

# Security or Human Rights?

US Foreign Policy Dilemma  
in Uzbekistan

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# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Today, America speaks anew to the peoples of the world. All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.

– President George W. Bush  
second inaugural address, January 2005.

Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch

– President Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
on the authoritarian (but anti-communist)  
president of Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza Garcia.

As the last US military personnel left the Karshi-Khanabad airbase in the Central Asian country of Uzbekistan on 21 November 2005, policymakers in Washington must have been shaking their heads in dismay. After four years as a staunch and strategically important ally in the war on terror, President Islam Karimov evicted US forces from the country, halted all cooperation on counterterrorism, and closed down the majority of American-funded nongovernmental organizations operating in the country. The base eviction marked the low point in relations between the two countries and Washington

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1 I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Helge Blakkisrud and his colleague Stina Torjesen from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). Also, a nod of thanks goes to Svein Melby and Anna Therese Klingstedt, both of the Norwegian Institute for Defense Studies, for their kind assistance and helpful comments.

was left with few opportunities to advance its political objectives, which included the continued use of the airbase as a logistics center for ongoing US/NATO operations in Afghanistan. Other US policy goals included counterterrorism, non-proliferation, improving the human rights record of the Karimov regime, and fostering democratic change in Uzbekistan in the interest of long-term peace and stability. It was an ambitious agenda and diverse almost to the point of being counterproductive, especially in an area of the world depicted by many analysts as a huge geopolitical chessboard.

The United States initially conducted a broad, multifaceted foreign policy towards the newly independent Central Asia countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. From the late 1990s onwards, however, the US nurtured a closer relationship with Uzbekistan for strategic reasons relating to counterterrorism. After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the subsequent conflict in Afghanistan, the region became crucial to US military planners and Uzbekistan became an important ally in the American-led war on terror.

Located in the heart of Central Asia, the republic of Uzbekistan drifted steadily towards authoritarianism after gaining independence from the collapsing Soviet Union in 1991. President Islam Karimov has led the country since that time, steadily consolidating his power through the office of the presidency. Most international observers agree that the Karimov regime does not respect universally recognized human rights, does not conduct free and fair elections, suppresses free speech, press and assembly by Uzbek citizens, arrests and convicts individuals on political or religious grounds, and engages in systematic torture of prisoners.

For a country such as the United States, whose leadership consistently and forcefully advocates the spreading of democracy, freedom, and human rights throughout the globe, a close relationship with Uzbekistan was not without complications. A slew of US-funded democracy and civil society programs had taken root throughout Central Asia in the early 1990s, aimed at encouraging the spread of liberal ideals and institutions. The US seemed to face a policy dilemma: encourage democracy and human rights through these programs which were perceived as threatening by

the Karimov regime, or pursue American security interests which depended on the cooperation of the repressive government in Tashkent. The main question this study seeks to answer, therefore, is this: How did the United States balance strategic interests, human rights concerns, and democracy promotion in its foreign policy toward Uzbekistan from 1995 to 2005?

Uzbekistan represents an interesting 'test case' for US policy precisely because of the consistently poor human rights record of President Karimov's government. The regime's uncompromisingly autocratic nature serves as a constant variable amidst a dynamic security environment with fluctuating American interests. Washington needed the support and cooperation of the Karimov regime to pursue US strategic interests, presenting a potential conflict with other more normative policy goals. How did the incorporation of the normative components of US foreign policy change in relation to the dynamic security environment? Did the shift in leadership from Presidents Clinton to Bush result in policy adjustments? How did the sudden emergence of Uzbekistan as a vital ally in the war on terror after September 2001 affect the composition of US policy? These are a few of the questions that should be answered by a focused review of US foreign policy towards Uzbekistan.

This study highlights United States foreign policy towards Uzbekistan during the period 1995–2005. The year 1995 marks the beginning of a more active US role in Uzbekistan, including the first year some military aid was granted, Uzbekistan's initial participation in the NATO-led Partnership for Peace program, and the visit to Tashkent by Defense Secretary William Perry. The study includes the ending date of 2005 in order to capture the most recent developments possible, most notably the violent events in Andijan and the eviction of US forces from the airbase at Karshi-Khanabad, both of which are useful in shedding light on US policy choices. The time period in focus will be divided into four segments, each dealing with an important juncture in US-Uzbek relations when policy decisions revealed how human rights, democratization, and security were prioritized.

The main focus for this study centered on the formation and execution of American foreign policy. Accordingly, a good portion

of the primary sources material originated from State Department and congressional documents outlining US foreign aid. In addition, interviews were conducted with a range of subjects, including key US embassy personnel (the US ambassador, the assistant defense attaché, and the USAID coordinator), the directors of a number of US-funded non-governmental organizations, and Uzbek opposition leaders.<sup>2</sup> Preceding the empirical data and analysis are two brief chapters containing useful background information and terminology. Each of the next four chapters then focuses on a period of US-Uzbek relations and analyzes the discussion, formation, and execution of US policy during crucial junctures in the relationship – times when Washington was forced to make tough choices regarding its interests and how to prioritize them. A final concluding chapter sums up the findings and offers some tentative lessons that can be drawn from US actions in Uzbekistan.

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2 Further information concerning the interviews, including a list of interview subjects, can be made available by contacting the author.

# Chapter 1

## US Foreign Policy

### The actors involved

A study of US foreign policy must first address the question of what exactly makes up the foreign policy of the United States and its principle actors. The three branches of the US federal government are the legislative (Congress, which makes the laws), the executive (the president, who enforces the laws), and the judicial (the courts, which interprets the laws). Constitutionally and historically, the judiciary has little role in the formation and implementation of foreign policy and the focus thereby falls on the remaining two branches of government.

According to Article Two of the US Constitution, the president is designated commander-in-chief of the armed forces and, through the powers to negotiate treaties and appoint ambassadors, serves as the chief diplomat for the United States. Additionally, the prominent nature of the Oval Office automatically ensures that speeches and policy proposals garner widespread attention and thus allows the president to set the foreign policy agenda. The US Congress, through Article One of the Constitution, is granted the power to create and fund the armed forces along with the power to declare war. The Congress (more specifically the US Senate) also must confirm diplomatic appointments and ratify treaties, responsibilities that serve to limit presidential power. Historically, congressional activity within the realm of foreign policy has mainly

been in an oversight capacity.<sup>3</sup> The legislature allows the president a great deal of leeway in conducting the country's foreign policy, and exercises its power mostly through control of the purse strings, as all spending bills must be approved by Congress.

The executive branch has become increasingly powerful within the past decades, due to a professed need to respond quickly to rapidly developing events around the world and the inherent inability of a legislature to act quickly and decisively.<sup>4</sup> Congressional attempts to curb this trend towards greater presidential authority in the foreign policy arena include the War Powers Act (1974), which set limits on the presidential deployment of US forces.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the political orientation of the legislature can also be decisive: a popular president with congressional support can act in almost any way he sees fit, while a White House which faces a combative Congress may be limited by which foreign policy initiatives the legislature is willing to fund. In addition to possible disagreements between the president and Congress on foreign policy issues, the president and his Cabinet and staff do not necessarily constitute a united front on foreign policy either.

In any case, the actors most involved in the formation of US foreign policy are the president and his Cabinet, whose policy-making toolbox includes policy speeches and written statements, diplomatic negotiations, foreign operations budget proposals that require congressional approval, and other executive actions not requiring congressional consent. The US Congress contributes to and influences foreign policy primarily through foreign appropriations legislation and oversight authority in the form of hearings, treaty ratification, congressional fact-finding investigations, and official visits. While the formal structures of US

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3 Alan P. Dobson and Steve Marsh, *US Foreign Policy Since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2001).

4 Some historians have warned of the dangers of the executive branch wielding so much power. See for example Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (New York: Popular Library, 1974).

5 In practical terms, however, this restriction (placing a 60 day limit on the presidential use of the military abroad, with the possibility of a 30 day extension) has had limited effect as the withdrawal of US forces becomes problematic once they are deployed, in addition to the speed with which recent military operations have generally been conducted.

foreign policy may appear fairly straightforward, the substance of foreign policy has always been a source of contention.

## Disagreements over the content of US foreign policy

Since its creation the United States has represented liberty, freedom and democratic ideals. The philosophical foundations of the country rest on these principles and are embedded in the political and legal framework set forth by the US Constitution. The US is seen by its citizens to have something unique – a system of government based on the protection of individual rights such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>6</sup> This idea of the American experience as something special represents an idealized self-image the US collectively holds, where the country feels a responsibility toward the rest of the world.<sup>7</sup> These rights were cast in universal terms and therefore applied not only to US citizens, but to the rest of humanity as well. The self-imposed burden of the US, therefore, was to spread this form of “political morality”.<sup>8</sup> Some political leaders questioned the wisdom of taking on such a missionary role and actively championing the cause of democracy overseas, among them John Quincy Adams, who said in 1821: “Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will be America’s heart, her benedictions, and her prayers. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy.”<sup>9</sup> Almost a century later, in contrast, President Woodrow Wilson’s firm belief in US exceptionalism laid the foundation for an increased US role in international affairs.

Disagreements over US policy take other forms than the engagement/isolation dichotomy illustrated by Adams and Wilson. Svein Melby identified four main intellectual lines of

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6 Dobson and Marsh, *US Foreign Policy*.

7 Svein Melby, *Amerikansk utenrikspolitikk* [American foreign policy] (Oslo: Tano, 1995).

8 Dobson and March, *US Foreign Policy*, p. 2.

9 Quoted in Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p. 238.

conflict consistently running through US foreign policy.<sup>10</sup> First, disagreement stems from a belief by some policymakers that working through international institutions (and a willingness to be bound by them) will always best accomplish foreign policy goals, versus those who see cooperation with those institutions as valuable only when it furthers the interests of the US. Another divergence among policymakers occurs over the use of military and economic tools (hard power) to secure US interests, versus using diplomatic means (soft power). A third disagreement results when those committed to preserving the status quo (i.e. the current political and security arrangement) clash with others intent on changing the international system. Finally, a long-running conflict exists between those striving to remain consistent to the idealistic principles of freedom and democracy (despite some costs to US interests) versus those who see the need to act pragmatically in the unforgiving world of international politics (in order to protect those same interests), as illustrated by the quotations at the beginning of this section.<sup>11</sup> This final conflict, pitting idealism against pragmatism, suggests a foreign policy compromise whereby a balance is reached between the demands of international *realpolitik* and the normative standards upon which the US was founded. Henry Kissinger wrote in a recent work:

The ultimate dilemma of the statesman is to strike a balance between values and interests and, occasionally, between peace and justice. The dichotomy postulated by many between morality and interest, between idealism and realism, is one of the standard clichés of the ongoing debate over international affairs. No such stark choice is, in fact, available.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Svein Melby, *Bush-revolusjonen i amerikansk utenrikspolitik* [The Bush Revolution in American foreign policy] (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2001).

11 In addition to these four conflict areas, Melby fills out his typology by identifying three main perspectives held by US policymakers: institutionalists (desiring to work through international institutions), realists (desiring pragmatic and *realpolitik* action), and expansionists (focused on spreading American political ideals).

12 Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* p. 286.

## US Policy and international relations theory

For IR theorists and policymakers alike, the theoretical perspective employed informs how national interests are determined and which strategies to employ. Classical realists in the style of Hans Morgenthau, viewing the world through the lens of an anarchic system in which the pursuit of power is necessary to ensure the state's survival, predict an instrumental foreign policy based on self-interest.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, proponents of realism place little stock in normative issues, prioritizing security concerns and explaining away idealistic rhetoric as mere instrumental speech. This realist view is one possible interpretation of US policy explored in this study.

Henry Kissinger warned against becoming preoccupied with stability, where “an excessively pragmatic policy will be empty of vision and humanity”.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, he goes on to note that policymakers must make compromises and focus on that which is possible to accomplish, therefore pragmatism must be the order of the day.<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau's brand of realism leaves much open to interpretation, especially in arriving at firm conceptualizations of power and therefore national interest. Foreign policy goals “can run the whole gamut of objectives any nation has ever pursued or might possibly pursue”.<sup>16</sup> His insistence that foreign policy goals are broadly defined and dependent on present circumstances leaves an opening for non-security interests to be incorporated into foreign policy goals if it furthers the security of the state. According to John Mearsheimer, non-security interests may be incorporated into a state's foreign policy if they do not conflict with the state's primary goals of power and security.<sup>17</sup>

This reflects the rationality aspect of realism. Rationality is by definition transitive in nature, meaning that states rank their

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13 Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968).

14 Henry Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1974), p. 259.

15 Ibid.

16 Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 9.

17 John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001), p. 46.

preferences and formulate policies based on those rankings. While security issues are always given the highest priority, are there matters of national interest lower down on the list that might be tended to if the state's security is assured? Thomas Carothers occupies this intellectual middle ground, arguing that US policy for decades has been

a semirealist balancing of sometimes competing and sometimes complementary interests. Where democracy appears to fit in well with US security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy. Where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored.<sup>18</sup>

Carothers' statement represents the second possible interpretation of US policy examined by this study.

As some analysts have pointed out, the rhetoric emanating from the White House and the State Department can hardly be described as the language of *realpolitik*, such that realists would use. After the terrorist attacks of September 2001, President George W. Bush characterized the fight against terrorism as "the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom".<sup>19</sup> The 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States lists "political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity" as the recipe "to help make the world not just safer but better".<sup>20</sup> In his second inaugural address, Bush proclaimed: "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world".<sup>21</sup> How can such language be explained?

Realists maintain that the United States presents itself in an idealistic manner while acting in accordance to realist principles. With its overwhelming focus on power and national security,

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- 18 Thomas Carothers, *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), p. 70.
- 19 George W Bush, Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 20 September 2001 (The White House [online 31 Oct 2005]).
- 20 "The National Security Strategy of the United States", September 2002, *The White House* ([online 31 Oct, 2006]).
- 21 "President Bush's Second Inaugural Address, 'There Is No Justice without Freedom'", 21 January 2005, *Washington Post* [online 2 Nov 2006].

however, realism has always been unpopular with the United States public, which has been raised on the idea of an American moral mission. Founded on principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, Americans view such moral elements as universal and perceive the mission of the US to be the propagation of these principles.<sup>22</sup> US foreign policy is therefore usually framed in idealistic and moral terms, while, according to Mearsheimer,

the elites who make national security policy speak mostly the language of power not that of principle, and the United States acts in the international system according to the dictates of realist logic. In essence, a discernable gap separates public rhetoric from the actual conduct of American foreign policy.<sup>23</sup>

Morgenthau makes a similar point, observing

politicians have an ineradicable tendency to deceive themselves about what they are doing by referring to their policies not in terms of power but in terms of either ethical and legal principles or biological necessities.<sup>24</sup>

The other alternative, of course, is that the United States does in fact include normative, idealistic elements in its foreign policy. Colin Dueck suggests that during the election campaign candidate Bush distanced himself from the seemingly idealistic and multilateral approach of the Clinton years, while as president he has gradually reincorporated idealistic elements into his foreign policy.<sup>25</sup> An analysis of statements made by leading members of the Bush Administration reached a similar conclusion, that the US has “trumpeted” its “commitment to freedom, human rights and good relations among the major powers” since 9/11.<sup>26</sup> Consistently recognizing the importance of (and actively promoting) human rights and democratic principles alongside security issues runs counter to the tenants of realist thought, which therefore offers little explanation for such observations. The soaring language of the

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22 Dobson and Marsh, *US Foreign Policy since 1945*.

23 John Mearsheimer, “Liberal Talk, Realist Thinking”, *University of Chicago Magazine*, vol. 94, no. 3 (2002) (University of Chicago [online 1 Nov 2006]).

24 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 84.

25 Colin Dueck, “Ideas and Alternatives in American Grand Strategy, 2000–2004”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2004): 511–535.

26 Michael J. Mazarr, “George W. Bush, Idealist”, *International Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 3 (2003): 503–522.

Bush Administration points toward the academic archrival of realist thought – liberalism. Scholars advancing a liberalist interpretation of international relations, including the likes of Michael Doyle and Andrew Moravcsik, have argued that individual freedoms are secured through the representative institutions of the state, which in turn creates a system of interdependent states predisposed toward cooperation, human progress, and a democratic peace.<sup>27</sup> Human rights and democracy are therefore prioritized, viewed by liberalists as crucial building blocks to an international system based on institutions and cooperation. A US foreign policy built on these principles becomes the third and final possible interpretation considered in this study.

It would be, mildly stated, a gross oversimplification to assume that all those in the US foreign policymaking community pressing for human rights improvements in Uzbekistan supported a liberalist view of world politics, and that those favoring security cooperation are staunch realists. However, the prioritization of normative goals, especially at the expense of practical security interests, reveals a policy position that can be compared much more favorably to the broad conceptual framework of liberalist international theory than to realist thought. Similarly, most supporters of the general framework of realism almost certainly prefer an interest-driven approach towards Uzbekistan, unencumbered by normative burdens that may not be in the immediate US national interest. The issues prioritized by policymakers in the present reveals something about how they envision the future and which policy path to choose. Such theoretical labels, carefully applied in a limited manner, simply provide a type of shorthand by which the goals of policymakers might be categorized.

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27 See, for example, Michael W. Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1983): 205–235 and Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Relations”, *International Organizations*, vol. 51, no. 4 (1997): 513–553.

## Defining the Terms: Prioritization in US foreign policy

For this study, the expenditure of foreign assistance dollars and the use of political capital are the two primary indicators of whether an issue is made a US foreign policy priority. The first indicator is a straightforward observation of how much of the United States budget was devoted to programs that address and/or promote a particular issue. The second indicator is less quantifiable, and deals with what the US was willing to sacrifice in order to pursue a particular issue – what did it cost the US politically? Did the US take actions that displeased allies, led to diplomatic crises, or forced the US to compromise or negotiate on other issues because of the prioritization? Both indicators deal with cost. Pursuing US interests when they are cost-free is painless and requires little prioritization, while continuing to pursue the same interests at some cost reveals their importance. Connecting the above discussion of foreign policy actions to that of prioritization, this study will examine the concrete actions of the United States and look for prioritization of the issues of human rights, democracy and security using the indicators of US dollars spent and political capital expended.

Neither are perfect measures of prioritization and preference in foreign policy. The director of one nongovernmental organization in Uzbekistan acknowledged that oftentimes the phrase ‘less is more’ applies to democracy assistance.<sup>28</sup> An overabundance of cash can attract the participation of those more interested in economic gain than democratic reform, while low levels of funding ensure participants’ sincerity and commitment to democratic ideals. Military assistance is equally complex and US-implemented training programs incorporate human rights principles.<sup>29</sup> The ease

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28 Interview conducted by the author in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, March 2006.

29 Some analysts argue, as Kurt Meppen does (Kurt Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options” in *Anatomy of a Crisis: US-Uzbekistan Relations, 2001–2005*, Svante Cornell ed., *Silk Road Paper – Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program* (Johns Hopkins University-SAIS and Uppsala University, 2006 [online 1 Nov 2006]), pp. 13–43), that military training by Western countries can be useful in spreading democratic ideals and respect for human rights, while others, including Thomas Carothers (Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999))

of measuring the availability and expenditure of political capital also varies considerably. In many instances, a conscious choice not to press a country on matters of interest to the US (in other words, a failure to spend political capital) is easier to spot than its use in private diplomacy where the effects (the possible gain or loss to US interests) are difficult to identify and attribute to one specific act. Therefore, while both funding levels and use of political capital (or lack of it) are employed as measures of US priorities in this study, quite simply because they are the best indicators publicly available, these types of measurements should not be considered by any means absolute.

## Defining security interests

How security interests are identified depends on the theoretical perspective being applied. As mentioned earlier, classical realists are preoccupied with military capability and other factors that make up their power base. Any threat to these sources of power, or threats to the sovereignty of the state, can constitute a security concern and can be prioritized by the US. The end of the Cold War, however, has led some scholars to question the usefulness of a purely military/materialistic approach to security issues. Non-traditional threats in the form of terrorism, crime, uncontrolled immigration, environmental disasters, and economic crises are increasingly viewed as security issues.<sup>30</sup> This type of security concern – and the dynamic nature of security in general – is more easily incorporated into the liberalist perspective.

According to liberalists, the interests of individuals and groups within the society determine national interests. In this perspective a state's representative institutions (and therefore its interests) are "constantly subject to capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction by coalitions of social actors".<sup>31</sup> Therefore, "in a democracy, the national interest is simply what citizens,

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point to abuses by military units led by US-trained commanders in Turkey, Indonesia, and throughout Central America as counterexamples.

30 David Baldwin, "Security Studies and the End of the Cold War", *World Politics*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1995): 117–141.

31 Andrew Moravcsik "Taking Preferences Seriously...": 518.

after proper deliberation, say it is (...) it is broader than vital security interests.”<sup>32</sup> So while classical realism addresses security issues in purely materialistic terms of capabilities, liberalism sees a dynamic process where security issues are fluid and dependent on which actors are most effective in influencing foreign policy. This is not to say that liberalists would not agree with realists on what constitutes a security threat at any given time, only that the security concerns of realists are fixed: survival of the state and protection of the state’s national interests. The liberalist view of security interests most likely includes this as well, but interprets the state’s national interests more broadly.

## Identifying human rights policy

Although the United States has long professed an interest in promoting human rights and democracy, the appearance of these issues in a concrete way in American foreign policy is more recent. While the post-war Marshall Plan (1948–51) infused Europe with development dollars from the United States (with the intention of rebuilding the continent as a bulwark against the Soviets), US development aid was not institutionalized until the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act that established the US Agency for International Development.<sup>33</sup> This institutionalizing process continued under Presidents Carter, Reagan and Clinton.<sup>34</sup> The existence of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in the US executive branch, along with legal requirements concerning human rights and foreign aid, ensure that normative issues are a well-established component of US policy. That the United States funds efforts in other sovereign states with the goal of promoting internal changes to their system of government should not be simply taken for granted. It is a significant international development that alters the substance of foreign policy.

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32 Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 139.

33 *United States Agency for International Development* ([online Oct–Dec 2005])

34 Thomas Carothers, *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004).

Attention to human rights has become increasingly prevalent in foreign policy. As Janne Haaland Matlary noted,

with the democratization of foreign policy and transparency of business life, there has arisen a great interest in *human rights*. The *legitimation* and *justification* of foreign policy which are offered are increasingly those of human rights.<sup>35</sup>

States that do not protect the human rights of its citizens (human security) – states which are authoritarian in nature or failed states – are considered less legitimate by the international community.<sup>36</sup> The standard of Westphalian non-intervention, where the sanctity of the sovereign state is paramount, has shifted. Therefore, it is becoming more accepted that the West intervenes in these states to promote human rights, not through the hard power tool of military force, rather “the tools that are used in foreign policy are the other ones: diplomacy, cooperation, criticism in bilateral and multilateral contexts, etc. These tools are called here ‘soft’ power tools”.<sup>37</sup> The United States not only uses the rhetoric of human rights to justify policies, it actively promotes them through diplomatic efforts. This trend has resulted in a multifaceted foreign policy that incorporates normative goals alongside more traditional national interests, and therefore an increasing pressure to balance them.

If one maintains that a normative issue such as human rights is prioritized over other foreign policy goals, how might it be expressed in concrete policy choices? What type of actions can one expect to see in the empirical data? A thorough analysis of this can be found in a collection of case studies published in 2004 entitled *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy*. In the concluding chapter, aptly titled “What Works?”, Debra Liang-Fenton lists nine tools used by US policymakers: private and public diplomacy, country reports by the US State Department, congressional actions, cultural and scholarly exchanges, sanctions and incentives, democracy building, symbolic actions, and use

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35 Janne Haaland Matlary, *Intervention for Human Rights in Europe* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p. 5 (original emphasis).

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid, p. 31.

of the media.<sup>38</sup> Activity on these fronts can constitute an active human rights agenda and would be the type of policy choices included in US foreign policy towards Uzbekistan if such issues were prioritized.

## Promoting democracy in US foreign policy

Just as human rights concerns are a relatively recent addition to US foreign policy, so too is the methodical pursuit of building and strengthening democracies outside the US. The promotion of democratic ideals and institutions as a component of US foreign policy was set in motion in the 1960s under President Kennedy as a way to combat communism, and gradually became institutionalized over the following decades.<sup>39</sup> The three categories of what Thomas Carothers refers to as the US “democracy template” are elections, institutions, and civil society.<sup>40</sup> Programs within these categories may include electoral aid, legislative assistance, nongovernmental organization (NGO) development and media support.<sup>41</sup> In a country like Uzbekistan, an authoritarian state with few functioning democratic institutions, programs to strengthen civil society are emphasized with the goal of laying a foundation for the development of a democratic society in the future.

The main conduit of democracy aid from the US government is through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), an independent agency within the federal government. As mentioned earlier, other departments also have a democracy component in their programs, including the Defense Department. The majority of democracy promotion aid, however, is represented in the yearly USAID budgets, which will be used to determine the levels of aid for these programs. The complex process of valuating the effectiveness of democracy building strategies falls outside the focus of this study, and it will be assumed that US policymakers believed USAID programs represented a reasonably good approach. Apart

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38 Debra Liang-Fenton, ed., *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005), p. 436.

39 Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

41 *Ibid.*

from USAID funding levels, commitment to democracy promotion will be measured by observing the amount of diplomatic pressure placed on the Uzbek government to institute reforms and criticisms leveled at the regime when such steps are not taken. In any event, the realities facing US policymakers in Uzbekistan at the onset of bilateral relations in 1995 were anything but democratic.

## Chapter 2

# Background on Uzbekistan 1991–95

### Independence and domestic politics

When the Supreme Soviet granted Uzbekistan its independence in August 1991, President Islam Karimov had already secured a firm grip on political power. Appointed First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in 1989 and elected president of Uzbekistan by the parliament the following year, Karimov facilitated the smooth transfer of authoritarian control from Moscow to Tashkent.<sup>42</sup> With the Communist Party banned after the failed 1991 coup attempt in Moscow, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan was simply renamed the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), and the old bureaucracy continued to exist as before in the new republic.<sup>43</sup>

Any political party that represented a significant challenge to Karimov's rule was quickly discredited and banned. The first opposition party, Birlik ("Unity"), arose just prior to independence and focused on Uzbek nationalism and multiparty democracy. Disagreements over political tactics within Birlik led to the creation of a new party, Erk ("Freedom") headed by the poet Salay

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42 Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism, and Washington's Security Agenda* (London: Zed Books, 2005).

43 Annette Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order", *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 3 (2004): 485–502.

Madaminov. Better known by the pseudonym Muhammad Salih, he ran against Karimov in the 1991 presidential elections and garnered just over twelve percent of the vote in an election many observers regarded as neither free nor fair.<sup>44</sup> Increased government pressure and harassment directed at both parties culminated with the arrest of Muhammad Salih in April 1993. Released after widespread international protest, Salih went into exile and eventually settled in Norway. As the International Crisis Group grimly observed: “By the middle of 1993, all opposition political groups have been banned and their leaders were in exile or prison.”<sup>45</sup> In their place, a slew of political parties emerged which gave an appearance of multiparty democracy. Adolat (“Justice”), Miliy Tiklanish (“National Renaissance”), and Fidokorlar (“Self-sacrificers”) adopted basically identical platforms and openly pledged their loyalty to Karimov.<sup>46</sup>

The existing structures of political power in Uzbekistan, which heavily favor the presidency in its distribution of power, became formalized with the 1992 constitution. The document allowed Karimov to appoint (and dismiss) ministers, cabinet officials, parliament, judges and regional governmental officials.<sup>47</sup> Although many of these powers are contingent on the acquiescence of the Uzbek parliament (called the Oliy Majlis), it has rarely, if ever, challenged the authority of the President. Karimov’s control even extends to the local administrative levels, which in turn influence the composition and therefore the loyalty of the Oliy Majlis.

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44 International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten: Repression and Instability*, Asia Report, no. 21 (21 August 2001) (ICG [online 1 Nov 2006]) and Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*.

45 International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten*, p. 6. Both Birlík and Erk have formed their own human rights organization in Uzbekistan: the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) and the Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (IHRSU), respectively.

46 Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998).

47 *Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan*, Umid World ([online 1 Nov 2006]).

## Islam

Close to 90 percent of Uzbekistan's population is Sunni Muslim.<sup>48</sup> The Soviet authorities had actively repressed the religion beginning in the 1920s by closing down mosques, banning ceremonies, and forbidding women to wear veils or children to read the Koran.<sup>49</sup> In the 1960s, however, Moscow tried a new approach – establishing a government-sanctioned version of Islam with state-approved religious schools (madrassahs) and leaders (mullahs) that ran state-approved mosques. An 'unofficial' Islam still existed in tandem with the official version, and underground *madrassahs* and mosques existed throughout the country. This system of government-sanctioned Islam continued after Uzbekistan's independence, but the people remained mistrustful of it and the real popular support lay with the underground version. Outward expressions of religious faith were restricted to official Islam, and any political expression of the religion was banned. According to Rashid, this allowed Islamic radicals to more easily gain followers in Uzbekistan and the rest of Central Asia.<sup>50</sup>

The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), founded in Astrakhan, Russia in 1990 and headquartered in Moscow, originally sought to unify Muslims throughout the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup> Denouncing the 'official' clergy, the IRP platform emphasized preaching, conversion, the creation of Islamic schools, and supported the implementation of Islamic social justice.<sup>52</sup> The party's local chapter, the IRP of Uzbekistan, harbored strong nationalistic tendencies in addition to this social justice platform promoted by the broader IRP.<sup>53</sup> The Karimov regime responded immediately by banning all political parties that were religiously inspired. The IRP, which had attracted a following in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan, gradually lost its momentum after operating illegally for a time. The 1992

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48 International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten*.

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

50 Ibid.

51 Oliver Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

52 Ibid.

53 Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*.

disappearance of its founder, Abdullah Utaev, was believed to be the work of the Uzbek secret police.<sup>54</sup> With mainstream opposition parties Erk and Birlik (both of which had Islamic components in their political platforms) banned along with the IRP of Uzbekistan, the stage was now set for the emergence of more radical Islamic movements.

One such group, Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Liberation Party), is an international movement seeking to establish an Islamic state across Central Asia and eventually the entire Muslim world.<sup>55</sup> The movement does not advocate violence and as Rashid reports, Hizb ut-Tahrir “believes in winning over mass support, believing that one day these supporters will rise up in peaceful demonstrations and overthrow the regimes of Central Asia”.<sup>56</sup> It is a secretive group with a closed organizational structure, making it difficult to gauge its exact size and influence. The organization uses leaflets to communicate and promote its message – possession of such leaflets has led to imprisonment by the Uzbek authorities.

## Economics

Uzbekistan has great potential as an economic engine for the region, but other factors work against the country’s economic success. Due to the Soviet legacy of a cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan, it is the second largest cotton exporter in the world. Conditions for farmers and other agricultural laborers are dismal, with heavy-handed enforcement of production quotas and the widespread use of conscripted child labor during harvesting.<sup>57</sup> Pursuing this type of agriculture in Uzbekistan’s arid climate requires massive irrigation – water that once flowed into the Aral Sea. As a result, the water level in the lake has dropped dramatically and left formerly coastal fishing villages tens of kilometers from the water’s edge.<sup>58</sup> The dry alkaline soil is picked up by the wind, creating choking clouds of

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54 Rashid, *Jihad*.

55 Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States* and Rashid, *Jihad*.

56 Rashid, *Jihad*, p. 117.

57 Environmental Justice Foundation, *White Gold, The True Cost of Cotton: Uzbekistan, Cotton, and the Crushing of a Nation* (London, 2005) (EJF [online 6 Nov 2006]).

58 Ibid.

salty dust, and huge environmental concerns. Along with sizable natural resources including natural gas, gold deposits and ferrous metals, the Uzbek economy has the advantage of location; many trade routes pass through Uzbek territory making it an important economic actor in the region. Regardless, there are few economic winners as much of the profit-generating industries are state-owned and corruption is rampant.<sup>59</sup> A large shadow economy sucks revenue away from other enterprises trying to remain ‘legitimate’. As one banker told an ICG interviewer, the black market “enriched a very limited group of people and [is] ruining the businesses of many promising entrepreneurs who struggle to survive this unfair economic battle.”<sup>60</sup>

Corruption is a part of everyday life in Uzbekistan prevalent in all types of social situations. Bribes are expected by public servants to expedite services; university admissions and grades are also dependent on payments to university officials.<sup>61</sup> A patronage system encourages corruption and limits the employment opportunities of those without a family member or friend in a position of influence. This ‘institutionalization’ of corruption helps the regime maintain control. Almost anyone is vulnerable to anti-corruption laws that are applied in a highly selective manner in order to punish those disloyal to the regime or industrious enough to start up a business that competes directly with those owned by the oligarchy.<sup>62</sup> The oligarchy, consisting of powerful politicians along with their families and supporters, controls almost all means of production in Uzbekistan. Very few economic activities apart from small-scale *bazaar* trading are open to average Uzbek citizens, and the larger enterprises, from cotton production to mining, are controlled by a small group of elites.<sup>63</sup>

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59 International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten*.

60 Ibid, p. 22.

61 Freedom House: *Nations In Transit 1998: Uzbekistan* (Budapest: Freedom House, 1999) (United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance [online 12 Jan 2006]).

62 Interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

63 Interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

## Human rights

The human rights situation is deplorable. Through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as the US State Department annual country reports, a constant barrage of abuses has been chronicled. The government enjoys complete control over the country's media outlets by way of direct censorship through such legislation as the 1991 prohibition against "offending the honor or dignity of the president".<sup>64</sup> Indirect and unofficial censorship methods are also widely employed, as illustrated by the many well-documented cases of journalist intimidation, arrest, torture, and imprisonment resulting from criticism of the government.<sup>65</sup>

Police use questionable methods during arrest procedures and often plant evidence. Political opposition figures are particularly prone to such treatment. As the 1993 Human Rights Watch Report documents:

On May 5, the co-chairman of the Birlik Popular Movement, Shukhrat Ismatullaev, was beaten on the street by unidentified assailants and spent six weeks in the intensive care unit in Tashkent suffering from head injuries. That attack mirrored almost exactly the attack on his counterpart in Birlik, co-chairman Abdurakhim Pulatov, in June of 1992. On October 4, Samad Murad was beaten in Karshi within days of his election as Erk's general secretary.<sup>66</sup>

Torture by Uzbek authorities is widespread and frequent, and these methods are used to elicit confessions that are then admissible in court. Trials are neither open nor fair. The State Department estimated in 1994 that up to 40 political prisoners were being held for purported "antigovernment activities [such as] distributing newspapers of the opposition Erk party".<sup>67</sup> While both Human Rights Watch and the State Department saw slight improvements in 1995, the overall situation in Uzbekistan remained grim after four years of independence. President Karimov employed harsh

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64 United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (US Government [online 1 Nov 2006]).

65 United States Department of State, *Country Report...1993*, and Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1995: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 1996 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

66 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1993: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 1994 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

67 United States Department of State, *Country Report...1993*.

measures in order to solidify his control and continued these practices to ensure his hold on power.

## Regional issues

Between 1924 and 1936, Central Asia was divided into five Soviet Socialist Republics, the borders drawn in a fashion many describe as “arbitrary inventions of Soviet planners”.<sup>68</sup> It was never intended for these republics to be independent entities and therefore utilities, irrigation, and transportation networks pay little attention to the current national boundaries. This has resulted in continuous and complex conflicts in the region over border issues and natural resources.<sup>69</sup> For example, Uzbekistan depends on water flowing down from Kyrgyz sources for their cotton crops while Kyrgyzstan relies on gas imports from Uzbekistan. A frustrated Uzbek government, tired of non-payment for the gas shipments to its impoverished Kyrgyz neighbors, regularly halts these shipments in the winter, causing Kyrgyzstan to increase the flow of water through their hydroelectric plants to make up for the lost energy production. Less water is then available in Kyrgyz reservoirs for Uzbek crops in the spring and summer, further escalating tensions between these countries.<sup>70</sup>

A civil war raged in neighboring Tajikistan from 1992–1997, and Uzbekistan joined Russia in supporting a Tajik government made up of former communists against a coalition of pro-democracy groups and the IRP in Tajikistan.<sup>71</sup> The Taliban in Afghanistan were also perceived as a threat to Uzbekistan, due to a sizeable Uzbek enclave in Afghanistan, the aggressive nature of the Taliban regime, and reported comments by some Taliban leaders hinting at ambitions of gaining control over the ancient Muslim cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan.<sup>72</sup> These issues combined to create a rather unstable political atmosphere in Central Asia during this period. This was the situation facing

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68 Nick Megoran, “The Critical Geopolitics of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary Dispute 1999–2000”, *Political Geography*, vol. 23 (2004): 733.

69 Ibid.

70 Bohr, “Regionalism in Central Asia”.

71 Rashid, *Jihad*.

72 Ibid.

the United States in 1995 as the US government debated foreign policy issues relating to Uzbekistan.

## Chapter 3

# Growing US interest in Central Asia 1995–97

### Making Eurasia stable

The Clinton administration in its first term (1993–96) appeared to show little public interest in Uzbekistan or in Central Asia as a whole. American policies addressed collectively the states of the former Soviet Union in broad economic and humanitarian aid packages aimed at stabilizing the new republics and securing loose Soviet nuclear weaponry. The main conduit of this aid was the Freedom Support Act, proposed by President George H.W. Bush in 1992 and approved by Congress the same year, which authorized substantial American foreign aid to Russia and the other former Soviet republics.<sup>73</sup> This legislation created assistance programs and allocated funding to address American concerns of regional instability and nuclear proliferation, while at the same time increasing American influence in a part of the world that had previously been firmly within the Soviet sphere. One exception to this broad regional approach was a 1995 visit to Tashkent by Secretary of Defense William Perry, where he singled out Uzbekistan as “an island of stability in Central Asia”.<sup>74</sup>

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73 Curt Tarnoff, “US Assistance to the Former Soviet Union 1991–2001: A history of Administrative and Congressional Action”, *CRS Report for Congress* (Washington DC: CRS, 2002) (Federation of American Scientists [online 6 Nov 2006]).

74 Quoted in S. Fredrick Starr, “Making Eurasia Stable” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 2

Some prominent writers and academics also began advocating a bilateral approach to the region. A 1996 article in the influential journal *Foreign Affairs* by S. Frederick Starr drew attention to Central Asia and Uzbekistan in particular. Starr saw three possible outcomes for the region: a return of Moscow's influence, a lapse into the sort of chaos seen in Tajikistan and Afghanistan at that time, or attainment of a strategic equilibrium through the "emergence of an anchor state or states".<sup>75</sup> After discounting the other four states in the region as unlikely candidates (Kazakhstan's closeness to Russia, Kyrgyzstan's poor resources and ethnic tensions, Tajikistan's internal strife, Turkmenistan's small population and large expanses of desert terrain), Starr outlined the advantages of developing Uzbekistan into this role as an anchor state.

Although the country had some liabilities, including an overreliance on cotton exports and Soviet-designed borders with its neighbors that led to conflicts, Uzbekistan's geographic and demographic size placed it at the top of the list of candidates. The country's geographic location in the heart of Central Asia was an advantage, and while "it borders all the region's other states, it alone has no common border with any major power."<sup>76</sup> Starr acknowledged the human rights abuses of the Karimov regime, but maintained that the Uzbek government was "acting in accordance with an overall strategy of change" which involved securing Uzbekistan's political stability before introducing democratic reforms and free market development.<sup>77</sup> The overriding theme of the article advocated increasing US support for Uzbekistan in the expectation that such support would generate greater regional stability and the hope that engagement would help the country along on the path to political, economic, and social reforms.

The argument that Central Asian stability depended on a strong and US-supported Uzbekistan was to have a significant impact on the thinking of US policymakers. A book published the following year by former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski

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(1997): 92.

75 Ibid.: 81.

76 Ibid.: 83.

77 Ibid.: 86.

advocated a similar strategy.<sup>78</sup> Scholars like Starr and Brzezinski supported an increase in American support for Uzbekistan and tended to accept or overlook the authoritarian nature of the Uzbek government and its record of human rights abuses, believing that the regime would eventually institute reforms, but at its own pace.<sup>79</sup> Both academics were associated with the newly formed School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, headed up by Paul Wolfowitz, a former diplomat during the Reagan years and Under Secretary of Defense for policy under President George H.W. Bush.

## The 1996 Karimov visit

President Karimov's 1996 meeting with President Clinton, referred to by the White House as a 'working visit', came after a multi-year charm offensive by the Uzbek leader to attract US support. Uzbekistan took the American position consistently at the United Nations in the years leading up to the 1996 visit, voiced support for Israel in order to show solidarity with the US, backed a US trade embargo on Iran, joined the NATO-organized Partnership for Peace program, and participated in military exercises alongside US troops in 1995.<sup>80</sup> Since gaining independence from the dissolving Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan had consistently sought to distance itself from Moscow. At the same time, the Karimov regime saw for itself a greater role in Central Asia as a regional hegemon.<sup>81</sup> Another patron than Russia was required in order to achieve this status, and the United States was the logical choice.

Despite Tashkent's friendly overtures, the lack of enthusiasm displayed by the Clinton administration in its dealings with

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78 See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

79 Karimov claimed this to be the case in several public statements, pointing to Uzbekistan's short history as an independent country compared with two centuries of democracy experience in the United States. He assured the international community that Uzbekistan was on the path of reform. (see Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*).

80 Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*.

81 Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia".

Uzbekistan was due in large part to the dismal human rights record of the Karimov regime. Human Rights Watch in 1995 observed that

the US continued to be the only country known to have kept human rights high on its bilateral agenda with Uzbekistan. The Clinton administration actively monitored human rights conditions, issued demarches and conducted interventions even as it welcomed the government's increased willingness to address human rights concerns.<sup>82</sup>

During a US trip in 1995, Karimov met with Vice President Al Gore, but was denied a meeting with President Clinton due to the Uzbek government's abuses.

A year later, Clinton initially refused to meet the Uzbek leader even after the details of the US visit had been arranged, in order to distance the administration from Karimov and show continued disapproval for the human rights abuses of the Uzbek government.<sup>83</sup> Clinton apparently agreed to a brief meeting only after an announcement by the Uzbek government in early June that some 80 political prisoners would be granted presidential pardons (in fact, the release of only five prisoners could be confirmed).<sup>84</sup> A short statement released by the White House reported that the "two presidents addressed key political, economic, and security issues of mutual interest, including progress in political and economic reform".<sup>85</sup> After his White House visit, Karimov made his first visit to the Pentagon where he met with Secretary of Defense William Perry. The Defense Department memo noted that the visit exemplified "the growing significance of the US-Uzbek bilateral

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82 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1995: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 1996 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

83 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1995*; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States; Implementation of US Policy on Caspian Sea Oil Exports*, hearing before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 8 July 1998, *Federal News Service* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

84 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 26 August 1996, Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1996: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 1997 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

85 "Statement by the Press Secretary: Clinton – Karimov Meeting", White House Press Release, 25 June 1996, collection of White House Papers, *Ibiblio Digital Library* (Center for Public Domain [online 2 Nov 2006]).

and multilateral security partnership".<sup>86</sup> Karimov then spent several weeks in the US, meeting with American business leaders and securing new contracts that increased substantially American foreign investment in Uzbekistan.<sup>87</sup>

The following year, US-Uzbek trade rose from \$50 million to \$420 million with large investments by US mining companies.<sup>88</sup> Foreign direct investment reached an all-time high of \$167 million in 1997.<sup>89</sup> The US Export-Import Bank, an agency under the executive branch, provided loan guarantees of \$55 million in 1995, \$80 million in 1996, with levels jumping to \$301 million in 1997.<sup>90</sup> Direct US foreign assistance to Uzbekistan nearly doubled from \$11 million in 1995 to \$21 million in 1996, before returning to \$16.9 million in 1997, the bulk of which funded economic and social programs and included on average \$1.7 million for citizen participation programs and NGO support.<sup>91</sup>

Military assistance in the form of International Military Education and Training (IMET) began in 1995 and remained low (under \$1 million). Along with several other former Soviet countries, Uzbekistan first became eligible for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) under NATO's Partnership for Peace program in 1997.<sup>92</sup> Referring to congressionally appropriated grants given to foreign governments to finance the purchase of American-made

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86 United States Department of Defense, "Memorandum for Correspondents", no. 144-M, 26 June 1996, *DefenseLink* ([online 5 Dec 2005]).

87 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1996*.

88 Rashid, *Jihad*.

89 Freedom House: *Nations In Transit 1999–2000: Uzbekistan* (Budapest: Freedom House, 2001) (United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance [online 2 Nov 2006]).

90 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union: 1996*, and United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 1997*, both Office of the Coordinator of US Assistance to the NIS, *Foreign Policy Institute Resource Library* ([online 1 Nov 2006]).

91 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Congressional Presentation: 1997* and *Congressional Presentation: 1998*, both from (USAID [online 2 Nov 2006]). The US provides foreign assistance, arranges credit guarantees from the US Export-Import Bank, and ships privately donated humanitarian aid. The figures cited in the text always refer to US assistance excluding the humanitarian aid and ExIm loans. See table on the following page.

92 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 1997*, *Foreign Policy Institute Resource Library* ([online 1 Nov 2006]).

## Overview of US assistance to Uzbekistan 1995–2005 in US \$ millions

Year	US assistance <sup>A</sup>	Security assistance <sup>B</sup>	Democracy assistance	Humanitarian assistance	Total US Ex Im Bank Loans
1995	11.3	0.1	1.6	2.7	55.0
1996	21.0	0.3	1.6	9.0	80.0
1997	16.9	1.2	1.7	22.7	301.0
1998	26.5	1.0	5.0	4.5	379.0
1999	46.2	10.0	3.3	29.0	256.0
2000	36.9	11.5	2.5	27.5	30.5
2001	59.6	11.8	2.9	25.4	136.0
2002	221.8	71.0	8.4	78.2	70.0
2003	94.2	37.7	5.2	42.0	96.0
2004	84.6	39.1	9.2	16.4	0.0
2005	101.6	63.3	9.3	20.0	81.0

A Humanitarian assistance and US Export Import bank credit guarantees not included as part of US assistance totals.

B Security assistance includes FMF, IMET, EXBS (border security), law enforcement, and non-proliferation/CTR funding. Some aid from 2004 and 2005 (mostly FMF and IMET) was not dispensed due to State Department decertification. Amounts ranged from \$8 million in 2004 to \$24 million in 2005, though the total amounts budgeted are shown here.

Sources: State Department, *US Government Assistance to Eurasia* reports, State Department fact sheets, HRW *World Reports*, Meppen (2006), Garcia and Stohl (2003), US Export-Import Bank site. No single source provides a complete overview of aid due to extra-budgetary payments and assistance from a variety of sources within the US government, less detailed reporting prior to 2001. These figures are the best estimates of the author and any errors are most likely from underestimating funds.

weapons, services and training, Uzbekistan received an initial grant of \$1 million through this program.<sup>93</sup>

## Interest in Central Asia increases

There were other signs of a heightened interest in Central Asia as well. First Lady Hillary Clinton traveled through the region in 1997, visiting Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. She used

93 Victoria Garcia and Rachel Stohl, "Arms Trade: Uzbekistan", 1 July 2003, *Center for Defense Information* [online 7 Jan 2006].

her time in Uzbekistan to visit nongovernmental organizations and delivered a speech on the importance of democracy and free markets.<sup>94</sup> Uzbekistan participated in annual (since 1995) NATO training exercises in conjunction with the Central Asia Battalion (Centrasbat), a joint military unit with forces from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>95</sup> For the 1997 exercise, 500 troops from Fort Bragg, North Carolina were airlifted nonstop and inserted by parachute 19 hours later into the exercise zone located in Kazakhstan – the longest airborne operation in history.<sup>96</sup> General John Sheehan, commanding officer and the first to jump, told journalists upon landing: “The message is that there is no nation on the face of the earth that we cannot get to.”<sup>97</sup>

Also that year, Undersecretary of State Strobe Talbott gave a key speech on US policy towards Central Asia at the newly established School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. Talbott warned against a return to a ‘Great Game’ scenario, saying such a conflict was “very much of the zero-sum variety. What we want to help bring about is just the opposite: We want to see all responsible players in the Caucasus and Central Asia be winners.”<sup>98</sup> Talbott stressed that regional integration would provide lasting stability to Central Asia, while a traditional power-balancing situation might lead to more conflict. America’s support for the region aimed to bring about democracy, free market economies, regional cooperation, and integration with the international community.<sup>99</sup>

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee conducted hearings on American foreign policy in Central Asia in July 1997. The

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94 *Embassy of the United States, Tashkent, Uzbekistan* (USINFO [online 9 Jan 2006]).

95 Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*.

96 Lutz Klevevan, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (New York: Grove/Atlantic Inc, 2003); David Brindly, “Asia’s Big Oil Rush: Count Us in”, *US News and World Report*, 29 September 1997 ([online 1 Nov 2006]).

97 Brindly, “Asia’s Big Oil Rush”.

98 Strobe Talbott, “A Farewell to Flashman: American policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia”, speech at Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C., 21 July 1997, *Caspian Sea Library* (The Council on Foreign Relations [online 2 Nov 2005]).

The ‘Great Game’ refers to the 19<sup>th</sup> century geopolitical battle over Central Asia between Great Britain and Czarist Russia, immortalized in Rudyard Kipling’s novel *Kim*.

99 *Ibid.*

Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, Stuart Eizenstat, testified for the administration and stated that

[I]n recognition of the growing strategic importance of the area to the United States, the Clinton administration, earlier this year, made a policy decision to further enhance our already considerable engagement with the eight states of the Caucasus and Central Asian region.”<sup>100</sup>

Eizenstat listed five US interests in the region: economic and political reform in the Central Asian countries, their integration into regional and international institutions, “rapid” development of Caspian energy resources with “robust US commercial participation”, conflict resolution in the region, and strong sovereign states to ward off Russian and Iranian influence.<sup>101</sup> Discussions concerning Iran and Russia led Senator Diane Feinstein to ask whether the administration saw “a kind of race to secure influence and control in this region of the world”.<sup>102</sup> Eizenstat replied that Central Asia was “clearly an area where a whole host of countries are trying to gain influence”, and that the US should create “the political and economic infrastructure so that our companies get the fair opportunity to compete for the enormous energy resources” while also striving “politically to assure the independence of these countries” from Iran and Russia.<sup>103</sup>

Another witness that day, Lt. General William Odom of the Washington-based think tank The Hudson Institute, characterized Uzbekistan as the “heavyweight” in Central Asia and as having “very great strategic significance”.<sup>104</sup> These types of statements, combined with viewpoints similar to the Starr article which supported the development of Uzbekistan as an ‘anchor state’, may have led policymakers to begin to assume that an increased US presence in Central Asia was best achieved through an increased engagement with Uzbekistan. This reasoning had yet to be heard from the administration, however, whose focus continued to be at

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100 *Policy towards Caucasus and Central Asia*, Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 22 July 1997, *Federal News Service* ([online 12 Dec 2005]).

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

the regional level. The United States' relationship with Uzbekistan remained lukewarm.

For its part, the Karimov regime seemed to be making small steps toward progress in 1996, partly to improve its image prior to the US visit. The US State Department annual report on human rights practices in Uzbekistan noted that the government took "several steps toward creating a less authoritarian society", but acknowledged that "serious problems remain".<sup>105</sup> The organization Human Rights Watch praised the United States in its annual report, calling it the "major source of pressure on the Uzbek government" to improve its record.<sup>106</sup> Human rights monitoring improved with the government permitting some NGOs to open offices in the country, including Human Rights Watch/Helsinki and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.<sup>107</sup> The annual survey by Freedom House improved Uzbekistan's 'civil liberties' rating from a seven (the worst) to a score of six, though the country's 'political freedom' continued to receive a seven rating.<sup>108</sup> Many of the improvements were cosmetic in nature and probably intended for international consumption rather than signifying real changes in the country. It appeared that Karimov clearly understood the international community's expectations of reform, and realized that such promises were necessary even if he had no intention of keeping them.

## Summary: The bilateral relationship emerges

Karimov's visit to the White House in 1996 had little practical value in terms of signed agreements or promises by the United States to increase its support of the Uzbek regime: the value of the meeting was purely symbolic in nature. The appearance of the two presidents together gave the Uzbek leader an unstated nod of approval and sent the message that this relationship was important to the United States. That Clinton was so hesitant to grant a meeting

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105 United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996* (US Government [online 1 Nov 2006]).

106 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1996*.

107 United States Department of State, *Annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997* (US Government [online 1 Nov 2006]).

108 Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 1998*.

while Karimov was so eager to obtain one illustrates the powerful symbolism involved; the substance of the meeting was relatively inconsequential. Although the Clinton administration might not have been prepared to back one of the Central Asian nations at the expense of the others, it is clear there was a heightened awareness of the region in the United States. Influential scholars began to advocate increased US support for Uzbekistan, a country seen as the key to Central Asia.

The Clinton administration listed democracy promotion as one of its core national security objectives, after diplomacy backed by military force and securing economic prosperity.<sup>109</sup> Talbott's 1997 speech was consistent with this, in that regional stability, cooperation, and diplomacy would lead to solutions (namely energy exports) that could benefit all actors involved. The National Security Strategy struck a similar note: peace and security through democracy and economic development. The message combined normative ideals with instrumental logic: "This commitment to see freedom and respect for human rights take hold is not only just, but pragmatic, for strengthened democratic institutions benefit the US and the world".<sup>110</sup> Clinton's 1994 State of the Union Address made this point clearly: "Democracies don't attack each other. They make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy. That is why we have supported, you and I, the democratic reformers in Russia and in the other states of the former Soviet bloc".<sup>111</sup> President Clinton made democracy promotion a central part of his foreign policy, though it was "democracy American style, linking free markets to the political freedoms characteristic of the American form of government".<sup>112</sup> As in the other new independent states (NIS), American interests in Uzbekistan would be the promotion of democracy and economic development – and these interests were reflected in US policy. The difficulty lay in deciding exactly

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109 "The National Security Strategy of the United States", May 1997, *The White House* (GlobalSecurity.org [online 2 Nov 2005]).

110 Ibid.

111 "1994 State of the Union Address", 25 January 1994, *Washington Post* ([online 6 Nov 2006]).

112 Julie Mertus, *Bait and Switch: Human Rights and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 40.

*how* the promotion of these ideals was best accomplished in Uzbekistan: through limited engagement and criticism or through a more active relationship with Tashkent.

The contrasting positions of the White House and the Pentagon with regard to Uzbekistan were reflected in Karimov's 1996 visit. Clinton's reluctant meeting with the Uzbek president was followed by a carefully worded press release. Over at the Pentagon, Secretary Perry had praised Uzbekistan in his 1995 Tashkent visit and highlighted the increased importance of US-Uzbek cooperation during Karimov's 1996 Pentagon visit. Diverging approaches in US policymaking circles were to become even more apparent in the coming years as the US-Uzbek relationship evolved. Two distinct approaches became clear during this first phase of closer US-Uzbek relations. The realists in Washington focused on regional stability, access to energy resources, and balance of power issues grounded in a zero-sum game attitude towards geopolitics in Central Asia. The liberalists tended to focus on political and economic reform within each country, in the belief that more open and pluralistic governments in the region would ultimately lead to greater regional stability and stronger independent republics able to resist the influence of Moscow or Beijing. US policy goals during this period were broadly focused on regional stability, commercial interests, and non-proliferation efforts. An even distribution of foreign assistance allocated to the Central Asian states reflected these priorities, where Uzbekistan was simply one of eight countries in the Central Asia/Caucasus region receiving US support.

The force projection demonstration inherent in the 1997 training exercises sent a clear message to Moscow that the US was able to operate militarily in the geographically distant region of Central Asia; it was, in effect, an act of geopolitical gamesmanship. Another small yet revealing action taken by the US at this time was the granting of FMF assistance to Uzbekistan in 1997. Although all US aid is subject to human rights conditions, security aid is given extra attention in US legislation. With the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) non-proliferation funds and other military assistance, the State Department must certify that international

human rights standards are not being violated. Non-certification bars the distribution of funding to the country in violation, unless the president waives the restrictions by citing overriding national security interests.<sup>113</sup> Although Uzbekistan was just one of several newly independent states (NIS) to receive this type of military aid, it points toward an acceptance of the Karimov regime's abuses. At this point it seemed that the United States had yet to see any urgent national interest in Uzbekistan requiring an extra investment of money or political capital in the country, but this was beginning to change.

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113 22 U.S.C. sec. 2304 (1998).

## Chapter 4

# An increased focus on militant Islam 1998–2000

### Terrorist attacks and Islamic violence

In August 1998, simultaneous bomb attacks struck the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing 258 people and wounding over 5000 others. An investigation by American authorities concluded that the terrorist organization al Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden had planned and carried out the attacks. Intelligence sources located bin Laden's mountain hideout in Afghanistan and President Clinton ordered military strikes in an attempt to destroy it and bin Laden's terrorist network. In addition, the president authorized the CIA to conduct covert operations intended to "disrupt and pre-empt bin Laden's operations".<sup>114</sup> As a result, a partnership of "significant" intelligence and military cooperation began between Washington and Tashkent around this time.<sup>115</sup> The increased US focus on radical Islam meshed perfectly with the rising concern of the Karimov regime.

The Karimov regime felt increasingly threatened by radical Islamic groups during this period. The civil war in neighboring Tajikistan had recently ended in a power-sharing arrangement

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114 Thomas E. Ricks and Susan B. Glasser, "US Operated Secret Alliance with Uzbekistan", *Washington Post*, 14 October 2001.

115 Ibid.

between former communist leaders and a coalition made up of democratic and Islamic groups. The fundamentalist government across the border in Afghanistan represented yet another Islamic threat to the Uzbek government for which Karimov hoped to find external support in combating. With the main domestic opposition parties Erk and Birlik banned, the stage was set for more radical movements infiltrating from outside the country, including Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

Hizb ut-Tahrir, as mentioned earlier, purports to advocate a non-violent strategy for revolution, though there is good reason to doubt this commitment to the peaceful establishment of a caliphate.<sup>116</sup> The IMU was founded by Tahir Yuldeshev and Juma Namangani, with Yuldashev as its political leader and Namangani as its military commander.<sup>117</sup> Beginning in the mid-1990s, Yuldeshev had encouraged inhabitants of the Fergana Valley town of Namangan to follow Islamic teachings more strictly and steadily gained a following of disillusioned Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) members including Namangani, who had fought in the Afghan conflict with the Soviet army.<sup>118</sup>

In December 1997, four Uzbek policemen were killed in Namangan by individuals the government claimed were radical Wahhabi Muslims, but who local Muslim leaders claimed were simply ordinary criminals.<sup>119</sup> According to a report by the International Crisis Group, “police detained hundreds of people because they wore religious clothes, had beards or prayed in a manner that identified them as members of ‘suspicious’ groups”, and according to one witness “the authorities had a list of those thought to be ‘too religious’ and a new wider campaign of arrests began”.<sup>120</sup> A group

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116 Kurt Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations”, pp. 13–43.

117 Juma Namangani’s real name was Jumaboi Ahmadzhanovich Khojaev, but incorporated the name of his hometown of Namangan as a pseudonym.

118 Rashid, *Jihad*.

119 Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe: *Political Reform and Human Rights in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakstan*, Congress no. 105, session no. 1, January 1998 (CSCE, 1 March 1998 [online 21 Apr 2006]).

120 International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten*, p.18. The government referred to the perpetrators as “Wahhabis”, a more fundamentalist version of Sunni Islam promoted by the government of Saudi Arabia. According to Rashid, *Jihad*, p. 46, “By 1997, the government was labelling as Wahhabis even ordinary Muslims who practiced Islam in unofficial mosques or engaged in private prayer or study”.

of Muslims arrested in Andijan in connection with the killings admitted receiving training from Namangani and the IMU.<sup>121</sup> In an infamous speech before parliament a few months later in May 1998, President Karimov expressed this view of radical Muslims: “These people should be shot in the head. If necessary, I’ll shoot them myself”.<sup>122</sup> Thus began a widespread campaign of arrests by the Karimov regime targeting Muslims, and thousands were arbitrarily arrested. Reports surfaced detailing allegations that the authorities threatened to rape defendants’ family members unless they cooperated and fathers were imprisoned and punished due to charges against their sons.<sup>123</sup>

Six car bombs detonated in Tashkent in February 1999 in an apparent assassination attempt on Karimov that left 13 dead and injured 120 others, according to government sources.<sup>124</sup> The government blamed both the Erk Party and Islamic militants of the attack, and several thousand people were subsequently arrested.<sup>125</sup> Eventually, Erk founder Muhammad Salih was accused of planning the attack in cooperation with the IMU and was convicted in absentia (without substantial evidence) to a fifteen-year prison term.<sup>126</sup> In August 1999, a group of IMU militants under Namangani entered a Kyrgyz section of the Fergana Valley from their mountain base in Tajikistan, taking hostages and attracting international attention.<sup>127</sup> The Kyrgyz army went into action against the IMU and fighting continued for several months. Sustained engagements between IMU militants and the Kyrgyz military failed to resolve matters, and the IMU only withdrew in late October because the onset of the winter snows would hinder their escape through the mountain passes back to their bases in neighboring Tajikistan.<sup>128</sup> The IMU returned to the Fergana Valley

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121 Rashid, *Jihad*.

122 Daniel Williams, “Uzbeks Caught Between Secular, Islamic Currents”, *Washington Post*, 27 September 1998.

123 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 2000 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

124 Daniel Williams, “13 Die in Uzbek Bombings”, *Washington Post*, 17 February 1999.

125 Rashid, *Jihad*.

126 International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten*.

127 Rashid, *Jihad*.

128 *Ibid*.

in the summer of 2000, with several hundred well-armed guerrillas attacking Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces in numerous locations over the next few months.<sup>129</sup> These attacks, along with the other acts of violence attributed to Islamic extremists, put the Karimov regime on the defensive. Tashkent, clearly feeling threatened by radical Islam, looked toward the US for assistance.

## US response to radical Islam in Central Asia

After the embassy attacks, the United States was suddenly willing to listen to Uzbek concerns about Islamic terrorists. In the official statement announcing the retaliatory missile attacks, Clinton reflected on the magnitude of a concerted national counterterrorism effort, saying, “This will be a long, ongoing struggle between freedom and fanaticism; between the rule of law and terrorism. We must be prepared to do all that we can for as long as we must”.<sup>130</sup> Central Asia appeared to be the next flashpoint for radical Islam and US policymakers refocused their attention on the region and on Uzbekistan.

Discussions in the United States Congress dealt with a range of issues including energy extraction, Islam, and regional stability. Democracy and political reform were touched on broadly and with little mention of human rights concerns. A February 1998 House hearing entitled “US interests in Central Asia” devoted the most attention to energy extraction and the strategic nature of oil and gas resources in the region. Congressman Howard Berman characterized US interests as “simply to ensure its progressive political and economic development and to prevent it from being under the thumb of any outside power, be it Iran or Russia”.<sup>131</sup> In a similar vein, Robert Gee, Assistant Secretary for Policy with the US Department of Energy, stated “We have strategic interests in supporting the independence, sovereignty, and prosperity of the

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129 Ibid.

130 “Clinton statement in full”, *BBC News*, 20 August 1998 (BBC [online 1 Nov 2006]).

131 *US Interests in the Central Asian Republics*, hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House Committee on International Relations, 12 February 1998, *Federal News Service* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

Newly Independent States of the Caspian Basin,” and that the US also had an interest in

maximizing commercial opportunities for US firms and for US and other foreign investment in the region’s energy development (...) Rapid development of the region’s energy resources and trade linkages are critical to the independence, prosperity, democracy, and stability of all of the countries of that region.<sup>132</sup>

Another Senate hearing on Caspian energy held just prior to the 1998 embassy bombings addressed militant groups in Central Asia. Academic Dr. Martha Brill Olcott, a regular witness on Capitol Hill, testified to the destabilizing nature of militant Islam, saying “If Islamic groups should take power in Uzbekistan or even if a secular regime should opt for visible religious coloration, there is sure to be impact in all three of these neighboring states.”<sup>133</sup> She went on to observe that “Uzbekistan’s government has created the most pervasive and effective security force in the region and is clearly able to deal summarily with small pockets of resistance, but is unlikely to be able to deal effectively with mass resistance”.<sup>134</sup> In remarks published afterwards in the Congressional Record, Congressman Christopher Smith acknowledged the strategic and commercial interests of the US in pursuing relations with Uzbekistan, but expressed concern over the Karimov regime’s poor human rights record and urged the US and Karimov to work towards reform.<sup>135</sup>

A 1999 Senate hearing entitled “Extremist Movements and their threat to the United States” also discussed militant Islam in Central Asia. The State Department’s Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Michael A. Sheehan, pointed out the links between the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, and militant Islamic groups in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries. In combating extremist groups, Sheehan noted, the “central element of our counterterrorism efforts remains a combination of political will and diplomatic action. We

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132 Ibid.

133 *Implementation of US Policy on Caspian Sea Oil Exports*.

134 Ibid.

135 “Human Rights in Uzbekistan”, Christopher Smith, Extension of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, 25 September 1998 (U.S. Government Printing Office [online 6 Nov 2006]).

can combat terrorism only if we persuade other governments to work with us. Intelligence sharing, law enforcement cooperation and armed force are important. But they must be integrated into an overall political/diplomatic strategy".<sup>136</sup>

Representatives from the US and Uzbekistan signed several security-related agreements in May 1999, one on counterterrorism and the second establishing a closer working relationship between the Pentagon and Uzbekistan's Defense Ministry.<sup>137</sup> Congressional hearings in 1998 and 1999 resulted in two pieces of legislation relevant to Uzbekistan: the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999 and the Security Assistance Act of 1999. The Silk Road Act authorized no new funding, but more clearly defined how existing funding should be directed, listing economic assistance, border control, infrastructure development and democracy promotion as its major goals.<sup>138</sup> The Security Assistance Act authorized the transfer of excess Defense Department articles to a number of countries, including Uzbekistan.<sup>139</sup>

US assistance rose from \$26 million in 1998 to \$46 million in 1999, before falling to \$37 million in 2000. Increases in IMET funding and FMF aid for arms purchases doubled to a combined \$2.2 million in 1999, and funding for law enforcement training reached \$2 million.<sup>140</sup> Although the US cleanup of the biological weapons site at Nukus made up \$6 million of the \$10 million in security aid, these amounts constituted a substantial increase from previous years.<sup>141</sup> Border security assistance through the Export Control and Related Border Security program (EXBS) began in

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136 *Extremist Movements and their threat to the United States*, hearing before the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2 November 1999, *Federal News Service* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

137 "Uzbekistan, US Discuss Defense Cooperation", *RFE/RL*, 26 May 1999.

138 *Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999* and the *Security Assistance Act of 1999*, Public Law no. 106-113.

139 *Ibid.*

140 Garcia and Stohl, "Arms Trade: Uzbekistan"; United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 1998; US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 1999*.

141 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 1999*.

Uzbekistan in 2000, with nearly \$2 million in funding.<sup>142</sup> USAID money earmarked for “citizen participation” (programs designed to increase public awareness of political developments in order to lay the foundation for democratic participation as well as increasing the number of NGOs in the country) had jumped to \$5 million in 1998, but was then reduced to \$3.28 million for 1999 and cut again the following year to \$2 million.<sup>143</sup> In addition to direct US assistance, \$61 million worth of unspecified “US Defense Department excess and privately donated humanitarian commodities” were provided to the Uzbek government from 1998–2000.<sup>144</sup> US Export-Import Bank loan guarantees for Uzbekistan increased to \$379 million in 1998, dropped the following year to \$256 million, and fell to only \$30 million in 2000.<sup>145</sup>

Human Rights Watch proclaimed 1998 a “disastrous year for human rights in Uzbekistan”, while in 1999 “human rights protections in Uzbekistan deteriorated rapidly and dramatically”.<sup>146</sup> The State Department’s own assessment for 1998, the Annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices, was muted by comparison, stating: “The Government’s human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit serious abuses in several areas”.<sup>147</sup> In its report the following year, the State Department admitted: “the government’s poor human rights record worsened” in 1999.<sup>148</sup>

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142 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 2000*.

143 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Congressional Presentation: 1998; Congressional Presentation: 1999; Congressional Presentation 2000* (all presentations USAID [online 2 Nov 2006]).

144 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 1997; 1998; 1999*.

145 Ibid.

146 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1997: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 1998 [online 1 Nov 2006]); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1998: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 1999 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

147 United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998* (US Government [online 1 Nov 2006]).

148 United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999* (US Government [online 1 Nov 2006]).

## Continued insurgency and elevated US cooperation

In the spring of 2000, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright offered some tough criticism of Uzbekistan's human rights situation in a speech at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent. She warned that "indiscriminate government censorship and repression can cause moderate and peaceful opponents of a regime to resort to violence" and cautioned against religious persecution.<sup>149</sup> After wielding its stick, the administration offered Uzbekistan the carrot: \$3 million would be made available to Uzbekistan for border security as well as counterterrorism and counter-narcotics training and equipment.<sup>150</sup> The catalyst for this extra aid was an incident on the Kazakh-Uzbek border a month earlier when Uzbek border guards intercepted a truck hauling scrap metal reportedly containing radioactive material.<sup>151</sup> The Uzbeks claimed they found lead pipes containing highly radioactive material while Kazakh tests showed low levels of radiation, consistent with their explanation that the scrap metal originated from a uranium mine.<sup>152</sup> Regardless of the true facts, the incident sparked a renewed interest in non-proliferation activities in the region and in Uzbekistan.

During the IMU incursion in the spring of 2000, insurgents took foreign tourists hostage as a fundraising venture in order to extract ransom payments. In August, a group of IMU militants in Kyrgyzstan came across four young American climbers and took them hostage. Although the climbers later managed to escape (the details of which are in dispute), this minor event contributed to the United States declaring the IMU a known terrorist group.<sup>153</sup> According to Rashid, some US diplomats had argued that

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149 Madeline Albright, "Speech by Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, Tashkent, Uzbekistan", 17 April 2000, *Civil Society International* ([online 10 Dec 2005]).

150 Rashid, *Jihad*; United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 2000*.

151 Ibid.

152 Center for Non-Proliferation Studies, "Uzbeks Seize Radioactive Material", news posting, *Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI)* (CNS [online 20 Apr 2006]).

153 Rashid, *Jihad*; Greg Child, "Fear of Falling", *Outside Magazine*, November 2000 (The Away Network [online 6 Nov 2006]).

attempts should be made to press Karimov for human rights assurances before such a declaration was made, but the CIA and FBI were eager to share intelligence with Uzbekistan (which they were legally prevented from doing until the IMU was officially a terrorist group).<sup>154</sup> Such cooperation was especially desirable for the US due to intelligence reports claiming Namangani and the IMU were receiving substantial funding from bin Laden.<sup>155</sup>

Karimov easily won the 2000 presidential election with 92 percent of the vote.<sup>156</sup> His opponent, Professor Abdulhafiz Jalalov, had previously held the position of secretary in Karimov's PDPU party, and admitted after the election that he had actually voted for Karimov himself in the interest of "stability, peace, our nation's independence, [and] the development of Uzbekistan".<sup>157</sup> When asked why he had run, Jalalov replied "So that democracy would win."<sup>158</sup> International observers declared the elections neither free nor fair, and the US did not offer election-related assistance for the 2000 contest due to Uzbekistan's "lack of commitment to electoral reform or to genuinely competitive elections".<sup>159</sup> After the election, Karimov's term was quickly extended by the legislature to 2007.<sup>160</sup>

By the end of the year, the United States and Uzbekistan had established a solid partnership to combat Osama bin Laden's terrorist network and the IMU. Programs to enhance Uzbekistan's business environment and economic development featured prominently in the US aid package for 2000, and US support for

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154 Rashid, *Jihad*.

155 Ibid.

156 Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe: *Human Rights and Democratization in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan*, Congress no. 106, session no. 2, March 2000 (CSCE, 1 March 2000 [online 2 Nov 2006]).

157 Ibid, p.8.

158 Ibid. According to one observer, this event has a simple explanation. It seems that Jalalov, who had been asked by Karimov to stand as a candidate, soon began to take his candidacy seriously, holding speeches and developing his vision of Uzbekistan's future. Seeming like a real alternative to Karimov was not a wise career move and Jalalov realized he had gone too far just before the elections. The vote for Karimov and the public acknowledgement of it was designed to reverse this mistake (from interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, March 2006).

159 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Former Soviet Union: 2000*, p. 122.

160 Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*.

Uzbekistan's military and law enforcement agencies continued to rise. One researcher calculated that US Export-Import Bank credit guarantees to Uzbekistan from 1995–2000 totaled \$980 million.<sup>161</sup>

The State Department, using the exact same phrasing as the previous year's report, characterized the human rights situation in Uzbekistan as a poor situation that was becoming worse.<sup>162</sup> In a September 2000 hearing on the State Department's Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (a report required by 1998 legislation of the same name) Human Rights Watch researcher Acacia Shields testified:

Since late 1997, Uzbek police and security forces have arrested thousands of pious Muslims. These arrests are illegal and discriminatory; they target people who belong to unregistered Islamic groups who practice outside state controlled mosques or who possess Islamic literature not generated by the government. Police routinely torture and threaten detainees, deny them access to medical treatment and legal counsel and often hold them incommunicado in basement cells for up to 6 months (...) This year's IRF report recognizes neither the anti-religious nature of this repression nor the human rights crisis it has produced. It argues that victims are engaged in activity that is primarily political and therefore that Uzbekistan cannot be said to be violating the victim's religious freedom. Only sophistry has allowed the administration to avoid classifying Uzbekistan as a country of particular concern for its gross violations of religious freedom.<sup>163</sup>

Robert A. Seiple, the US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, responded to her charges by pointing out that "diplomacy has had some major successes" in Uzbekistan, that the Karimov regime was justified in being paranoid about Islamic extremists after the 1999 Tashkent bombings, and that this was a

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161 *State Department Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 2000*, hearing before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 7 September 2000, *Federal News Service* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

162 United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2000* (US Government [online 1 Nov 2006]).

163 Acacia Shields, congressional testimony 7 September 2000. Listing Uzbekistan as a "country of particular concern" would make it ineligible for certain types of assistance.

human rights issue rather than one of religious freedom.<sup>164</sup>

Continued concerns over stability in Central Asia led some to support strengthening the US-Uzbek relationship in order to better control Uzbekistan. Far from being an 'island of stability', Tashkent's recent dealings with its neighbors had been turbulent. Over the previous three years, Uzbekistan had erected fences and mined territory claimed by neighboring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and repeatedly withheld gas shipments to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>165</sup> The bombing of Kyrgyz villages by Uzbek planes in response to IMU attacks, as well as a tough line towards Tajikistan (where IMU bases were located) made these relationships particularly tense.<sup>166</sup> Testifying before an April 2000 House Joint hearing, Dr. Martha Brill Olcott urged Congress to continue to invest in the US-Uzbek relationship, saying "I think engagement with Uzbekistan is really critical because they create a security risk for the whole region."<sup>167</sup>

## Summary: Pragmatism sweeps through Washington

The 1998 embassy bombings heightened America's awareness of militant Islam and the threat it posed to US interests. The investigation into the source of the attacks pointed to Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan, so the geographic importance of neighboring Uzbekistan was undeniable. As US Counterterrorism Coordinator Michael Sheenan testified, Washington needed other governments to collaborate in fighting extremists hostile to American interests. Karimov had been conducting his own domestic campaign against what he perceived to be radical Islam, and saw in the United States a natural ally. The Uzbek government was more than receptive

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164 *State Department Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 2000.*

165 International Crisis Group, *Central Asia: Faultlines in the New Security Map*, Asia Report no. 20, 4 July 2001 (ICG [online 12 Nov 2005]); Megoran, "Critical Geopolitics".

166 International Crisis Group, *Central Asia*.

167 *Democracy in the Central Asian Republics*, Joint hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific and the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, *Federal News Service* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

to the idea of American assistance. Cooperation between the two countries clearly increased after 1998, although the extent and details of this cooperation remain unclear. Regardless, the region was viewed as a potential source of new Islamic radicalism and the mountainous regions of Central Asia provided perfect safe havens for terrorist groups. At the same time, this period saw a marked increase in internal pressures to pursue Caspian energy resources. Although lacking the substantial petroleum export potential of the two Central Asia countries bordering the Caspian, namely Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan's substantial natural gas and mineral resources attracted the attention of American commercial interests. Stability in the region was crucial if American corporations were to succeed in Central Asia, and Uzbekistan again became part of the equation as a potential stabilizing force.

Along with ongoing efforts to combat nuclear proliferation in the former Soviet states, energy and Islam defined US policy in the region. In contrast to the previous period in 1996–97, clear strategic interests were recognized by the United States. The human rights situation in Uzbekistan continued to deteriorate, especially after the Namangan killings and the 1999 Tashkent bombings. The State Department country reports continued to chronicle this steady increase in government abuse along with NGOs like Human Rights Watch. The policy dilemma was now clear in Uzbekistan: security interests or normative human rights concerns?

Based on the concrete actions made by the US government in relation to Uzbekistan, it appears that security concerns began to dictate American foreign policy. Three trends in US policy are worth noting. First, the amount of assistance provided by the United States to Uzbekistan more than doubled from the previous period of 1995–97. The amounts earmarked for economic and security programs constituted a growing portion of the aid – security assistance increased tenfold from 1998 to 1999 – while citizenship programs and democracy promotion funding steadily decreased after 1998. The trend was clear: less aid for civil society programs and more funding for items that directly benefited the oligarchy. Second, the aid increases occurred during a period of escalating abuses by the Uzbek government, a trend clearly seen by NGOs as

well as the US State Department. Third, the political maneuvering for improvements in Uzbekistan's human rights record, of the sort displayed by President Clinton during Karimov's 1996 visit, were not seen in this period. No apparent efforts were made to gain any type of concessions or promises of reform from the Karimov regime. The granting of FMF aid to Uzbekistan lends support to this interpretation, aid that doubled from 1997 to 2000.<sup>168</sup> Rather than Karimov desiring American approval and support, it now appeared that the US hoped for Uzbek cooperation in their hunt for Osama bin Laden. Tashkent's political leverage had increased.

Although normative concerns were voiced by the administration through the State Department and by members of Congress, the actions taken by the US government reveal a trend toward increased cooperation and support for the Uzbek regime after an increased awareness and reevaluation of Uzbekistan's strategic importance. Increases in US funding coincided with escalating abuses by the Karimov regime and occurred without any repercussions or conditions being imposed on the aid packages. The US pursued its perceived national interests without any concrete attempts to pressure President Karimov to institute reforms. Those in Washington pushing for a more normative agenda were not left empty handed, however. Although American foreign assistance was increasing, a substantial amount of that aid was designed to improve conditions in the country over the long run. Many of the programs funded by the US were designed and intended to create a stable environment for investment and economic liberalization, factors which liberalists believe further political liberalization. While mostly benefiting the Uzbek oligarchy in control of the country's major commercial interests, economic growth ostensibly provided some benefit to an Uzbek population suffering under economic hardship as well. Stability and economic growth are important building blocks of a democratic society, and an argument could be made that a foundation was being laid for future improvements. There were limits to the options available to the United States with regard to promoting internal change in Uzbekistan and perhaps a strategy of engagement was preferred to one of isolation. In any

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168 Garcia and Stohl, "Arms Trade: Uzbekistan".

case, the struggle to maintain a balance between perceived strategic interests and normative concerns continued and the US had swung more towards a realist approach favoring security interests while still maintaining some normative components in its policy.

## Chapter 5

# After the 9/11 Attacks 2001–2003

### Operation Enduring Freedom and the US base at Karshi-Khanabad

On the eve of the 2001 attacks, the US-Uzbek relationship continued to drift towards increased security cooperation. When, on 11 September 2001, two hijacked commercial airlines struck the World Trade Centre in New York, another plowed into the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed into the Pennsylvania countryside apparently before reaching its target, the newly-elected Bush administration shifted into high gear on counterterrorism. Afghanistan and its neighbors suddenly became the front lines in the US-led war on terror. Addressing a joint session of Congress just nine days after the attacks, President Bush informed the American people that Osama bin Laden and the terrorist network al Qaeda were responsible, specifically mentioning the IMU as one of bin Laden's allies.<sup>169</sup> The US pursued bin Laden and al Qaeda with the invasion of Afghanistan in early October 2001. The American military required support facilities for these operations, and Uzbekistan – a country strategically located on Afghanistan's northern border – became a crucial ally in the war on terror.

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169 George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People", 20 September 2001. (The White House [Online 15 Nov 2005]).

Long before the September 2001 attacks, the US military had commissioned a study conducted by the RAND Corporation to examine potential causes of conflict in Central Asia and analyze possible alternatives for military operations in the region. Made publicly available in 2003, *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus* contained comprehensive data on a wide range of topics, including the availability of air bases suitable to American military needs. According to the study, Uzbekistan had the best infrastructure and lines of communication to support “major airlift operations”, and therefore “US military planners began to pursue access to former Soviet military airfields in Uzbekistan”.<sup>170</sup>

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan all border Afghanistan, a necessary logistical factor to support US operations there. Tajikistan was used as a logistics hub to transport personnel and supplies into Afghanistan, but the “operational environment (...) complicates any deployments and compounds force protection concerns”.<sup>171</sup> The list of problems with any substantial military basing in Tajikistan was long: unrest remaining from the 1992–97 civil war, Tajikistan’s dependence on around 16,000 Russian troops as border guards, lack of central government control over Tajik territory, and heavy narcotics trafficking in collusion with local authorities.<sup>172</sup> American forces and their allies (French and Italian) made use of Tajik facilities near the Afghan border, but the situation was less than ideal. Turkmenistan has pursued a policy of non-alignment and therefore had limited security cooperation with the US, although it did authorize overflight of its territory.<sup>173</sup>

In an event brimming with both strategic and symbolic significance, US military aircraft landed at an airbase outside Tashkent in late September 2001, along with several hundred personnel.<sup>174</sup>

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170 William O’Malley, “Central Asia and South Caucasus as an area of operations: Challenges and Constraints” in *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the US Army*, eds. Olga Oliker and Thomas Szanya (Arroyo Center: RAND, 2003), pp. 264–5.

171 Ibid, p. 267.

172 O’Malley, “Central Asia and South Caucasus”.

173 Ibid.

174 Susan B. Glasser, “First US Planes land at Uzbek Air Base”, *Washington Post*, 23 September 2001.

President Karimov had officially offered the use of three Uzbek airfields and opened his country's airspace for US-led attacks on the Taliban in Afghanistan. The US quickly established an air base at Karshi-Kanabad (also known as K2) in southern Uzbekistan, manned with US Air Force personnel and elements of the US Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.<sup>175</sup> An established American military presence in Russia's Near Abroad demonstrated how much the geopolitical landscape had shifted in just a decade. The US base at K2 was crucial to the Afghanistan campaign and demonstrated American willingness to involve itself in Central Asia more deeply than just foreign aid and diplomatic partnerships.<sup>176</sup>

As to the necessity of the Central Asian bases to the Afghan war, "it cannot be overemphasized that these countries provided crucial staging bases on the perimeter of Afghanistan that allowed the United States to more effectively and efficiently move assets into the combat zone".<sup>177</sup> The K2 base, by virtue of its consistently good flying weather, easy availability of fuel, and access to Afghanistan, became a "critical refueling and logistics nexus" for the United States.<sup>178</sup> The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA – a statement of understanding drafted when US troops are stationed in a foreign country) between the US and Uzbekistan was quickly signed on 7 October 2001. The terms of the SOFA "were vague enough to allow the US to begin moving immediately and to deal with the details later".<sup>179</sup> The Bush administration was unwilling to conduct aerial bombing raids over northern Afghanistan without a search and rescue base close by to support the missions, and negotiations with Tashkent took on an urgent tone as nearly the entire campaign depended upon this detail.<sup>180</sup> The air war commenced over Afghanistan just one hour after the SOFA was in

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175 "America and Uzbekistan Seal Strategic Partnership", *Jamestown Monitor*, 19 March 2002.

176 A second base at the civilian airport in Manas, Krygyzstan also played a significant role in the Afghan campaign and increased the US presence in the region.

177 O'Malley, "Central Asia and South Caucasus", p. 269.

178 Meppen, "US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options", p.17. This was also confirmed through interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

179 *Ibid*, p. 16.

180 Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002).

place, highlighting K2's importance to Operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>181</sup>

## Strategic Partnership

After successful negotiations by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, President Karimov traveled to Washington in March 2002 for the signing of a more comprehensive accord between the two countries, the Strategic Partnership Agreement. This document outlined a framework for cooperation on a range of issues including economic reforms, democratization, humanitarian assistance, and military cooperation. It began by recognizing "the importance of competent implementation of democratic and market reforms in Uzbekistan as a necessary condition for ensuring political, social, and economic stability, sustainable development, prosperity and national security".<sup>182</sup> In effect, the US agreed to remain closely involved in Uzbekistan's security and assist in modernizing the Uzbek armed forces, while the Karimov regime promised to cooperate in US counterterrorism efforts and pursue a series of political reforms. This was clearly how the State Department interpreted the Strategic Partnership Agreement. In November 2002 Assistant Secretary of State Lorne Craner declared:

We are grateful for the support that Uzbekistan has provided in the war on terror. But the United States will not sacrifice its long-term commitment to protect human rights for short-term political expediency (...) The Uzbek government has (...) made a commitment to improve human rights, but we see mixed results on the ground, and there is obviously still a long way to go.<sup>183</sup>

Absent from the agreement was any mention of payment for basing rights or promises of remuneration for cooperation, an issue which would resurface in the following months.

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181 United States Department of State: "Frequently Asked Questions about US Policy in Central Asia", Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (U.S. Department of State [online 6 Nov]).

182 United States Department of State, *Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Between the United States of America and the Republic of Uzbekistan*, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

183 "Press statement and press conference of Lorne Craner, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor", Public Affairs Section Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 8 November 2002, *US Embassy in Uzbekistan* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

During Karimov's White House visit, President Bush expressed his appreciation for Uzbekistan's cooperation with US-led Afghanistan operations and pressed the Uzbek president on human rights issues, according to a White House spokesman.<sup>184</sup> In congressional testimony the previous day, Secretary of State Colin Powell had characterized Uzbekistan as a "solid coalition partner", while insisting that human rights issues were still a point of discussion between the two countries.<sup>185</sup> Earlier in the year, US Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones remarked that Washington sensed a new commitment by the Karimov regime to improving human rights in his country.<sup>186</sup> The limited political opposition remaining in Uzbekistan also had reason to be hopeful after hearing promises of democratic reform from the Uzbek authorities as well as the liberalist rhetoric from Washington. Increased US engagement in the country could bring about real change in Tashkent, and according to one opposition leader Uzbeks were both "excited and apprehensive" after 2001.<sup>187</sup>

### *Balancing military aid and human rights: Congressional hearings*

Another congressional hearing in 2002, this time before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee entitled "Balancing Military Assistance and Support for Human Rights in Central Asia", directly addressed the themes discussed in this study. The panel of witnesses had an interesting composition: three of the five witnesses providing testimony were members of the Bush administration; the fourth was a former US ambassador to Kazakhstan and now the senior vice president of a military subcontractor. Academic Dr. Martha Brill Olcott, who appeared regularly before such hearings, rounded out the list.

Committee chairman Senator Robert Torricelli began by noting that "rooting out terrorism and promoting democracy and human

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184 Dana Milbank, "Uzbekistan Thanked for Role in War", *Washington Post*, 13 March 2002.

185 Ibid.

186 Frank T. Csongos, "Uzbekistan: US Boosting Aid to Tashkent", *RFE/RL*, 31 January 2002.

187 Interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

rights are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they are probably mutually reinforcing”, explaining that undemocratic regimes marginalize and radicalize their populations, leading to terrorism and instability.<sup>188</sup> Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, testified to some of the reform successes in Uzbekistan, including arranging for better International Red Cross access to prisons, the registration of one human rights NGO, and the invitation extended by the Uzbek government to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture. Craner agreed with Senator Torricelli that military assistance and human rights “need not be a question of balance and competing interests, but can, as we’re attempting, be an issue of mutually reinforcing goals”.<sup>189</sup> Assistant Secretary of Defense J.D. Crouch concurred:

All of the Central Asian countries have told us that OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom) directly addresses their security concerns, namely terrorism and religious extremism (...) narco-traffickers (...) and the transnational threat of weapons of mass destruction. And I think because our action is in a security interest, this provides us more leverage, frankly, on the human rights side than we would have if we were in a position where they were simply doing us a favor (...) Our interests are complementary.<sup>190</sup>

Lynn Pascoe, Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia, then commented that “I listened to both of you gentlemen’s [Craner and Crouch] opening statements very carefully and it occurred to me how closely we agree on this question”.<sup>191</sup> Pascoe saw “no conflict whatsoever” between American military cooperation with Central Asian countries and human rights concerns in those countries.<sup>192</sup> Assistant Secretary Craner pointed out that the US had now mostly eliminated the terrorist threat in Central Asia, a rationale given by the countries in the region for having closed political systems.<sup>193</sup>

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188 *Balancing Military Assistance and Support for Human Rights in Central Asia*, Hearing of the Central Asia and South Caucasus Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 27 June 2002, *Federal News Service* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

191 Ibid.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid. After a small action in July 2001 against a television tower in Kyrgyzstan, the

Former Ambassador William Courtney provided a comprehensive strategy for the region: increasing security assistance, maintaining a US military presence, focusing more attention on human rights and democracy, remembering that “US security cooperation boosts government legitimacy, which offers a source of leverage for promoting human rights and democracy”, working with allies in Europe to effect change in the region, and promoting long-term change by focusing on youth programs.<sup>194</sup> All four witnesses connected to the Bush administration agreed that no balance needed to be struck between military assistance and support for human rights, as they were complementary interests.

Dr. Olcott testified last and warned that “unless the US finds some more effective means of leveraging these states, there could be some highly undesirable and even violent (and at least unscheduled) regime changes throughout the region.”<sup>195</sup> She warned that American human rights policy and democracy promotion strategies were “unlikely to lead to any major change in the nature of our partner regimes in Central Asia” because undemocratic regimes were “deeply rooted throughout the region”.<sup>196</sup> Seemingly contradicting herself in the very next breath, Olcott then argued that the US should not abandon its human rights policy, but should instead devote even more funding to these programs, and that the US was “moving in the right direction”.<sup>197</sup> Dr. Olcott’s testimony provided some pessimism to an otherwise optimistic hearing in which the witnesses from the administration reaffirmed their belief that the US was proceeding appropriately and correctly in its foreign policy. Even Olcott, despite her pessimism, had few criticisms of US policy.

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IMU threat seemed to dissipate as many of the IMU fighters had reportedly gone to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban against American forces [Richard Weitz, “Storm Clouds over Central Asia: Revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 27 (2004): 505–530].

194 *Balancing Military Assistance and Support for Human Rights in Central Asia*.

195 *Ibid.*

196 *Ibid.*

197 *Ibid.*

## US involvement in Uzbekistan increases dramatically

US government assistance to Uzbekistan increased dramatically from \$58 million in 2001 to \$221 million in 2002, which included supplemental funding of \$128 million in addition to the \$95 million budgeted.<sup>198</sup> These funds provided \$36 million in FMF money, \$18 million for border security, and almost \$80 million in Defense Department excess and privately donated humanitarian commodities.<sup>199</sup> The security assistance provided funds for non-proliferation activities in Uzbekistan (the Nunn Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program) including clean-up of Soviet biological weapons laboratories, as well as funding for the purchase of military equipment and assistance directed at increasing Uzbek border security. The \$4 million earmarked for democracy programs in Uzbekistan was increased by the emergency supplemental to \$8 million for 2002. With the aid package also came an additional \$70 million in credit guarantees from the US Export-Import Bank.<sup>200</sup>

The funding increases for USAID-implemented civil society programs in Uzbekistan further exacerbated a growing tension within the country over NGO activity. With the growing US involvement in economic and social development programs came an increased awareness and activism among the Uzbeks involved in or targeted by the NGOs. Encouraged to create their own local NGOs that could deal with the problems of ordinary Uzbek citizens, these budding NGO leaders became increasingly vocal about conditions in the country. This reflected badly upon the government, which in turn became increasingly suspicious of the NGO community.<sup>201</sup>

A darker aspect of the United States' relationship with Uzbekistan developed after the September 2001 terrorist attacks when President Bush signed a still-classified directive giving the Central

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198 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia: 2002*, Office of the Coordinator of US Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, U.S. (Department of State [online Oct–Dec 2005]).

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

201 Interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

Intelligence Agency “expansive” authority to transport suspected terrorists to foreign countries for interrogation.<sup>202</sup> This practice – known as extraordinary rendition – was also used prior to 2001, but became widespread after Bush granted the CIA extended authority.<sup>203</sup> In *The New Yorker* magazine, a story on rendition included this passage on Uzbekistan:

Craig Murray, the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, told me that “the US accepts quite a lot of intelligence from the Uzbeks” that has been extracted from suspects who have been tortured. This information was, he said, “largely rubbish.” He said he knew of “at least three” instances where the US had rendered suspected militants from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan. Although Murray does not know the fate of the three men, he said, “They almost certainly would have been tortured.” In Uzbekistan, he said, “partial boiling of a hand or an arm is quite common.” He also knew of two cases in which prisoners had been boiled to death. In 2002, Murray, concerned that America was complicit with such a regime, asked his deputy to discuss the problem with the CIA’s station chief in Tashkent. He said that the station chief did not dispute that intelligence was being obtained under torture. But the CIA did not consider this a problem. “There was no reason to think they were perturbed,” Murray told me.<sup>204</sup>

The CIA denied that any such meeting took place.<sup>205</sup> According to several sources, the US rendered dozens of suspects to the Uzbek authorities.<sup>206</sup> Such allegations are even more disconcerting considering the 2002 United Nations report by Theo von Boven, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. In his report, van Boven characterized torture in the country’s prisons and detention facilities as “systematic”.<sup>207</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that Uzbekistan continued its human rights abuses on a “massive scale” in 2002, the Karimov regime “systematically violating the rights to freedom

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202 Douglas Jehl and David Johnston, “Rule Change Lets CIA Freely Send Suspects Abroad”, *New York Times*, 6 March 2005.

203 Ibid.

204 Jane Mayer, “Outsourcing Torture”, *New Yorker*, 14 February 2005.

205 “CIA Jets Fly the War on Terror”, *ABC News*, 7 March 2005.

206 Ahmed Rashid, “Democracy is not about to sweep Central Asia”, *International Herald Tribune*, 7 April 2005; Alexander Cooley, “Base Politics”, *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (2005): 76–94.

207 “UN Investigator Condemns Systematic Use of Torture in Uzbekistan”, *RFE/RL Newslines*, 9 December 2002.

of religion, expression, association, and assembly. There was no independent judiciary, and torture was widespread.”<sup>208</sup> The US State Department annual country report agreed that Tashkent’s human rights record was “very poor, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses”.<sup>209</sup>

## Summary: Trying to do it all

The period after the September 2001 terrorist attacks tested more than ever the United States’ foreign policy priorities with regard to security, democracy, and human rights. A sudden increase of activity and cooperation ensued between the US and several Central Asian countries. Although the US recognized and actively pursued its security interest in Uzbekistan prior to 2001, the war in Afghanistan elevated this to an entirely new level with the need for basing rights and logistical support for the Afghan campaign. There was no doubt that the US greatly desired cooperation from the Karimov regime after 2001, and that Uzbekistan’s assistance to the US was of great value to military operations in Afghanistan.

In addition, the Karimov regime exhibited a clear failure to improve its human rights record despite US statements which routinely mentioned progress in this area – concessions by the Uzbek government in 2002 included the release of some 800 political prisoners, granting access to the UN Rapporteur on Torture, and allowing an Uzbek human rights organization register as an official NGO.<sup>210</sup> Human Rights Watch discounted the moves as gestures without any real substance.<sup>211</sup> Just one example of these superficial reform measures was Tashkent’s May 2002 announcement that it had officially ended Uzbekistan’s policy of state censorship. Along with the announcement came a warning to the editors of the country’s six official newspapers that they would now be responsible for the content of their newspapers, a

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208 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 2002 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

209 United States Department of State: *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2002* (US Government [online 1 Nov 2006]).

210 *Balancing Military Assistance and Support for Human Rights in Central Asia*.

211 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003: Uzbekistan* (HRW, 2004 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

threat that simply reinforced most editors' existing habit of self-censoring. Journalists brave enough to publish pieces critical of the government over the next few years were arrested and convicted on charges ranging from disseminating antigovernment propaganda to homosexuality. Despite its official legal demise, censorship was alive and well in Uzbekistan.<sup>212</sup>

Increased US-Uzbek cooperation occurring alongside a continued lack of reform brought the foreign policy balancing act between human rights and security interests clearly into focus. Three general observations can be made about US policy during this period. First, funding for security-related programs increased substantially in 2002, as did military training and border security programs for the Uzbek government. The levels of security aid rose much more dramatically than those funds provided for social programs and democracy promotion, which were given small increases. In a simplistic comparison of funding levels, security concerns were the clear winner.<sup>213</sup>

Second, the actions and statements by the Bush administration revealed its intent to pursue security interests, democracy promotion, and human rights policies simultaneously. These were, as was mentioned by US officials several times in testimony, mutually reinforcing goals. For some policymakers, stability and security were seen as necessary preconditions for political and economic liberalization. Karimov had justified his regime's tight control by pointing to Islamic extremists and terrorists who sought to destabilize the country. Operation Enduring Freedom severely weakened the IMU through targeting of its bases in Afghanistan during which IMU leader Juma Namangani was reportedly killed.<sup>214</sup> As Secretary Craner pointed out, the reduction of this threat presented an opportunity for real reform. Perhaps these

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212 "Uzbekistan Abolishes Media Censorship", 13 May 2002 and "Uzbek Human Rights Activist Sentenced", 17 September 2002, both *Associated Press* (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS [online 6 Nov 2006]).

213 Extra-budgetary funding during this period makes definitive computations of total assistance to Uzbekistan problematic, but the funding provided was no lower than those amounts listed in the previous section.

214 Jim Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and US Interests", *CRS Report for Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005) (National Defense University [online 6 Nov 2006]).

seemingly divergent policy goals could be pursued concurrently through retraining of military and law enforcement agencies, economic development aid, and civil society programs. In short: a policy of positive engagement on both security and political reform.

Third, the reports of a CIA rendition program in Uzbekistan demonstrated more than American cooperation with the Karimov regime, it showed complicity. Although the US has yet to confirm the specific reports concerning Uzbekistan, it has acknowledged that such a program exists. If terrorist suspects were indeed transferred to the Uzbek authorities for interrogation knowing those suspects would be tortured, there would be little doubt as to the administration's political priorities. Rendering prisoners to the Karimov regime while highlighting normative ideals in its political rhetoric would leave the US government's statements on democracy and human rights with little credibility.

Both the realist and liberalist factions in Washington felt satisfied with the state of relations between the two countries after the Strategic Partnership Agreement. Realists focused the continued survival of the state and urged the prioritization of purely national interests. The terrorist attacks of 2001 shocked the US on a level comparable to the 1941 surprise attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor. The US, forced to defend itself against an asymmetrical threat, sought allies from a number of countries that did not share its democratic and normative ideals, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, and Uzbekistan. The perceived need for self-defense easily outweighed any political objections to cooperation with these states. The attention given by the United States to democratic reforms in Uzbekistan, genuine or not, made these policy decisions more palatable for both domestic and foreign audiences.

According to the realists, monies provided for social programs and economic aid were meant to stabilize Uzbekistan so that it could be a reliable partner for the United States, while political reform was less of a priority and explains why little public pressure was placed on the Karimov regime. Comments by President Bush, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State

Powell routinely praised Uzbekistan's cooperation in the war on terror. Questions on human rights were met with the simple acknowledgement that these concerns were part of the dialogue between the two countries. Criticism came in the form of the State Department's annual country reports, which had consistently reported the abuses of the Karimov regime for several years with only very limited high level acknowledgement by US officials of their content.

Meanwhile, the liberalist rhetoric from the Bush administration espoused freedom and democracy. The US won some minor concessions from the Karimov regime in 2002, resulting directly from American pressures on the Uzbek government. The US was greatly encouraged by this progress and interpreted these actions by Karimov as a major development.<sup>215</sup> A strategy of engagement in order to promote reform from within continued to be a rationale for US policy, similar to the previous period. Funding for democracy promotion saw large increases though it continued to be a fraction of the security budget. Other social programs and economic development assistance received a boost in funding as well. The inclusion of political reforms in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement alongside promises of security cooperation strengthened the liberalist position.

It became clear during this period that the US attempted to pursue all three interests – security, human rights, and democracy promotion – concurrently. Those in the administration favoring a liberalist approach were satisfied with the increases in democracy promotion aid and promises of political reform in the Strategic Partnership Agreement. The realists in the administration were satisfied as well, viewing the establishment of an American military presence in Uzbekistan as vital to the Afghan campaign, as well as an important step toward countering Russian or Chinese attempts to gain influence in Central Asia. The congressional hearings on balancing military interests and human rights concerns showed contentment with US policy from all sides. This all-encompassing policy proved to be unsustainable.

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215 Interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.



## Chapter 6

# The Relationship Deteriorates 2004–05

### The ‘color revolutions’ and NGOs

After almost two years of what some described as a ‘honeymoon period’ between the US and Uzbekistan, during which Uzbek cooperation in the war on terror was rewarded with a minimal amount of criticism on human rights and democracy issues, the relationship slowly began to fray. In mid-2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell attested to Uzbekistan’s substantial and continued progress toward improving its human rights record, but noted that the Karimov regime’s record “remained very poor and it continued to commit serious abuses”.<sup>216</sup> The State Department’s annual report listed some improvements: no credible reports of any deaths in Uzbek custody, increased cooperation with human rights workers, few human rights advocates arrested and no journalists arrested in 2003.<sup>217</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that while “Uzbekistan has made some attempts to convince the international community that it is improving its human rights record (...) the situation remains grave”.<sup>218</sup>

When protesters stormed the Georgian parliament building in

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216 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003*.

217 United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003* (Washington DC, 2004).

218 Human Rights Watch, *Annual Report 2003*

November 2003 and deposed President Eduard Shevardnadze in the Rose Revolution, reports of US-funded NGO involvement in the revolution led President Karimov to take a harder line against the international NGOs operating in Uzbekistan. The regime implemented new procedures almost immediately. All grants from international NGOs to local organizations were halted pending an administrative review. Organizations wishing to fund projects in the country were forced to switch their accounts to one of two banks, both controlled by the regime, where a panel would decide whether individual grants would be awarded.<sup>219</sup> The government organ responsible for liaising with the international NGOs switched from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Justice, a more heavy-handed agency.<sup>220</sup> The new regulations were contradictory and made compliance almost impossible. Inspections of NGO records and operating procedures increased, as did petty harassment.<sup>221</sup>

Ukraine followed suit the following year with an Orange Revolution in November 2004. Massive protests erupted after a rigged presidential contest, ultimately leading to the invalidation of the electoral results. Reports of NGO involvement again surfaced in the media. In the British newspaper *The Guardian*, a news analysis reported on US complicity in fostering 'democratic' revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, along with a failed attempt in Belarus.<sup>222</sup> The US reportedly spent over \$40 million on campaign advertising to defeat Milosevic at the ballot box and around \$14 million on the Ukraine regime change.<sup>223</sup>

The phenomena struck a third time in March 2005 in neighboring Kyrgyzstan, with a disorganized and accidental Tulip Revolution that sent President Askar Akayev into exile in Moscow. The US had spent heavily on pro-democracy programs there; Kyrgyzstan's population is a fifth of Uzbekistan's and received nearly twice

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219 Interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

220 "Uzbekistan Tightens Control on Groups", *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, Johns Hopkins University, 22 January 2004.

221 Interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

222 Ian Traynor, "US Campaign Behind the Turmoil in Kiev", *The Guardian*, 26 November 2004.

223 Carothers, *Critical Mission*; *Guardian* 26 November 2004.

the democracy promotion funding (\$15 million) than its larger neighbor.<sup>224</sup> US grants allowed for the creation of television talk shows and opposition debates, while US-funded equipment broadcasted these programs to places outside Bishkek such as southern Kyrgyzstan, where the protests began.<sup>225</sup> In Bishkek, the unrest was fueled in part by pictures depicting the nearly-completed Akayev family villa published in an opposition newspaper, the printing of which was made possible by the US-funded NGO Freedom House.<sup>226</sup> After the government cut the electricity to the building housing the printing presses, the US embassy delivered two generators so that the last batch of opposition papers could be printed.<sup>227</sup>

Although the ‘color revolution’ in Kyrgyzstan resulted from a host of complex factors, the media support provided by NGOs and the US State Department helped to fan the flames of protest which resulted in Akayev fleeing the country. Freedom House project manager Mike Stone’s triumphant announcement to the world: “Mission accomplished” was widely interpreted as referring to the regime change, although Stone claimed he was talking about printing the newspapers and that “The intention was to assist media development. It wasn’t to create a revolution”.<sup>228</sup> The opposition newspaper editor, Alexander Kim, acknowledged the role of US and NGO activities in Kyrgyzstan, saying “The result is that the society became politicized, they were informed (...) The role of the NGOs and independent media were crucial factors in the revolution.”<sup>229</sup> Those NGOs which reportedly played a role in the revolutions – the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, Freedom House, the Open Society Institute – were all organizations active in Uzbekistan as well. In the months

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224 US State Department Fact Sheet, “US Assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic Fiscal Year 2005”, 17 August 2005; US State Department Fact Sheet, “US Assistance to Uzbekistan, Fiscal Year 2005”, 17 August 2005.

225 Craig Smith, “US Helped to Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan’s Uprising”, *New York Times*, 30 March 2005.

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.

228 Richard Spencer, “Quiet American Behind Tulip Revolution”, *Telegraph*, 2 March 2005.

229 Smith, “US Helped to Prepare the Way...”

following the Kyrgyzstan revolution, the Karimov regime began closing US-funded NGOs.<sup>230</sup>

## The US increases pressure for reforms and cuts aid

The State Department suddenly became increasingly critical of Tashkent and US foreign policy began placing greater emphasis on human rights and democratic reform. In December 2003, the State Department for the first time decertified Uzbekistan with respect to non-proliferation CTR funding, but President Bush waived the human rights restrictions and funding was ultimately unaffected.<sup>231</sup> The State Department reiterated in January that Uzbekistan had failed to meet international human rights standards.<sup>232</sup> Hinting towards a shift in Uzbekistan's foreign policy, President Karimov and President Vladimir Putin of Russia signed a strategic partnership agreement in June 2004.<sup>233</sup> David Lewis, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, said the move reflected a breakdown in US-Uzbek relations due to human rights concerns in Washington and therefore the uncertainty of future US aid to the Uzbek government.<sup>234</sup>

A congressional hearing in June 2004 dealt specifically with US policy toward Uzbekistan. Officials from the Bush administration, including Secretaries Pascoe and Craner, testified before the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, reiterating

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- 230 The linkage between the 'color revolutions' and the crackdown on NGOs in Uzbekistan was confirmed repeatedly through interviews conducted by the author in Tashkent, February/March 2006.
- 231 George W. Bush, "Memorandum for the Secretary of State: Presidential Determination: No. 2004-19", 30 December 2003 (White House [online 2 Nov 2006]). In December 2004, the State Department again failed to certify Uzbekistan as eligible for CTR funding and President Bush once again waived the human rights requirement, citing national security interests. Uzbekistan continued to receive the funding (George W. Bush, "Memorandum for the Secretary of State: Presidential Determination: No. 2005-13", 14 December 2004 (White House [online 20 Jan 2006])).
- 232 Dana Linzer, "US Assails Uzbekistan Policies, Trims Aid", *Washington Post*, 14 July 2004.
- 233 Antoine Blua, "Russia/Uzbekistan: Presidents Sign Strategic Partnership Agreement", *RFE/RL*, 17 June 2004.
- 234 Ibid.

their positions that human rights and democracy promotion were being pursued alongside American security interests. Committee chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen acknowledged Uzbekistan's cooperation with American efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq (the Karimov regime was one of the first to publicly support the US invasion), but insisted that the US "must press for greater political and economic reforms within Uzbekistan".<sup>235</sup> She observed that Congress had become increasingly frustrated with Uzbekistan's lack of reform and inserted provisions into the Foreign Appropriations Bill for 2004 that would limit funding for the Karimov regime if the State Department could not certify progress toward reforms measures promised in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement. The Congresswoman maintained these commitments had not been met and that funding would be cut on 1 July 2004 if no progress could be shown.<sup>236</sup>

One month later, on 13 July, the Bush administration announced an \$18 million cut in military and economic aid to Uzbekistan due to the State Department's determination that the Karimov regime had failed to institute reforms outlined in the Strategic Partnership Agreement.<sup>237</sup> Unlike previous legislation, the 2004 stipulations from Congress did not come with a clause allowing the president to waive the restrictions based on national security concerns, a situation lamented as "unfortunate" by the State Department, which had hoped for "a more nuanced approach to encourage compliance".<sup>238</sup> Due to some funds being redirected and other monies reinstated only about \$7 million in aid was actually withheld, with IMET and FMF programs the most affected.<sup>239</sup>

According to the State Department press release, "Uzbekistan has made some encouraging progress over the past year with

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235 *Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia?* hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 15 June 2004, *Federal News Service* ([online 2 Nov 2006]).

236 *Ibid.*

237 Linzer, "US Assails Uzbekistan Policies, Trims Aid".

238 *Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia?*

239 Jim Nichol, "Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests", *CRS Report for Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005) (US Department of State [online 6 Nov 2005]).

respect to human rights. We are, however, disappointed by lack of progress on democratic reform and restrictions put on US assistance partners on the ground”.<sup>240</sup> The reference to restrictions on American-funded NGOs may explain the administration’s move to decertify while simultaneously pointing to ‘encouraging progress’ by the Karimov regime. The US had earlier threatened sanctions against Uzbekistan due to the new restrictions on NGOs that violated a 1994 bilateral agreement between the two countries concerning such groups.<sup>241</sup> The 2004 decertification seemed to be a direct response to the continued NGO restrictions.

Tashkent was the scene of several bombings in March 2004, killing 19 people and wounding over 20 in attacks attributed to Hizb ut-Tahrir and the IMU.<sup>242</sup> Three days of unrest followed and the death toll climbed to 50 while Uzbek authorities conducted operations aimed at eliminating alleged terrorists.<sup>243</sup> As the trial of those suspected of involvement in the March violence commenced four months later in July 2004, three more bombings struck Tashkent – this time targeting the American and Israeli embassies along with the offices of the Uzbek chief prosecutor.<sup>244</sup> Human rights organizations warned of an impending crackdown by the regime. When hundreds of suspects were arrested rather than the thousands detained after the 1999 bombings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe remarked on the improvement in congressional hearings, praising the government’s measured response.<sup>245</sup> The attacks represented the first real antigovernment violence since the US military presence began in Uzbekistan following 9/11.

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240 Boucher, Richard: Daily Press Briefing 13 July 2004, US State Department Press Release ([online 7 Nov 2006]).

241 “Uzbekistan Tightens Control on Groups”.

242 Antoine Blua, “Uzbekistan: Official Says at Least 19 Killed, 26 Injured in Blasts”, *RFE/RL*, 29 March 2004..

243 Susan B. Glasser, “US, Israeli Embassies Hit in Uzbek Bomb Attacks”, *Washington Post*, 31 July 2004.

244 Ibid.

245 *Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia?*

## Disagreements over Karshi-Khanabad

By late 2003, the Uzbek government had become increasingly dissatisfied with the basing arrangement at Karshi-Khanabad. It was standing US policy to differentiate between the use of civilian airports (where landing fees were paid) and military airstrips (where they were not). The US therefore paid landing rights fees for use of the civilian base in Kyrgyzstan, while it did not pay for the use of the military base at K2. Tashkent apparently felt slighted by this arrangement. The Karimov regime offered up at least six drafts of an agreement on the long-term use of Karshi-Khanabad from late 2003 to early 2005; all were rejected by the administration without comment.<sup>246</sup> President Karimov, hoping to sidestep the more critical State Department, eventually sent a personal letter directly to President Bush requesting more economic aid. This too was rejected.<sup>247</sup>

As a way to improve its negotiating position and increase the pressure on the US, Tashkent implemented restrictions on cargo flights into K2, claiming the runway was being damaged by the heavy aircraft – a claim refuted by US engineers.<sup>248</sup> In response, the US initiated a study to determine how the runway might be improved, and eventually arranged funding to rebuild the airstrip. The Defense Department had been provided with substantial supplemental funding by Congress in 2003 and 2004 for miscellaneous expenses related to the war on terror, and \$10.7 million from the fund was used to reimburse Uzbekistan in 2003 for “expenses Tashkent initially incurred in moving its forces off of Karshi-Khanabad Air Base to other locations, and for continued services in providing security for the installation.”<sup>249</sup> Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld began looking into how the Defense Department itself might use this type of funding to ‘reimburse’ the Uzbek government for use of K2 and negotiations continued over long-term US access to the base.<sup>250</sup> In August, Richard Myers,

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246 Ibid. Tensions between the US and Uzbekistan over the payment of landing fees surfaced repeatedly in interviews conducted in Tashkent in February/March 2006.

247 Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options”.

248 Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options”.

249 Ibid, p. 32.

250 Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options”.

the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – the Pentagon’s top military official – traveled to Central Asia. During his Uzbekistan visit, Myers criticized the aid cuts due to State Department decertification as “shortsighted” and not “productive”.<sup>251</sup> He then announced that the Pentagon would add \$21 million in non-proliferation funds and the transfer of fourteen patrol boats worth nearly \$3 million.<sup>252</sup>

After funding spiked in 2002, US assistance the following year was reduced: total assistance amounted to \$93 million, with \$5.2 million for democracy/civil society, \$37 million in security assistance, and credit guarantees from the US Export-Import Bank worth \$96 million.<sup>253</sup> For 2004, Uzbekistan received just over \$85 million in US assistance, including \$39 million in security and law enforcement aid, \$19 million for democratic reform programs.<sup>254</sup> The US provided Uzbekistan with humanitarian aid from 2003–05 in excess of \$78 million.<sup>255</sup> With the Strategic Partnership decertification in place, FMF and IMEF funding for 2004 was withheld. Total US assistance to Uzbekistan for 2005 amounted to \$101 million, including \$9 million in democracy promotion/civil society programs and \$86.3 million in security aid.<sup>256</sup> The security aid total includes the \$23 million paid by the Defense Department for K2 as well as \$24 million budgeted but withheld due to decertification.<sup>257</sup> One estimate placed the total assistance to Uzbekistan for security and border control since September 2001 at over \$500 million.<sup>258</sup>

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251 Nichol, “Central Asia’s Security”.

252 “Top US General Tours Central Asian Capitals, Dispenses Aid to Uzbekistan”, *Eurasia Insight*, 13 August 2004.

253 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Eurasia: 2002*; Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options”.

254 United States Department of State, *US Government Assistance... Eurasia: 2004*.

255 Ibid.

256 Ibid.

257 US State Department Fact Sheet, “US Assistance to Uzbekistan, Fiscal Year 2005”, 17 August 2005.

258 Kimberly Marten, “Understanding the Impact of the K2 Closure”, *PONARS policy memo*, no. 401, December 2005 (Center for Strategic and International Studies [online 6 Nov 2006]).

## Tragedy in Andijan

By late spring 2005, US-Uzbek relations had noticeably deteriorated due to tensions over K2 and harassment of American-funded NGOs in the country. The killings in Andijan simply tipped the balance and unleashed a chain of events that would ultimately end US-Uzbek cooperation. The violence in the Fergana Valley town of Andijan on 13 May 2005 stemmed from the trial of 23 successful local businessmen who stood accused of “extremism, fundamentalism, and separatism” and belonging to a radical Islamic group called the Akromiya.<sup>259</sup> The trial, begun three months earlier in February, had led to daily protests outside the courthouse by family members of those accused and others sympathetic to their plight. On the night of 12 May, as the verdicts in the trial were delayed for some reason, armed men took over the local police station and attacked the prison. They freed the 23 accused along with a substantial number of other prisoners – some of them reportedly with IMU connections – and made their way to the local government building where they took several hostages.<sup>260</sup> Later that morning the crowd gathered in Babur Square grew to several thousand as others heard of the large meeting in progress, and the protesters who occupied the government building on the square demanded to negotiate with the authorities.<sup>261</sup> Several telephone communications between protest leaders and the Interior Minister Zakir Almatov occurred, and Almatov reportedly offered the protesters safe passage to Kyrgyzstan.<sup>262</sup> President Karimov flew to Andijan in order to personally direct operations to regain control over the government buildings.<sup>263</sup>

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259 Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Preliminary Findings on the events in Andijan, Uzbekistan, 13 May 2005* (Warsaw, 2005) (OSCE [online 6 Nov 2006]).

260 Peter Baker and Robin Wright, “With Uzbek Unrest, Unease in the US”, *Washington Post*, 18 May 2005; International Crisis Group: *Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising*, Asia Briefing, no. 38 (Osh/Brussels, May 2005) (ICG [online 6 Nov 2006]).

261 Human Rights Watch: *Bullets Were Falling Like Rain: The Andijan Massacre, May 13, 2005* (New York, 2005) (HWR [online 6 Nov 2006]); *Eurasianet* 13 May 2005.

262 ODIHR, *Preliminary Findings*; Human Rights Watch, *Bullets were Falling like Rain*.

263 Jim Nichol, “Unrest in Uzbekistan: Context and Implications”, *CRS Report for Congress*, (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005) (National

Throughout the day, armored vehicles drove past the square and fired repeatedly into the crowd, killing and wounding a substantial number of them.<sup>264</sup> People remained in the square despite these attacks, believing that they would be safer as a group and due to rumors that President Karimov was on his way to address the crowd; a helicopter appeared overhead which lent credibility to the rumor.<sup>265</sup> That evening, according to witnesses, armored personnel carriers arrived with government troops and began shooting intensely into the crowd while other soldiers stormed the government building.<sup>266</sup> The crowd then began to flee down the only street not then occupied by government soldiers, and were attacked by snipers as they moved away from the square.<sup>267</sup> Government sources reported (and the Akiner report supports this figure) a total of 187 people killed while all other reports maintain that 400–750 died.<sup>268</sup> Hundreds of residents fled the violence and around 500 of them eventually ended up in refugee camps in neighboring Kyrgyzstan.<sup>269</sup>

While the European Union immediately blamed the Karimov regime for the violence, the initial US response to these events was muted as State Department spokesman Richard Boucher called on

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Defense University [online 6 Nov 2006]); Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options”; Shirin Akiner, “Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment”, *Silk Road Paper – Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program* (Johns Hopkins University-SAIS and Uppsala University, 2006 [online 1 Nov 2006]).

- 264 Human Rights Watch, *Bullets were Falling like Rain*; ODIHR, *Preliminary Findings*. The official Uzbek government version and the Akiner report published by the CACI Institute at Johns Hopkins University place more emphasis on the role of foreign insurgents who carried out the prison break and engaged in gun battles with security forces. The killing of civilians occurred mostly during the crossfire where the insurgents were equally, if not more, responsible for the civilian deaths. It is important to note that a definitive account of what actually transpired does not exist. Reports by OSCE, UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, and the International Crisis Group all acknowledge that a violent prison break was followed by an even more violent attack by government forces on a peaceful gathering in the square. Only Akiner’s report corroborates the government’s version.
- 265 Ibid.
- 266 ICG, *Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising*; Human Rights Watch, *Bullets Were Falling like Rain*.
- 267 ODIHR, *Preliminary Findings*.
- 268 Akiner, “Violence in Andijan”; RFE/RL 13 July 2005; Human Rights Watch, *Bullets were Falling like Rain*; ODIHR, *Preliminary Findings*.
- 269 ICG, *Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising*.

the government and the protesters to exercise restraint, but also voiced concerns that some of those freed in the prison break were IMU terrorists.<sup>270</sup> Five days later at a daily briefing, Boucher had this to say:

We deeply regret that loss of life and are deeply concerned of reports of indiscriminate firing by Uzbek authorities on demonstrators last Friday. At the same time, I think it's clear that the episode began by an armed attack on the prison and on other government facilities. There are reports of hostage-taking and other claims that should be investigated. Nothing justified such acts of violence. And we're also concerned about reports of the release or the escape of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan members. We need to reiterate, I think, the bottom line that real economic and democratic reform and an end to human rights abuses are essential to the stability of Uzbekistan.<sup>271</sup>

The State Department signaled on 25 May that US-Uzbek cooperation on counterterrorism would not be diminished by the events in Andijan as it was based on the “common interests” of both countries.<sup>272</sup> Spokesman Boucher pointed out that the US would “continue to press for the kinds of changes in the human rights situation” that provides “the best bulwark against terrorism”.<sup>273</sup> After the international community repeatedly demanded an independent investigation of Andijan, the newly appointed Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice eventually joined their calls for an inquiry. A US congressional delegation made up of Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and John Sununu, arrived in Uzbekistan in late May. They met with representatives of unregistered opposition parties in the country. The entire delegation was initially refused permission to enter the country – a decision that was reversed just two days before the trip – and even then Uzbek officials flatly refused to meet with them.<sup>274</sup> By July,

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270 Boucher, Richard: Daily Press Briefing (corrected), 13 May 2005, US State Department Press Release ([online 7 Nov 2006]).

271 Boucher, Richard: Daily Press Briefing 18 May 2005, US State Department Press Release ([online 7 Nov 2006]).

272 Boucher, Richard: US State Department Daily Press Briefing 25 May 2005 ([online 7 Nov 2006]).

273 Ibid.

274 US Embassy in Uzbekistan website, [Online 2 May 2006]; *RFE/RL* 2 June 2005.

the State Department had announced that levels of future aid to Uzbekistan could be dependent on such an investigation.<sup>275</sup>

## Relations rapidly decline

The timing of the Andijan violence coincided with US-Uzbek negotiations over the long-term use of the K2 airbase. The Karimov regime began complaining even louder about inadequate compensation for the base soon after some aid to Uzbekistan was cut due to the 2004 decertification, and imposed restrictions on night flights and C-17 cargo aircraft operations after US calls for an independent inquiry into Andijan.<sup>276</sup> Although some saw these moves by Karimov simply as negotiating tactics, the fate of K2 was not at all certain. Congressional leaders pressed the administration to halt talks on basing until Karimov agreed to an investigation, and even senior Defense Department officials questioned whether Uzbekistan was “the right place for us to be” in the long run.<sup>277</sup> Meetings between US and Uzbek representatives occurred in April and May, but a planned meeting to continue the negotiations never occurred due to Andijan.<sup>278</sup>

Further complicating the already tense and complex US-Uzbek relationship were the Andijan refugees in Kyrgyzstan. The UN refugee agency UNHCR reported in July that the Uzbek government had repeatedly demanded that Kyrgyzstan return the refugees while UNHCR revealed that efforts were underway to fly them to a third country.<sup>279</sup> Among those working for the evacuation of the Uzbek refugees was US Secretary of State Rice, who played a

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275 Andrew Tully, “US Says Uzbek Response on Probe Could Affect Aid”, *RFE/RL*, 13 July 2005.

276 Jim Nichol, “Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications” (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005) (Center for Democracy & Technology [online 6 Nov 2005]).

277 Ann Scott Tyson and Robin Wright, “Crackdown Muddies US-Uzbek Relations”, *Washington Post*, 4 June 2005.

278 John C.K. Daly, “Chronology of US-Uzbekistan Relations, 2001–2005” in *Anatomy of a Crisis: US Uzbekistan Relations, 2001–2005*, Svante Cornell ed., *Silk Road Paper – Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program* (Johns Hopkins University-SAIS and Uppsala University, 2006 [online 1 Nov 2006]), pp. 66–108.

279 Gulnoza Saidazimova, “Uzbekistan: Tashkent Demands Deportation of Andijon Refugees”, *EurasiaNet Posting*, 27 July 2005.

prominent role and even placed last minute phone calls to Kyrgyz leaders to arrange for the refugees to be flown to Romania.<sup>280</sup> The morning airlift on 29 July 2005 led to an immediate response from the Karimov regime, which sent a diplomatic note to the US embassy in Tashkent later that day ordering the US to leave the airbase at K2 within 180 days. The eviction notice came less than a month after a summit held by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – whose members include Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan – approved a declaration demanding a timeframe for US withdrawal from its bases in Central Asia.<sup>281</sup>

At a September Tashkent news briefing, US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried said that the US was not appealing the decision and intended to vacate the base as requested.<sup>282</sup> Fried announced that the US had agreed to pay the Uzbek government \$23 million for services rendered to the K2 base during its four years of operations; nonpayment of such debts had been one complaint of the Uzbek government.<sup>283</sup> Congress attempted to block the payment in October 2005 and make its dispersal dependent on a renewal of Uzbek cooperation on counterterrorism and an independent inquiry into the Andijan violence.<sup>284</sup> Instead, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld used 2005 funds to complete the payment.<sup>285</sup> The last US military planes left the K2 base in Karshi-Khanabad on 21 November, well before the deadline imposed by the Karimov regime.<sup>286</sup> After the 29 July eviction notice, Uzbekistan gradually terminated its cooperation with the US on anti-terrorism efforts,

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280 Steven R Weisman and Thom Shanker, “Uzbeks Order US from Base in Refugee Rift”, *New York Times*, 31 July 2005.

281 Daniel Kimmage, “Central Asia: SCO Shoring Up the Post-Soviet Status Quo”, *RFE/RL*, 8 July 2005.

282 Daniel Kimmage, “Uzbekistan: Departure From Base Underlines US-Uzbek Tensions”, *RFE/RL*, 28 September 2005.

283 Ibid.

284 Nichol, “Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad”.

285 Meppen, “US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options”. Meppen points to on-going base negotiations in other countries and the symbolic message of the US paying its debts as the rationale behind Secretary Rumsfeld’s unconventional funding procedure.

286 “US Completes Withdrawal from Uzbek Base”, *RFE/RL Newswire*, 22 November 2005.

revoked US over flight privileges, and shifted its focus towards Russia and China by signing agreements on closer military and economic cooperation.<sup>287</sup>

## Summary: Policy breakdown

This final period illustrates the culmination of Washington's policy dilemma with Tashkent. The four years that the US operated out of the K2 airbase marked a period of intense cooperation between the two countries. Only during what proved to be the final two years of US operations from K2 did Washington direct any strong criticisms at the Karimov regime's human rights record and failure to implement any democratic reforms. The December 2003 announcement by the State Department that Uzbekistan would lose its certification for CTR funding was unexpected, especially after Powell's testimony in mid-2003 that claimed progress was being made. The November 2003 revolution in Georgia and Tashkent's immediate reaction against US-funded NGOs represent one plausible explanation.

The language of the 2004 decertification announcement pertaining to the Strategic Partnership Agreement speaks directly to the Karimov regime's restrictions on US-financed NGO programs in the country. Congressional legislation tied part of the Uzbek aid package to *specific* reforms mentioned in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement and did not include the usual national security waiver. This may have forced the administration's hand somewhat with regard to both certifications. Finally compelled by Congress to certify specific improvements rather than invoke broad generalities, the Bush administration made the choice to decertify. Although this move had little real effect on aid levels, it showed the Karimov regime that future American support might begin to depend on genuine reform.

The apparent disagreement between the State Department, the Pentagon, the White House, and Congress first became visible during these decertifications and became increasingly obvious in

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287 Robin Wright, "Uzbeks Stop Working with US Against Terrorism", *Washington Post* 30 September 2005; Vladimir Socor, "Unprecedented Uzbek-Russian Joint Military Exercises Held", *Jamestown Monitor*, 27 September 2005.

the following months. While Secretary of State Rice worked towards forcing an independent inquiry into Andijan, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld reportedly worked to block an investigation.<sup>288</sup> The split within the administration was painfully obvious in 2004 when the Pentagon restored \$24 million in aid to Uzbekistan after the State Department had withheld \$21 million due to de-certification. Tensions between the Department of Defense and Congress surfaced again the next year after Andijan and the payment demanded by Karimov for services rendered at the K2 airbase, when Congress unsuccessfully attempted to block the payment. Even disagreements within the State Department seemed possible, with Secretary Pascoe consistently claiming progress by the Uzbek regime while Secretary Craner focused much more on the failure to reform.

Analyst Stephen Blank, writing just after the events in Andijan, remarked that “to external observers American policy towards Uzbekistan looks like it is divided, ambivalent, and uncoordinated, despite administration claims to the contrary”.<sup>289</sup> Blank saw a need for a “coordinated inter-agency policy on Uzbekistan” so that Karimov could not “successfully play US cabinet departments against each other”.<sup>290</sup> Media speculation of a divided administration led State Department spokesman Sean McCormack, speaking about Andijan on June 14, 2005, to declare: “We are speaking with one voice with respect to this issue”.<sup>291</sup>

In terms of the base eviction, the continued use of K2 by the Americans was already looking doubtful by the time of the Andijan crackdown in May 2005. Was the base important enough to US interests that other concerns were downplayed in a last-ditch effort to save the base? In early 2005, C-130 aircraft still transported on average 50 tons of cargo and 60 passengers a day through K2, supported by around 1000 military personnel at the base.<sup>292</sup>

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288 Ahmed Rashid, “By Ignoring Uzbek Bad Behavior, Washington Risks Repeating Historical Mistakes”, *EurasiaNet Commentary*, 27 June 2005.

289 Stephen Blank, “Is America’s Military Base in Uzbekistan at Risk?” *Jamestown Monitor*, 22 June 2005.

290 Ibid.

291 Igor Torbakov, “Moscow and Washington Pursue Diverging Policies in Uzbekistan, Central Asia”, *Jamestown Monitor*, 17 June 2005.

292 Nichol, “Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad”.

The Defense Department claimed that the loss of K2 presented logistical problems, but would not noticeably affect operations in Afghanistan or in the war on terror.<sup>293</sup> One analyst argued that the loss of the Uzbek base places increased pressure on the other bases in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan itself, reducing the administration's political maneuverability.<sup>294</sup> In addition, K2 was used as a logistical hub: transferring airlifted cargo to container trucks which could reach US bases inside Afghanistan. The overland route fed by the cargo planes represented the only road access into Afghanistan available to the US.<sup>295</sup> The airfield was deemed "undeniably critical in supporting our combat operations" by the Pentagon.<sup>296</sup> Some reports suggest the Bush administration were in negotiations to secure the use of K2 as a cooperative security location (CSL), a facility housing military equipment and some contract personnel, but few or no troops.<sup>297</sup> This would suggest plans for a permanent (though less central) role for the air base.

The initial weak response by the US to the Uzbek government's actions in Andijan, occurring in the middle of ongoing base negotiations between the two countries, also points toward inconsistencies in US policy. The mute response was perhaps intended to lessen Andijan's impact on the ongoing basing talks, but international pressures again may have forced the administration's hand on the issue. US statements concerning the violence in Andijan sounded less like a country pressing for human rights and more like one attempting to keep a balanced and measured response. State Department official L. Nicholas Burns claimed the US "made a clear choice, and that was to stand on the side of human rights," when US involvement in the refugee airlift was followed by the eviction notice for K2, implying that the US knew this would be the consequence of such an action and proceeded nevertheless.<sup>298</sup> However, disagreements over payments for Karshi-Khanabad and

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293 Ibid.

294 Marten, "Understanding the Impact of the K2 Closure".

295 Ibid.

296 Tyson and Wright, "Crackdown Muddies US-Uzbek Relations".

297 Nichol, "Uzbekistan's Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad".

298 "U.S. Chose Human Rights over Air Base in Uzbekistan, Burns Says", *USINFO*, press release, 3 August 2005 (U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs [online 6 Nov 2006]).

negotiations over its continued use had dragged on for nearly two years by the time the Andijan violence occurred. This fact, coupled with the weak initial US response to Andijan most likely intended to save the negotiating process, sheds doubt on the accuracy of the State Department's announcement about 'choosing' human rights in the matter.

US policy during this period revealed competing factions within the foreign policy establishment and exhibited both realist and liberalist components. Due to a lack of policy coordination, these two factions worked against each other much of the time. The realists in the Pentagon and the White House saw their efforts to placate the Karimov regime consistently frustrated by other actors. For example, the application of normative stipulations on military aid to Uzbekistan through the certification process represented the placement of a liberalist concept over realist policy actions. The realists would rather not have such restrictions.<sup>299</sup> The threat of decertification made the military aid less dependable and therefore less attractive to target countries, which in turn made the aid and the decertification leverage less effective. This could be one factor in Karimov's abrupt turn toward Moscow after 2003. In addition, US efforts to assist the Andijan refugees, knowing it risked alienating a key ally in the region and putting the future of the US base at further risk, cannot be explained from a realist perspective. If the US were to first engage in actions detrimental to US-Uzbek relations, increased pressure for internal reform would have longer-term effects than the refugee crisis. Why engage in risky behavior for issues that do little to further US interests?

It appeared that international pressures to condemn the Uzbek regime and conduct an independent investigation factored into the US response. These actions are clearly influenced by a more liberalist faction that, just as the realists had encountered

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299 The realist approach of the Pentagon is evident in this observation from Meppen: "Karimov maintained confidence, however, in his personal relationship with Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. It is not unusual in private meetings in Central Asia for local leaders to attempt to distinguish between Department of State, for whom they often hold great antipathy, and the Department of Defense, usually a source of largesse and little criticism" (Meppen, "US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options", p. 30).

liberalist interference, also met with resistance when pursuing its agenda. Congressional legislation concerning the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement leveraged concrete reforms against continued aid. This linkage was opposed by the White House and apparently by the State Department as well. The State Department decertified Uzbekistan in December 2003 for CTR funding but a presidential waiver allowed the funding to continue. After a security waiver was intentionally left out of the 2004 legislation, the State Department decertified Uzbekistan and aid was cut. Again, however, the White House and the Pentagon circumvented this process by awarding aid from other sources. Congressional efforts to block the \$23 million for K2 failed after the Defense Department outmaneuvered them. Lastly, echoing Strobe Talbott's 1997 speech, the State Department continued to insist that the US hoped to move away from geopolitics and power balancing. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried declared as recently as October 2005: "we do not look at Central Asia as an object in a great game. We do not look at this as a zero sum contest between us, the Russians and Chinese".<sup>300</sup>

This phase in US-Uzbek relations most clearly exhibits the struggle to reconcile security interests with human rights concerns. The period 2004–05 perhaps best illustrates the chaotic and sometimes incoherent realities of foreign policy and national responses to crisis. Events in 2005 developed rapidly and gave the US little time to prepare a coordinated, coherent response. The stakes were high for multiple US interests: basing rights, regional influence, international prestige, and human rights. Policymakers in Washington were split between those advocating a more realist approach and those pressing for a liberalist policy. It is in this final period that the influence of theoretical foundations in shaping foreign policy is best observed and illustrated. Uncoordinated efforts by various actors within the US foreign policy establishment maneuvered to influence US actions according to their respective beliefs. The result was an ineffective mix of actors working at cross-

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300 "Press Conference of the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried" Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 27 September 2005, *US Embassy in Uzbekistan* ([online 6 Nov 2006]).

purposes and the eventual inability of all actors to accomplish their respective policy goals.



## Chapter 7

# Conclusions

### General observations on balancing in US foreign policy

Balancing the three policy concerns of human rights, democracy promotion and security occurred on two distinct levels during the period studied. The president, in his role as chief diplomat, had the most immediate and wide-reaching influence on foreign policy decisions. He set the tone for US policy through various decisions on such matters as diplomatic visits, criticism or praise in speeches, and budget proposals sent to Congress. Through these actions, the White House integrated human rights, democracy and security in its policy positions, and when conflicting interests made a smooth integration impossible, the president prioritized some issues at the expense of others. In general, the president has been the most visible and most influential force in US foreign affairs, but certainly not the only one and perhaps not the most influential in US-Uzbek relations. Although the administration formally conducted American foreign policy and purported to balance the three issues discussed in this study, they were often balanced only in a rhetorical sense and focused on the 'big picture'. Many of the important policy actions examined in this study involved lower-level administration officials or members of Congress exercising their influence through speeches, hearings, legislation, certification processes, budget appropriations, and other oversight measures.

This more complex level of issue balancing resulted from a

process whereby competing factions in Washington jockeyed to get their agendas incorporated into US policy. The various agencies of the government that dealt in day-to-day diplomacy took many lesser decisions that comprised the bulk of American foreign policy. Various actors within the US policymaking establishment contributed to policy formation, including the White House (the president and, just as importantly, the group of advisors surrounding the president), the State Department, the Defense Department, and the US Congress. Among non-state actors, NGOs and academic institutions that publish articles on policy issues and offer expert testimony before Congress were among the most significant. The independent media focused the public's attention on certain issues. Various interest groups also generated private and public pressures to further their causes. Nevertheless, those most directly responsible for US policy were the aforementioned governmental actors, each pursuing a mix of realist- or liberalist-oriented agendas. When there was little to fight over, supporters of the two perspectives were not readily identifiable and acted more or less as one. When clear interests emerged for each of the factions and those interests diverged, the strain of finding common ground for a unified foreign policy became discernible. This process of integrating diverging views on policy direction constitutes the second means of balancing security with more the normative issues of democracy and human rights.

## **Comparing the conclusions to the empirical data**

In the earlier discussion on American foreign policy, three possible interpretations were presented: a 'realist' perspective where security issues and the national interest reigned supreme, a 'liberalist' view that prioritized democracy promotion and human rights, and Carothers' 'semi-realist' middle ground where liberalist priorities were included when no pressing security concerns were present. Based on the conclusions reached in the previous section, any attempt to classify US policy under such broad categories would be an oversimplification of the empirical data. However,

these broad brushstrokes provide a type of shorthand by which the political perspectives of the various actors involved in US policy can be categorized. Indeed, the 'semi-realist' designation appears to mesh quite well with the policies and actions of both President Clinton and President Bush. With this in mind, a brief summation of the empirical data will now be presented, based on the general conclusions presented in the previous section and keeping in mind the three interpretations of US foreign policy.

Lacking any perceived security interests in Uzbekistan, the Clinton administration pressed Tashkent on human rights issues in this first period from 1995–97, and the rhetoric from the White House was loaded with the liberalist language of democracy promotion. Inconsistent policy was seen from the president and the Pentagon: as Clinton snubbed Karimov, Secretary Perry offered warm words of support. Whether this represented a true rift between the White House and Defense Department or a conscious policy decision is difficult to ascertain. As the State Department argued for a departure from power balancing in the region, the Pentagon demonstrated its military capabilities through training exercises with other Central Asian countries. The beginnings of a bilateral relationship formed during this period as Uzbekistan's importance to regional stability began to resonate in Washington.

After the US embassy bombings in East Africa in 1998, the Clinton Administration recognized the advantages of Uzbek cooperation in the hunt for Osama bin Laden and toned down its criticism accordingly. For the next several years, policy balancing emanated from the White House and with little disagreement among other competing foreign policy actors. Congress focused primarily on Caspian energy resources and Islamic radicalism and the Pentagon pressed for and received increased security cooperation with Uzbekistan. The State Department continued to issue its annual country reports on human rights, but even they were muted in comparison to the worsening domestic situation in Uzbekistan. Pragmatism was the order of the day. Only in the final year of the Clinton administration did the tough criticism return during Secretary of State Albright's Tashkent speech. Even then, however, the US balanced its criticism by awarding \$3 million in

security assistance to Uzbekistan.

Interestingly, US policy toward Uzbekistan after 9/11 continued to exhibit elements of liberalism even as America focused overwhelmingly on security issues. The Bush administration negotiated the use of the strategically important airbase at Karshi-Khanabad for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan while the president's speeches were loaded with the liberalist language of freedom and democracy. The White House's policy balancing act included all three issues of human rights, democracy, and security in its foreign policy. This pleased supporters of both realist and liberalist approaches, as there was literally 'something for everyone' in this policy, formalized in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement between the two countries. In purely practical terms, however, human rights criticisms were toned down as high-level US officials failed to comment on the obvious lack of substantial reforms by the Karimov regime. Reports of extraordinary rendition called into question the US commitment to human rights and the rule of law. The realists, pleased with the use of K2, tried to keep the Uzbek government content. Meanwhile, the liberalist faction remained hopeful that Tashkent would honor its commitments to reform embodied in the 2002 agreement. The stage was now set for the US policy meltdown that was to come in the following years.

President Karimov's crackdown on US-funded NGOs in response to the Ukrainian and Georgian 'color revolutions' of 2003 and 2004, along with Tashkent's constant complaints for more compensation for the use of K2, sent US-Uzbek relations on a downward spiral from 2004–2005. It also revealed the clear splits that existed in US policymaking circles. The White House balanced the issues rhetorically by including some criticisms of the Karimov regime in its statements, but with little real prioritizing of anything other than security concerns. A more liberalist faction within the State Department reacted to the NGO restrictions by decertifying Uzbekistan for some security aid. Their hand forced, the White House waived the initial decertification and CTR funding continued to flow. Congress then passed legislation linking security aid to reforms promised in the Strategic Partnership Agreement and did not include a national security waiver.

After the State Department failed to certify Tashkent's compliance with the agreement, the White House was forced to cut security-related funding. The Pentagon, concerned that the K2 base would be threatened, openly criticized the decertification and scrambled to find funds with which to placate the Karimov regime. The stakes were high in this policy fight and the different approaches (often working at cross-purposes) by the White House, State Department and the Pentagon could not possibly represent a coordinated policy. With large and steadily growing cracks in the relationship, the violence in Andijan shattered what was left of US-Uzbek relations. Such egregious human rights violations as those that occurred in May 2005 could not be casually dismissed by the US, and an already strained relationship reached its breaking point. The Bush administration seemed more willing to openly criticize the Karimov regime after Tashkent asked US forces to leave the country, and have since that time pressed for an investigation into Andijan. Despite the K2 eviction notice and the abrupt halt to Uzbek cooperation with the US, the Pentagon sought to pay the Karimov regime \$23 million while Congress struggled to halt the payment.

The varying approaches taken by Washington during these four periods in US-Uzbek relations revealed a semi-realist balancing of security, democracy and human rights by the White House. In its entirety, however, US policy cannot be categorized so neatly. When one factors in the various actions of the State Department (decertifying Uzbekistan for CTR funds in 2003/2004 and again in connection with congressional legislation in 2004), the Pentagon (criticizing the aid cuts and unilaterally providing funds to the Uzbek government), and Congress (passing legislation to limit foreign assistance to Uzbekistan, pressing for an investigation into Andijan, and pushing for the withholding of final payments to Tashkent for K2), the balancing seems much less coordinated. The obvious tensions and conflicts within the American foreign policy community led to a set of often contradictory policy decisions that ultimately affected Washington's ability to achieve its policy goals.

## Lessons learned from the US experience in Uzbekistan

There are several general themes in US policy that can be drawn from the empirical data. The first deals with US policy regarding foreign military basing in authoritarian countries and the dangers inherent in such an action. Secondly, US policy regarding democracy promotion in Uzbekistan will be examined to reach some conclusions on the pitfalls of building democracy in autocracies. Finally, the broad issue of US policy in the region, given US policy towards Uzbekistan, will be considered.

### *Maintaining military bases in authoritarian countries*

After the establishment of a US airbase at Karshi-Khanabad, US officials argued that K2 gave the US increased leverage with the Karimov regime to press for reforms.<sup>301</sup> After several years, it became obvious that the reverse was in fact true: the US stepped lightly around the abuses and lack of reforms by Karimov due to the base's importance to US military planners. The weak US response in the wake of the Andijan violence, which occurred during the 'last chance' phase of base negotiations, was further confirmation of the linkage. This dynamic, where the small state in effect can dictate the terms of its relationship with a great power, runs counter to the conventional 'might-is-right' rules of power politics. President Karimov actively courted American involvement in Uzbekistan during the 1990s, realized the relationship wasn't providing the benefits he had hoped within a year of signing the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement, and then began a process of rapprochement with Moscow. Much of the US-Uzbek relationship depended upon the actions and signals by President Karimov rather than by US policy, although Washington's uncoordinated policies exacerbated the problem.

The eviction highlighted another problem with autocrats as

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301 *Balancing Military Assistance and Support for Human Rights in Central Asia*, J.D. Crouch's testimony; Paula J. Dobriansky, "Democracy Promotion: Explaining the Bush Administration's Position" in Thomas Carothers *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004): 75-79.

hosts: they are fickle and unpredictable. As Alexander Cooley observes, “agreements with an authoritarian state last only as long as the ruling regime does – if even that long – because the status of such treaties is subject to the regime’s fortunes rather than to a lasting institution framework”.<sup>302</sup> Lacking institutionalization of the basing agreement, the US was left completely dependent upon remaining in the good graces of President Karimov.<sup>303</sup> Finally, US bases in authoritarian countries like Uzbekistan attract the ire of radical domestic opposition groups who see the US as supporting the host country’s repression, a situation that undermines US security.<sup>304</sup> Choosing to base US forces in more pluralistic countries might better ensure the country’s long term security and help avoid policy conflicts with human rights and democracy building issues.

### *Democracy promotion*

Democracy promotion in authoritarian countries such as Uzbekistan can be challenging, if not impossible. Diplomatic pressure from the US to reform, even if successful, results in superficial measures that can be rescinded by presidential decree at any time. The authoritarian nature of regimes such as Karimov’s precludes any lasting institutional changes that may survive the changing whims of the autocrat. Even legally binding documents such as constitutions and treaties were routinely flouted by Karimov. Working to promote changes from the bottom up in a grassroots approach has become even more challenging after the so-called color revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan.

As Carothers argues, US involvement in these events, along with

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302 Cooley, “Base Politics”, p.85.

303 Karimov’s foreign policy can be quite erratic. Uzbekistan left GUUAM in 2002 only for Karimov to retract the announcement later saying Uzbekistan only ‘suspended’ its involvement. It finally left the organization for good in 2005. In addition, Karimov announced a close security relationship with Russia in May 2000, reversed himself and criticized Russian involvement in Central Asia a year later in May 2001, just one month before entering the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (consisting of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia and China) and thereby agreeing to closer economic and military ties with fellow member Russia.

304 See for example Cooley, “Base Politics”; Thomas Carothers, *Critical Mission*; Matthew Crosston, *Fostering Fundamentalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to install democratic governments and a constant barrage of democracy rhetoric from the US, has led autocratic governments to link democracy promotion with regime change.<sup>305</sup> In this, the autocrats are correct: democracy promotion technically aims to replace their authoritarian regimes with pluralistic ones. Many autocratic leaders are questioning the wisdom of allowing US-funded NGOs to operate in their countries for this purpose, what Carothers calls in the title of his article the “backlash against democracy promotion”, and scores of NGOs have been forced close as they did in Uzbekistan. Carothers argues against the “instrumentalization of pro-democracy policies – wrapping security goals in the language of democracy promotion and then confusing democracy promotion with the search for particular political outcomes that enhance those security objectives.”<sup>306</sup> Attempts by the US to combine democracy-building efforts with its security interests can lead to these types of unclear, counterproductive or outright disingenuous democracy policies.

### *US policy in Central Asia*

US policy can, at the very least, be criticized for its incoherent and fragmented nature in Uzbekistan, but larger issues are even more disconcerting. The Cold War was for decades the main focus of US foreign policy, and its abrupt end left the US without a suitable security framework to replace it until the US foreign policy establishment seized upon terrorism as the new global security threat after 2001. Combined with Cold War mistrust of Russia, the realist faction in the US looked toward Central Asia as a continuation of the ‘Great Game’ despite statements by the State Department encouraging a view beyond the zero-sum game scenario. The Russians seemed to still be playing a game of the zero-sum variety, maneuvering for influence in the Central Asian countries throughout the period studied here. Despite obvious common interests in addressing Islamic extremism, drug trafficking and regional instability, the US and Russia did not cooperate with

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305 Thomas Carothers, “The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion”, *Foreign Affairs* vol. 85, no. 2 (2006): 55–68.

306 Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p.71.

one another on these issues. The Russian anti-terrorism base in Kyrgyzstan sits less than thirty kilometers from the US base at Manas, a testament to the parallel strategies pursued by both countries.

In addition, the US tendency to favor bilateral agreements over regional and multilateral arrangements arguably contributed to an unnecessary balance of power environment in the region. By aligning itself so closely with Uzbekistan for reasons of strategic convenience, the neighboring countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan may have felt inclined to nurture relations with Russia given Uzbekistan's aggressive behavior toward its neighbors regarding border disputes, trading policies and cross border incursions by the IMU. Tajikistan's existing close ties with Russia were reaffirmed with an economic package and a new Russian military base, Kyrgyzstan agreed to the Russian counterterrorism base after US-Uzbekistan ties strengthened in 2002, and with thousands of kilometers of territory bordering Russia, Kazakhstan also continued its good relations with Moscow.<sup>307</sup> After the K2 eviction, Tashkent's abrupt end to cooperation with the US, and the recent strengthening of ties between Russia and Uzbekistan, the US has found itself shut out of Central Asia. Even the base at Manas, Kyrgyzstan is threatened as President Bakiev has pressed for a staggering rent hike for continued US use of the airport, from \$2 million to \$207 million.<sup>308</sup> The reliance on bilateral agreements and diplomatic efforts, while necessary for detailed basing agreements and other cooperative efforts, carries with it the inherent weakness of complete dependence upon that country to facilitate US foreign policy actions.

## The Future of US Policy in Central Asia

Even a superpower like the US cannot control every environment and influence every outcome, especially when the region in question lies halfway around the world. At the most basic level, effective US foreign policy requires access and opportunity in order to work toward its political goals in a country. These conditions

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307 See Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia".

308 *BBC News*, "Kyrgyzstan Seeks US Base Hike", 15 February 2006.

are now absent in Uzbekistan, where most avenues of political action are presently closed to the US. An ineffective mix of policy prioritization has left Washington without any political leverage across its spectrum of interests in the country. Throughout the past year, Uzbekistan has continued to rekindle its relationships in the region, sharply avoiding any engagement with the West. In March, Uzbekistan joined the Eurasia Economic Community (EEC), thereby signaling closer economic ties to some of the former CIS countries. President Karimov attended the yearly summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in June, which was followed closely by Tashkent's rejoining of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in August, a group it had left in 1999 amid strengthening ties to the US and the West. This flurry of diplomatic activity represents a positive movement toward regional cooperation while its timing signals a desire to distance itself from the United States. In the wake of Andijan, the Uzbek authorities have continued their pattern of blatant human rights violations, repressed religious expression, and conducted show trials for those implicated in the Andijan unrest. Several American-funded NGOs were forced to close during 2006, including the well-regarded organization Counterpart International. Freedom House reduced Uzbekistan's civil liberties rating in 2006 from six to seven (the worst), and with a rating of seven in political rights the country is now ranked as one of the most repressive in the world, alongside Burma, Cuba, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, and neighboring Turkmenistan.

The United States remained active in Central Asia after its exit from Uzbekistan, demonstrated in 2006 by a diplomatic visit by Vice President Cheney to Kazakhstan, stops in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and a recent meeting between newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher and President Karimov in Tashkent. References to Kazakhstan as a 'regional anchor' and diplomatic gestures toward Kyrgyzstan amid the renegotiation of US basing arrangements highlights the importance of these two countries to future US involvement in the region. During congressional testimony in

April 2006, Boucher laid out a reformulated Central Asian policy that retained some familiar themes:

Our strategy rests on three integrated pillars: security cooperation; our commercial and energy interests; and political and economic reform. We see these three pillars as mutually reinforcing. Genuine stability, in our view, requires a process of democratic change, and stability, in turn, provides for economic development and prosperity. Thus, we are determined to pursue all three sets of interests simultaneously in a balanced way.<sup>309</sup>

It remains to be seen whether the US can effectively combine these policy goals in a broader regional context after Washington's failed attempts at precisely such a balancing act in Uzbekistan.

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309 *US Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities Part II*, Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia of the House Committee on International Relations, 26 April 2006, *Federal News Service* ([online 12 Dec 2005]).



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