted by Uzbek-language ISIS supporters, who frequently claim that ISIS is a Muslim response to U.S. and Western aggression.

Uzbekistani users frequently echo several of the government’s most often-used slogans, emphasizing the value they place on “peace and stability” (*tinchlik va osoyishtalik*) and expressing their strong preference for life under the rule of Islam Karimov if the “Islamic State” is the alternative. Much of the state’s messaging campaign appears to have been designed in the beginning to convince voters that stability and security in Uzbekistan depended on Karimov during the erstwhile campaign period leading up to the 2015 president election, when ISIS coverage first intensified in the national press. It is difficult to determine how many of these comments represent popular opinion and how many are state-run information operations, but their volume and frequency, even some-

times from political dissidents, likely indicates that they represent a genuine public sentiment.

Social media activity and commentary among Uzbekistanis indicate that many, if not a majority, of users believe that ISIS and most other Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) are created, funded or supplied by the United States, Israel, and other Western states. Uzbek social media users widely believe and share conspiracy theories that argue that ISIS leader Abu Bakr Baghdadi is a former Mossad agent, that U.S. Senator John McCain attended meetings with ISIS leadership, that al Qaida itself was a U.S. paramilitary puppet and the 9-11 attacks were a “false flag” operation designed to create negative public opinion about Muslims and provide a pretext to invade Afghanistan and Iraq. Jihadist operators and sympathizers frequently find themselves in the awkward position of arguing with other Uzbeks that al Qaida or other militant Islamist organizations are real and capable of carrying out attacks. These conspiracy theories at times originate in Middle Eastern forums and even from Western outlets, such as InfoWars, but in the Uzbek Internet space most often come from Russian media.

The small minority of Uzbek social media users who support ISIS – particularly on Odnoklassniki, the network most frequently used by migrant laborers in Russia – portray the group as the primary opponent of the United States and recruit Uzbeks online to join ISIS with the promise that they will fight the United States in Iraq. Uzbek ISIS supporters on social media blame the United States for the oppression of Central Asian governments and portray ISIS as the “Muslim counterforce” to Western imperialism and local authoritarianism all at once. These users sometimes echo conspiracy theories that the United



The profile picture for an Uzbek ISIS operator on Odnoklassniki who calls himself “Abu Mujahid ash Shamiy.” Much of the rhetoric and iconography of Uzbek ISIS supporters, especially migrant laborers in Russia, promotes the theme that ISIS is the Muslim counterforce to the United States.

States or Israel supports *other* Islamist extremist organizations – such as Syrian al Qaida affiliate Jabhat al Nusra – in order to claim that they are the only “true” Islamic military force.

2) *ISIS as an Internal Threat to Muslims*

Uzbek social media users who self-identify as Muslims and participate in Islamic devotional groups more often respond to ISIS messages as an internal dispute within Islam, one that they see as threatening to their own freedom to practice their religion and that they fear will likely lead others to associate Islam with what they see as unconscionable violence perpetrated by the “Islamic State” against other Muslims. Theologically literate Muslims who stand against ISIS ideology and tactics from a scriptural standpoint have some of the strongest and most resonant voices condemning the group online; in contrast to state messaging in Uzbekistan, reformist (or Salafist) Muslim groups who are often viewed with suspicion by regional governments may be the most articulate opposition to ISIS on social media.

Many Uzbek Muslim social media users seized on the February 2015 video release of the execution by fire of Jordanian Royal Air Force pilot Moaz al-Kasabeh to demonstrate that ISIS tactics flagrantly violate the teaching and traditions of the Prophet, who according to multiple *hadiths* forbade his followers from killing even an animal or insect by fire. These *hadiths* resonated strongly with Uzbek Muslims, who frequently cited them following the June 2010 ethnic

violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in response to multiple videos depicting Uzbeks burned alive by mobs of attackers. These and other responses express horror at the violence committed against innocents and protected categories of people, noting especially that their treatment of prisoners, women, and children violates Islamic law as Uzbeks understand it.

Other self-identified devout reformist Uzbek Muslims on social media have adapted a theological criticism frequently used in the Middle Eastern information environment, identifying ISIS with the Kharajite heresy in the early history of Islam. Although the average Central Asian Muslim lacks the deep theological and historical background for this parallel to make sense without extended explanation, it resonates highly among dedicated Reformist/Salafist devotional groups who are often primary targets for recruiting by ISIS and other Syria-based VEOs.

Several influential Uzbek reformist religious leaders have condemned ISIS, notably including now-imprisoned Kyrgyzstani imam Rashod Qori Kamalov. Immediately after Abu Bakr al Baghdadi declared himself Caliph of all Muslims in July 2014 and announced the “Islamic State,” Rashod Qori preached a Friday sermon in his mosque in Karasu condemning Baghdadi and citing scriptural and historical precedent from the period of the *rashidun* (the “rightly-guided caliphs”) that he argued proved no man could appoint himself Caliph. Video of the sermon shared on YouTube and on multiple social



ANTI ISIS by traysummerall

In late 2015 and early 2016, a number of prominent Uzbek reformist Muslims in exile changed their social media profile pictures to make a public stand against ISIS.

Zazzle



Users supporting the campaign to take back the “Black Banner” from ISIS post the meme above or change it to their profile picture on Facebook. The text reads “Yes to the Banner of the Prophet, Peace be Upon Him – No to colonialist flags.”

networking sites has attracted over 38,000 views, exceeding the total for most Uzbek-language ISIS material. Paradoxically, it was the video of this exact sermon that was used by state prosecutors in Kamalov's trial in the fall of 2015 to advance charges that he supported extremism.

Even Uzbeks in self-identified Islamist groups publicly oppose ISIS. As mentioned above, Hizb ut-Tahrir activists have particularly condemned ISIS and worked to draw a clear delineation between their own vision of the Caliphate - which they advocate creating by consensus of believers - and reaffirm that the group rejects violent means for political change. Uzbek Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Kyrgyzstan use Facebook to publicly refute statements by Kyrgyzstan's security services (GKNB) that the group has pledged to support ISIS in Syria. Other Uzbek Facebook users who support a global Sunni Muslim identity but reject ISIS's claim to represent it have started a campaign to "take back" the ancient Black Banner of the Prophet (the flag used by ISIS), arguing that they too have a right to reject "colonial" national symbols without appearing to support a group they regard as heretical terrorists.

Efforts even by respected reformist Muslim activists online to counter ISIS messaging by drawing attention to contradictions between the ruthless tactics used by the group and Sharia law are often complicated by the pervasiveness of conspiracy theories and broad distrust of all Western media. In a typical interaction of this type, the administrator of the Facebook group "Islom va Siyosat" (Islam and Politics) translates into Uzbek excerpts from a report detailing an ISIS bomb attack on a marketplace in Iraq just before Eid al-Fitr celebrations that killed more than a hundred bystanders and injured dozens more. The administrator calls the group "#Каллакесарлар" (cutthroats, barbarians) and challenges anyone to defend their tactics in light of Islamic law. In the long thread that followed, not a single user offered support for ISIS or attempted to defend their tactics, but many attacked the administrator for "being so gullible as to believe what you read in the world media," and insisted that the story was fabricated as part of a grand conspiracy to associate the Islamic faith with violence and terrorism. Similar dialogues frequently occur on social media in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan - faced with the unsettling possibility that a group like ISIS could carry out unspeakable horrors in the name of Islam, many Uzbeks and others from Central Asia choose to believe that these horrors simply never

happened, and sometimes go as far as to even deny that the group exists at all.

### **Uzbekistan Shifts Counter-Messaging Tactics to Align with Resonant Public Responses**

Following the March 2015 presidential election, the Karimov government abruptly shifted tactics on ISIS counter-messaging, switching from selected leaks from the National Security Services that warned ISIS attacks were imminent to allowing the Directorate of Muslim Affairs (also known as the Muftiate) to downplay the threat and characterize the ISIS conflict with other Muslims as a *fitna* - an intra-Islamic conflict, heresy or conspiracy. With this, the government's public messaging switched from emphasizing military measures to defend Uzbekistani territory to preventing recruitment. The anti-recruiting emphasis had begun already in February 2015 with the largely failed (but widely publicized) launch a new Muftiate-authored glossy pamphlet titled *The ISIS Fitna (ISHID Fitnasi)*. The launch was previewed on Sayyod.com, one of the most popular Uzbek language pop-culture media outlets among both Uzbekistani and those living abroad, and advertised widely in the press following a conference that involved national and local state-approved imams and other local government figures. When these efforts failed to gain public traction, the state took the unprecedented step of releasing Hayrullo Hamidov, a highly respected Islamic poet and teacher jailed on dubious terrorism charges in 2010, and made him the face of the anti-ISIS campaign - again enlisting the assistance of Sayyod.com. This tactic achieved broad and immediate resonance, attracted significant attention, and prompted an official response from IMU and other dissenting Islamic figures.

Within weeks of his release Sayyod published Hamidov's first new poem since his imprisonment in 2010, "The Iraq-Syria *Fitna*, The ISIS *Fitna*." The poem follows the outline of many of the arguments described above from religiously observant users - in rhythmic verse he condemns the group as an ultraviolent schism that has turned against all other Muslims and compares them to the Kharajite heresy, saying "Everywhere bullets and shells are flying/ Oases that once prospered are now burnt and dying/ Islam has utterly no connection to this... Those still alive cry out *Rasulolloh!* ('Save us, Prophet of Allah!')"



*A photo shared by an Uzbekistan-based user in a Facebook debate with a prominent ISIS supporter as evidence that Uzbekistanis are free to attend mosque and practice their religion.*

This revolting business is more than they can stand/  
The tulip fields are watered now with human blood.”

The state’s decision to shift tactics and begin to use respected religious figures – even if they have to be released from prison first – to counter extremist messaging is not without foundation. IMU and ISIS supporters on social media frequently appeal to Uzbekistani to revolt against the rule of Islam Karimov and support an Islamist state as a specific response to the oppression of religious freedom, widespread arrests of observant Muslims, and persecution of women wearing *hijab*. A potential mark of success for the state’s mixed tactic – both promoting and policing expressions of Islamic faith – is that a surprisingly high number of social media users counter these extremist arguments in exactly the way state-controlled Muftiate would hope – some post photos showing newly-constructed mosques with full parking lots or pictures of people praying in state-run mosques. Others counter that they see women wearing *hijab* but have never seen a woman pulled off the street and arrested for violating a dress code. These responses, however, are meaningless to regime opponents who have personally experienced oppression or had to flee their homeland because their beliefs or outward expressions contradicted “state-approved” definitions of which mosques they could attend, whose sermons they could listen to, or what definition of *hijab* they understood to be sacred. The state’s choice to promote Hamidov as a spokesperson

for “Uzbek” Islam (as opposed to “foreign” Islam) has the potential to be interpreted by many as hypocrisy after imprisoning him for almost five full years on charges that he, too, was a “terrorist.” In response to claims that the Uzbek citizens enjoy religious freedom under Karimov, one prominent ISIS and IMU supporter countered that one of his closest friends was framed for an attack on a state imam and imprisoned because he was an outwardly observant Muslim.

### **Policy Takeaways: Challenges for Uzbek Anti-ISIS Messaging**

As in other states in the region, an exclusive focus on ISIS in the Syrian/Iraqi conflict and its potential effect on Uzbeks in Central Asia obscures the intra-Islamic conflict and ISIS attacks against other organized militant groups fighting Syrian government forces. Responses to ISIS messaging that highlight the group’s violence against other Muslims are among the most resonant – treating ISIS as the only non-state Islamist faction in the conflict both glosses over its internecine tactics and bolsters its claim that it is the only “truly Muslim” group opposed to Assad in Syria or the only one representing a global Sunni identity.

State policies in Uzbekistan and Russia of exaggerating ISIS’s ability to pose a military threat to the territory of the Central Asian states similarly only facilitates the group’s claims that they represent a unified Sunni political movement and the false dilemma argument that citizens of Uzbekistan must accept an authoritarian regime and Russian political dominance or support ISIS – exactly the message promoted by ISIS supporters aimed at citizens unhappy with authoritarianism and political and cultural dominance by external powers.

While only a small portion of the public is vulnerable to recruitment, overcoming ubiquitous conspiracy theories fed by Russian and local media that blame the United States for the ISIS threat is likely the primary challenge for the United States and its partners in creating anti-ISIS messages that resonate with the Uzbek-speaking public. Persuading Uzbeks that external states are reliable partners with a shared interest in combatting a common threat and assisting in the development of strong ethnic Uzbek communities and institutions – particularly in Kyrgyzstan and among migrant workers in Russia and elsewhere

– is the first task before other messaging is likely to resonate.

Uzbekistan's shift in tactics to use trusted religious figures like Hayrullo Hamidov who have genuine popular influence to counter ISIS recruitment reflects one of the most resonant public responses to ISIS messaging and is likely to be significantly more successful than past strategies. New support for ISIS by some members of the hardline Uzbek Salafist networks on social media reaffirms the need for articulating theological responses by figures viewed as legitimate and authoritative.

Past regional government policies that resulted in the arrest, exile, or assassination of respected Islamic scholars who opposed violent extremist groups and political violence but were critical of

their own government have significantly narrowed the field of religious authorities available to assist in anti-ISIS messaging. While Uzbekistan released one of its most influential Islamic figures from prison to improve its anti-ISIS campaign, Kyrgyzstan almost simultaneously imprisoned its most popular ethnic Uzbek imam who had already publicly condemned ISIS. Cooperation between independent religious figures and states need not be direct or coordinated, but strict restrictions on independent Islamic discourse of Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan make it difficult for grassroots anti-ISIS dialogue to develop. Restrictions on religious freedom also open opportunities for ISIS supporters to argue that there is an inherent conflict between Muslims and secular government authorities.





## PART IV. THE DIFFICULT ISSUE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

### The Highly Securitized Insecurities of State Borders in the Fergana Valley

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Rashid Gabdulhakov<sup>1</sup> (2012)

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International organizations and Western NGOs consider that the existence of enclaves in the Fergana Valley presents a critical risk for Central Asian stability.<sup>2</sup> Vast border areas between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are still disputed, and the issue of enclaves, especially those located in Kyrgyzstan's Batken province, has not been successfully resolved yet either.

Map 1. The Fergana Valley and Its Enclaves



Source: Google map

The collapse of the multinational socialist states—the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia—resulted in the appearance of nearly twenty additional enclaves on the

world political map.<sup>3</sup> The current research identifies the following eight enclaves in the Fergana Valley, as listed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance.<sup>4</sup> There are four Uzbek enclaves in Kyrgyzstan (Sokh, Shahimardan, Dzhangail/Jani-Ayil, and Qalacha/Chon-Qora/Chongara); two Tajik enclaves in Kyrgyzstan (Western Qal'acha/Kayragach, and Vorukh); one Tajik enclave in Uzbekistan (Sarvan/Sarvak/Sarvaksoi); and one Kyrgyz enclave in Uzbekistan (Barak).

These enclaves face a wide spectrum of issues, which go far beyond the delimitation of territorial borders. Enclave residents and people residing in areas close to the border experience huge problems in their ability to travel, trade, get access to water and land resources, as well as in participating in the weddings, burials, and other ceremonies of their relatives living across the border. On some sections of the border between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, were the borders to be concretely demarcated and fences built, some households would be split in half, with one half living in one country, and the other half in the other.

#### A Brief Historical Sketch

It is important to make clear the terminological distinction between “enclaves” and “exclaves.” The term “exclave” describes a territory of a specific state that is surrounded by another country, or coun-

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2 “Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential,” International Crisis Group, April 4, 2004, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/Central%20Asia%20Border%20Disputes%20and%20Conflict%20Potential.pdf>.

3 E. Vinokurov, *A Theory of Enclaves* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 15.

4 “Border Incidents in Central Asian Enclaves,” Issue 2, January 1 - June 30, 2013. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HB\\_ROCCA\\_20130709%20EN.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HB_ROCCA_20130709%20EN.pdf).

tries. “Enclave,” on the other hand, describes a part of a foreign territory that is embedded into a state’s own territory. Thus, Sokh is an exclave of Uzbekistan (Uzbekistan is its “mainland” state) and an enclave of Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyzstan is its “host,” or surrounding, state). Like the other enclaves in the Fergana Valley, Sokh is a “true enclave,” i.e., both an enclave in respect of its surrounding host state and an exclave in respect of its mainland state.<sup>5</sup>

The legal status of an enclave is usually defined on the basis of its history of emergence, which may be a subject of dispute itself. In this latter case, each state prefers to make use of the particular Soviet documents that benefit its own interests and positions on the matter (the documents referenced date from the 1920s and the 1950s).<sup>6</sup> In the 1920s-1930s the Central Asian states were mapped out by the Soviet elites, in such a manner that resources between the upstream and downstream countries were highly integrated.<sup>7</sup> Water was exchanged for natural gas, electricity for fruits and vegetables, and even the people, who now constitute “titular” nations in their nation-states, were intermixed. While Moscow could have had in mind the mechanism of “dividing and conquering” as the driving strategy for forming the new states, there is no doubt that local elites, formal and informal leaders, and influential people had interests of their own. As Nick Megoran has stated, “It is unlikely that the original cartographers ever thought that the borders they were creating would one day delimit independent states: rather, it was expected that national sentiment would eventually wither away.”<sup>8</sup>

The emergence of the Fergana enclaves is usually explained via the assumption that land units were allocated to a country based on the language spoken. For instance, since the majority of the people in Barak village spoke Kyrgyz, the land unit was given to the Kyrgyz SSR, despite the fact that this very land unit was located inside the Uzbek SSR. Since Shakhimardan

was of cultural significance to the Uzbeks, it was given to the Uzbek administration. Sokh’s emergence is subject to debate, because the enclave is populated by ethnic Tajiks, though Tajik ASSR was part of the Uzbek SSR until October 16, 1929, when Tajikistan was granted the status of a Soviet Socialist Republic in its own right.<sup>9</sup> There are claims that in those days Sokh was “rented” to the Uzbek SSR for agricultural purposes. Both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan try to legitimate their claims by referring to different documents signed under the USSR. The lack of consensual documentation puts Sokh’s status in jeopardy, leaving it subject to speculation and debate.

### A Complex Legal Framework

Generally, the process of border demarcation between the three Fergana republics lacks transparency and has been built on political fears and emotions. Unilateral attempts to install border infrastructure, to move the physical border into the neighboring state’s territory, to erect new block posts and close the existing ones, and to change the visa agreements<sup>10</sup> make the situation regularly tense. Despite the collective dependency on infrastructure, the construction of new roads often provokes an aggressive reaction from the neighboring state, as was the case in the 2014 incident at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, when the Tajik side was accused of using heavy weapons, such as mortar shells and rocket-propelled grenades, in response to the construction of a road in a disputed area near the Vorukh enclave.<sup>11</sup>

The decision-making process on the question of enclaves and on activities undertaken in the near-border areas is rarely a multilateral one. For instance, in early 2015 the President of Kyrgyzstan, Almazbek Atambayev, made a statement about secret border-related documents signed between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan under President Bakiev’s rule.<sup>12</sup> Such

5 “Enclaves of the world - Geographical oddities or sources of international tension?”, <http://enclaves.webs.com>.

6 From the interview of S. Alamanov, “Border demarcation with Uzbekistan does not come easy - Kyrgyz official,” *Uzdaily*, December 17, 2007, <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-2109.htm>.

7 For a complete account of the National Territorial Delimitation in Central Asia, see M. Reeves, *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 65-100.

8 N. Megoran, “The critical geopolitics of the Uzbekistan—Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley boundary dispute, 1999–2000,” in *Political Geography* 23 (2004): 731–64.

9 P. Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and Origins of the Republic* (New York: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd., 2007), 1.

10 As of August 2012, Uzbekistan has required its citizens to obtain an “exit visa” (also referred to as an OVIR sticker), if the stay in Kyrgyzstan exceeds 60 days. The measure does not apply to citizens residing in the Russian Federation and was not widely announced to the citizens.

11 “Kyrgyz-Tajik Row After Border Clash,” *IWPR*, January 15, 2014, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/kyrgyz-tajik-row-after-border-clash>.

12 “Granitsa KR s RUz. Taynoe stanovitsya yavnym,” RL, January 9, 2015, <http://rus.azattyk.mobi/a/26784103.html>.

statements place border demarcation processes and the issue of enclaves even further under a veil of uncertainty. Furthermore, the opinions of local residents are not regarded as vital in the process. As a result, residents develop distrust toward “high politics,” and take individual actions to protect their land.

Defined boundaries are an integral aspect of state sovereignty. However, the task of border demarcation can be troublesome, especially for newly emergent states. The current administrative design, which includes vaguely defined internal borders, was of little concern during Soviet times. Today, the process of border demarcation is no longer the duty of the “center” and has become a key element of nation building. Independence and sovereignty imply individual legal structures, currencies, laws, and regulations that do not necessarily cohere with those of neighboring states. Trade, movement of the people, and national security all become dependent on the “imaginary lines” of the nation; lines that are actually materialized in space, and highly securitized.

### **A Large Diversity of Situations**

Enclaves can be large or small, with or without inhabitants, with or without resources. Some enclaves, such as Dzhangail or Western Qal’acha, are as small as one square kilometer in size. The legal status of some of them is unclear due to the lack of official documentation, which is the case for Dzhangail.<sup>13</sup> Some cause tremendous tensions to arise between states, while others are able to exist in peaceful surroundings. The Tajik exclave of Sarvan in Uzbekistan, for instance, is not a subject of tension or site of conflict, despite years of rough relations between, and difficult visa regulations in, the two states involved. The exclave was granted new border crossing privileges that

help its residents avoid the procedure of obtaining an Uzbek visa.<sup>14</sup> At the same time the Kyrgyz enclave in Uzbekistan—Barak—is now nearly uninhabited, since the residents have demanded relocation.<sup>15</sup> Sokh and Vorukh, as far as they are concerned, are subject to regular outbursts of conflict and explosions of violence, with as many as 30-40 incidents per year.<sup>16</sup>

Sokh and Shahimardan are the largest of the four Uzbek exclaves in Kyrgyzstan. With a population of 5,000 inhabitants, comprising mostly ethnic Uzbeks,<sup>17</sup> Shahimardan is accessible both to Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and foreign citizens, and is advertized as a tourist destination, although its attraction as a tourist spot is questionable due to the complexity of crossing the border and the lack of tourist infrastructure.<sup>18</sup> The Sokh enclave—the largest true enclave in the world by size and the most populated enclave of the Fergana Valley—is isolated from the outside world, foreigners are not permitted to enter it, and residents themselves are limited in their ability to travel to mainland Uzbekistan as a result of actions by both the Uzbek and Kyrgyz sides.

Conflicts around enclave issues involve both civilians and border guards, and resonate in other enclaves and through the border-crossing points. In January 5-7, 2013, Sokh became the epicenter of a conflict between local dwellers, Kyrgyz border guards, and residents of neighboring Kyrgyz villages.<sup>19</sup> As a result of the incident, border checkpoints and railroad communications were shutdown by Tashkent, while the Kyrgyz side promised to turn Sokh into a “reservation” by surrounding it with a concrete wall.<sup>20</sup> As a matter of course, the Kyrgyz side blocked entry to Shakhimardan enclave, and the Uzbek side, entry to Barak enclave.<sup>21</sup>

Having a territorial unit belonging to Uzbekistan right in the middle of the Kyrgyzstani province of Batken causes many problems. Until a detour road

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13 Dzhangail’s status is unclear, although it appears in some scholarly articles and even in travel guides, see Eurasia Travel, [http://eurasia.travel/kyrgyzstan/cities/southwestern\\_kyrgyzstan/batken/enclaves\\_and\\_exclaves/](http://eurasia.travel/kyrgyzstan/cities/southwestern_kyrgyzstan/batken/enclaves_and_exclaves/).

14 T. Rasul-Zade, “Zhizn’ anklava,” *Asia-Plus News Agency*, June 1, 2012, <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/zhizn-anklava>.

15 “Kyrgyz Exodus from Tiny Exclave,” *RFE/RL*, Kyrgyz Service, June 6, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/qishloq-ovozi-kyrgyzstan-barak-exclave-exodus/25413373.html>.

16 E. Ivashenko, “Kyrgyzstan: granitsy kak istochnik problem i konfliktov,” *Fergana.ru News Agency*, November 27, 2014, <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/8323>.

17 Ibid.

18 Visit Uzbekistan, <http://www.visituzbekistan.travel/sightseeing/ferghana/shakhimardan/>.

19 D. Sindelar, “Sokh: In One Tiny Territory, a World of Problems,” *RFE*, January 18, 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/sokh-exclave-kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan/24877127.html>.

20 REX Information Agency, July 7, 2013, <http://www.iarex.ru/news/38577.html>.

21 I. Rotar, “Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan Heighten Tensions in Violent Local Border Dispute,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 17 (January 30, 2013), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=40390&cHash=268108bc1c955041c74ec07ac2f6d0b4#.VMmpHGJdXAK](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40390&cHash=268108bc1c955041c74ec07ac2f6d0b4#.VMmpHGJdXAK).

was upgraded from a dirt road into a highway,<sup>22</sup> half of Kyrgyzstan's Batken province was reachable only via travel through Uzbek's Sokh enclave. Despite the signing in 1996 of a memorandum of eternal friendship between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the relationship between the two states has been challenging in the spheres of trade, water, gas supply, border demarcation, and even inter-ethnic relations. Attempts have been made to trade a land equivalent for a corridor that would connect mainland Uzbekistan with Sokh. The Kyrgyz side refused a 17 km long/1 km wide corridor, claiming that the land the Uzbek side was offering in the exchange was mountainous, non-arable, and of disproportionately low value.<sup>23</sup> Negotiations over land exchanges and corridors for de-enclaving Sokh has not born fruit, primarily because connecting Sokh to mainland Uzbekistan would end up enclaving Batken province itself.

### A Theoretical Framework of State Interactions

Fergana Valley enclaves are part of a complex matrix of relations between all the neighboring states. The relationship between the states involved (mainland state and surrounding state) largely shapes their respective relationships with the enclave. The theory of enclaves introduced by Evgeni Vinokurov suggests a

triangular relationship between the mother state, the enclave, and the host, or surrounding, state.<sup>24</sup>

The mainland state may harbor concerns about the exclave's secession and in this case may impose measures that are disproportionately strict relative to the enclave's size and population; such measures may include the suspension of local democracy. Vinokurov uses the notion of *negative stimuli* to refer to such actions. On the other hand, the mainland state may empower its exclave with economic privileges that are unthinkable in the mainland. Such actions he terms a *positive stimuli*, which is to say, actions taken by the mainland state in order to hold the enclave under its authority. The same scheme of positive and negative stimuli is exercised against the hosted enclaves by the surrounding states.

This triangular schema helps to put into perspective the complex relations between the three actors. However, sometimes a fourth player may also come into the picture, namely the "ethnic root state of the enclave." That is, due to their ethnic origins, enclave dwellers may identify with yet a third state, as is shown in the example of Sokh enclave, with its almost exclusively (99.4%) Tajik-speaking population.<sup>25</sup> This fact, then, expands the phenomenon of enclaves, turning triangular relations into a trapezoid schema, with the ethnic root state of the enclave marked as "ERSE."

Figure 1. Vinokurov's Triangular Relations between the Enclave, the Mother State, and the Surrounding Country

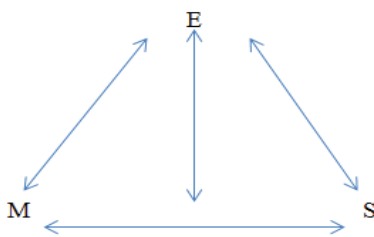
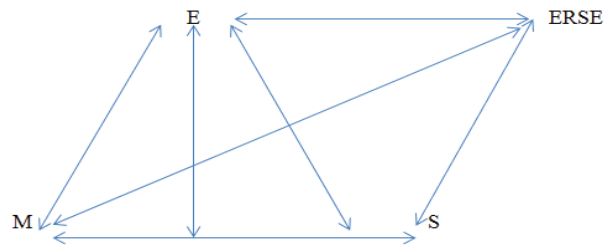


Figure 2. Trapezoid Illustrating Relations between the Four Actors



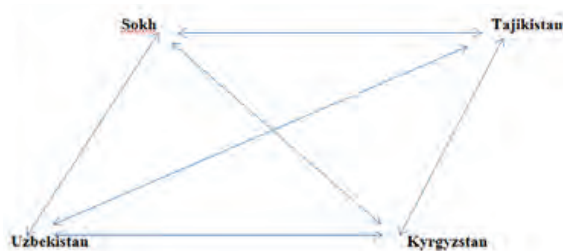
22 "Launch of the National Road Rehabilitation (Osh-Batken-Isfana)," *World Bank Road Safety Report*. World Bank, February 18, 2010, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2010/02/18/launch-of-the-national-road-rehabilitation-osh-batken-isfana-project-and-the-world-bank-road-safety-report>.

23 A. Koichiev, "Batken Residents Furious over Secret Uzbek-Kyrgyz Deal," *Eurasianet.org*, August 24, 2001, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav042501.shtml>.

24 Vinokurov, *Theory of Enclaves*.

25 "Border Incidents in Central Asian Enclaves," Issue 2, January 1- June 30, 2013, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HB\\_ROCCA\\_20130709%20EN.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HB_ROCCA_20130709%20EN.pdf).

Figure 3. The ERSE System Applied to the Sokh Enclave



### Governance Issues

Enclaves are tough to govern. The mother state or the surrounding state may be suspicious of its enclaves and exclaves. After the terrorist attacks in Tashkent in February 1999,<sup>26</sup> and the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan across the porous border and into enclaves in Batken during the summer of the same year, the Uzbek government took a proactive stance in strengthening, defining, demarcating, and materializing its border, with security being uppermost on the list of the country's priorities. The border was even land-mined by the Uzbek side until a gradual de-mining took place starting in 2004.<sup>27</sup>

The Fergana Valley enclaves have had varying experiences both with their surrounding states and with their mother countries. Two smaller enclaves, Tajik Sarvan and Kyrgyz Barak in Uzbekistan, have had different fates. Sarvan's population has been essentially absorbed by Uzbekistan, while the residents of Barak have demanded their relocation to Kyrgyzstan's Karasuu district in Osh province, as life inside the enclave and restrictions on movement and access to mainland Kyrgyzstan were considered too burdensome.<sup>28</sup>

Population pressures, resources, land, rivers, and roads are considered the major causes of tension. Sokh itself is deprived of any independent territorial decision-making ability: it falls under the administration of the Republic of Uzbekistan and is a simple administrative district of Fergana province. Economic life in the enclave is centered on agriculture, which includes rice and potato growing. Industry is limited, as both its canned goods factory and its shoe factory were shut down due to the lack of a corridor to the mainland; the majority of its young people seek economic opportunities in Russia.<sup>29</sup> The quasi-totality of Sokh residents speak Tajik, and education is carried out in the Tajik language, although it is not an official language of Uzbekistan.<sup>30</sup> The local newspaper, *Sadoi Sokh* (The Voice of Sokh), is printed in Tajik.<sup>31</sup> According to the Uzbek government, there are 28 schools that serve 11,654 students, along with three professional colleges that serve 2,233 students.<sup>32</sup> The general relationship of the Sokh administration with mainland Uzbekistan is passive. Outbursts of conflict display the hostile attitude of Sokh inhabitants towards their Kyrgyz neighbors, and their lack of belief in the system imposed upon them by Uzbekistan since Tashkent closed and mined the border.<sup>33</sup> Sokh's communications with Tajikistan have been limited due to the tense relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, their strict visa regimes, and their lack of transport communications.

Sokh is thus an extreme example of almost complete landlockedness. What applies generally for any enclave, applies all the more in the case of Sokh: the frequent closure of border-crossing points makes it difficult for people to cross the border legally in order to visit relatives, or conduct trade. In most cases, then, restrictions and regulations cause trade to become "contraband" and the people involved in it to be viewed as smugglers. Burials and wedding are hard to attend, which further isolates people, and

26 "Uzbekistan: Explosions in Tashkent," *Information Bulletin* No. 1. IFRC, February 25, 1999, <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/rpts99/infouz99.pdf>.

27 "Uzbekistan: Tashkent moves to de-mine borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis*, June 24, 2004, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/24400/uzbekistan-tashkent-moves-to-de-mine-borders-with-kyrgyzstan-and-tajikistan>.

28 "Kyrgyz Exodus from Tiny Exclave," *RFE/RL*, Kyrgyz Service, June 6, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/qishloq-ovozi-kyrgyzstan-barak-exclave-exodus/25413373.html>.

29 "Sokh Enclaves: Two Decades of Simmering Tension," *RL*, January 7, 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/sokh-exclave-two-decades-of-simmering-tension/24817411.html>.

30 B. Musaev, "Anklav Sokh. Poiski vyhoda iz tupikovoy situatsii," *ZonaKz Online Newspaper*, July 19, 2001, <http://www.zonakz.net/articles/13555>.

31 F. Nadgibula, "Uzbekskiy anklav Sokh v Kyrgyzstane, naseleenny Tadzhhikami," *RL*, June 14, 2010, <http://rus.azattyq.org/content/Sokh/2068831.html>.

32 Official website of the Fergana City Administration, <http://ru.ferghana.uz/soh>.

33 D. Sindelar, "Sokh."

causes them to be alienated on account of their ethnicity.

When the residents of Sokh violently reacted to the five-meter violation<sup>34</sup> of their border by the Kyrgyz side in January 2013, the events inevitably affected both states and required a solution at the interstate and international levels. Although it can be assumed that the incident did not carry any ethnic character and was centered primarily on the issue of access to resources—water, land and roads—residents of Sokh feared further isolation from the rest of the world. Resources are indeed at the root cause of the problems in the enclaves and near-border settlements, but it is alarming how quickly the “ethnic” component takes on a central role in matters. Vorukh, the Tajik exclave in Kyrgyzstan, is also subject to frequent explosions of violence. The construction of roads that bypass the enclave lead to “...hostage-taking, physical attacks on authorities, and car burnings.”<sup>35</sup> Yet again, these incidents carry a non-ethnic character, although ethnic intolerance may be seen as a result of such tensions.

## Conclusion

The Fergana Valley enclaves are a reflection of the complex processes that the Central Asian states have faced since independence. These include: ensuring their newly acquired sovereignty, securing borders, symbolizing the nation through territorial markers, addressing a system of interdependency around natural resources between the water-rich upstream and fossil-fuel rich downstream countries, and managing often difficult relations with neighboring states.

The case of the enclaves reveals the lack of interstate cooperation and the refusal to make compromises to improve the lives of inhabitants. Lack of access to justice, to educational institutions, and to medical facilities, as well as overpopulation, economic deprivation, and difficulties in accessing resources often force enclave dwellers to take matters into their own hands in order to secure their well-being. These actions are often of a violent nature, further deepening the alienation of people on the ground and political confrontation at the top, which generally devolves into a blame game.

## Recommendations to the Governments of Central Asia

Despite the fact that enclaves are often viewed as problematic land units, they can serve as triggers for cooperation as they require the involvement of all three states that share the Fergana Valley.

*Agree to make the border demarcation process transparent.* Cooperation and compromise could make it easier to agree on disputed sections of the border and define the legal boundaries of each state.

*Recognize the legal status of the enclaves and the need for building mutually beneficial road infrastructure.*

*Include local residents (elders, informal leaders) and self-government authorities in the process of negotiation, as this will shape the first-hand perception of these local dwellers.* Taking into account the demands and needs of local residents would help reduce cases of localized violence in near-border areas.

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34 “Uzbekistan’s Sokh Exclave Remains Sealed After Clashes,” RL, January 9, 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-sokh-exclave-tensions/24819071.html>.

35 “Border Incidents in Central Asian Enclaves.”

# If Only It Was Only Water...

## The Strained Relationship between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

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Volker Jacoby<sup>1</sup> (2013)

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### Overcoming the Threat Narrative

News about yet another exchange of bitter words between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan hits the headlines with regularity. Observers describe the relationship between the two neighbors in Central Asia as “acrimonious,” “a feud,” or even as an “undeclared cold war.”

While a violent escalation of the tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is improbable in the foreseeable future, embitterment prevents the rivals from finding solutions to problems that take into account the interests and needs of both sides.

The strained relationship between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan finds its expression in a number of issues—all of them intertwined, but none of insurmountable. What connects them is the fabric of a narrative of threat and competition.

In both countries, threat narratives have their roots in the time of their respective nation-building, which was informed by the Soviet nationalities policy of the 1920s and “national delimitation.” They were magnified in the period of state-building after the breakup of the Soviet Union under conditions of instability and turmoil—and even civil war in the case of Tajikistan. In the quest for identity during this period, emerging authoritarian leaders in both countries effectively made bogeymen out of their neighbors, which were used as a tool to aid the integration of their societies at home.

This finds its expression, for instance, in the Bukhara/Samarkand question. In 2009, Tajik

President Emomali Rahmon and Uzbek President Islam Karimov clashed on the issue, in the course of which Rahmon told Karimov that “in any case we will take Samarkand and Bukhara” (*Samarkand i Bukharu my vse ravno voz'mem*).<sup>2</sup> While the Bukhara and Samarkand issue is not officially on the political agenda of Tajikistan or Uzbekistan, Rahmon's not so veiled threat does characterize the hostile political atmosphere.

A constituency for constructive bilateral cooperation can only develop once both sides enter a process of overcoming the threat narrative in opening a space for political dialogue. While the potential for constructive external involvement in the form of mediation or mitigation is very limited, supporting a holistic view on the conflict issues can help.

### The Water/Energy Nexus

The end of the Soviet system brought about the de facto dissolution of the water/energy nexus in Central Asia, leaving some of the countries with an abundance of water but few fossil energy resources, and others with less water but more fossil fuels. Nevertheless, all were left without an efficient mechanism to organize a mutually beneficial exchange of water and energy throughout the region.

Previously, upstream countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan would release water during the summer from their hydropower reservoirs, allowing downstream countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to irrigate their crops, as well as producing energy for themselves. In turn, during the winter, downstream countries would provide gas, coal, or electricity to their upstream neigh-

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1 United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Ashgabat.

2 This sentence alludes to the early years of the USSR, when the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created as a part of the Uzbek SSR. It became a separate constituent republic only in 1929; but the predominantly ethnic Tajik cities of Samarkand and Bukhara remained in the Uzbek SSR. See N. Hamm, “Rahmon reminisces about his days in Samarkand with Karimov,” *Registan*, November 12, 2009, <http://registan.net/2009/12/11/rahmon-reminisces-about-his-days-in-samarkand-with-karimov/>.

3 In spring 2012, Tajikistan accused Uzbekistan of causing a “humanitarian catastrophe.” See J. Kilner, “Tajikistan and Uzbekistan row over “economic blockade,” *Daily Telegraph*, April 4, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/tajikistan/9186804/Tajikistan-and-Uzbekistan-row-over-economic-blockade.html>.



bors. With the end of the Soviet Union, however, downstream countries began to sell fossil fuels to the world market at a significantly higher price than to their former co-republics.

Sale of water from upstream to downstream countries could, in theory, resolve the matter. However, this is not a feasible option at the moment, as downstream countries do not consider water a commodity that can be sold or purchased.

Mostly for reasons of non-payment, gas supply from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan during the winter has been repeatedly interrupted in recent years. Massive shortages of electricity have forced hospitals and schools to close, and private households not only in rural Tajikistan have also suffered from acute shortages. Major industrial companies have had to reduce production and, in some cases, not been able to pay their employees' wages.<sup>3</sup>

To produce energy for its own consumption and exports, in the mid-1990s Tajikistan revived a Soviet plan to construct the Rogun hydropower station (HPS). Located on the Vakhsh River, a tributary of the Amu-Darya, the dam, if constructed according to plan, would be the highest in the world (335 meters or 1,100 ft). It would form part of a cascade which includes the Nurek dam, currently the tallest man-made dam in the world (300 meters or 980 ft).

Tajikistan argues it needs the electricity generated by Rogun to revive its economy and job market. This claim is countered by Uzbekistan, which argues that the dam would constitute tremendous economic and environmental risks.<sup>4</sup> Construction of a lower dam or the formation of a consortium with Uzbekistan would appear to be a logical compromise, but for this the parties would need to engage with each other and be willing to at least consider a compromise. Neither would appear to be feasible at the present moment.

In response to a request by the government of Tajikistan and with the initial agreement of Uzbekistan, the World Bank commissioned two studies to evaluate the viability of the proposed Rogun

project in accordance with international standards.<sup>5</sup> The results will be made public later in 2013, probably after the presidential election in Tajikistan scheduled for November.

However, Tashkent has already revoked its consent to the studies mainly because financing of the World Bank-led process is channeled through Tajikistan's government, calling into question the objectivity of the entire process. In the eyes of Tashkent, this shortcoming found its most recent expression in February 2013 when, in the course of a regular informational meeting with stakeholders and riparian states, the World Bank presented a number of preliminary conclusions, according to which the parameters of the construction of the Rogun HPS were deemed correct and appropriate. Tashkent countered by saying that the World Bank's statement was "premature and testifies to a preconceived position."<sup>6</sup>

In Tajikistan, Rogun has been exalted as a project of national pride. The government has even compelled the population to "voluntarily" purchase vouchers to finance the project. Moreover, the Tajik government has made it clear in public statements that it will not waiver in its commitment to completing the project.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there is no political force in Tajikistan that would speak out against Rogun.

This is not so in Uzbekistan, where, in September 2012, President Islam Karimov stated that Central Asia might even go to war over water in the future.<sup>8</sup> This scenario is unlikely; moreover, it is also true that Tajikistan is probably not in the position to finalize the construction of the Rogun HPS without massive financial support—an unviable option as no major donor organizations or interested party (the U.S., EU, Russia, China, or Iran) would be willing to commit to supporting one side in this conflict. This is all the more so given the relative strategic importance and size of Uzbekistan compared to Tajikistan.

The reason why the World Bank got involved reflects a dilemma of international cooperation. At the time of its engagement, there was no holistic view of the narrative subtext of the conflict encompassing

4 "The Rogun reservoir in Tajikistan can provoke an earthquake," <http://www.uzbekistan.be/Aral/10.html>.

5 For details see the section of the World Bank website on this issue, "Assessment Studies for Proposed Rogun Regional Water Reservoir and Hydropower Project in Tajikistan," <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22743325~pagePK:146736~piPK:226340~theSitePK:258599,00.html>.

6 See the comments from the Uzbek side to the World Bank intermediary reports: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECA/Resources/257896-1313431899176/Comments-UZ-Govt-Feb-Mar-2013-en.pdf>.

7 Tweet by @ERahmon on November 15, 2012: "We will build Rogun! Whatever it takes! I swear!"

8 R. Nurshayeva, "Uzbek leader sounds warning over Central Asia water disputes," *Reuters*, September 7, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/07/centralasia-water-idUSL6E8K793I20120907>.

its historical, economic, social, political, and personal dimensions. Thus, the results of the World Bank's studies are unlikely to serve as a basis for the two parties to move closer to each other, let alone abandon their entrenched positions.

To fill this gap to some degree, and to bring about a political solution, cooperation between the World Bank and the UN has intensified. The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), together with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS), are engaging the two sides (as well as other actors) in a project called "scenario approach."<sup>9</sup> This approach constitutes an attempt to overcome the perception that the water-energy-agriculture-ecology nexus can be conceptualized as a zero-sum game. However, even this approach is yet to develop traction as Uzbekistan's engagement in this undertaking is non-committal, and further endangered since Uzbekistan recently took over the Chairpersonship of the EC IFAS. The government of Uzbekistan is notorious for its preference of engaging only in bilateral negotiations and its opposition to any multilateral engagement. Notwithstanding, no substantial bilateral negotiations with Tajikistan are taking place.

Recently, in additional efforts to stabilize the basis for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, UNRCCA commissioned a *Proposal for Modernizing the Legal Framework for Transboundary Water Management in the Aral Sea Basin*. The structure of this legal framework resembles the UN conventions on water, but is translated into the specific context of Central Asia. It remains to be seen whether this undertaking will bear fruit, as it still only provides a legal mechanism. In any case, tradeoffs will have to be made— which is the job of politicians, not engineers or lawyers.

Uzbekistan's adamant rejection of the Rogun project is explained in Tashkent on account of its causing a lack of water for irrigation, which, or so it is argued, will endanger its crop yields. There is, however, reason to believe that this is not as dramatic as the government claims, given that the River Vakhsh sup-

plies only roughly 35 percent of water to the Amu-Darya. If Uzbekistan improved its irrigation system, a decreased flow of water from Tajikistan would hardly have a significant impact on its crop. David Trilling of Eurasianet quoted a water engineer from the Asian Development Bank as saying: "If Tashkent would spend its energies patching up its leaky canals and pipe networks, it would save 60 percent of its water."<sup>10</sup>

The same is true regarding Tajikistan. The latter's energy problems largely stem from extremely weak governance in this sector, paired with ubiquitous corruption and a dramatic waste of energy due to bad insulation and a dilapidated energy grid. If these issues were addressed properly, at least Dushanbe's argument that its population is on the verge of humanitarian catastrophe and that Rogun constitutes a panacea would be put into perspective somewhat.

The core of the matter is political. Uzbekistan fears that Tajikistan could become a major exporter of energy in the region. CASA-1000,<sup>11</sup> a project connecting power-lines from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with Afghanistan and Pakistan—which is designed to supply a seasonal energy surplus from the north to the south—would become a footnote in the local energy market in comparison to what would be possible in case Rogun becomes a reality.

Moreover, while possessing substantial hydro-power potential, it is estimated that Tajikistan may have up to 27.5 billion barrels of oil equivalent (BOE), mainly in gas resources,<sup>12</sup> which may also serve as a driver of economic development and shift emphasis away from conflict over water resources.

## **If Only It Was Only Water—Other Elements of Conflict**

### *Border Delimitation*

The complexity of the water-energy nexus is magnified by a number of related contentious issues, among them the Farhad water reservoir on the Syr-Darya. The Tajik-Uzbek border runs along the dam: the reservoir is on the Tajik side, while the adjacent HPS

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9 "Searching for Water Peace," FAO of the UN, April 11, 2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXk40xM\\_nZU&feature=share](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXk40xM_nZU&feature=share).

10 D. Trilling, "Tajikistan & Uzbekistan: World Bank Cautiously Positive on Hydropower Project," *Eurasianet*, February 22, 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66589>.

11 "The smart use of mother nature is the objective of the CASA-1000 Project," CASA-1000, <http://www.casa-1000.org/MainPages/CASAAbout.php#objective>.

12 E. Gasmatullin, "Total, CNPC Join Tethys Petroleum in Tajikistan Exploration," *Bloomberg*, December 21, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-12-21/total-cnpc-join-tethys-petroleum-in-tajikistan-oil-exploration.html>.

is on Uzbek territory. Both sides of the border are mainly inhabited by ethnic Uzbeks. The electricity generated is used by Uzbekistan exclusively. Tashkent claims that in 1944 both Republics signed an agreement according to which the Tajik SSR ceded the territory to the Uzbek SSR. This agreement is nowhere to be found, however.

Allegedly, after achieving independence from the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan tried to change the border line by moving the boundary posts, but in 2002, a Tajik militia “liberated” the territory and de facto moved the border to the dam.<sup>13</sup> In 2012, Uzbekistan raised claims of ownership of the reservoir and, according to Dushanbe, proposed that should Tajikistan cede the territory, other controversial issues—including Rogun—would be handled by Uzbekistan in a more favorable spirit. This issue hasn’t been pursued further, however, and the status quo provides further cause for a possible escalation of tensions.

In fact, the Farhad reservoir forms part of a broader problem concerning the border between the two countries: 20 percent of their 1,000 km-long border remains non-delineated. While talks between the two sides have taken place, they have been largely fruitless; instead they have been used to reiterate irreconcilable positions without any intention of reaching a compromise. Meanwhile, clashes between border officials are a regular occurrence, with casualties on both sides.

### TALCO

The Tajik Aluminum Company (TALCO) runs the largest aluminum manufacturing plant in Central Asia. Located in Tursunzade, close to the border with Uzbekistan, it is Tajikistan’s chief industrial asset—one that also consumes 40 percent of the country’s electrical power. TALCO pays a lot less for its energy consumption than the local market price. As Tajikistan has almost no raw materials at its disposal, the government keeps the price of aluminum produced by the plant low by subsidizing the company’s energy bill. Thus the price for Tajik aluminum is competitive on the world market; the substantial profits generated, however, have been moved offshore to the British Virgin Islands and therefore do not benefit the population.

On another note, TALCO is also said to be responsible for significant air and water pollution in the region as well as causing other serious ecological problems. Uzbekistan has requested that Tajikistan set up a joint working group to initiate an independent assessment of trans-border contamination. This group has never been formed and, given the strained relationship between Dushanbe and Tashkent, the UN has refrained from engaging in such an assessment. Meanwhile, TALCO will continue to poison the atmosphere between the two countries, in both senses of the term.

### Severed Railroad Connections

At the same time as construction material and technical equipment for the Rogun HPS was being transported through Uzbek territory, railroad connections between both countries have been largely severed and tracks in part dismantled on the Uzbek side. Officially, though, Rogun was never stated as the reason for this.<sup>14</sup> The international community, namely the OSCE and UN, have been involved in unsuccessful attempts to mediate between both sides and to re-open railroad connections.

### Leadership Issues

Personal animosity between the two presidents makes direct talks at a high level extremely difficult. It is conceivable that should one of the incumbent presidents depart from the scene, there would at least stand a chance of things improving under new leadership. However, it should also be observed that both presidents manage the brinkmanship that characterizes relations between the countries quite skillfully.

### Conclusions

The threat narrative and the countries’ focus on hard security, including the overstated scenario of spillover from Afghanistan, are flip sides of the same coin. Notwithstanding this, the biggest threat to stability in both countries stems from how their governments are dealing with domestic challenges. Addressing those would enable Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to consolidate and integrate their respective societies and

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13 A. Mannanov, “Kak Tadjikistan vernul ‘Plotinu’ i Farkhodskoe vodokhranilishche,” *Asia-Plus*, August 19, 2011, <http://news.tj/ru/news/kak-tadjikistan-vernul-plotinu-i-farkhodskoe-vodokhranilishche>.

14 M. Sadykov, “Uzbekistan: New Ferghana Railway Plan Tweaks Tajikistan,” *Ferghana.news*, March 13, 2013, <http://enews.ferghananews.com/articles/2825>.

to embrace cross-border cooperation as a win-win game.

Domestic demand for good governance needs to be fostered in both countries. The international community can promote these principles by applying them in their own dealings with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. International engagement with authoritarian leaders in Central Asia according to the motto of “he is a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a

bitch” (*on sukin syn, no on nash sukin syn*) stands in the way of initiating domestic political processes. It also comes at the price of long-term instability as, by supporting the countries’ leaders for the sake of today’s stability, the feeling of disenfranchisement on the parts of the countries’ respective populations is nurtured. This, in turn, is understood as a cause for radicalization that can come along with instability in a long-term perspective.

# Revisiting Water Issues in Central Asia: Shifting from Regional Approach to National Solutions

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**Nariya Khasanova<sup>1</sup> (2014)**

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In June 2014 the World Bank released two studies on the viability of the Rogun dam in Tajikistan.<sup>2</sup> It instantly revived the tensions between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan over the construction of the dam. Uzbekistan—Tajikistan’s downstream neighbor—opposes construction of the dam and fears the undue interference by Dushanbe with the water supply necessary for its cotton industry. Tajikistan sees construction of the dam as having national strategic importance, vital for dealing with its chronic energy crises.

Many Central Asian observers consider water to be one of the main risks of interstate conflict in Central Asia, and a key obstacle to regional cooperation. That said, international donors continue to push for regional approaches. In this paper, I argue that a regional approach to water in Central Asia is misguided and bound to fail. I argue that the international community should shift its focus from regional level to national-level solutions. It would slow down the ongoing geo-politicization of the water debate, and therefore interstate tensions. It would also motivate the Central Asian authorities to identify the real challenges faced on the ground. Finally, this shift would contribute to moving the focus from water distribution to water (over)consumption, which is the real drama of the Central Asian region’s water dilemma.

### **Three Main Reasons Why Multilateral Solutions to Water Do Not Work**

There are three main reasons to explain the failure of multilateral water cooperation in Central Asia. The

first is the legacy of the Soviet water distribution approach which links cross-border water flows to interstate energy distribution in a context of independent states with increasingly divergent needs and policies. The second is the lack of political will for regional cooperation. The third is the securitization of the water issue, that is, the development of a narrative about the alleged scarcity of water, and the ensuing risk of interstate conflicts. In all three instances, the focus is put on water distribution, while it should be on the real problem, namely, water consumption.

### *Reproducing the Soviet Water Distribution Approach*

The basin-wide water management approach is a legacy of the Soviet Union. The Soviet water resource management was based on a regional water vs. energy barter system which balanced the water needs of downstream countries (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) and the energy needs of upstream countries (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan). The allocation of water was dependent on the main area of specialization of a republic. Under this system, intensive agricultural development was a priority and Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were given significantly larger water quotas than Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In exchange for the water from upstream countries to power irrigation pumps in downstream countries during the summer, the Soviet Union ensured the delivery of natural gas from downstream countries to upstream countries during the winter. This system was complemented by the electricity delivery through the Unified Central Asia Energy System.

After gaining independence in 1991 Central Asian countries agreed to keep the water-energy barter system and left the water quotas at the same level.

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<sup>2</sup> One study focused on the technical and economic viability, and the other on the social and environmental impact of the dam. See, among others, “Key Issues for Consideration on the Proposed Rogun Hydropower Project,” Draft for Discussion, World Bank, 2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/ECA/central-asia/WB%20Rogun%20Key%20Issues.pdf>.

However, maintaining the Soviet water distribution system quickly revealed three main problems.

First, there is no central redistribution of benefits anymore. During the Soviet time Central Asian republics were part of one country that regulated not only the distribution of natural resources, but also the distribution of their benefits. The collapse of the Soviet Union left the newly independent states with water distribution mechanisms, but with no central authority able to take over a regulatory role in the barter system. Negotiations over the exchange of water for hydrocarbons regularly broke up while the regional electricity trade declined from 25 GWh (giga-watt hours) in 1990 to 4 GWh in 2008.<sup>3</sup> The work on the grid was interrupted several times because of withdrawals by Turkmenistan, and withdrawals and returns by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Second, Central Asian countries are now independent states and their policies are driven by national interests and needs that often do not align. Central Asian states have growing demands for water and constantly increase their water use without renegotiating the agreement<sup>4</sup>.

Third, Afghanistan (8% of Amu Darya is formed on its territory) was excluded from the regional distribution structures. The Soviet Protocol 566 dated March 12, 1987 specified the annual amount of water use in Central Asia at 61.5 km<sup>3</sup> 2.1 km<sup>3</sup> of which was assumed to go to Afghanistan. That said, the current rough estimation of Afghanistan's water demand is of 6.09 km<sup>3</sup>.<sup>5</sup> With the Amu Darya feeding

40% of Afghanistan's irrigated lands<sup>6</sup>, it is likely that Afghanistan will increase its water use and claim its rights in the years to come, generating new tensions with other bordering states and thus, compromising regional cooperation.

*Political Will for Regional Cooperation Is Lacking*  
Regional cooperation over water does not work because the majority of water initiatives taken in Central Asia in the 1990s and 2000s reproduced the Soviet water management approach.

This is the case both at the intra-regional level and at the level of international donors. At the intra-regional level it is represented by the 1992 Almaty Agreement, the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea<sup>7</sup>.

Regional water benefit-sharing approaches through the establishment of the Central Asian Water and Energy Consortium were discussed in 1997 and later in 2003, and 2006.<sup>8</sup> However, disagreements with respect to the share in the consortium, reluctance to compromise, and low level of trust and regional political competition have hindered the implementation of this project.<sup>9</sup>

Regional cooperation remains the overarching principle for many international donors, working both at regional and national levels. These international projects include the EU Water Initiative; the German inspired "Berlin process" aiming to improve regional cooperation in water; UNECE and

Table 1. Annual Water Withdrawal in Amu Darya by CA Countries in 2011 as Opposed to Allocated Water Quotas (Km<sup>3</sup>)

Country	Water Quotas	Withdrawal in Amu Darya	Total Water Withdrawal
Kyrgyzstan	0.4	0.054	10.1
Tajikistan	9.5	9.4	11.5
Turkmenistan	22	28.145	28
Uzbekistan	22	29.4	56

Sources: WB and Drainage Basin of the Aral Sea and other Transboundary Waters in Central Asia, UNECE

3 M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse, "Regional Organizations in Central Asia: Patterns of Interaction, Dilemmas of Efficiency," *University of Central Asia's Institute of Public Policy and Administration Working Paper No. 10*, 2012.

4 K. Wegerich, "Hydrohegemony in the Amudarya Basin," *Water policy* 10, no. 2, IWA Publishing, 2008.

5 K. Wegerich, "The New Great Game: Water Allocation in post-Soviet Central Asia," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2009): 117-23.

6 A. Nazariy, "BVO "Amudar'ya" o voprosakh vodnoy bezopasnosti v bassejne reki Amudar'ya," 2013, [www.eecca-water.net/file/nazariy-1113.pdf](http://www.eecca-water.net/file/nazariy-1113.pdf).

7 "Regional Water Intelligence report Central Asia," *SIWI baseline report*, Paper 15, 2010.

8 Y. Sigov, "Vodnoe peremirie. Kak reshit' vopros razdela vodnykh resursov Tsentral'noy Azii?," *Delovaya nedelya*, April 25, 2008, <https://www.ca-news.info/2008/04/26/22>.

9 I. Kirsanov, "Bitva za vodu v Tsentral'noy Azii," *Fond Nasledie Evrazii*, 2006, <http://www.fundeh.org/publications/articles/48/>

UNESCAP regional water and energy strategies; the UNDP Integrated Water Management Framework, which stresses the need for regional management of water resources<sup>10</sup>; and the World Bank Central Asia Energy Water Development Program which considers a consumption-based approach, but stays with the idea of building multilateral water and energy cooperation in Central Asia by establishing a multi-donor trust fund.

Despite water being one of the main foci of international donors, regional cooperation over this issue has failed and is not likely to succeed in the near future because of historical and geostrategic factors and because of the nature of the political regimes. For most Central Asian policymakers regional integration efforts are linked to the Soviet experience and there is no interest in delegating any power to supranational bodies. For many Central Asian states state-building is linked to a process of distancing – if not competing with – from one's neighbors. Lastly, relatively bad inter-personnel relations between presidents play a huge role<sup>11</sup>.

The lack of political will to engage in regional cooperation makes Central Asian states very protective over their national water data. The official data presented by the Basin Water Organization "Amu Darya" (BVO), for instance, does not reflect the real amounts of water each riparian state is consuming.<sup>12</sup> Only two countries in the region, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, have ratified the Water Convention. Uzbekistan is the only country from Central Asia that has acceded to the UN International Commission, legally obliging it to implement the principles of "reasonable and equitable use of water."<sup>13</sup>

Bilateral cooperation can sometimes be successful. One of the successful examples of water cooperation is a shared water agreement on the Chu and Talas rivers between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The countries agreed to share operational and maintenance costs in proportion to received water amounts.<sup>14</sup> However, successful bilateral cooperation is often very specific. In that case, the good relations between Bishkek and Astana explain largely

the success, which Dushanbe and Tashkent cannot replicate.

### *The Threat of Water Scarcity and the Rogun Debate*

Water has also become an object of securitization in Central Asia. Official narratives emphasize water scarcity and the risk of interstate conflicts. The water scarcity debate in Central Asia started around the shrinking of the Aral Sea and became more intense in the 2000s.

The water scarcity argument is however a bogus argument. Indeed, compared to other regions of the world, water is not a scarce resource in Central Asia. According to the Water Stress Index a country is considered to be water scarce if its amount of renewable water per capita is less than 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>/year. All the Central Asian states are largely above this level. As a region, Central Asia is also sufficiently endowed with water (20,525 m<sup>3</sup>/year) compared to the Near East (7,922) or Northern Africa (2,441).

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The real problem in Central Asia has to do with water consumption and the totally disproportionate waste of water. Even in the United States, which is known for its excessive water consumption, water withdrawal per capita is far below Central Asian levels, with the exception of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>16</sup>

10 S. Priesner, "Integrated Water Resources Management in Central Asia" (paper presented at the joint seminar, 2014), <http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2014/04/18/-the-joint-seminar-integrated-water-resources-management-in-central-asia/>.

11 Laruelle and Peyrouse, "Regional Organisations in Central Asia."

12 Wegerich, "Hydrohegemony in the Amudarya Basin."

13 A. Khamzaeva, "Water Resource Management in Central Asia: security implications and prospects for regional cooperation," *Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) Asia*, no. 25, 2009.

14 "Regional Water Intelligence report Central Asia."

15 J. Sehring and A. Diebold, "Water Scarcity Analyzed, 2014," <http://www.waterunites-ca.org/themes/19-infoboxes/32-water-scarcity-analyzed.html>.

16 M. Laruelle, "Water in Central Asian Agriculture: No Time to Waste," *EUCAM Watch*, no. 13, November 2012.

Table 2. Total Renewable Water Resources in Selected Countries (M3/Capita/Year)

United Arab Emirates	18.5
Saudi Arabia	83.61
Singapore	114.2
Jordan	145.1
Israel	231.3
Uzbekistan	1,741
Afghanistan	1,956
Tajikistan	3,095
Kyrgyzstan	4,336
Turkmenistan	4,791
Kazakhstan	6,562

Source: <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/data/query/index.html?lang=en>

Table 3. Total Water Withdrawal per Capita in Central Asia (M3)

Afghanistan	823
Kazakhstan	1,291
Kyrgyzstan	1,558
Tajikistan	1,740
Turkmenistan	5,752
Uzbekistan	2,113

Source: <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/data/query/index.html?lang=en>

The debate around the Rogun dam is the most illustrative example of how water and energy are being securitized in Central Asia both by the two concerned states, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and by the international community.

The Rogun dam is a hydropower station to be constructed on the Vakhsh River in Tajikistan, a tributary to Amu Darya. The construction of the station began in late Soviet times but was not completed. In 1993 severe floods destroyed a significant part of the infrastructure and the dam's initial basement. The devastating civil war in Tajikistan further contributed to the deterioration of the construction. The Tajik government decided to revitalize the Rogun dam construction in 2004.

However, in 2007 the Russian company Rusal abandoned the project following a disagreement with the Tajik government over the dam height (285 or 335 meters), and because Rusal wanted to acquire the TALCO aluminum factory as well, which Dushanbe didn't want to sell.

The estimated total cost of the project is between \$3 and \$5 billion,<sup>17</sup> an amount that the country cannot secure. In 2010 the Tajik government launched an Initial Public Offering (IPO) for a total amount of six billion somoni (about \$1.37 billion), but it was able to raise only 20% of the required amount, mostly by forcing its population to buy shares.

In response to a request by the government of Tajikistan, the World Bank prepared two feasibility studies (A Techno-Economic Assessment Study and An Environmental and Social Impact Assessment). Both studies, released in 2014, concluded that subject to design changes and mitigation measures, a hydropower project could be built and operated at the Rogun site within international safety norms. Another key concluding statement was "The project is very large (on the order of 50 percent of 2013 GDP) and would present correspondingly large financing and macroeconomic risks."<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, there are no countries, or international institutions, including World Bank, who made or would be willing to make financial commitments to support this project.

The Uzbek and the Tajik positions with regard to the Rogun dam project are at opposite ends. Uzbekistan fears that Tajik upstream diverting of water on the Vakhsh River will put its water needs for agriculture in the summer months in danger. Tashkent has argued that once constructed the reservoir's filling (lasting between 10 and 17 years depending on sources and calculations) will impact potable water supplies and damage irrigation and crop yields. It has also pointed to seismic risks and the dangers involved if a dam of such height is built in a region sensitive to earthquakes.

Tajikistan on the other hand argues that Rogun is needed to solve its energy shortages that drastically hamper its economic development (estimated at about 2,700 gigawatt hours<sup>19</sup>). The country has

17 "Assessment Studies for Proposed Rogun Hydropower Project in Tajikistan," Brief, World Bank, 2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/brief/rogun-assessment-studies>.

18 "Key Issues for Consideration on the Proposed Rogun Hydropower Project," Draft for Discussion, World Bank, 2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/ECA/central-asia/WB%20Rogun%20Key%20Issues.pdf>.

19 "Study shows TALCO's potential to save energy, 2013," World Bank, 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/01/28/study-shows-talco-potential-save-energy>.



huge undeveloped hydropower potential (production of 527 milliard kWh electricity with total capacity of 4070 megawatts<sup>20</sup>) and hopes to strengthen its national budget by exporting hydroelectricity to its southern neighbors in South Asia. Dushanbe believes that seismic security can be ensured. It also argues that the Amu Darya flows won't be reduced, neither during the reservoir's filling time or after, and that agreed quotas will be respected.<sup>21</sup>

Tensions over the Rogun project led to uncompromised positions from both sides, with President Islam Karimov mentioning armed conflict and President Emomali Rakhmon making Rogun a panacea for current energy outages in Tajikistan.

Solutions other than Rogun were disregarded. At the third riparian meeting on February 12, 2013 in Almaty, the World Bank proposed to Tajikistan that they construct several small hydropower stations with different heights and different capacities<sup>22</sup>, but it was refused by Dushanbe. The Tajik government has also tended to ignore the main reason for the country's energy shortages, namely the fact that the Tajik aluminum factory, TALCO, consumes about 40%<sup>23</sup> of the total net electricity consumption and is not paying its dues to the state electric company Barki Tojik. On the Uzbek side, vocal concerns about water scarcity divert attention from extremely high water consumption, almost twice that of Spain, with the latter having 17 million more people (30 million versus 47 million inhabitants), and being one of the main agricultural producers in Europe<sup>24</sup>.

The international community's equivocal statements about Rogun and the repetitive wishful thinking about regional cooperation do not help Tashkent and Dushanbe deconstruct their narratives of danger over water and energy issues.

## Changing Water Policies in the Uzbek Agricultural Sector

With the exception of Kazakhstan, on average, more than 90% of the total water withdrawal per capita in Central Asia is withdrawn for agricultural purposes (Kazakhstan has 66% of its water consumption going to agricultural purposes).<sup>25</sup> Water policies in the agricultural sector are therefore the key element to be targeted to reduce the water consumption of the region.

### *Managing the Soviet Legacy*

In Soviet times water was perceived as a free natural resource to benefit the economy and people. The Soviet era was characterized by the expansion of irrigated lands, especially in Uzbekistan, where they increased from 1.2 million hectares in 1913 to 2.3 million hectares in 1950 and to 4.2 million hectares in 1990. From 1930 to 1990, Uzbekistan was producing more than two thirds of all Soviet cotton.<sup>26</sup> This expansion was facilitated by large public investments. The Ministry of Water Resources and Amelioration, the main water agency, became the second largest consumer of state funds after the Ministry of Defense.<sup>27</sup> More than 90% of water resources from two major Central Asian river basins—Amu Darya and Syr Darya—were withdrawn for the irrigation of cotton and other crops.<sup>28</sup>

Water distribution was organized by state water management organizations. The interaction between water managers and water users was handled through seasonal agreements. For each type of crop water demand norms were calculated. These collected water demands were translated into seasonal plans, according to which water was allocated to users. Trained and experienced staff, agronomists and hydro-technicians were employed in every collective farm and were mandated to overlook the irrigation

20 "The Capacity of Hydropower Tajikistan," TAJ Hydro, 2011, <http://tajhydro.tj/en/about-tajikistan/hydropower-capacity-of-tajikistan>.

21 "Tajikistan's Rogun Hydro: Social and Environmental Aspects," Bank Information Center, Bank Information Center (BIC) Europe and Central Asia Program, 2014, <http://www.bicusa.org/en/Document.102618.pdf>.

22 "Third Riparian Meetings on Rogun Assessment Studies," *Press Release*, World Bank, 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/02/13/third-riparian-meetings-on-rogun-assessment-studies>.

23 "Study shows TALCO's potential to save energy, 2013."

24 V. Fedorenko, "Prospects for water cooperation in Central Asia," *Rethink Institute Paper* 14, 2014.

25 Statistical database of FAO (AQUASTAT), 2014, <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/data/query/index.html?lang=en>.

26 D. Tarr and E. Trushin, "Did the Desire for Cotton Self-Sufficiency Lead to the Aral Sea Environmental Disaster?," in D. Tarr, ed., *Trade Policy and WTO Accession for Development in Russia and CIS Handbook* (World Bank Institute Publication, 2006).

27 I. Abdullaev and S. Atabaeva, "Water sector in Central Asia: slow transformation and potential for cooperation," *International Journal of Sustainable Society* 4, nos. 1/2 (2012): 103–112.

28 G. N. Golubev, "Systems View of the Water Management in Central Asia," in Z. Adeel, ed., *New Approaches to Water Management in Central Asia* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2001), 5–18.

water management.<sup>29</sup> The farms were exempt from paying for water, the cost of which was high and covered by the state. In many cases the real water supply rates were 2-3 times higher than recommended water needs. The absence of incentives for limiting water consumption led to overexploitation of available water resources.<sup>30</sup>

Soviet irrigation expansion resulted in many water related environmental problems such as the shrinking of the Aral Sea, water salinity, water pollution by fertilizers and pesticides, as well as water logging of irrigated lands. In the regions close to the Aral Sea, about 90% of the land is affected by salinization. The decay of soil quality requires additional large volumes of water to rinse away the salt. The drainage of water heavily contaminated with nitrates, organic fertilizers, and phenol, has polluted the ground water. In the downstream regions of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya, water is so polluted that it is unsuitable for either drinking or irrigation.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Post-Soviet Agricultural Reforms*

Since the collapse of Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has undertaken two major reforms in the agricultural sector that affected water distribution and water use differently: wheat independence and de-collectivization.

To ensure national food security, Uzbekistan made the decision to decrease cotton production and increase the production of wheat due to an overlap of their growing seasons. Winter wheat consumes less water than cotton as 40% of its water consumption is supplied by rainfall. Therefore, this shift decreased overall irrigation water requirements. However, uninterrupted operation of irrigation and drainage networks during wheat growing season and limited time left for cleaning and small repairs had a negative impact on the state of irrigation drainage and resulted in higher irrigation water consumption rates.<sup>32</sup>

De-collectivization in Uzbekistan was initiated gradually. It started with land redistribution from collective farms to rural households. Each rural household received an additional plot of about 0.13 hectares next to their backyard garden of about 0.12 hectares to ensure that families could grow their own food during the difficult time of economic transition.<sup>33</sup> After that, state and collective farms were transformed into shirkats. Shirkats represented smaller collective farms that did not prove to work efficiently. Later on, unprofitable collective farms and shirkats were privatized and their land was leased to private farmers. The final transformation was the legalization of family plots or *dehkans*.

The main production of farmers remains under state control. Procurement prices, application of fertilizers, dates – everything remains determined by the state. During the growing season, state officials visit farms to determine yield potential and adjust planning targets and production quotas.<sup>34</sup> Farmers have to grow cotton on the particular areas designated for that and sell it to the state at a price below the export parity under market conditions.<sup>35</sup> They have to fulfill seasonal quotas determined by the state. Satisfactory cotton production provides farmers with more profitable production opportunities – crops that can be produced and sold in a commercial manner. Farmers producing wheat are allowed to sell 50% of their quota in the open market or to keep it for home consumption. The land for wheat is also strictly controlled and the same rules are applied as for cotton.

Dehkans represent a large number of rural households – 95%. They are not part of the cotton and wheat quota system. They use their backyards and additional plots to produce fruit, vegetables, potatoes, rice, and wheat. Most of it is for personal consumption, although some products are sold or bartered. About 50% of dehkan households are paid by the farmers to provide manual labor on their fields.

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29 I. Abdullaev et al., *Socio-technical aspect of water management in Uzbekistan: emerging water governance issues at the grassroots level* (Water and Development Publications, Helsinki University, 2006).

30 I. Abdullaev et al., *Water Rights in Central Asia: History, Present and Perspectives* (International Water Management Institute, 2004).

31 J. Sehring and A. Diebold, "Ecological legacies: environmental impacts of unsustainable water management," 2014, <http://www.waterunites-ca.org/themes/9-ecological-legacies-environmental-impacts-of-unsustainable-water-management.html?view=booktext>.

32 I. Abdullaev et al. "Agricultural Water Use and Trade in Uzbekistan: Situation and Potential Impacts of Market Liberalization," *Water Resources Development* 25, no. 1 (March 2009): 47–63.

33 G. J. Veldwisch, "Dehkans, Diversification and Dependencies: Rural Transformation in post-Soviet Uzbekistan," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 11, no. 4 (2011): 581–597.

34 S. MacDonald, "Economic Policy and Cotton in Uzbekistan," United States Department of Agriculture, 2012.

35 Ibid.

In some cases dehkans may produce rice based on sharecropping: farmers provide agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers, tractors, combines, water) while dehkans do the work for a fixed percentage of the yield (30%-50%).<sup>36</sup>

#### *Subsequent Changes in Water Management*

This ultimate stage of de-collectivization reforms was accompanied by a water sector transformation in 2003. In order to address two main issues, rational water use and lack of funds for operation and maintenance, the government initiated the establishment of Water Users' Associations (WUA). WUAs are membership-based, nongovernmental, and noncommercial organizations aimed at maintaining irrigation, ensuring fair, effective, and timely distribution of water between water users, collecting payments for the water supply, and settling minor disputes related to the distribution and use of water.<sup>37</sup> The general belief of the government was that transfer of financial responsibilities for maintenance and operation (O&M) of irrigation systems would address the problem of state under-financing. However, Water Users Associations did not prove to be effective and their work is constrained by the lack of funds and the opacity of a decision-making processes.

In terms of lack of funds, many WUAs experience problems in water fee collection that makes it difficult to cover the costs of water supply services. The material and technical infrastructure is outdated and not in good condition. There are different reasons why water users do not always pay for the services of WUAs. Many farmers cannot pay due to inefficiency in their agricultural production. This inefficiency can be explained by several reasons, including, but not limited to:

*The level of agricultural extension:* The collective farms were abandoned and individual farms were introduced. Former members of the collective farms, as well as citizens with no agricultural experience, became individual farmers. Many did not have the

technical expertise for crop cultivation and irrigation. Many farmers complain about the lack of support they receive in terms of technical knowledge from agronomists, fertilizer specialists, and crop disease experts.<sup>38</sup>

*The system of state production quota for cotton and wheat:* Farmers cultivate about 60%-70%<sup>39</sup> of their farmlands with cotton or wheat; 30%-40% being left for growing other crops. Farmers have to sell crops to the state at a procurement price that often does not cover the production costs. Cotton-producing farmers, for example, received only about 66% of the world market price in 2004-5 for their raw cotton.<sup>40</sup>

*Land ownership and land use:* The land rights are not secure.<sup>41</sup> The land is leased to farmers for a period of up to 50 years with the reserved right of the state to terminate the lease contract with a farmer at any time. It happens very frequently when farmers change their cotton cultivation area.<sup>42</sup> The cotton cultivation area allocated by the state frequently is not appropriate for growing the crop. Therefore, farmers are always under stress of losing their land.

The land rights of farmers can also be canceled if they do not fulfill production agreements three years in a row.<sup>43</sup> Land subleasing is prohibited, which deprives farmers of the opportunity to sublease their inactive lands to other farmers for a certain period of time. For example, current livestock farmers facing shortage of arable land are not allowed to lease land from a neighbor to cultivate necessary crops.<sup>44</sup> Informal subleasing practices exist, but they are not always safe for the farmers as there are no contracts stipulating conditions.

*Provision of subsidies for agricultural inputs for cotton/wheat producers:* Special state subsidies are provided for agricultural inputs: fertilizers, maintenance and operation of irrigation systems, fuel, and machinery services. However, only 8% of these subsidies represent input price differentials. More than half of these subsidies are targeted loans at a prefer-

36 Veldwisch, "Dehkans, Diversification and Dependencies."

37 P. Roudik, "Legislation on Use of Water in Agriculture: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan," 2013, <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/water-law/central-asian-states.php>.

38 W. Sutton et al. "Reducing the vulnerability of Uzbekistan's agricultural systems to climate change," *World Bank Study*, 2013.

39 N. Djanibekov et al. "Pros and cons of cotton production in Uzbekistan," *Case-study 7-9*, Cornell University, 2010.

40 Ibid.

41 G. J. Veldwisch et al. "Lost in transition? The introduction of water users associations in Uzbekistan," *Water International*, 2013.

42 Djanibekov et al., "Pros and cons of cotton production in Uzbekistan."

43 Abdullaev et al., "Agricultural Water Use and Trade in Uzbekistan."

44 Z. Lerman, "Agricultural development of Uzbekistan: the effect of ongoing reforms," *Discussion paper 7.08*. Department of Agricultural Economics and Management, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, 2008.

ential interest rate of 3%, which is significantly lower than the market interest rate. The credit is automatically deducted by the banks after the account of the farmer has been credited with the payments for the cotton/wheat sales.<sup>45</sup> Very frequently those who allocate the money for agricultural inputs are not knowledgeable enough in terms of the needed quantity and prices, which creates another challenge for farmers.

*Lack of incentives for non-cotton or non-wheat production:* The income of cotton/wheat producers is coming from growing other crops. However, there are not many benefits to support the farmers in this respect. They often face problems related to export restrictions imposed by the government. Export of agricultural produce can be implemented only by state institutions and joint-ventures such as Uzulgurjisavdoinvest, and Matlubotsavdo.<sup>46</sup> The state controls the prices to maintain the agricultural products affordable for national consumers. Situations when supply exceeds domestic demand and export is restricted leave farmers no choice but to dispose their produce as they don't have storage facilities.

In terms of decision-making, Water Users' Associations in Uzbekistan are criticized for being the pure extension of the existing government structures responsible for the control of agricultural production – district level agricultural authorities and regional governors (*hokims*). The WUA chairman is indeed appointed by the *hokim*. WUAs report to state representatives on the activities of the previous week and get new instructions for the next one. District agricultural authorities and regional governments monitor and control the fulfillment of state cotton/wheat production and ensure the timely water delivery for these purposes through WUAs. Water users meet rarely, and farmers in WUAs don't participate in the water distribution debate even at the local level.

#### *A More Complicated Picture: Financial Constraints Are Key*

The inefficiency of WUAs means that responsibility for water use lies with the practices of farmers.

Several field studies<sup>47</sup> reveal that some farmers independently install pumps and water saving irrigation technologies (drip irrigation); *dehkans* and farmers negotiate their irrigation turns, collectively buy pumps, block or clean canals, and complain about the lack of water to their water managers.<sup>48</sup> Although one of the rationales of the WUAs is that water management is up to the state, farmers value water as an important source for their lives (*suv – hayot*, “water is life”)<sup>49</sup> and welcome the idea of not wasting it. They have also demonstrated the ability to manage water when necessary.

Therefore, the major problem of water overconsumption in agriculture is not the absence of agency among water users and their water use irresponsibility, but rather financial constraints. Rehabilitation of deteriorated infrastructure and introduction of water saving technologies (drip irrigation) are very costly, and neither government nor water users can afford to implement them countrywide. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), rehabilitation and modernization costs of the old irrigated areas are estimated at \$4,500/ha. The cost of drip irrigation development on existing irrigated areas varies between \$ 2,300 and 3,500/ha. Average annual operation and maintenance costs for full recovery is about \$450/ha for standard systems, more than \$640/ha for drip irrigation systems and \$680/ha for pump systems.<sup>50</sup> The government's willingness to transfer financial responsibility for infrastructure operations and maintenance to farmers cannot succeed as many farmers are not ready for that financially given the above-mentioned conditions under which they operate.

The lack of technical expertise in the government support and insufficient knowledge by farmers themselves is another obstacle for water use efficiency in agriculture. Moreover, the reproduction of the Soviet water allocation system was designed for collective farms, the number of which (in 1991 Uzbekistan counted 971 *kolkhozes* and 1,137 *sovkhozes*<sup>51</sup>) was far less than the current number of water users (more

45 Djanibekov et al., “Pros and cons of cotton production in Uzbekistan.”

46 “Uzbekistan ogranichil eksport sel'khozproduksii v tselyakh nasyshcheniya sobstvennogo rynka,” *Kao-a.kz*, October 1, 2009, [http://kao-a.kz/ru/news/232-zbekistan\\_ogranichil\\_eksport\\_selkhozprodukcii\\_v\\_celah\\_nasyshhenija\\_sobstvennogo\\_rynka/](http://kao-a.kz/ru/news/232-zbekistan_ogranichil_eksport_selkhozprodukcii_v_celah_nasyshhenija_sobstvennogo_rynka/).

47 L. Oberchirker and A. K. Hornidge, “Water Is Life’—Farmer Rationales and Water Saving in Khorezm, Uzbekistan: A Lifeworld Analysis,” *Rural Sociology* 76, no. 3 (2011): 394–421; Abdullaev et al., “Socio-technical aspect of water management in Uzbekistan.”

48 Oberchirker and Hornidge, “Water Is Life.”

49 Ibid.

50 “Irrigation in Central Asia in figures,” *AQUASTAT's Survey*, FAO 2012.

51 K. Wegerich, “Water user associations in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan: study on conditions for sustainable development,” *Occasional Paper* 32, University of London, 2000.

than 80,000<sup>52</sup>). Modification of the infrastructure for many small farms would require large investments. The government introduced a land consolidation program, but due to the continued land fragmentation, the expected benefits did not materialize.<sup>53</sup>

#### *Uzbekistan's Proposed Solutions*

Uzbekistan inherited from the Soviet Union a solid hydraulic infrastructure: 1,130 pumping stations that irrigated more than 50% of total irrigated land via a 22,300 km long network of inter-farm and main canals and 42 water-intake structures.<sup>54</sup> Operation and maintenance of such an infrastructure is costly for a newly independent country. State financing for rehabilitation decreased from 27% in the 1990s to 8% in the 2000s. Operation and maintenance remains underfinanced: Uzbekistan can cover only 50% of the required amount.<sup>55</sup> The water infrastructure after 35 years of operation has reached its limit. Moreover, many on-farm irrigation channels are unlined: only 20-30% of them have concrete lining.<sup>56</sup> One of the tremendous implications is that 70% of water in Uzbekistan is lost during transport between the river and the crops due to deteriorated infrastructure.<sup>57</sup>

Uzbekistan has recognized the problem of its water use inefficiency and since 2007 spends more than \$110 million to improve irrigation infrastructure annually.

During the 2014 World Water Day, Tashkent promised to allocate \$1 billion for irrigation system modernization over a period of five years.<sup>58</sup> The Irrigated Land Reclamation Fund was established by a presidential decree. As a result the Uzbek state declared that 3,127 km of collection and drainage systems, 809 vertical drain units, 156 drainage pumping stations, and 1,422 observation networks have been built or rehabilitated, and 66,200 km of collection

and drainage networks, drainage pumping stations, and 5,807 culverts have been repaired or upgraded.

The two Welfare Improvement Strategies (2008-2010 and 2013-2015) indicate that Uzbekistan is developing policies on:

- Introducing progressive, resource-saving irrigation technologies: there are plans to build a drip irrigation system on 25,000 ha of land between 2013 and 2018. By presidential decree, farmers and other land users will be given long-term concessional loans with a 5% interest rate and these farmers will be exempt from land tax and other types of taxes;
- Capacity building: Uzbekistan will strengthen the physical infrastructure and provide equipment to water management organizations, upgrade the skills of water management professionals;<sup>59</sup>
- Improving the activities of the Association of Water Users;
- Gradually shifting toward the system of partially-charged water usage in agriculture;
- Developing agrarian science, and introducing mechanisms designed to stimulate the application of scientific and technological advancements, as well as innovations into agricultural production.<sup>60</sup>

Funding national solutions is also increasingly part of the international financial institutions' approaches. International organizations issued US \$1.1 billion to support agricultural projects in Uzbekistan, including some related to the improvement of water management in the agricultural sector.<sup>61</sup> Uzbekistan is seeking international assistance to rehabilitate its irrigation/drainage infrastructure and increase effi-

52 "Water resources management and improvement of the water sector in Uzbekistan," Annex to the letter dated 14 March 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

53 N. Djanibekov, K. Van Assche, I. Bobojonov, and J. P. A. Lamers, "Farm Restructuring and Land Consolidation in Uzbekistan: New Farms with Old Barriers," *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 6 (2012): 1101-26.

54 S. Rakhmatullaev, F. Huneau, H. Celle-Jeanton et al., "Water reservoirs, irrigation and sedimentation in Central Asia," *Environmental Earth Sciences* 68, no. 4 (2013): 985-98.

55 Author's anonymous interview with World Bank expert.

56 Ibid.

57 Rakhmatullaev, Huneau, Celle-Jeanton et al., "Water reservoirs, irrigation and sedimentation in Central Asia."

58 "Uzbekistan vydelit svyshe \$1 milliardov v blizhayshie 5 let na modernizatsiyu svoey irrigatsionno-meliorativnoy sistemy," *Kant.kg*, March 24, 2014, <http://kant.kg/2014-03-24/uzbekistan-vyidelit-svyishe-1-mlrd-v-blizhayshie-5-let-na-modernizatsiyu-svoey-irrigatsionno-meliorativnoy-sistemyi/>.

59 "Water resources management and improvement of the water sector in Uzbekistan."

60 Welfare Improvement Strategy in Uzbekistan (2013-2015).

61 <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-28057.htm>.

ciency in the agricultural sector. Along with the pilot efforts of introducing water saving technologies by the UNDP, Israel, being a rational water user, has become interested in the prospect of introducing their innovative technologies to the Uzbek market.<sup>62</sup>

## **Recommendations**

Based on the above analysis, several recommendations can be advanced.

### *To International Donors*

International donors should support national-level solutions as opposed to regional ones. Regional cooperation over water remains mostly declaratory and unfeasible because of various historical and political factors. National-level solutions that do not compromise the needs and interests of riparian states should be given priority. This will help prevent the over-politicization of water and energy in the region. To de-securitize the issue, water should be approached from a water consumption perspective as opposed to a water distribution one.

### *To Uzbekistan*

Water overconsumption in Uzbekistan should be addressed not only from the perspective of capital-intensive technologies, but also from the knowledge-based activities' point of view. The provision of good agricultural extension services is of paramount importance. Under the current system of Water Users' Associations, farmers are primary stakeholders. They have expressed interest in saving water and in dealing with the ineffectiveness of the current system by cleaning on-farm canals, independently installing the pumps, negotiating their water rights, etc.

However, besides capacity-building actions, specified in the Welfare Improvement Strategy of Uzbekistan, Uzbek farmers should also be provided with better market conditions. In this respect, the government should address the current constraints related to the level of agricultural extension, land use and land ownership, the state procurement prices for cotton/wheat, export restrictions on agricultural produce, provision of subsidies, and incentives for non-cotton/non-wheat production.

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<sup>62</sup> "Israel technologies for farmers in Uzbekistan," Embassy of Israel in Uzbekistan, 2014, <http://embassies.gov.il/tashkent/NewsAndEvents/Pages/GH.aspx>.

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## PART V. UZBEK FOREIGN POLICY: MOVES AND STABILITY

### Flexibility or Strategic Confusion? Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan

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Farkhod Tolipov<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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Observers tend to describe Uzbekistan's foreign policy in terms of fluctuation, pro- and anti-biases; furthermore, some have even evaluated it as flexible and maneuvering. However, the analysis of the Uzbek international behavior reveals more of a fundamental problem, namely a lack of strong understanding of national interests. As evidence of this, I can point to the considerable gap between the declared Uzbek policy principles and their actual implementation.

The modality of any foreign policy activity is predetermined by the nature and character of the international system. At the same time, it depends to a significant degree on policy makers' perceptions of this system. Such notions as "bipolar," "unipolar," or "multipolar" world order prevails not only within Uzbekistan's foreign policy institutions, but also within global academia. The swift dissolution of the Soviet Union and Central Asia's advent into world politics has had a twofold impact on geopolitical thought: on the one hand, these events reinforced once again geopolitical narratives, contemplations, and speculations after a long period of relative geopolitical stability; so geopolitics became the "ultimate explanatory tool" in the overall analyses of the post-Soviet transformation. On the other hand, theoretical transformation is underway within the field of geopolitical studies itself. These new circumstances have created wide spread confusion among political scientists dealing with Central Asia, as well as among local political regimes whose attempts to pursue their own geopolitics—micro-geopolitics of micro-heartlands—have also modified the macro-geopolitics of great powers.<sup>2</sup>

In this respect, the Central Asian states', especially Uzbekistan's, foreign policy doctrines are pro-

nounced by negative and positive diversifications. *Negative diversification* revitalizes the classical balance of power in international relations and the zero-sum game between great powers at the expense of the Central Asians. *Positive diversification* avoids the zero-sum approach and is inclusive in character: it means not only the equal involvement of external powers but also, what is more important, the coordinated policy of the Central Asian states themselves. From this perspective, Tashkent's pendulum-like international behavior bears rather a trait of negative diversification.

The first concept of a Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted in 1993, declared such principles as: non-participation in any military-political bloc; active participation in international organizations; de-ideologization of foreign policy; non-interference in internal affairs of other states; supremacy of international law and priority of national interests. The second Foreign Policy Concept was adopted in September 2012 and declared, among others, 4 "no"s: *no* to deployment of foreign bases in Uzbekistan; *no* to the membership in any military bloc; *no* to the participation in international peace-keeping operations; and *no* to mediation of any external power in the resolution of regional conflicts in Central Asia. This policy affirms a "national interests first" principle, but does not make clear whether and why national interests dictate four such "no"s and what the national interests by-and-large are. One of Tashkent's recent foreign policy "innovations" is the shift to bilateralism as the key principle of its international and regional actions, which means that the country now aims to deal with major international and regional issues on a bilateral level. On the functional level, however, the foreign policy of Uzbekistan has been more convoluted and controversial than what is declared on the doctrinal level. This policy can be delineated by three sets of

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1 Director, Non-governmental Education Institution "Bilim Karvoni," Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

2 F. Tolipov, "Micro-Geopolitics of Central Asia: An Uzbekistan Perspective," *Strategic Analysis* 35, no. 4 (2011): 629-639.

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characteristics: achievements, uncertain ties, and problems.

### **Achievements**

Uzbekistan's foreign policy in the 1990s can be evaluated as having had a good start: Tashkent was quite pro-active in the beginning. Over a period of more than two decades, the country has accrued vital experience on the international arena. Diplomatic relations have been established with most of the states of the world and Uzbekistan has gained genuine international recognition. At an early stage the young Uzbek foreign policy was region-oriented, and President Islam Karimov was a proponent of regional integration in Central Asia, proclaiming in 1995 the concept "Turkistan—our common home." Uzbekistan's international initiatives were quite remarkable. At the UN 48th Session of the General Assembly in 1993 Karimov called for the establishment of a permanent regional conference on regional security in Central Asia; he initiated the establishment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Central Asia; and in 1998 he launched the so-called '6+2' format of negotiations on Afghanistan.

### **Uncertainties**

However, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and U.S. forces being deployed in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, regional geopolitical processes exacerbated. In 2005 Islam Karimov even had to state that "strategic uncertainty remains in the region. Geostrategic interests of major world powers and our neighboring countries concentrate and sometime collide in this part of the world." In 2008, Tashkent initiated an updated version of its Afghanistan initiative, the '6+3' format, but the proposal failed to gain any international support. Uzbekistan re-entered the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2006 but abandoned it in 2012. It became a member of the Euro-Asian Economic Community (EAEC) in 2006, but left it in 2007. The regional structure of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), created in 2001, was disbanded and merged with the EAEC in 2006. Today, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) remains the only international/regional organization which enjoys a steady commitment on the part of

Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's membership of the SCO seems quite resolute, moreover the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) has been set up in Tashkent.

### **Problems**

With the adoption of the new Foreign Policy Concept in 2012 Uzbekistan has demonstrated itself as being more isolationist than having an active engagement in international and regional affairs. The current tense relations with two neighbors—Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—over the issue of water regulation and over border delimitation are accumulating potential for further conflict. Tashkent has not only abandoned participation in such organizations as the CSTO, EAEC, and CACO, but has also quite isolated itself from other multilateral cooperation frameworks such as, for example, the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan and the SPECA project of the United Nations. Uzbekistan's foreign policy today is neither pro-American nor pro-Russian, neither pro-active nor reactive. Over a period of more than two decades, Uzbekistan's foreign policy has thus undergone deep evolutions: from a promising start and some real achievements in the 1990s, through a period of uncertainty in the early 2000s, up to isolationism and stagnation today.

### **The 'Moneybox' of Strategic Partnerships**

Having learnt how to play geopolitical games, Uzbekistan has shown itself to be a master of maneuver. Illustrative in this respect is Tashkent's so-called 'moneybox' of strategic partnerships. Uzbekistan has managed to sign several strategic partnership agreements and declarations with a number of great powers usually perceived as strategic rivals. For instance, the United States-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership (USUSP) Declaration was signed in March 2002, followed by the Russian Federation-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership Treaty (RFUSP) being signed in June 2004. The China-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership (PRCUSP) Declaration was signed in June 2012, while the Joint Statement on India-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership (IUSP) dated from May 2011. Recently, in June 2013, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed a bilateral Treaty of Strategic Partnership (KUSP).

Interestingly, Uzbekistan's strategic partnerships envisage different goals. Whilst the United States-Uzbekistan is perceived as more normative and comprehensive, the Russian Federation-Uzbekistan one is more military-driven. The China-Uzbekistan one does not imply having any mutual security commitments of the two states as it is the case with the U.S.-Uzbek and Russian-Uzbek agreements, but concentrates on the developmental dimension of the strategic partnership. The India-Uzbekistan one has a geostrategic dimension that highlights threats to regional security, such as terrorism.

The United States-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership was the first document of its kind that Uzbekistan has signed with a great power and as such has passed a certain test of time.

Uzbekistan-U.S. relations subsequently declined after 2005 after the Andijon events, and Tashkent accused American organizations and the U.S. government for having been behind the alleged provocation of the 'extremist' uprising.<sup>3</sup> In the current context of the international forces being withdrawn from Afghanistan, it seems that both the United States and Uzbekistan could actually, intentionally or not, end up reducing the significance and meaning of a *de jure* strategic partnership to a *de facto* opportunistic one. In other words, Washington only needs the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to be operational while its forces and technology are being withdrawn from Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan is mainly interested in taking financial advantage of the NDN and keeping the remnants of military equipment used in Afghanistan. Real strategic partners are supposed to be able to move beyond such short-term lucrative cooperation. The end of the allied operation in Afghanistan in 2014 is not only changing the regional strategic and geopolitical situation and the U.S. posture in the region, but Uzbekistan itself is expected to undergo changes in connection with the upcoming parliamentary elections in December 2014 and presidential elections in March 2015.

In 2009, the United States and Uzbekistan set up a high-level annual bilateral consultations (ABC) mechanism and since then three ABCs have taken place in which a wide range of issues are covered such as trade and development, investments, energy, agriculture, health, parliamentary exchanges, education, science and technology, counter-narcotics, border security, counter-terrorism, religious free-

dom, trafficking in persons, development of civil society and human rights as well as the operation in Afghanistan. The letters ABC have a symbolic designation, implying a new beginning, and also a setting of benchmarks. The ABCs and overall reset of U.S.-Uzbekistan relations can have long-term geopolitical and strategic implications if indeed these relations finally meet the criteria of a real strategic partnership. The March 2013 visit of Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov to Washington was obviously an important step in U.S.-Uzbekistan bilateral relations, but whether it amounted to a crucial step in terms of the strategic partnership remains to be seen.

Can two states professing two different value systems become real strategic partners? Are the strategic partnerships between Tashkent and Washington on the one hand, and Tashkent and Moscow, on the other, contradictory? A strategic partnership implies a type of relationship going far beyond the features of ordinary cooperation. It requires a high level of mutual trust along with long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive cooperation in the sphere of security interests, as well as having similar positions on major international issues. The U.S.-Uzbek sides should, for instance, cooperate more intimately on issues related to Afghanistan than what is required by NDN-driven strategies. Overall, the spirit and letter of a strategic partnership should not be obscured and should be addressed properly by both states, who are currently *de jure* but not yet *de facto* strategic partners.

### A Failed Leader of Central Asia

The 1995 proclamation "Turkistan—our common home" announced a strategic choice for Uzbekistan and a crucial geopolitical slogan. So were other concepts such as "Towards globalism through regionalism" and "Uzbeks and Tajiks are one people speaking two languages." They told of a genuine leadership role of Uzbekistan in Central Asia. However, these strategic, region-oriented concepts have so far remained mostly on paper. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan, centrally located in the region, surrounded by all of the other Central Asian countries, with the largest population (30 million inhabitants), having the most developed transport infrastructure, possessing one of the strongest industrial potentials, and being the historical center of the whole region, has had ten-

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3 F. Tolipov, "Uzbekistan and Russia: Alliance against a Mythic Threat," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 11, 2006.

sions with almost all of its neighbors. This paradox can be explained by at least four interrelated reasons: Uzbekistan's obsession with sovereignty and independence; its perception of the world order through the prism of old geopolitical concepts; its preference for bilateralism as the main principle of its foreign policy; and its undemocratic and relatively closed political system.

### Conclusion

Since gaining independence in 1991, the states of Central Asia have undergone profound shifts. The current "strategic uncertainty" is, in fact, an *ad hoc* geopolitical reality. Twenty-two years of independent development has given Uzbekistan unique international experiences and political lessons. The so-called "transition period" has now passed. The country is approaching a new turning point in its

post-Soviet history with forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. There is a great expectation among the population, its regional neighbors, as well as among the international community, that Uzbekistan will engage more pro-actively with the region and in the international system.

Uzbekistan has managed to frustrate neighboring countries and failed to lead the region toward integration. Nevertheless, it is primarily Uzbekistan and its reopening to its neighbors that the success of the region's cooperation, security, and development will ultimately depend on. As Frederick Starr noted as early as in 1996, a regional "arrangement, in which a sovereign and strong Uzbekistan would play a significant role, best serves the interests of all countries involved, Russia included."<sup>4</sup> For this to become true, Tashkent should reconsider its foreign policy doctrine in favor of multilateral engagements, and making regional affairs a priority.

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4 S. Frederick Starr, "Making Eurasia Stable," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1996, 92.

# Uzbekistan's National Security Strategy: Threat and Response

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Richard Weitz<sup>1, 2</sup> (2014)

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Since its independence two decades ago, the government of Uzbekistan has sought to maintain its national security and autonomy by avoiding disproportionate political and military dependence on any single foreign actor. In particular, Tashkent has been careful to maintain correct bilateral relations with Moscow without allowing Russian military bases or other security ties that could compromise the country's sovereignty. The Uzbekistani government has also sought to develop good relations with the United States and more recently China to help balance Russian preeminence, but not at the expense of national autonomy or regime stability. Unlike the other Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan does not border Russia or China, which gives Tashkent a broader maneuvering room than its neighbors. Uzbekistan's current Foreign Policy Concept affirms that the country will not join politico-military blocs, and bans foreign military bases on its territory.<sup>3</sup>

Uzbekistani leaders have faced several major security challenges, which they have thus far surmounted or at least contained. First, Uzbekistan's relations with some of its neighbors have at times been strained due to diverging foreign policies, resource tensions, or anxieties regarding the country having the largest population in Central Asia, thus making it a potential aspirant for regional hegemony. Second, Russia has succeeded in developing close ties with some of its neighbors, resulting in Uzbekistan being unable to emerge as the leader of a Central Asian regional bloc but instead having to choose between either joining Moscow-led multinational institutions,

such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Customs Union, or standing aside in relative isolation from regional processes.<sup>4</sup> To Moscow's irritation, Tashkent has generally followed the latter course.

Third, from Tashkent's perspective, the United States and Europe have served as a poor external balancer, pressing the government to pursue domestic policies that Uzbekistani officials fear could weaken their country's internal stability, while limiting the West's own contributions to regional security. Yet, with the U.S. and European military drawdown in the region, Uzbekistan now has to manage a resurgent Russia either by itself or by aligning more closely with China, which might also challenge its national autonomy in coming years.

Uzbekistan is perhaps the most important Central Asian country from the perspective of maintaining regional stability. It has the largest population of the five Central Asian countries, and many ethnic Uzbeks reside in neighboring countries, making it likely that any internal instability would spill across the national boundaries. Uzbekistan's pivotal location—it is the only Central Asian country to border the other four states—means that regional economic and political integration efforts cannot succeed without Tashkent's support. Uzbekistani leaders generally resist these schemes and have pursued a strongly autonomous foreign policy grounded in realist principles and a prioritization of national sovereignty almost since the country gained independence in late 1991. A frustrating early experience trying to promote cooperation within the dysfunctional Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) reinforced Tashkent's skepticism regarding the likely benefits of regional integration schemes.

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2 The author would like to thank Hudson interns, Armin Tadayon and Pikria Saliashvili, for their research assistance with this paper.

3 "The main foreign policy aims and objectives of the Republic of Uzbekistan," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, [http://mfa.uz/eng/inter\\_cooper/foreign\\_policy/](http://mfa.uz/eng/inter_cooper/foreign_policy/).

4 F. Tolipov, "Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Concept: No Base, No Blocks but National Interests First," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, September 5, 2012, <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5829>.

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## Uzbekistan's Assessment of Regional Security Challenges

The main transnational threats facing Uzbekistan include terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and other challenges related to the situation in Afghanistan as well as tensions over access to water, regional rivalries among the great powers, and the Iranian nuclear program.

### *Islamist Terrorism*

Uzbekistanis worry about Islamist militarism, especially the remnants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Established in the 1990s by radicalized Uzbekistanis in the Ferghana Valley with the explicit goal of overthrowing the secular government, the IMU received considerable support from al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which allowed it to establish bases in Afghanistan in the 1990s. From Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, IMU guerrillas infiltrated Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries, where they conducted kidnappings and acts of terrorism. The IMU bombed and attacked a number of targets in and around Uzbekistan during the 1999-2000 period. In February 1999, six car bombs exploded in Tashkent, killing 16 people and wounding more than one hundred. Although the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 drove the original IMU from its Taliban-protected training camps, the movement's offshoots and other Central Asian terrorists have been fighting alongside the Taliban and al-Qaeda for years in Pakistan and elsewhere. IMU-affiliated terrorists attacked Tashkent in April and July 2004 and twice more in 2009.

Today the terrorists hope to exploit the NATO military drawdown to reestablish safe havens in Afghanistan in order to wage jihad against the secular regimes in Central Asia more directly. Meanwhile, Uzbekistani security experts intend to rely on their powerful army and internal security forces to keep Islamist militants from Afghanistan out of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's army is the largest in Central Asia. Western experts rate its elite special forces highly. But Uzbekistani policy makers have thus far relied primarily on their internal security forces to counter

terrorist threats even while their diplomats insist that the inseparability of Central Asia from Afghanistan require greater international exertions to end the conflict in that country.

### *Narco-Trafficking*

Narcotics trafficking is another regional problem made worse by the civil war in Afghanistan. In its fall 2013 report, the Afghanistan government and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) calculated that the country's 2013 harvest would amount to 5,500 metric tons of opium, a 49 percent increase over the previous year.<sup>5</sup> The Taliban assists the narcotics trade in order to earn revenue from taxing opium production and providing protection for the traffickers. Transnational criminal organizations then traffic these opiates northward through Central Asia and Russia and then into Europe as well as through Iran, Pakistan, and China. In 2011, the opiate-related trade amounted to at least 16 percent of Afghan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>6</sup>

There is also a reverse flow of weapons and other contraband into Afghanistan, though most of the profits from regional narcotics trafficking do not remain in Afghanistan. Smugglers funnel heroin and opium from Afghanistan through the "Northern Route," passing through Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to final destinations in Europe and Russia. According to the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, narcotics have been discovered in trucks returning from delivering humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, and on trains from Tajikistan.<sup>7</sup> Drug abuse and narcotics-related crime and corruption in Central Asia is extensive. Uzbekistani law enforcement agencies have increased training and resources to help combat the drug problem, but the Afghan record harvests will probably impact on Central Asia more heavily.

### *Afghanistan's Future*

The Uzbek authorities see their country as a "front-line" state regarding the war in Afghanistan. Not only does Uzbekistan share a 137 km-border with Afghanistan as a direct neighbor, but many ethnic Uzbeks reside in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has sought

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5 "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013: Summary Findings," Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, November 2013, [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_report\\_Summary\\_Findings\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_report_Summary_Findings_2013.pdf).

6 L. Sun Wylar, "International Drug Control Policy: Background and U.S. Responses," *Congressional Research Service*, August 13, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34543.pdf>.

7 "Uzbekistan: Summary," Embassy of the United States in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, February 27, 2009, [http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/incsr\\_2009.html](http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/incsr_2009.html).

to help the Afghan government by providing considerable economic assistance. Uzbekistani firms have helped build Afghanistan's roads, railroads, bridges, telecommunications (including parts of Afghanistan's Internet networks) and other national infrastructure. Uzbekistan also supplies electricity to Afghanistan and recently helped build Afghanistan's first national railway line. Yet, Uzbekistani experts do not anticipate that the Afghan National Security Forces will crush the Taliban insurgency, that efforts to contain the conflict within Afghanistan borders will work given its organic ties with Central Asia; or that the Taliban can conquer all of Afghanistan.

Given this likely stalemate, the Uzbekistani government still favors the "6+3 proposal" advanced by President Islam Karimov at the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest. The idea is to revive the "6+2" group established in 1999 under the UN's auspices but to add NATO to the construct. The six core members are the neighboring states of Afghanistan: China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The two additional members are Russia and the United States. Under the proposal, these nine actors including NATO would provide a supportive framework (proposing solutions and offering guarantees) to help direct negotiations between Afghanistan's government and so-called moderate members of the Taliban insurgents succeed. Neither the Afghan government nor the Taliban has supported the proposal. Countries excluded from this framework with a strong interest in the Afghanistan conflict, such as India, have also objected to it.

#### *... But Also Human Trafficking, Water and Iran's Neighborhood*

According to the UN, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan encourages Afghans to flee into Uzbekistan, sometimes illegally.<sup>8</sup> Transnational criminal organizations exploit Central Asia's porous frontiers, corrupt border services, and illicit routes sustained by narcotics traffickers to move illegal migrants and other exploited people across national frontiers. All the five Central Asian countries have signed the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime as well as the supplemental Protocol to

Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. Despite their efforts to meet these commitments, the U.S. Department of State's yearly Trafficking in Persons Report regularly assesses Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries as failing to suppress all human trafficking within its borders.

Uzbekistani officials and analysts consider having adequate access to fresh water another national security priority. Whereas Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan want to use Central Asian water resources for irrigation, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been constructing dams to generate electricity from controlled water flows. In particular, Uzbekistan fears that Tajikistan's construction of the Rogun Dam and other major hydroelectric projects could threaten its fair access to regional water supplies. Karimov has warned that these projects could lead to "not just serious confrontation, but even wars."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, while Iranian support for Tajikistan is a source of tensions with Tashkent, Karimov has called for resolving the Iranian nuclear question through negotiations given the potentially disastrous regional consequences of a war or even a limited military strike on Iran.

## **Uzbekistan's Response**

### *Strengthening the Armed Forces*

Uzbekistan is commonly thought to have the most powerful and capable military and internal security forces of the five Central Asian countries.<sup>10</sup> The London-based IISS 2012 Military Balance estimates its military and security forces to number around 67,000 personnel, with 50,000 in the Army and 17,000 in the Air Force.<sup>11</sup> The U.S. State Department calculates that the country has some 65,000 people in uniform out of 13 million fit for military service.<sup>12</sup> Uzbekistan has continued to reform the military, largely but not exclusively along Western lines, moving away from the dominant Soviet influence prevalent in the ground forces. The country's military reform program has aimed to downsize the regular army while strengthening the border guards. A major priority of the government is upgrading the military's

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<sup>8</sup> "Uzbekistan transfers border trespassers to Afghanistan," *Interfax: Central Asia General Newswire*, April 30, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/1347091072>.

<sup>9</sup> "Dammed if they do," *The Economist*, September 29, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21563764>

<sup>10</sup> "Country Profile for Uzbekistan," U.S. Department of State, January 31, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm#gov>.

<sup>11</sup> *The Military Balance* (London: The International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2012), 290.

<sup>12</sup> "Background Note: Uzbekistan," U.S. Department of State, January 31, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm>.

Soviet-era equipment. Uzbekistan is also reshaping its military into a leaner counterterrorist-focused force in line with the National Security doctrine that defines the major threats to Uzbekistan as international terrorism and Islamic extremism.

Uzbekistani leaders have fortified the country's narrow border with Afghanistan. The Armed Forces can, along with the Border Guard and internal security forces, defend Uzbekistan against a conventional Taliban attack, but their ability to project power and intervene, even in a neighboring country, is limited. At the October 2013 Council of CIS meeting held in Minsk, President Karimov stated that Uzbekistan "adheres to the principle policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, organization of bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan and rendering assistance and support to the government that will be elected by Afghans themselves."<sup>13</sup> But were the Taliban to return to power in Kabul, the Uzbekistani authorities would likely resume their earlier strategy of re-establishing a border buffer zone by arming and supporting their former allies in the Northern Alliance, whose coalition of non-Pashtun warlords offered the main resistance to the Taliban in the 1990s.

#### *Rebuilding Security Ties with the United States*

Uzbekistan welcomed the increased U.S. interest in Central Asia's security after the Soviet Union's collapse. During the 1990s, Washington and Tashkent engaged in comprehensive consultations regarding regional threats and developments. Following the September 2001 terrorist attacks, Uzbekistan allowed the United States and its NATO allies to use its former Soviet Karshi-Khanabad (K2) air base to support limited military operations related to their war in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan also deepened security cooperation with major European countries such as Germany. But Uzbekistani leaders soon came to perceive the growing Western presence in their region as a security liability. In particular, the U.S. government's support for "colored revolutions" in the former Soviet republics deepened fears in Tashkent that U.S. democracy promotion efforts might extend to Uzbekistan. The break between Washington and Tashkent came in 2005, when the Uzbekistani government's securi-

ty forces suppressed anti-regime protests in Andijon. U.S. officials urged neighboring governments to respect the asylum claims of protesters who had fled to neighboring countries, leading Tashkent to expel the Pentagon from the Karshi base.<sup>14</sup>

It took several years for relations between Uzbekistan and the United States to partly recover from this episode. At the April 2008 NATO heads-of-state summit in Bucharest, President Karimov offered the Alliance permission to transship goods through Uzbekistan to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan then assumed a leading role in the new Northern Distribution Network (NDN), which has helped Tashkent garner greater attention in Washington and other Western capitals. Senior U.S. military and political officials resumed visiting Tashkent and the U.S. Congress has allowed for the renewed provision of U.S. non-lethal defense assistance to Uzbekistan. Uzbekistani and U.S. officials are now discussing how to use Uzbekistani territory to remove NATO military equipment from Afghanistan through the NDN as well as how to address the unresolved threats of regional terrorism and narco-trafficking.

#### *Searching the Right Balance between Russia and China*

The Uzbekistani government largely stood aside during the formation of the Moscow-backed CSTO in 2002 and 2003. Insisting on upholding its autonomy of action, it has strongly objected to the CSTO's deepening integration and expanding missions and capabilities. The focus of recent Uzbekistani concern has been the creation of the 20,000-strong CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force in 2009 and the 2010 amendments to the CSTO charter allowing military action in response to a wider range of security crises based on a majority vote rather than a consensus of the members. After years of limiting its participation in the organization, Uzbekistan eventually suspended its CSTO membership in June 2012.

Nonetheless, Uzbekistan has remained a key member of the CIS air defense system and participated in the 65th meeting of the CIS defense ministries in Kaliningrad.<sup>15</sup> Immediately following the

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13 V. Zhavaronkova, "Brief: Uzbekistan, UN Discuss Cooperation," *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, October 30, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/1446461322>.

14 R. Wright and A. Scott Tyson, "U.S. Evicted From Air Base in Uzbekistan," *Washington Post*, July 30, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/29/AR2005072902038.html>.

15 R. McDermott, "Understanding the 'Uzbek way' on security," *Asia Times*, July 24, 2012, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/NG24Ag01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/NG24Ag01.html).

suspension of its CSTO membership, the country reaffirmed its commitment to joint air defense with the CIS, demonstrating its commitment to the CIS over CSTO.<sup>16</sup> Uzbekistan also participates in the CIS Anti-terrorist Center, the CIS Military Cooperation Coordination Headquarters, and the CIS Council of Commanders of Border Troops, which develops relations among CIS countries' border troops and facilitates joint training programs and technical cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

Despite a general aversion to multilateral institutions, Uzbekistan remains actively involved in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Tashkent has hosted the SCO's Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS) since the creation in June 2004. Within its framework, the SCO members have studied Eurasian terrorist movements, exchanged information about terrorist threats, and shared mutual insights regarding counterterrorism policies. The RATS has also coordinated exercises among SCO internal security forces and organized efforts to disrupt terrorist financing and money laundering. Although sending only staff officers and observers mostly to the large-scale SCO exercises involving military forces, Uzbekistan has participated in some of the organization's smaller-scale counterterrorist drills. Ties with other regional security organizations remain weaker.

#### 2012-2013 Recent Readjustments

Recently facing a declining U.S. and European military presence in the region, Uzbekistan has been seeking to strengthen its ties with Russia, China, and its Central Asian neighbors. In June 2012, Putin and Karimov signed a declaration on deepening the Russia-Uzbekistan strategic partnership and a mem-

orandum strengthening economic ties. From 2011 to 2012, according to the official statistics of Uzbekistan, the commodity turnover between Russia and Uzbekistan increased by 12.6 percent, reaching \$7.6 billion.<sup>18</sup> In November 2013, Uzbekistan affirmed that a priority in the security sphere was military and technical cooperation with Russia.<sup>19</sup> On December 13, 2013, Tashkent ratified a free trade agreement with the CIS.<sup>20</sup> That same day, Uzbekistan ratified a treaty of friendship and cooperation with China.<sup>21</sup> Economic, diplomatic, and security ties between Uzbekistan and China have developed strongly since Karimov visited the country in 2005. In November 2013, Uzbekistani and Chinese officials met during a business forum in Tashkent to deepen economic cooperation.<sup>22</sup>

Relations between Uzbekistan and some of its Central Asian neighbors have improved somewhat in recent years, though difficulties persist, especially with Tajikistan due to conflicts over water rights. The Uzbekistani authorities have affirmed their desire to see "further constructive cooperation" with Kyrgyzstan to ensure their mutual border security.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, their disputed border and acts of discrimination against the Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan continue to cause conflict.<sup>24</sup> In July 2013, two Uzbekistani servicemen died in an armed incident on the border.<sup>25</sup>

Uzbekistani-Kazakhstani ties have seen a notable improvement in recent years. When they met in 2012, Karimov and President Nursultan Nazarbayev endorsed greater bilateral coordination regarding regional water access and limiting Afghanistan's civil strife. In December 2013, Uzbekistan's parliament ratified an important strategic partnership agreement with Astana.<sup>26</sup> Yet, both countries have large-

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16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 L. Mahmudova, "Russia and Uzbekistan are bound with allied and strategic relationship," *Gazeta News*, June 10, 2013, <http://www.gazeta.uz/2013/06/10/russia/>.

19 "Uzbekistan has no intention to return to CSTO - senator," *Interfax News Agency - World News Connection*, November 13, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/1450229600>.

20 D. Azizov, "Uzbekistan ratifies agreement on CIS free trade zone," *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, December 14, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/1467734712>.

21 D. Azizov, "Uzbekistan Ratifies Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with China," *Trend News Agency*, December 13, 2013, <http://en.trend.az/regions/casia/uzbekistan/2221390.html>.

22 D. Azizov, "Uzbekistan, China sign several agreements in economic sphere," *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, November 29, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/1462218760>.

23 "Uzbekistan wants resumption of work of closed checkpoints on Uzbek-Kyrgyz border," *Interfax*, July 31, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/1417361323>.

24 Ibid.

25 D. Azizov, "Kyrgyz side apologizes to Uzbekistan," *Trend News Agency*, July 24, 2013, <http://en.trend.az/regions/casia/uzbekistan/2173580.html>.

26 "Uzbek Parliament approved a strategic partnership agreement with Kazakhstan," *Zona.kz*, December 16, 2013, <http://www.zonakz.net/articles/75553>.



ly pursued diverging responses to the Afghanistan crisis. Karimov has for years supported UN-led reconciliation and reconstruction initiatives and been a strong backer of NATO's presence in Central Asia. While providing logistical assistance to NATO forces in Afghanistan through the same Northern Distribution Network as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan has relied more on bilateral and multilateral economic assistance, as well as regional diplomatic initiatives such as the Istanbul Process. Kazakhstani officials have also welcomed precisely those Russian-led economic and security initiatives that the Uzbekistani government has resisted, which has resulted in Kazakhstan's assuming a leading role in the Customs Union, the CSTO, and other regional institutions that Uzbekistan has largely shunned.

## **Conclusions**

The future of Uzbekistani foreign policy will depend on both domestic and external developments. At home, uncertainty continues over when and how the transition to the next generation of political leaders will occur and whether the successor generation will pursue foreign policies that differ radically from those of the current leaders. Meanwhile, how the war in Afghanistan evolves along with the uncertain relationship between Russia and China in Central Asia will probably have the greatest impact on Uzbekistan's external relations in coming years.

# China's Economic Presence in Uzbekistan Realities and Potentials<sup>1</sup>

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Vladimir Paramonov<sup>2</sup> (2014)

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Despite the fact that the Republic of Uzbekistan was the first country in Central Asia to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) on January 2, 1992,<sup>3</sup> it was not until the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century that China took active steps to gain a foothold in the Uzbek economy. Even in 2001, when Uzbekistan became one of the founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), there was no real evidence of a rapid or significant growth of Chinese economic or business presence in the country. Officially recorded trade volumes (excluding shuttle trade) were almost negligible. According to official statistics, in the period from 1992 to 2002 the volume of China's exports to Uzbekistan did not exceed \$114 million per year, while overall trade stood at \$136 million per year, representing only slightly more than 2 percent of the foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan.

Only after 2003 did China's economic activity in Uzbekistan become more visible. A landmark event was the state visit of Chinese leader Hu Jintao to Tashkent in 2004. The visit resulted in a number of signed agreements on the development of political, economic, military-technical, and cultural cooperation. Another important factor which gave impetus to Sino-Uzbek economic relations was the deterioration of relations between Uzbekistan and the U.S./West in 2004-05. Turning east, there were two meetings between the leaders of Uzbekistan and China in 2005 alone. One of the main topics discussed at the meetings was the development of economic cooperation, with some 20 investment agreements, credit agreements, and contracts subsequently being signed

between the two countries to the tune of \$1.5 billion, including \$600 million in the oil and gas industry. Also in the same year the first Sino-Uzbek Business Forum was organized in Tashkent with the participation of the Chinese vice-premier, which resulted in the signing of eight contracts encompassing projects worth a total of \$473 million.

As a result of the above, the volume of trade between China and Uzbekistan increased significantly. During 2003-07 China's exports increased by a factor of 5.5—up from \$164 million to \$867 million (16.2 percent of Uzbek total imports, and 0.07 percent of China's exports), while total trade increased by a factor of 7—from \$216 million to \$1.6 billion (about 11 percent of Uzbek trade, and 0.07 percent of China's trade). In turn, the volume of Uzbek exports to China reached \$741 million dollars (about 8 percent of Uzbekistan's exports, and 0.08 percent of China's imports).

However, in 2008 trade between China and Uzbekistan slightly decreased, which was apparently due to an overall reduction of trade as a result of the global financial and economic crisis and the significant decrease in world prices for raw materials—the mainstay of Uzbek exports. Accordingly in 2008 Sino-Uzbek trade fell by 17 percent (from \$1.6 to \$1.3 billion). Uzbek exports to China amounted to \$544 million (about 5 percent of Uzbekistan's exports, and 0.05 percent of Chinese imports), while China's exports to Uzbekistan amounted to \$791 million (approximately 10.5 percent of Uzbek total imports, and 0.05 percent of China's exports). By 2009 Sino-Uzbek trade had recovered and increased by 43 percent on the previous year, reaching a total of \$1.91 billion. Moreover, China's exports almost doubled, attaining a value of \$1.4 billion. Thereafter trade between China and Uzbekistan grew to a total of \$3.23 billion in 2012 (Table 1).

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a number of joint publications, primarily in collaboration with Alexei Strokov and also with Oleg Stolpovsky, which include the following books (in Russian): *Russia and China in Central Asia: politics, economy, and security* (Bishkek, 2008); *Chinese economic express in Central Eurasia: a threat or a historic opportunity?* (Barnaul, 2010); *Russia and China in the energy sector in Central Eurasia: rivals or partners?* (Barnaul, 2011). The section of this paper with recommendations is based on joint works with Bakhtiyor Ziyamov and Alexei Strokov.

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D., head of the project "Central Eurasia" ([www.ceasia.ru](http://www.ceasia.ru)), Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

<sup>3</sup> Kazakhstan established diplomatic relations with China on January 3, Tajikistan on January 4, Kyrgyzstan on January 5, and Turkmenistan on January 6, 1992, respectively.

Table 1. Trade between China and Uzbekistan (1992-2012)

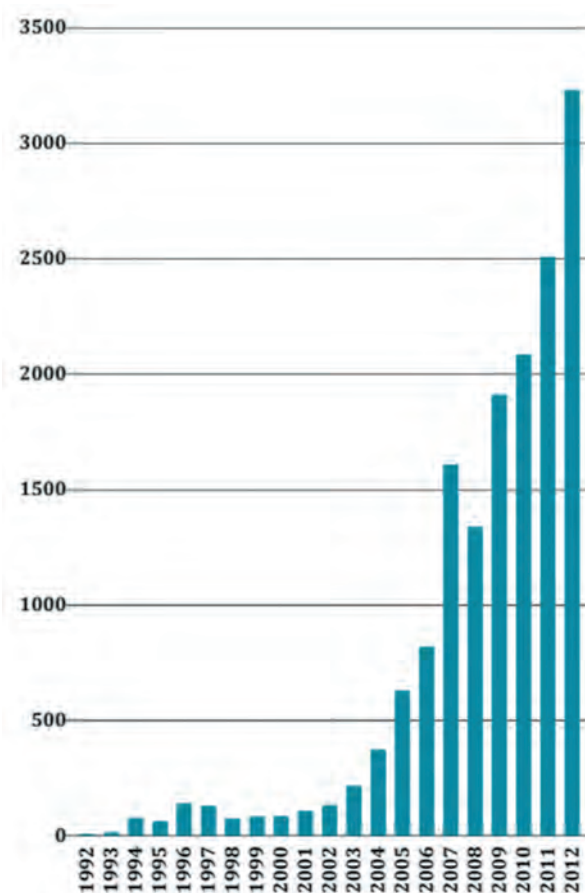
Year	Trade, Million USD	Exports China to Uzbekistan, Million USD	Exports Uzbekistan to China, Million USD
1992	5	*	*
1993	12	*	*
1994	75	*	*
1995	64	*	*
1996	136	72	64
1997	127	70	57
1998	72	*	*
1999	80	63	17
2000	84	*	*
2001	107	85	22
2002	132	114	18
2003	216 (346)	164	52
2004	370 (576)	267	102
2005	628 (782)	390	238
2006	817 (900)	465	352
2007	1,608 (1,800)	867	741
2008	1,335 (1,500)	791	544
2009	1,910 (2,000)	1,453	457
2010	2,085 (2,200)	1,186	899
2011	2,508 (2,630)	1,541	967
2012	3,233 (3,380)	2,046	1,187

Sources: Data for 1992-2001 from the Asian Development Bank (Key Indicators of developing Asia and Pacific Countries, Asian Development Bank, 2002), data for 2002-2012 from the Economist Intelligence Unit, citing national statistical authorities in Uzbekistan (Uzbekistan: Country Report, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, June 2003, June 2004, June 2005, June 2006, June 2007, June 2008, September 2009, September 2010, September 2011, September 2012, September 2013), data in parentheses for 2003-2012 from the Ministry of Commerce of China

The dynamics of trade between China and Uzbekistan can be observed even more vividly in Figure 1.

As is the case with other countries in Central Asia, Sino-Uzbek trade statistics are distorted (although this has not been so significant in recent years) to a certain extent by so-called shuttle trade which is not taken into account (or only to a limited extent) by Uzbek statistics. Thus, according to Uzbek data, by the end of 2012 trade with China amounted to approximately \$2.8 billion, which is approximately \$500 million less than the volume of trade estimated by the Chinese (\$3.38 billion).

Figure 1. Trade between China and Uzbekistan (1992-2012, In Million USD)



### Trade Patterns

Although during much of its independence Uzbekistan has had a lower share of its exports made up by primary commodities compared to other Central Asian countries, this situation has begun to change in recent years: before 2009, the share of primary commodities in Uzbek exports was less than 40 percent, while in subsequent years it has grown to almost 70 percent. For example, in 2007 Uzbek exports to China were comprised of services (45 percent), non-ferrous metals (19 percent), cotton fiber (12 percent), chemical raw materials (9 percent), and machinery and equipment (8 percent). In turn, the range of commodities supplied by China consisted mainly of engineering products (54 percent), services (18 percent), food (10 percent), and chemical products (9 percent) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Trade between China and Uzbekistan by Commodities (2007)

Item	Exports from China to Uzbekistan		Exports from Uzbekistan to China	
	Million USD	Share, %	Million USD	Share, %
Cotton Fiber	—	—	91	12.3
Chemicals	80	9.2	71	9.6
Non-Ferrous Metals	—	—	143	19.3
Ferrous Metals	70	8.1	—	—
Energy	—	—	42	5.7
Machines and Equipment	462	53.7	59	7.9
Food and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods	91	10.5	—	—
Services	164	18.5	335	45.2
Total	867	100	741	100

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit with reference to the National Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan (*Uzbekistan: Country Report*, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, June 2008)

In 2008, the structure of Sino-Uzbek trade did not change significantly from that of the previous year. However, since 2009 the share of primary commodities in Uzbek exports to China had increased, and by the end of 2012 such commodities accounted for 68 percent of exports. This is attributed primarily to gas exports to China. As of 2012 exports from Uzbekistan included energy (31 percent), cotton fiber (14 percent), ferrous and non-ferrous metals (9 percent), chemical raw materials (14 percent), and machinery and equipment (4 percent). From China, meanwhile, exports continued to be comprised mainly of engineering products (54 percent), food and other consumer goods (17 percent), as well as chemical products (17 percent) (see Table 3).

### Industrial Cooperation

The picture of China's economic presence in Uzbekistan would not be complete without taking into account some of the trends that have been observed in recent years. Namely, the Uzbek leadership has been persistent in its attempts to reorient China's economic presence in the country toward the development of industrial cooperation. In so doing, Tashkent has been keen to overcome the negative aspects of the "natural resource component" in its economic relations with China.

Table 3. Trade between China and Uzbekistan by Commodities (2012)

Item	Exports from China to Uzbekistan		Exports from Uzbekistan to China	
	Million USD	Share, %	Million USD	Share, %
Cotton Fiber	-	-	170	14.3
Chemicals	356	17.4	171	14.4
Non-Ferrous Metals	-	-	87	7.3
Ferrous Metals	-	-	25	2.1
Energy	-	-	373	31.4
Machines and Equipment	1,101	53.8	27	4.3
Food and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods	343	16.8	-	-
Services	98	4.8	197	16.6
Other	148	7.2	137	9.6
Total	2,046	100	1,187	100

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit with reference to the National Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan (*"Uzbekistan: Country Report,"* London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, September, 2013)

In this regard, Uzbek President Islam Karimov made a landmark visit to China in June 2012, which resulted in the signing of 45 agreements and contracts amounting to \$5.3 billion. Equally important was an agreement between the two countries' leaders over a strategic partnership declaration, which identified new areas of mutually beneficial cooperation, including in the economic sphere. These arrangements were confirmed during the first state visit of President Xi Jinping to Uzbekistan in September 2013, which saw the signing of 31 documents at intergovernmental and interdepartmental levels for the implementation of projects totaling \$15 billion. Furthermore, a treaty of amity and cooperation as well as a joint declaration on further development and deepening of the bilateral strategic partnership were also signed.

The Uzbek-Chinese high technology industrial park set up in March 2013 has a special role in the development of industrial cooperation. The industrial park takes the form of a Special Industrial Zone (SIZ) known as 'Jizzaq' with a branch in the Syrdarya region. Since June 2013 the park has seen the production of mobile phones, building materials, and other products. Finally, if at the beginning of 2009 there were barely more than 100 Chinese-Uzbek enterprises in Uzbekistan, by the end of 2013 there were more than 450 such enterprises, of which 69 had been set up with 100 percent Chinese capital.

## Chinese Loans

One important reason why China has been able to significantly increase its economic presence in Uzbekistan is that, since 2005, it has been increasingly applying in Uzbekistan the same strategy which has worked in a number of other Central Asian countries—that is, providing loans for Chinese exports and services. Such loans are governed by an agreement signed in 2005 between the Export-Import Bank (EXIM Bank) of China and the National Bank of Uzbekistan (NBU) for Foreign Economic Activities and embraces many sectors of the economy of Uzbekistan: oil and gas, power generation, chemicals, transport, textiles, and agriculture. Many of these projects can be called “Chinese-owned”—albeit not without some reservation—as the majority of projects are implemented by Uzbeks themselves but funded by the Chinese. These projects are important for the country and together with strengthening trade relations and increasing industrial cooperation comprise the basis of China’s economic presence in Uzbekistan.

## Chinese Projects

Along with increased Sino-Uzbek trade and the promotion of Uzbekistan’s strategic course of industrialization, one can observe a clear trend from 2005 onward of an increasing number of Chinese investment projects in Uzbekistan. The interest of Chinese companies is focused on a number of sectors, especially the fuel and energy complex and related industries. China’s total financial resources in Uzbekistan are estimated at not less than \$640 million (of which up to 85 percent is concentrated in the energy sector), including \$167 million in loans and \$473 million in investments (as of 2010).

### *Oil and Gas*

The year 2004 can be considered as the beginning of the Chinese penetration in the oil and gas industry of Uzbekistan, when the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) and National Holding Company (NAC) Uzbekneftegaz signed a framework agreement on cooperation. CNPC intends to implement a number of projects in the oil and gas industry of Uzbekistan. Most of these projects are still in the preliminary stage, however. The only exception is a project for the construction and operation of the Uzbek

section of the Sino-Central Asian gas pipeline, which was implemented in June 2008. The above pipe line originates from the gas field of Samandeppe (an area of gas deposits known as Bagtियarlyk in the Lebap region of eastern Turkmenistan) and passes through the territory of four countries: Turkmenistan (188 kilometers of pipeline), Uzbekistan (530 kilometers), Kazakhstan (1,300 kilometers), and China (over 4,500 kilometers), thus connecting major gas reserves in eastern Turkmenistan with the industrial centers of the Chinese province of Guangdong. The total length of the pipeline is more than 7,000 kilometers.

The official launch of the pipeline, with a transport capacity of 13 billion cubic meters per year, took place on December 14, 2009, in the presence of the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The official opening of the second pipeline took place in December 2011, and the third pipeline is scheduled to come online at the end of 2014, after which the combined capacity of all three pipelines will total 65 billion cubic meters of gas per year. In addition, there are plans to build a fourth gas pipeline (line “D”). This route is not intended to run in parallel to the existing three pipelines, which currently pass through Kazakhstan, but will rather bypass the latter instead traversing Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan en route to China. The transport capacity of the fourth pipeline is expected to be about 25 billion cubic meters per year, the construction costs of which will be incurred by the Chinese side. CNPC (or one of its subsidiaries) is likely to be an operator of the project. There is no confirmed information as of yet on the funding and terms as well as the time-frame for this project.

Another project worthy of note is that concerning preparations for the development of oil and gas fields in the Uzbek part of the Aral Sea (north-western Uzbekistan). Gas reserves were originally estimated at approximately 1 trillion cubic meters, while oil reserves were put at about 150 million tons. The project is being implemented by an international consortium of investors. Since 2005 the consortium has been comprised of Uzbekneftegaz (Uzbekistan), LUKOIL (Russia), Petronas (Malaysia), CNOC (Korea), and CNPC (China). The project is operated by a specially established company called Aral Sea Operating Company. Under the agreement, signed on the basis of a 35 year-period (2005-2040), China’s share in the consortium stands at 10 percent. If the estimated gas reserves are confirmed, the industrial production in these fields could potentially reach at

least 25 billion cubic meters of gas per year. The initial cost of exploration was estimated at \$100 million. Funds were invested on a parity basis by all foreign participants of the consortium (excepting, of course, Uzbekneftegaz).

#### *Electricity*

Since 2006, China has financed a number of projects in Uzbekistan's electricity sector. These projects are mainly focused on the construction of small hydro-power plants (SHP), implemented by the Uzbek company Uzsuvenergo under the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of Uzbekistan, and are funded by loans provided by the EXIM Bank of China. These projects are part of a program implemented by Uzbekistan which envisages the construction of 41 such plants.

#### *Transport*

Uzbekistan does not share a border with China, and transportation between the two countries is conducted through the territories of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, in terms of the development of transport communications, Uzbekistan is of interest to China only as a transit country within the system of trans-Asian international routes. Accordingly, Chinese transport interests are focused on the construction of the Uzbek section of the railway to China via Kyrgyzstan as well as a road following the same route—which has not yet begun.

#### *Construction*

Since 2008 China has displayed interest in Uzbek construction materials. Possessing huge reserves of primary commodities, including materials for cement production, Uzbekistan plans to significantly increase production by attracting foreign investment. However, until now China and Chinese businesses have been relatively inactive in this sector.

#### *Telecommunications*

From 2005 onward, the telecommunications services market has developed apace in Uzbekistan with the number of mobile phone users having increased significantly. In January 2007, a government decree was signed on the further development and modernization of the state joint stock company Uzbektelecom, which gave a significant boost to the development of the telecommunications industry in the country. As a result, the industry has attracted the close attention of Chinese businesses. Chinese companies such

as ZTE, Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd., and Alcatel Shanghai Bell have long been present in the market of Uzbekistan and have been involved in implementing a number of telecommunications projects, including those related to trade and services.

#### *Chemical Industry*

China's involvement in the chemical industry of Uzbekistan has been limited to only one fairly large project—which, however, is of considerable importance for Tashkent. The project in question is the construction and operation of a plant for the production of soda in Kungrad (Republic of Karakalpakstan, north-western Uzbekistan). Back in 2002, the Chinese company CITIC Group signed an agreement with the Uzbek state company Uzhimprom to design and construct a plant (\$32.3 million) for the production of soda. The plant with a capacity of producing 100,000 tons of soda ash per year became operational in 2006. Part of the production is exported to China. The contract was funded by a loan from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China to the tune of \$29.2 million with the remaining \$3.1 million provided by Uzpromstroybank of Uzbekistan.

#### *Agriculture*

China's presence in the agricultural sector of Uzbekistan as a whole is small and limited mainly to exports of agricultural machinery. These supplies are financed through loans from EXIM Bank of China. Information on this is fragmentary. Nevertheless, it would appear that there will be a continued growth of interest from China in this industry.

#### *Textile Industry*

It is known that in 2013 China and Chinese companies began to show more interest in setting up several textile industries. Most likely, this trend will develop further and we should expect large-scale projects and investments from China in the Uzbek textile industry in the coming years.

### **Conclusions**

In the early 1990s, China's economic ties with Uzbekistan, as well as other countries of Central Asia, were in a nascent stage and focused exclusively on small-scale trade. The trade was mainly conducted close to the border with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: these were the only countries of the region to have

direct transport links with China. At the same time, so-called shuttle trade was growing, which was also concentrated mostly in Kazakhstan and

Kyrgyzstan, from where Chinese products were re-exported to Uzbekistan and the rest of the region, including to Russia.

Whereas up to 2002 Sino-Uzbek economic ties had been limited mainly to trade China's economic activity in Uzbekistan became increasingly visible after 2003. A rapid increase in bilateral trade was made possible mainly thanks to the ongoing China export credit program which provides targeted loans that are used for the purchase of Chinese goods and services. In addition to an increase in Sino-Uzbek trade, various investment projects began to appear with Chinese companies displaying interest in a number of sectors of the Uzbek economy: primarily oil and gas, as well as electric power, chemicals, transport, textiles, and agriculture. In spite of the above, the overall scale of China's economic presence in Uzbekistan is still relatively small. And while theoretically Chinese business interests could be involved in the production of strategic raw materials (for example, gold, base metals, uranium) and the development of innovation and industrial sectors, there has been no active cooperation in these areas so far.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has been trying to attract Chinese investors to participate in the country's ongoing privatization program of major economic projects, but Beijing and Chinese businesses have responded less enthusiastically to signals coming from Tashkent. By and large, China's economic presence in Uzbekistan beyond the energy sector is limited and mainly focused on providing loans to certain projects which are deemed important for Tashkent, as well as provision of services and concluding trade agreements (by tender) to supply certain types of Uzbek commodities to China. It is difficult to envisage how China's economic presence in Uzbekistan will evolve in the future. In the light of a worldwide economic and financial crisis, Beijing is focused on buying assets in the resource industries of many countries and regions. However, so far Tashkent has rightfully refrained from the large-scale sale of its raw materials and strategic assets to foreign companies, including Chinese.

## Recommendations

It would appear that industrial cooperation could become one of the most promising activities for

China in Uzbekistan, especially in such industries as agriculture, construction, coal, textiles, the automotive sector, as well as agricultural machinery. The projects outlined below could be particularly beneficial.

### *Production of Packaging/Containers for Fruits and Vegetables*

This is a very promising area as Uzbekistan has a well-developed agricultural system and relatively high export opportunities for vegetables, and particularly fruits, melons, and grapes. Annual production of fruits and vegetables is more than 5.5 million tons; more than 1.5 million tons of melons and over 2 million tons of fruit crops (mainly grapes) are harvested annually. Currently there is a tendency in Uzbekistan to reduce acre age of cotton and simultaneously increase areas under cultivation for food crops, including vegetables, fruits, grapes, and melons. In addition, cold storage facilities are being constructed in the country for these products. In the future, production of the above items will only continue to increase in Uzbekistan. These products are in great demand—as organic products they contain no artificial additives and are not genetically modified—and their production could be even more profitable than the sale of cotton.

Uzbek fruit and vegetable products are mainly exported to the post-Soviet markets (mostly Russia and Kazakhstan). However, exports of these products to the EU (especially the promising markets of Germany, France, and the UK) are hampered by the lack of packaging/packing lines which conform to European standards. Consequently, setting up the production of container/packaging facilities for fruit and vegetables corresponding to the highest European standards will promote large-scale, highly profitable exports of horticultural products—both to the markets of the former Soviet Union and Europe. An optimal way to implement such projects is through the establishment of a series of joint ventures and/ or businesses fully financed by Chinese capital; Uzbekistan has no experience in the organization of such production. The Chinese could supply the managers and engineers while Uzbeks could comprise the local workforce. Moreover, there is already a conducive environment in Uzbekistan to set up such a manufacturing sector, as polyethylene is produced at Shurtan Gas Chemical Complex in the Kashkadarya region, which is mainly used in the food industry.

*Supplies/Production of Refrigerator Cars for Transporting Fruit and Vegetables*

Transportation of large volumes of fruits and vegetables from Uzbekistan to the post-Soviet markets and Europe is most profitable when done by rail. What is needed, though, are refrigerated wagons, which can be provided by Chinese companies. There are two parallel ways to achieve this: delivery of finished refrigerator cars from China to Uzbekistan funded by Chinese loans; or production of refrigerator cars in Uzbekistan within a joint venture.

*Storage and Processing of Fruits and Vegetables*

This is a very promising direction for future projects. It is proposed to construct special refrigerated storage for storing fruits and vegetables based on sandwich panels and the organization of deep processing of fruits and vegetables to obtain products with high-added value. Of particular interest is the organization of production/export of baby food processed from organic Uzbek fruits and vegetables (which, as previously stated, contain no chemicals and are not genetically modified). There could be two ways to implement the project: either through setting up a series of production facilities with 100 percent Chinese capital and/or a series of joint ventures with Uzbek partners.

*Production of Construction Materials*

This also constitutes a promising avenue as Uzbekistan has huge reserves of primary materials used for the production of all kinds of building materials: gypsum, limestone, chalk, raw materials for cement production, vermiculite, fluorspar, feldspar, graphite, mineral wax, quartz, marble, building stones, and so on. Currently, private Uzbek companies sell deposits containing primary resources for the production of building materials. In this regard, Chinese companies have a chance to buy such deposits and their resource base to set up the production of building materials. Moreover, there are potential new deposits for development. There are two models: acquisition of deposits and establishment of enterprises wholly owned by Chinese capital; or acquisition of deposits on a par with Uzbek companies and setting up of a joint venture with Uzbek partners.

*Coal Processing and Construction of Coal Terminals in the Ferghana Valley*

Currently Uzbekistan seeks to greatly reduce its domestic gas consumption. In this context, it is planned

that energy consumption in the Ferghana Valley (Namangan, Ferghana, and Andijan) be shifted from natural gas to coal. The Uzbek coal industry produces 7 to 8 million tons of coal annually. However, given that gas has traditionally been and remains a main source of energy in all regions of Uzbekistan, the infrastructure of the coal market is poorly developed. In this regard, it is deemed reasonable to turn to the Chinese experience in the construction of coal terminals and processing enterprises of coal (removal of impurities, pressing, and briquetting). The most optimal form of implementation of such projects is to set up enterprises wholly owned by Chinese capital; indeed, Uzbekistan has little experience in this field. While the managers and engineers could come from China, the labor force could be supplied by Uzbekistan.

*Processing of Raw Cotton, Textile Production/ Garment Products for Export*

This is an extremely promising direction. China is currently a main buyer of Uzbek cotton. However, it seems that Chinese companies may participate more effectively in the processing of Uzbek cotton locally with further sale of textile/apparel products to the post-Soviet countries, and even Europe. There is a favorable environment in Uzbekistan for the organization of large-scale textile and garment production (ginneries, textile mills, garment factories, adequate infrastructure, cheap labor), and most importantly, there is political will to support these businesses. Currently, the shares of Uzbekistan ginneries are put up for sale where the Chinese companies can participate. In the Jizdaq free economic zone at least seven textile factories are being built with Chinese participation. In terms of set up, this could take the form of a Sino-Uzbek joint venture in textile and garment production, or through enterprises wholly owned by Chinese capital. In terms of the division of management and labor this could be the same as for the projects above.

*Development of Small Hydropower Capacities*

Hydropower represents a promising sector. A state program is currently underway for the reconstruction of more than 60 small Soviet-era hydropower plants in Uzbekistan. In this context, China is already taking part in the reconstruction of a number of hydroelectric power plants. Reconstruction/construction of small hydropower plants is being implemented by the Uzbek state company Uzsuenergo under



the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources funded by loans from the EXIM Bank of China. The most optimal form for these projects is to fund construction through loans.

#### *Production of Automobile Tires*

Currently there are several assembling facilities for passenger cars, buses, and vans in Uzbekistan. The annual demand for tires exceeds 3 million units in the domestic market alone. The organization of production with 100 percent Chinese capital with Uzbek labor and Chinese management and engineering is optimal. Products can be sold to the Uzbek state automobile company Uzavtoprom, which is able to convert Uzbek currency into foreign currency. Another model for the project could be to set up a joint venture in cooperation with Uzavtoprom.

#### *Production of Electric Motors*

While there already exists a state-owned factory in Andijon specialized in the production of electric motors, it has ceased operations since 2008. It would be desirable to resume production of electric motors at the plant. The motors would be in demand both in Uzbekistan and abroad, at least in Central Asia and Afghanistan. This could be achieved through Chinese investment in the plant and the establishment of a company with 100 percent Chinese capital; or via a joint venture with the Uzbek side to use the plant. The division of labor could follow the same form as above.

#### *Introduction of Solar Energy Technologies*

Uzbekistan pays considerable attention to the use of solar energy. Since the Soviet era the country has de-

veloped an appropriate scientific, technological, and infrastructural base. But while the possibilities for the use of solar energy in Uzbekistan are significant, they have hitherto failed to be sufficiently exploited. The technical potential of solar energy (a potential that can be activated with the existing technologies today) in Uzbekistan is huge and is estimated to be around 175 million tons of oil equivalent. However, the extent of the current use of solar energy in the country still makes up only about 0.6 million tons of oil equivalent, which corresponds to approximately 0.3 per cent of what could potentially be harnessed. Some of the most feasible projects in terms of the use of solar energy would include setups for the production of solar panels, batteries, as well as the latter for use in street lighting and road signs. An optimal scheme for the project is an enterprise wholly owned by Chinese capital.

In sum, all of the above sectors for potential projects are beneficial both for Uzbekistan and China, and could be implemented in practice, especially if agreed upon at the highest political levels. However, the manufacturing industry and technological sector of the Uzbek economy still remains largely unattractive for China and Chinese businesses. On the one hand, Beijing is fairly satisfied with the resource orientation of the regional economies, which enables it to maintain industrial production at home, particularly in Xinjiang. On the other hand, there is a significant fragmentation of the Central Asian economic market (transport and customs limitations) which also hinders the development of full-fledged and mutually beneficial economic relations between the countries of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan and China.

# Iranian-Uzbek Relations in the Geopolitical Context of Central Asia

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Guli Yuldasheva<sup>1</sup> (2014)

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Over the past two decades, Iranian-Uzbek relations have come to the attention of the international community as a key factor determining trends in the development of modern Central Asia. In fact, with expectations of a possible change in Iran-U.S. relations, the dynamics of relations between Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran may play an indirect role in this process. It is also obvious that the state of relations between Uzbekistan and Iran is largely dependent on the barriers and obstacles imposed by the current geopolitical environment in the Central Asian region.

## Common Interests

The Islamic Republic of Iran (hereafter Iran) views the role and importance of Uzbekistan in its foreign policy within a set of strategic considerations, revised after the collapse of the Soviet Union and formulated in the 1990s.

Thus, Iran's contemporary foreign policy in essence seeks to build a multipolar world order under the auspices of the United Nation, whereby Iran and other Islamic countries occupy one of the "power poles." Particular importance is attached to Central Asia, which Tehran in fact sees as an extension of a vital area for its economic interests as well as of the Persian Gulf region as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Active cooperation with Central Asian countries thus serves to strengthen Iran's regional status, prestige, and role in the Muslim world, as well as constitutes a significant counterweight to the U.S., eases the region's international isolation, and attempts to reintegrate it on the basis of a shared Middle East-Central Asian historical past. However, Iran needs to also ensure that there is stability, mutually beneficial cooperation, and peace

in Central Asia, a region it has both culturally and historically influenced, and that anti-Iranian sentiment does not emerge on its borders.

In this regard, the geostrategic position of Uzbekistan being located at the core of Central Asia and the demographic factor (largest population of the region and Tajik diaspora) make the country the most important actor in terms of the implementation of long-term plans<sup>3</sup> for Tehran's gradual engagement with the region. From this perspective it is also important that both countries play an effective role by using "their significant civilizational legacies on both sides of the Amu Darya."<sup>4</sup>

In general, Iran has the following fundamental interests in the Central Asian region, which find also understanding and support in Uzbekistan:

- Ensuring security and stability in Central Asia, which is inextricably linked with the situation in Afghanistan due to the geographical, historical, cultural, and ethnic proximity of Afghanistan to Iran and Central Asian countries. Tehran seeks to secure Afghanistan's unity, peace and stability, as well as supports the establishment of the Afghan coalition government with an equal participation of all ethnic groups, religions, and movements (and providing certain freedoms to the Shiite community), which also lies in the interest of Tashkent. Moreover, along with increasing religious extremism and the significant growth of drug production and drug trafficking, the problem of regional security in Central Asia is becoming particularly acute for Tashkent as Uzbekistan borders Afghanistan.
- Strengthening the region's status through geo-economic projects. Iran is interested in engaging Central Asian countries within the framework of regional and international economic structures with its participation. This

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1 Member of the Expert Council, Analytical Project "Central Eurasia."

2 K. Mokhammad, *Islam, dialog I grazhdanskoe obshchestvo* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), 46.

3 M. Mohammad, *Islamic Fundamentalism. The New Global Threat* (Washington D.C.: Seven Locks Press, 2001), 78-81.

4 K. Elakhi, "Kul'turnoe vzaimosovershenstvovanie po dvum storonom," *Amu Darya* 11 (Winter/ Spring 2002): 73-87.

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is consistent with the interests of the Central Asian countries, as it provides them with potential access to world markets.

- Ensuring that Iran will play the role of a “gatekeeper” in Central Asia and as a transit route for oil and gas pipelines and transport networks. For its part, Uzbekistan may also play an important role in transit, transport, and communication networks as well as the electric power system of Central Asia. Uzbekistan is the third largest producer of natural gas in the CIS and is among the top ten countries in the world in terms of gas production.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is of great importance that Uzbekistan is involved in Central Asian energy projects that transit Iran to the Persian Gulf. This would serve to bolster the economic and political security of the region by helping to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan through utilizing its transit opportunities, ones which Tashkent and Tehran are vitally interested in.

### Barriers to Cooperation

A number of objective and subjective factors have served as barriers to the effective development of bilateral relations between Iran and Central Asian countries, including the socio-economic consequences of the collapse of the USSR and differences between the political system of the Islamic regime in Iran and the secular states of Central Asia. Further factors include the inability of the Iranian economy to supply high-end technologies to and make sizable investments in Central Asian countries, and ethnic and religious differences between Sunnis and Shiites, Persians and Turks; this in spite of some commonalities too. Furthermore, there are a number of potential and real threats, which include the potential threat of religious extremism emanating from Iran, and Tehran’s alleged use of the Persian language in promoting the vision of a Persian “alliance” consisting of Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan). Bilateral relations have also to a certain extent been handi-

capped by the anti-Iranian policy pursued by the U.S.

Thus, because of the potential threat of the spillover of religious fundamentalism from Iran in the early 1990s, Tashkent supported the hostile U.S. policy regarding Iran. Tehran was accused of providing asylum to Uzbek militant extremists from the “Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan” (IMU), and it was suspected that Iran’s security services had trained IMU fighters, supplying them with documents, weapons, and explosives. However, upon President Muhammad Khatami’s coming to power, Tashkent’s perception of Iran gradually changed, with Tehran adopting more cautious and flexible tactics vis-à-vis Central Asia, while Iran’s links with terrorist acts conducted in Uzbekistan remained largely unproven.

Moreover, while it is possible that in the past Tehran may have hoped to cement and extend its presence in Central Asia by strengthening links with Tajikistan, and so supporting political forces with a pro-Iranian orientation, this has largely been hindered by the fact that significant ideological and cultural differences have become apparent between Iran and Tajikistan.

In this context, Dr. M. Mesbahi<sup>6</sup> is a scholar who has highlighted a number of differences between the traditions of the Iranian Shia and Central Asia Sunni, as well as between the ideology of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Tajik experience of civil war.

Not only this but the Tajik population has greater ties with the rest of Central Asia due to a common Soviet historical, cultural, economic, and ethno-religious heritage and common “mentality.” It is also clear from a geopolitical point of view that a politically and economically weak Tajikistan will not have a significant role in Iran’s strategy in Central Asia. Therefore, it appears logical that the Iranian branch of Islam and its most radical manifestations have not only failed to gain a foothold in Tajikistan, but sometimes even caused a degree of distancing in bilateral relations with Iran.<sup>7</sup> Even today Tajik experts recognize the ambiguity of Iran-Tajikistan relations with “Tajik authorities not eager to give the green light to all Iranian initiatives.”<sup>8</sup> Besides Dushanbe

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5 “Caspian Sea Region Country Analysis Brief,” Energy International Agency, December 2004, <http://www.eia.doe.gov>.

6 M. Mohiaddin, “Tajikistan, Iran, and the International Politics of the Islamic Factor,” *Central Asian Survey* 16, no. 2 (1997): 141-158.

7 R. Abdullo, “Tadzhikistan-Iran: novye perspektivy,” *CentrAsia.Ru*, October 14, 2004, <http://www.CentrAsia.Ru/newsA>. Asia-Plus.

8 A. Dzhumayev, “Iran i Tadzhikistan. Dve strany, odna natsiya,” *Central-asia.tj*, February 25, 2013, <http://central-asia.tj/2013/02/25/iran-i-tadzhikistan-dve-strany-odna-naciya/>.

itself is a victim of terrorism and drug trafficking from Afghanistan and needs the support of the international community, as evidenced by the participation of Tajik representatives, including members of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, in recent international conferences on Afghanistan. The economic interests of the country require coordination in building transport corridors, which is why in June 2003 Presidents Emomali Rakhmon and Islam Karimov signed transport agreements with Iran and Afghanistan in Tehran. The above is hardly likely to lead to the formation of any Persian association in Central Asia with the participation of Tajikistan, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Sanctions imposed on Iran to some extent serve as obstacles to the development of Iranian-Uzbek relations, which hinders the construction of new transport routes and telecommunications necessary for the implementation of major projects, as well as small business activities and the inflow of foreign investment in Uzbekistan. In particular, sanctions have a negative impact on the economies of Iran and Central Asian countries and thereby substantially impede the pace of construction of the most economically feasible and mutually beneficial railways, which could provide direct access for the Central Asian countries to the ports of the Persian Gulf, Europe, Turkey, India, and Russia. These routes, for example, include the Trans-Afghan route Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat, access to the Iranian ports of Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar, and the planned corridor Bafq-Zahedan through Iran and Pakistan, which is potentially capable of linking Central Asian countries with South Asian markets.

The lack of an adequate regional transport network along with other factors limits the development of Iranian-Uzbek relations, with links being restricted mostly to the level of small-scale business and scientific and cultural relations. Partly for this reason the trade between Iran and Uzbekistan has increased only marginally: in 1990 imports stood at 2155 million dollars and exports 2399 million dollars, increasing to 3136.9 million dollars' worth of imports and 3264 million dollars of exports in 2001.<sup>9</sup> By 2012 the volume of Uzbek-Iranian trade reached only \$350 million.<sup>10</sup>

## **Partnership and Cooperation**

Nevertheless, objective interests in mutual cooperation prevail. As early as November 1992 Tashkent and Tehran signed a joint statement on cooperation in economic, cultural, transport, and communication sectors, which was later supported by a number of other agreements which laid the basis for the development of bilateral relations.

Events post-2001 demonstrated the need to boost bilateral relations and take urgent decisions to address Central Asian transport and communication problems. In 2002, an agreement was reached on non-interference in the internal or external affairs of either country, and the need was stressed to build a policy based primarily on national interests. A strategic partnership between Russia and Uzbekistan had been also an incentive to consolidate bilateral relations, which to some extent lay in the interests of Tehran which views cooperation with Russia as a potential counterweight to U.S. policy in Central Asia. Indeed, Iranian experts believe that it is only with the assistance of Moscow that Uzbekistan can solve the problems of armed aggression on its borders.<sup>11</sup> Of further importance to bilateral relations was an agreement signed in summer 2003 in Tehran on the creation of the Trans-Afghan corridor with the participation of Afghanistan.

Despite, growing geopolitical instability in the Central Asian region, partly due to continued Iranian-American antagonism,<sup>12</sup> Uzbekistan worked to improve its trade relations with Tehran in the mid-2000s. Deepening relations have been supported by the number of signed contracts between the two countries: by January 2005 about 20 agreements had been signed, while by 2011 there were more than 30 intergovernmental and interagency documents setting out basic principles and directions for the development of mutually beneficial economic and trade relations. In particular, relations between the countries are governed by the agreements "On trade and economic cooperation," "On promotion and reciprocal protection of investments," "On avoidance of double taxation and exchange of information on income and capital taxes," as well as a number of inter-

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9 "Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific," United Nations, 2003.

10 "Posol Irana v Uzbekistane rasskazal ob otnosheniyakh dvukh stran," *Anons.uz*, February 11, 2013, <http://www.anons.uz/article/politics/8549/>.

11 S. Khabibulla Abu Khasan, "Mery bezopasnosti v Tsentral'noy Azii i na Kavkaze," *Amu-Darya* 6 (2000): 45.

12 G. I. Yuldasheva, *Irano-amerikanskie otnosheniya na sovremennom etape i ikh vozdeystvie na geopoliticheskuyu situatsiyu v Tsentral'noi Azii* (Tashkent: Academy of Science of Uzbekistan, 2006).

governmental memoranda. Currently there are over 120 joint Iranian-Uzbek companies in Uzbekistan, 20 of which are established with one hundred percent Iranian capital. The priority areas of cooperation include transport communications, energy, textiles, and agriculture.

Beyond the economic sphere, Iran and Uzbekistan continue to actively cooperate in the field of security: namely, combating drug trafficking and organized crime<sup>13</sup> and participating in the activities of international organizations—including the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OEC), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), as well as all regional initiatives on Afghanistan which include the grouping “6+2,” “Delhi Policy group,” the Istanbul Summit, “Afghanistan and Central Asia” dialogue, among others.

### Current Situation

Currently, the development of Iranian-Uzbek relations continues to be largely affected by geopolitical checks and balances as well as interstate confrontation.

The focus is now on how the situation in Afghanistan will evolve after the drawdown of NATO troops in 2014. Allied to this, moreover, there are several conflicting visions of geopolitical development in the Central Asian region: the Eurasian model under the auspices of Russia, the American “New Silk Road” model, and the pan-Asian or “Heart of Asia” model. It is obvious that each of these political projects cannot be realized without engaging Iran, which is capable of assisting or blocking the development of such projects on account of its special links with Central Asia, including Afghanistan and its large Shiite diaspora.

In light of the above and given the fact that many countries are seeking economic partnership with Iran, and support Tehran’s involvement in certain conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan, Washington is trying to enlist Tehran’s support or at least ensure its neutrality when addressing regional problems. In response, Iran’s policy has been steadfastly cautious and ambiguous. On the one hand, because of the continuing dispute with the United States, Tehran has been

actively involved in various regional associations (SCO, Non-Aligned Movement, OIC, “Heart of Asia” for Afghanistan etc.) that seek to exclude U.S. pressure and interests; on the other hand, Iran continues, with some success, to negotiate with the international community on its nuclear program, which meets the interests of the United States.

Attempts by the Obama administration to improve the standing of relations with Iran may, however, provoke Iran’s regional rival—the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—which in turn could lead to a series of outbreaks of Sunni extremism in the Central Asian region, not least directed and sponsored by the Saudis. Upon successful completion of current negotiations of the International Group 5+1 with Iran on the nuclear issue, it is expected that Saudi Arabia is likely to experience a decline in its geopolitical and economic influence and weight in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as in OPEC. In order to prevent this, Saudi Arabia is seeking a strategic partnership with the Gulf States and Israel. Presumably, the Saudis can also influence the situation in Afghanistan by inciting Sunni-Shiite strife. These new trends may potentially destabilize the already difficult situation in Central Asia and adversely affect Iranian-Uzbek relations, given the fact that the population of Uzbekistan is largely composed of Sunnis.

At the same time, dissatisfaction with the policy on Iran of the Euro-Atlantic community and alleged “double standards” by the U.S. may once again force Iran, Russia, and China to seek a greater convergence of positions, notwithstanding competition among them.

Thus, there are two major challenges to current Iranian-Uzbek relations: *geopolitical tensions* in Central Asia, which has forced Tashkent to seek an acceptable balance of forces in the region, and *religious extremism*, which is partly connected to the longstanding hostility between Iran and the United States. It is therefore obvious that prospects for bilateral relations will be largely determined by the nature and degree of influence these two factors exert.

At the same time, Iran shares many commonalities with Uzbekistan, and it is in the interests of economic and political security for Uzbekistan to gradually integrate itself into the Eurasian trading system. In December 2013, Tashkent ratified a Treaty of Accession to the free economic zone of the CIS

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13 “Uzbekistan sovместno s UNP realizovuyvaet 7 proektov,” *12uz.com*, December 31, 2013, <http://12uz.com/#ru/new/s/show/official/16033/>.

countries, which expands the possibilities for economic partnership with Iran.

It is also noteworthy that most of Iran's partners are also partners of Uzbekistan. It is worth mentioning in this regard that Tehran is not limiting itself to close bilateral relations with Russia and China, but also seeks to join the multilateral structure of the SCO. On the other hand, Iran is working closely with New Delhi, including cooperation on the TRACECA project which is favorable both to Central Asia and Europe. Moreover, Iran and another close neighbor of Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, have signed a strategic partnership and officially announced the launch of Afghan exports from the Iranian port of Chabahar.<sup>14</sup> In parallel, Tehran is attempting to accelerate construction of the planned transport corridor Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman-Qatar and a pipeline from Iran to Pakistan. The improvement of Iran's relations with Qatar<sup>15</sup> has been helped to a certain degree by such economic considerations and security interests (read the Saudi factor). Further, economic interests encourage European countries (notably Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Italy) not to await resolution of the Iran-U.S. dispute but rather to revive lost links with Tehran.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of the position of the U.S. Congress on this issue, security and economic interests help to develop multilateral regional cooperation in Central Asia involving Iran. In order to consolidate these positive trends, Iran officially announced its refusal of violence in the Islamic world<sup>17</sup> by reiterating that it has no links with international extremism. Moreover, it has stressed that Iran itself is a victim of drug trafficking and is interested in a regional partnership to combat such.

Amid intensifying regional cooperation, the attempts of Saudi Arabia to create an anti-Iranian bloc of Gulf States remain fruitless. Taking into account domestic political problems in Saudi Arabia, its eco-

nommic dependence on the United States, as well as Tehran's efforts to approach the Saudis on finding a compromise in areas of common interest, it is possible that Saudi Arabia may yet come to a consensus with the Iranian leadership.

As for Israel, because of emerging pro-Iranian trends and the lack of a clear approach to Iran in the U.S., there has been a tendency of rapprochement toward Russia<sup>18</sup>—one that could also pave the way for a possible gradual normalization of relations with Tehran.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the evolution of Iranian-Uzbek relations and the dynamics of these relations to some extent affect regional processes in Central Asia as a whole. In particular, limited contacts between Iran and Uzbekistan (until 2005) led to an unstable geopolitical situation in the region while periods of cooperation (since 2005) have served to reduce the negative impact of other complicating factors (U.S.-Iran dispute, etc.) through the implementation of economic projects. What is more, it is clear that without taking into account the interests of Uzbekistan and Iran and their active collaborative partnership, it is impossible to construct an effective mechanism for regional security and cooperation. This is particularly important given the current situation in Afghanistan.

In turn, the intensity and degree of relations between Uzbekistan and Iran is also largely dependent on the barriers and obstacles imposed by the current geopolitical environment in Central Asia and the individual interests of these states. In the case of a substantial improvement in Iranian-American relations, Tashkent and Tehran could also significantly consolidate their relations by engaging in new large-scale energy projects (among others) in Central Asia.

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14 "Afghanistan Has Officially Started Export of Goods by Chabahar Port," *Afghanistan.ru*, July 28, 2013, <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/62773.html>.

15 "Yuzhnyy Pars. Katar gotov sotrudnicat' s Iranom v razrabotke mestorozhdeniya," *Iran.ru*, December 25, 2013, [http://www.iran.ru/news/economics/91951/Katar\\_gotov\\_sotrudnicat\\_s\\_Iranom\\_v\\_razrabotke\\_mestorozhdeniya\\_Y\\_uzhnyy\\_Pars](http://www.iran.ru/news/economics/91951/Katar_gotov_sotrudnicat_s_Iranom_v_razrabotke_mestorozhdeniya_Y_uzhnyy_Pars).

16 "Germanskije kompanii gotovy investirovat' v iranskuyu ekonomiku," *Iran.ru*, December 24, 2013, [http://www.iran.ru/new\\_s/economics/91946/Germanskije\\_kompanii\\_gotovy\\_investirovat\\_iranskuyu\\_ekonomiku](http://www.iran.ru/new_s/economics/91946/Germanskije_kompanii_gotovy_investirovat_iranskuyu_ekonomiku); "Dva evropejskikh ministra inostrannykh del posetyat Iran," *Iran.ru*, December 27, 2013, [http://www.iran.ru/news/politics/91997/Dva\\_evropejskikh\\_ministra\\_inostrannykh\\_del\\_posetyatIran](http://www.iran.ru/news/politics/91997/Dva_evropejskikh_ministra_inostrannykh_del_posetyatIran).

17 "Iranskiy ayatolla prizval shiitov i sunnitov ob'edinit'sya protiv terrorizma," *Iran.ru*, January 3, 2014, [http://www.iran.ru/news/politics/92033/Iranskiy\\_ayatolla\\_prizval\\_shiitov\\_i\\_sunnitov\\_obedinit'sya\\_protiv\\_terrorizma](http://www.iran.ru/news/politics/92033/Iranskiy_ayatolla_prizval_shiitov_i_sunnitov_obedinit'sya_protiv_terrorizma).

18 I. Shamir, "O chem govoriли Putin i Netan'yakhu - sensatsiya," *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, December 28, 2013, [http://www.iran.ru/news/politics/92002/0\\_chem\\_govorili\\_Putin\\_i\\_Netan'yahu\\_sensatsiya](http://www.iran.ru/news/politics/92002/0_chem_govorili_Putin_i_Netan'yahu_sensatsiya).

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However, if the negotiation process underway is delayed and confrontation with Iran prolonged, it cannot be ruled out that subversive activities and local conflicts with the participation and sponsorship of Saudi Arabia will take place. This scenario is not in the interest of any party, including

Washington or Riyadh. It is highly likely that a very gradual improvement of U.S.-Iran relations, albeit not without difficulties, will come to pass, where after a revival of Iranian-Uzbek relations in the emerging Eurasian Economic Community will become more possible.

# Constraints and Opportunities for Uzbek-Afghan Economic Relations

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**Vladimir Paramonov and Alexey Stokov<sup>1</sup> (2013)**

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In order to normalize the situation in Afghanistan and ensure long-term stability, coordinated international action is needed in Afghanistan to restore the following: (1) the transportation network; (2) industrial facilities; and (3) agriculture. This requires mobilizing the economic potential, above all, of the countries neighboring Afghanistan, including Uzbekistan. It is precisely Uzbekistan that—given competent coordination of international assistance—could play a decisive role in rehabilitating the northern provinces of Afghanistan, which are home to over two million ethnic Uzbeks (about 7 percent of the total population of Afghanistan) and formerly contained at least two-thirds of the country's industrial facilities.

## The Current State of Economic Relations

From the birth of Uzbekistan as an independent state in 1991 up to 1998, when the Taliban took control of Mazar-i-Sharif, economic ties between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan remained insignificant, notwithstanding the aid that Uzbekistan provided the northern provinces before the Taliban regime established its control over them. During the period 1998-2001, when the Taliban controlled almost the entire territory of Afghanistan, Uzbek-Afghan economic ties were practically nonexistent. With the start of the international anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan, however, Uzbekistan became one of the main forward bases in the fight against the Taliban. It is generally recognized that this played a key role in enabling the United States and its allies to consolidate their positions in Afghanistan.

After the “overthrow” of the Taliban regime, economic relations between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan were gradually restored. This was greatly facilitated by the fact that the two countries share a border—

of about 137 kilometers—and that Uzbekistan has a developed transportation infrastructure that links with Afghanistan. In 2002 Uzbekistan opened the Khairaton Bridge on the Uzbek-Afghan border. In 2003 the Airitom Customs Complex began to operate in the border town of Termez, speeding up the process of registering and delivering freight to Afghanistan. Over the period 2002-3 alone, about 2.5 million tons of freight were delivered to Afghanistan via Uzbekistan. In turn, Hamid Karzai's government expressed willingness to develop economic interaction with Uzbekistan, the matter coming under discussion during numerous visits to Tashkent by highly placed Afghan officials. In addition, Uzbekistan has participated in a number of projects to develop transportation arteries in Afghanistan.

In spite of the above, Uzbek-Afghan economic relations remain at a low level, being confined mainly to small-scale trade that has a certain significance for Afghanistan (more precisely, for its northern provinces), but which, as of yet, is of no great importance to Uzbekistan.

## Uzbek-Afghan Trade

The volume of Uzbek-Afghan trade rose throughout the period 2002-2010, with the exception of 2005 when trade between the two countries dropped sharply largely due to difficulties in Uzbek-American relations. The volume of trade in 2011 was also somewhat lower than in 2010. According to data for 2011, Uzbek-Afghan trade accounts for under 3 percent of the foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan and roughly 6 percent of that of Afghanistan. This is far below its potential level (see Table 1 below).

The structure of Uzbek-Afghan trade (see Figure 1) remained practically unchanged throughout the period 2002-2011. Uzbek deliveries to Afghanistan included fuel, electricity, and petrochemicals (60-62 percent), ferrous metals and their products (20-24 percent), food products consisting of flour, cereals,

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<sup>1</sup> Co-founders of the web think-tank “Central Eurasia” ([www.ceasia.ru](http://www.ceasia.ru)), Tashkent.



fruits, and vegetables (11-13 percent), and services (about 3 percent). Uzbek exports go predominantly to the northern provinces of Afghanistan, constituting either international humanitarian aid or are paid for from funds provided to Afghanistan by international financial institutions.

Table 1. Trade between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan over the Period 2002-2011, in US\$ Million

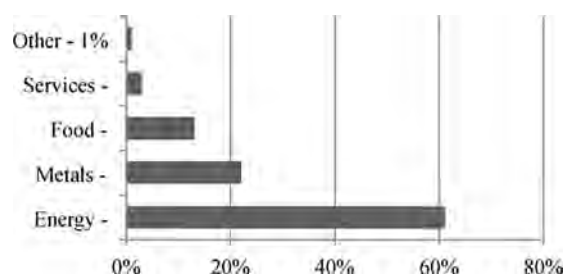
Year	Total Volume, US\$ Million	Uzbek Exports to Afghanistan, US\$ Million	Afghan Exports to Uzbekistan, US\$ Million	Export Balance in Favor of Uzbekistan, US\$ Million
2002	61.5	61.3	0.2	+61.1
2003	89.6	89.4	0.2	+89.2
2004	130.1	126.2	3.9	+122.3
2005	19.3	19.2	0.1	+19.1
2006	163.7	161.7	2.0	+159.7
2007	332.3	331.4	0.9	+330.5
2008	533.1	530.5	2.6	+527.9
2009	703.9	703.8	0.1	+703.7
2010	663.5	663.3	0.2	+663.1
2011	456.3	456.1	0.2	+459.9

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit<sup>2</sup>

Volumes of Afghan exports to Uzbekistan were insignificant throughout the period 2002-2011 and remain minor today. Except for the years 2004, 2006, and 2008, when their value was in the range of \$2-4 million, the value of exports from Afghanistan was at an extremely low level. Moreover, they were made up almost entirely of services (about 99 percent). Deliveries of goods are very modest and consist of certain kinds of agricultural raw materials such as edible fruits and nuts.

This distinct lack of exports from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan is not surprising considering that the real sector of the Afghan economy (its industrial and agro-industrial segments) was practically destroyed, while the population of Afghanistan survives mostly on account of the subsistence economy and by cultivating opium poppy. As a result, the scale of Afghan-Uzbek trade is determined mainly by the magnitude of international financial assistance to Afghanistan: it is primarily with foreign money that Afghanistan buys industrial and consumer goods in Uzbekistan.

Figure 1. Structure of Commodity Deliveries from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan (2011)



Source: Figure utilizes data from the Economist Intelligence Unit

### Projects with Uzbek Participation

The economic projects carried out in Afghanistan with Uzbek participation are mainly concerned with the restoration or building of transportation arteries. These projects are financed by international institutions on account of Uzbekistan being unable on its own to make investments of any significance in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the contribution that Uzbekistan makes to the process of reconstruction in Afghanistan may be considered significant: the projects in which Uzbekistan participates are important to Afghanistan.

After the overthrow of the Taliban and the accession to power of the Karzai government, Uzbekistan participated very actively in restoring the motor road between Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul. Between 2003 and 2011, Uzbek specialists restored and reopened eleven bridges along this route. Another major project in Afghanistan has been the construction of the rail branch line from Khairaton to Mazar-i-Sharif (75 kilometers). This project was carried out during the period 2009- 2011 on the basis of an agreement concluded in 2009 between the State Joint-Stock Railway Company (SJRC) Uzbekiston Temir Yullari (the operator of the project) and the government of Afghanistan. The project itself included the laying of the railway line and the building of a freight terminal and accompanying infrastructure in Mazar-i-Sharif.

The total funds allocated to the project were about \$180 million, of which \$165 million was a grant from the Asian Development Bank and \$15 million came from the government of Afghanistan. The line came into operation at the end of 2011. The volume

<sup>2</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit ("Uzbekistan: Country Report," The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, June 2003, June 2004, June 2005, June 2006, June 2007, June 2008, June 2009, June 2010, June 2011, March 2012).

of freight predicted for the initial stage is 7 million tons a year, subsequently rising to 20 million tons.

### **Main Obstacles to the Economic Reconstruction of Afghanistan: A View from Uzbekistan**

Regarding Afghanistan as an inseparable part of Central Asia, Uzbekistan focuses its main efforts on the search for mechanisms to rebuild the country. At the same time, it is understood in Uzbekistan that the current level of economic relations with Afghanistan is extremely low and does not correspond to the interests of either country. However, the chief reasons for this have very little to do with Uzbekistan and Afghanistan themselves, but rather because the “Afghan problem” is a direct result of the global confrontation of the Cold War period. It is therefore appropriate that the main measures for the reconstruction of Afghanistan should also be international in scope.

Especially relevant here is an analysis of the international effort to aid Afghanistan. It should be recognized that, hitherto, the aid provided by the international community has been extremely ineffective and has done very little to tackle the country’s underlying structural problems. The three main problems are as follows:

- The weakness and ineffectiveness of international efforts to restore the transportation infrastructure of Afghanistan;
- The weakness and ineffectiveness of international efforts to restore the Afghan economy and the country’s regional economic ties;
- The weakness and ineffectiveness of international efforts to counter the drug trade.

Not only does the volume of international aid fall far short of the real needs of Afghanistan, but even those foreign funds that are available are put to extremely ineffective use in terms of the contribution they make to restoring the country’s economy.

The United States spends enormous financial resources in Afghanistan. American financial outlays have been increasing year on year. Thus, while in 2002-2004 the United States spent about \$12 billion per year, by 2010-2011 annual expenditure had already reached around \$160 billion; in 2012 the White House allocated \$110 billion to the war in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, practically all this mon-

ey is allocated to maintaining the American military presence and the establishment of the new Afghan army and force structures. Even these enormous outlays have thus failed to normalize the situation in Afghanistan. To a large extent this is because the United States takes no account whatsoever (or does not wish to do so) of the real needs and interests of Afghanistan itself. Practically nothing is allocated to finding a systemic solution to the problems of restoring the devastated Afghan economy, creating employment, and normalizing the everyday lives of the population.

### **The Weakness and Ineffectiveness of International Efforts to Restore the Transportation Infrastructure of Afghanistan**

The rebuilding of the transportation infrastructure of Afghanistan is one of the main preconditions undergirding the country’s economic reconstruction. However, international efforts have yet to address this issue adequately with the result that the Afghan transportation infrastructure today remains weakly developed, even though the country in geographic terms occupies a very favorable position for the creation of transportation corridors from Central Asia to South Asia, and also to the Middle East. Today the country has practically no railway network—there exists only the 75-kilometer branch line between Khairaton and Mazar-i-Sharif recently built with aid from Uzbekistan. This clearly does not suffice to substantially intensify freight flows through Afghanistan. In fact, the sole form of transportation in Afghanistan is by motor vehicle. There are about 21,000 kilometers of motor roads in the country, of which only 2,800 kilometers (about 13 percent) have a hard surface. Due to the endless fighting and the virtual absence of road repairs, however, road surfaces are in an extremely unsatisfactory condition, while the throughput capacity of the roads themselves is small. Moreover, for four to five months of the year (late autumn, winter, and early spring) the majority of the roads are almost or completely impassable. The routes connecting Afghanistan with its neighbors also continue to be extremely poor. Consequently, Afghanistan’s existing transportation infrastructure prevents it from becoming a regional transportation crossroads: regional trade flows continue to bypass Afghanistan and do not “feed” the process of its reconstruction and development.

### **The Weakness and Ineffectiveness of International Efforts to Restore the Afghan Economy and the Country's Regional Economic Ties**

In the course of over 30 years of continuous armed conflict, all branches of Afghan industry (including those created with Soviet assistance in the 1960s and 1970s) have been destroyed. The situation in agriculture also fares only marginally better with there having been a sharp decline in the volume of agricultural output as a result of the fighting and mass migration from the villages. The country has become increasingly dependent upon deliveries of food from abroad. The collapse of the Afghan economy in turn determines the weakness of the country's regional economic ties from which it finds itself cut off. For example, over the period 2002-2011 the five neighbors of Afghanistan (Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan) together accounted for only some 10 percent of its foreign trade turnover.

It is obvious that the reconstruction of Afghanistan requires, therefore, large-scale investment in the country's industry and agriculture as well as the development of economic ties with neighboring countries. If this is to be achieved it is essential that cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors be bolstered and accelerated. However, the near total absence of international aid to Afghanistan directed toward the restoration of its industrial and agro-industrial sectors, combined with the weakness of the country's regional economic relations, make it impossible even to tackle this crucial task. While international donors allocated a portion of funding to the restoration of certain Afghan roads (mainly those used to supply the NATO troops deployed in Afghanistan), the prospects for the reconstruction of Afghanistan's industry and agriculture remain hazy.

### **The Weakness and Ineffectiveness of International Efforts to Counter the Drug Trade**

The most important obstacle to the reconstruction of Afghanistan—and therefore to the development of Uzbek-Afghan economic cooperation—is the growing resistance of the international drug cartels. Moreover, it was precisely after the Taliban regime was overthrown and NATO forces arrived that the production of drugs in Afghanistan began to rise rapidly. According to UN data, the production of heroin

in Afghanistan rose by 61 percent from 3,600 tons in 2010 to 5,800 tons in 2011—a figure that exceeds 90 percent of global output. A similar quantity of other drugs is also produced in Afghanistan. Altogether, over the ten years since the start of the “antiterrorist campaign” the production of drugs in Afghanistan has increased by a factor of 40.

The international drugs business is a powerful force in Afghanistan—financially and organizationally incomparably stronger than the Karzai government and, apparently, even stronger than the forces of the American-led anti-terrorist coalition. Indeed, according to certain estimates, revenues from the sale of Afghan drugs are in the magnitude of \$640 billion a year, while the incomes of Afghan farmers and the revenues of the Afghan government together amount to just \$4 billion a year. Therefore, in order to maintain its control over this hugely lucrative business, the drug cartels have an objective interest in keeping the central government in Kabul weak and in perpetuating the situation of “smoldering conflict” in Afghanistan.

In sum, the process of reconstruction in Afghanistan—and also the development of Afghan-Uzbek economic ties—is making little headway, with the international community yet to devise a clear, coherent, and agreed upon international program to provide funds and resources for this task.

Conspicuous by its absence has been the potential contribution of regional cooperation to this task, which, instead, has been almost completely neglected. All this renders international efforts to reconstruct the Afghan economy and provide security in the country even less effective than they would otherwise be. As a result, Afghanistan has entered a vicious circle. On the one hand, without targeted international investment in the development of the Afghan economy (transportation, industry, agriculture) and stimulation of regional cooperation there can be no guarantee of even a modicum of stability in Afghanistan, but, on the other hand, without any guarantee of stability there will be no regional cooperation or large-scale foreign investment in the Afghan economy.

### **Prospects for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan: Main Recommendations**

The effectiveness of any efforts targeted at the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan will to a large

extent be determined by the success or failure of the following top-priority measures:

*1. Creation of a More Effective International Mechanism for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan*

It seems to us that the main potential for a fundamental solution to the problems of Afghanistan lies in the creation of a more effective international mechanism to implement targeted programs for the reconstruction of the Afghan economy. Any new program must satisfy the following basic conditions: (1) active participation by the leading powers, international donors, and Afghanistan's neighbors; (2) the setting of priorities for reconstruction; (3) the greatest possible transparency of international money flows; and (4) strict control over the use of international financial and material resources. Even at the initial stage of their implementation, these measures might give a powerful impulse to regional economic cooperation. From the economic point of view, the most efficient way to carry out reconstruction work in northern Afghanistan is to involve companies and specialists from Uzbekistan.

*2. Accelerated Building of Transportation Arteries*

The issue of building trans-Afghan transportation arteries is of fundamental importance. In thus doing, the idea of creating an international transportation consortium for Afghanistan would appear to be worthy of consideration. The members of the consortium could be those states with a direct interest in developing a network of transportation arteries to connect the regions of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East by the shortest possible routes. The building of trans-Afghan arteries may lead to a significant expansion of economic ties between Afghanistan and its neighbors. Moreover, transportation costs in Afghanistan and in a number of other countries (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and also countries of South Asia) may fall by over 60 percent.

This in turn may expand the international flow of goods through Afghanistan, which in itself will speed up the reconstruction of the country. For Uzbekistan, for example, a route through Afghanistan to ports on the Indian Ocean would reduce by more than half the distance to ports on the Baltic and Black Seas; the former route would also be almost 80 percent shorter than routes to ports on the Pacific Ocean. The trans-Afghan route of greatest interest to Uzbekistan would start

at Termez, pass through Mazar-i-Sharif, Shibargan, Herat, and Kandahar, and continue to international seaports in Iran (Chakhbakhar and Bender-Abbas) and in Pakistan (Karachi). Another vital consideration is that development of the Afghan transportation infrastructure may be one of the decisive factors in normalizing the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan, at the same time as undermining the positions of extremist forces and the drugs business in the country. Turning Afghanistan into a transportation hub connecting Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East is objectively in the interests of all strata of Afghan society. The large-scale development of transportation infrastructure could substantially expand the circulation of goods among these regions through Afghanistan. This will create many new jobs, help to solve the problem of unemployment, and potentially lead to a significant raise in the incomes of the Afghan population.

*3. Development of Industrial and Agricultural Cooperation between Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*

In the course of implementing various international projects in Afghanistan, industrial and agricultural cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors may give significant impetus to the country's economic development. Thus, Uzbekistan together with other states might assume responsibility for a broad spectrum of work to restore Afghan agriculture, infrastructure, and industrial and social facilities. This would substantially increase the effectiveness of all international aid to Afghanistan, and especially to the country's northern provinces. One reason for this is that Afghanistan's main industrial facilities, which in the 1970s (before military-political destabilization) accounted for over 60 percent of GDP, used to be concentrated in the northern provinces. There are also specific opportunities to accelerate the reconstruction process in the agrarian sector. A promising approach might be for Afghanistan and neighboring states to jointly establish bilateral and multilateral agricultural holding companies specializing in animal husbandry (for instance, the breeding of Astrakhan sheep) and the cultivation and processing of cotton, fruits, and vegetables. This would make it possible to offer Afghan farmers alternative crops to replace the opium poppy—furthermore, crops that would be in stable demand on the world market.

## **Conclusion**

Greater international attention to the economic reconstruction and development of Afghanistan and to its integration into the system of regional ties would make it possible to come closer to solving the difficult problems of security both in Afghanistan itself and at the interregional and global level. A fundamental re-examination in this light of the current international program of aid to Afghanistan (with a focus on transportation projects within Afghanistan and on enhanced economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors) may provide the necessary impulse to set in motion the country's reconstruction. It seems to us that the key to solving the "Afghan problem" lies in fundamentally changing the situation not only within but also around Afghanistan—above all, the obvious inadequacy of international aid.

Only this will make it possible for more decisive steps to be taken to strengthen the central government in Kabul and weaken the positions of destructive forces. The stabilization and steady development of Afghanistan would signify a major victory of the entire international community in the fight against global terrorism and extremism and the international drug trade. This will also make it easier to normalize the situation in other regions of the world, including the Middle East, because international terrorist organizations will no longer have a support base in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the building of transportation arteries through a stabilized Afghanistan may produce a global economic effect. This has the potential to greatly strengthen economic ties between the maritime and continental regions of Eurasia, correct the current imbalance in their economic development, and ensure long-term stability in Eurasia as a whole.

## About the Central Asia Program (CAP)

The Central Asia Program (CAP) at George Washington University promotes high-quality academic research on contemporary Central Asia, and serves as an interface for the policy, academic, diplomatic, and business communities.

The Central Asia Program focuses on the wider Central Asian space, which includes the five post-Soviet Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Xinjiang, Mongolia, as well as the Volga-Ural region, Kashmir, and Balochistan.

The program calls for a multidisciplinary approach combining the fields of political science, sociology, anthropology, economics, history, globalization studies, development studies, and security studies. It provides a platform for different, and even sometimes contradictory, points of view on contemporary Central Asia.

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**UZBEKISTAN: Political Order, Societal Changes, and Cultural Transformations** is part of a series dedicated to the 5th anniversary of the Central Asia Program.

Academic knowledge on Uzbekistan blossomed in the 1990s, before drying up in the 2000s and 2010s with the closure of the country and the increased difficulty of doing fieldwork. However, research has continued, whether directly, on the ground, or indirectly, through secondary sources or diasporic and migrant communities abroad. The death of the 'father of the nation,' Islam Karimov, in fall 2016, partly changed the conditions and may slowly reopen the country to external observers and to regional cooperation and interaction with the world more broadly. This volume offers a unique collection of articles on Uzbekistan under Karimov, giving the floor to scholars from diverse disciplines. It looks at critical issues of history and memory, at dramatic societal and cultural change the country faced during two decades, at the domestic political order, and at change and continuity in Uzbek regional and foreign policies.

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