AUTHORITARIANISM VERSUS DEMOCRACY IN UZBEKISTAN: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FACTORS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

GÜLŞEN AYDIN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

JANUARY 2004

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

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January 2004, 116 pages

The objective of this thesis is to analyze the authoritarian Karimov regime in post-Soviet Uzbekistan on a comprehensive basis and shed light on the domestic and international factors that has shaped this regime. The thesis consists of three main parts. The first part of the study defines the concepts of democracy and authoritarianism and provides the criteria to determine if a regime is democratic or authoritarian. The second part applies the theoretical framework developed in the first part to Uzbekistan. The third part deals with the factors that helped Karimov to strengthen his authoritarian rule in the country. The main argument of this study is that the incumbent leadership in Uzbekistan has failed to take steps to establish democracy in the country in post-Soviet period. The changes that were introduced proved to be only decorative, they lacked substance. The president of the country, Islam Karimov, has aimed at consolidating his own authority rather than establishing

democracy and that his attempts to realize this aim resulted in the strengthening of executive branch in Uzbekistan at the expense of legislative and judiciary, silencing of the opposition forces, curtailment of the civil and political rights of the citizens, restriction of autonomy of civil society organizations and media.

Keywords: Democracy, Authoritarianism, Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, Separation of powers, Opposition, Participation, Civil and Political Rights, Civil Society, Media.

ÖZ

ÖZBEKiSTAN'DA DEMOKRASİYE KARŞI OTORiTER DÜZEN: İÇ VE DIŞ FAKTÖRLER

Aydın, Gülşen

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Süha Bölükbaşıoğlu

Ocak 2004, 116 Sayfa

Bu tezin amacı Özbekistan'da Sovyet sonrası dönemde ortaya çıkan otoriter siyasi rejimi ve bu rejimi şekillendiren iç ve dış faktörleri incelemektir. Tez üç ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde demokrasi ve otoriter düzen kavramları tanımlanmış ve bir rejimi otoriter veya demokratik yapan unsurlar üzerinde durulmuştur. İkinci bölümde ilk kısımda geliştirilen teorik çerçeve Özbekistan'a uygulanmıştır. Üçüncü kısımda ülkede otoriter bir düzen kurmayı kolaylaştıran iç ve dış faktörler incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu tez ülkedeki yönetimin Sovyet sonrası dönemde demokratik bir düzen kurma yolunda hiç bir önemli adım atmadığını ileri sürmektedir. Yapılan değişiklikler sadece kağıt üzerinde kalmıştır, demokrasiyi kurmaya yönelik gerçek reformlar yapılmamıştır. Devlet Başkanı İslam Karimov ülkede demokratik bir düzen kurmak yerine, kendi otoritesini güçlendirmek yolunda adımlar atmıştır ve onun bu yöndeki adımları yürütmenin yasama ve yargıya karşı sürekli güç kazanmasını, muhalefet güçlerinin susturulmasını, siyasi hakların kısıtlanmasını ve sivil toplum örgütlerinin ve medyanın bağımsızlıklarının sınırlandırılmasını beraberinde getirmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokrasi, Otoriter Düzen, Özbekistan, İslam Karimov, Güçler Ayrılığı, Muhalefet, Katılım, Siyasi Haklar, Sivil Toplum, Medya.

Sevgili Tolga'ya

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many scholars and friends to whom I should express my gratitude for their contributions to this study. First of all, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my thesis supervisor, Professor Dr. Süha Bölükbaşıoğlu for his invaluable encouragement, criticism and guidance. The completition of this study would not have been possible without his help. I also wish to thank the members of my thesis comitee: Asistant Prof. Dr. Pınar Akçalı and Asistant Prof. Dr. Oktay Tanrısever for their very useful comments and suggestions which helped me refine my ideas and arguments.

I also owe great dept to my husband, Tolga Aydın, for his morale support, patience and profound assistance. I really appreciate his help; his contribution to this thesis has been decisive.

I have no proper words to express my indebtedness to my parents, who supported me in every step of my way, believed in me and respected all my choices and decisions.

Lastly, I am also thankful to Berna Süer, Eda Benlioğlu, Ali Yıldız, Taylan Özgür Kaya, Ayşe Ömür Bostan, İnan Rüma, Çağrı Öztürk, Işık Kuşçu, Hayriye Kahveci, Cengiz Sürücü, Bayram Sinkaya, Murat Gül and Özlem Kaplan and the other research assistants of International Relations Department of Middle East Technical University for motivating and assisting me during the completion of this thesis and of course for their friendship.

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Date: 22.1.2004 Signature:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Without doubt the collapse of the Soviet Union is one of the most important developments that the history recorded. Initially, this dramatic development led to the emergence of a wave of optimism in the West. Many regarded the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a golden opportunity for the freedom-thirsty people who had lived under the totalitarian rule to adopt democratic forms of governance.

However, in the course of time it became apparent that the collapse of the Soviet Union would not lead to the establishment of democratic regimes in Central Asia in the short run. With the emergence of regimes which have provided the presidencies with very broad ranges of powers and which have not hesitated to restrain the rights of individuals for the sake of stability, Central Asia proved to be a region which dashed the hopes of people who expected that democratic values would be embraced in the region. The Central Asian States, which were exposed to undemocratic rule thorough their history, did not rush to engage in democratic reforms.

The transition to democracy will apparently prove to be a much more difficult process than the West initially expected. The collapse of the Soviet Union has given way to the emergence of very complex challenges for Central Asians. Making democratic reforms has not been the only task to accomplish for these newly independent states. These states had to adapt to the collapse of the all-union economy and take reforms in the way of free market economy. With the collapse of

the Soviet Union, the communist ideology that guided this state has virtually disappeared, and as a result an ideological vacuum emerged. Newly independent states came to embrace nationalism and engage in nation building to fill this ideological vacuum and to legitimize themselves in the eyes of their citizens. This proved to be no easy task and necessitated taking steps like re-writing of their national histories to raise national consciousness. While taking such steps, the Central Asian States have also tried to keep the discontent of the minorities living in their countries at a minimum to maintain stability in their countries.

Thus, the post-Soviet democratization, whenever it will take place, will take place in such a difficult context. The lack of knowledge about this difficult context led to unrealistic expectations regarding political transition in post Soviet states. The need to understand the real context that is shaping the democratization process in Central Asia and to avoid making unrealistic assessments in this way prompted me to study political transition in Central Asia. Moreover, the literature which examine authoritarianism in post-Soviet Central Asia generally focus on the relations of governments' in the region with opposition or the growth of strong executive power. There is the need to examine also some other aspects of authoritarianism such as the restrictions on civil and political rights, media and civil society. This study aims to do this and provide a comprehensive analysis. It tries to go beyond focusing on only one or two aspects of authoritarianism.

Initially, I had planned to focus on authoritarianism in Central Asia in its entirety, but further reading on the issue has revealed the fact that important relative differences exist among the Central Asian States when it comes to the governments' treatment of opposition, respect for civil and political rights, civil society development and tolerance towards minorities. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a full and detailed examination of the status of democratic reform in each country in the region. Thus, I have opted for choosing only one country and focusing on it.

In this study I will examine the several aspects of political regime in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. I have chosen Uzbekistan because there are several factors which reinforces the importance of Uzbekistan in the region. Although Kazakhstan is the largest of the Central Asian states in terms of landmass, Uzbekistan has the largest population among the Central Asian states. Uzbekistan is located at the center of Central Asia and it is the only country that shares borders with each of other Central Asian states. Thus, the developments in this country have the capacity to affect developments in the other Central Asian states. Uzbekistan does not share borders with powerful states that are interested in the region such as China and Russia and thus, compared to such states as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, it is less vulnerable to the pressures of these states.

As a result of sharing no borders with Russia and having relatively a smaller Russian minority compared to states like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan has felt more confident in distancing itself from its previous 'big brother'. Compared to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan has smaller quantities of oil and gas, but still, it has enough energy resources not to be dependent on other countries. All these factors justify an interest in the affairs in this country.

The main argument of this study is that the incumbent leadership in Uzbekistan has failed to take steps to establish democracy in the country in post-Soviet period. The changes that were introduced proved to be only decorative, they lacked substance. I will mainly argue that the president of the country, Islam Karimov, has aimed at consolidating his own authority rather than establishing democracy and that his attempts to realize this aim resulted in the silencing of the opposition forces and curtailment of civil and political rights of the citizens.

This study is composed of seven chapters. After the introduction, the second chapter defines the concepts of democracy and authoritarianism as they are used in this study and provides the criteria to determine if a regime is democratic or

authoritarian. While doing these, this chapter at the same time draws a framework of analysis of this thesis because the definitions of democracy and authoritarianism to be used in this study will determine which aspects of the political life in Uzbekistan should be examined in order to decide whether this country is democratic or not. The third chapter provides a brief historical background and argues that Uzbekistan has been exposed to undemocratic forms of governance in the pre-Tsarist, Tsarist and Soviet periods.

Chapters Four and Five apply the theoretical framework developed in the second chapter to Uzbekistan and discuss that to a large extent Uzbekistan had failed to satisfy the criteria introduced in second chapter for democratic governance. Chapter Four focuses on the strengthening of executive branch in Uzbekistan at the expense of legislative and judiciary. This chapter also illustrates Karimov's attempts to control the governments at the regional and *mahalla* (neighborhood) levels. Chapter Five elaborates on Karimov government's highly intolerant attitude toward the alternative political voices in the country including secular and religious opposition, independent civil society organizations that are regarded undesirable by the regime, independent media channels and minorities living in the country.

Chapter Six deals with the factors that proved to be stumbling blocks to democratization and helped Karimov to strengthen his authoritarian rule in the country. It also tries to account for the relative ease that Karimov enjoyed when he was suppressing the opposition forces in the country.

The sources utilized in this thesis are mainly books and articles dealing with the subject. Moreover, internet archives of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, Eurasianet and Transitions Online have been frequently used while preparing this study. Human rights reports of U.S. Department of State, Freedom House, Amnesty International and Human Rights/Helsinki Watch have also proved to be important sources when discussing the government's violation of civil and political rights.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this study, the statements like "The Karimov regime does not rule the country in a democratic way", "Islam Karimov has aimed at consolidating his own authority rather than establishing democracy and that his attempts to realize this aim resulted in the establishment of an authoritarian regime in Uzbekistan" will appear quite frequently. Thus, it is indispensable that before we focus on the characteristics of the regime in Uzbekistan, we should have a clear understanding of the concepts 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism'. Therefore, in this chapter, the first step is to clarify the meanings of these concepts as they are used in this study. As will be seen, as the concepts of democracy and authoritarianism are defined, the framework of analysis for this thesis will also be drawn. Because, the definitions of democracy and democratization that will be used in this study will determine my main points of focus.

2. 1. The Concept of Democracy

The word democracy comes from the Greek and literally means rule by people. It is sometimes argued that democratic government was born in the city-states of ancient Greece and that we inherited democratic ideals from that time. In fact, however, this assertion can be refuted easily.[1] The Greeks gave us the word but did not provide us with a model. The assumptions and practices of the Greeks were quite different from those of modern democrats. The Greeks had little or no idea of

[1] Antony H. Birch, *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 45

the rights of the individual, an idea highly associated with the modern concept of democracy. Greeks granted the right of political participation to only a small minority of the adult inhabitants of the city. Those granted this right were able to take political decisions by direct vote on issues, which is very different from the system of representative government that has developed in the west in the past two centuries.

At first, the definition 'rule by people' seems unambiguous but further thinking on it provokes many questions which are summarized by Held as follows:

- Who are to be considered 'the people'?
- What kind of participation is envisaged for them?
- What kinds of conditions are assumed to be conducive to participation?
- How broadly or narrowly is the scope of rule to be constructed?
- If 'rule' is to cover 'the political' what is meant by this? Does it cover: (a) law or order? (b) relations between states? (c) the economy? (d) the domestic or private sphere?
- must the rules of 'the people' be obeyed? What is the place of obligation and dissent?[2]

Thus, even a cursory examination reveals the fact that it is impossible to arrive at a clear and precise meaning of democracy by simply focusing on the literal meaning of the term. The definition 'rule by the people' involves complex problems that cannot be solved easily. Thus, two alternatives are left. As the first alternative, I can put forward my democratic ideals, formulate a concept of democracy and utilize it in this study. As a second alternative, I can examine how the different scholars writing on the issue have defined and used the term democracy and choose among their formulations. This second alternative will be the path followed in this study.

[2] David Held, *Models of Democracy* (*Stanford*: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.2

2. 2. The Characteristics of Democratic Governance

In the debates over the definition of democracy two competing camps can be identified.[3] On the one hand, there are scholars who tend to define democracy in narrow, minimalist or procedural terms. On the other hand, there are the ones who have favored broad, maximalist or performance-based conceptualizations of democracy. Whereas narrow definitions of democracy focus on the democratic procedures such as elections, those favoring broad or performance-based definitions focus on substantive policies or other outcomes that might be viewed as democratic. Those defend the broad conceptualization of democracy argue that almost all normatively desirable aspects of political life - - and sometimes even of social an economic life - - should be included as definitional aspects of democracy: representation, equality, participation, dignity, rationality, security, freedom and so on.[4] For instance, Michael Saward included the rights such as the right to an adequate education, the right to adequate health care, income that would provide the basic requirements of a civilized lifestyle in his conceptualization of democracy.[5]

In this study, I will employ the minimalist definition of democracy. Minimalist in the sense that I do not include in my definition of democracy any social or economic aspects of society. But, this does not mean that I regard the narrow or procedural definition of democracy as the best. The term 'democracy' does not have a meaning that is universally applicable and objective. Democracy is a term which is heavily associated with value judgments. As Giovanni Sartori argued, democracy is a "deontological" concept:

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[3] David Collier and Steven Levitsky, " Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research", *World Politics*, Vol. 49 (April 1997), p. 433; Laurance Whitehand, *Democratisation: Theory and Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 10-14; Georg Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratisation: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 9-10

[4] Adam Przewoski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 14

[5] Michael Saward, *The Terms of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp.94-101

> What democracy is cannot be separated from what democracy should be. A democracy exists only as far as its ideals and values bring it into being. No doubt any political system is sustained by imperatives and value goals, but, perhaps democracy needs them more than any other. For in a democracy the tension between fact and value reaches the highest point, since no other ideal is further from the reality in which it has to operate.[6]

Then, whatever definition employed in this study will be charged with value judgments and thus vulnerable to contest. But, in order to draw the framework of this analysis, I need a definition of democracy. Despite being contestable, procedural definition of democracy seems to be an appropriate starting point for analysis. It is more practical for the purposes of this study, because what I need is a precise concept that provides a clear identification of what democracy is. To say it in another way, I need a tool with which I can identify democracy by its core futures. Moreover, for Uzbekistan the first step is satisfying the criteria specified in procedural definition. These criteria are the minimum criteria. Going beyond satisfying these minimum criteria is a further step. Finally, as already argued, broad definitions of democracy include a very wide range of rights and thus examining whether Uzbekistan meets the criteria specified in the broad definitions of democracy goes beyond the scope of a master thesis. Due to these reasons, it is more helpful to employ a procedural definition of democracy in this study.

Let me now focus on the narrow, minimalist or procedural definition of democracy. The narrow definition of democracy can be traced back to Joseph Schumpeter. In his classic book, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Schumper focuses on the deficiencies of what he termed the "classical theory of democracy", which defined democracy in terms of "the will of the people" and "the common good". First, he argues that there is no such thing as a uniquely determined common good that all people could agree on or be made to agree on by the force of rational argument. The common good means different things to different individuals. Our

[6] Geovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962), p. 4

conceptions of what life and society can bring about differences in opinion, which cannot be bridged by compromise in some cases.[7]

Making these criticisms against what he terms as the classical doctrine of democracy, he puts forward another theory of democracy. The "democratic method" he wrote, "is that institutional arrangements for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for people's vote".[8] With this definition, he assumes that in a democracy the role of the people is to produce a government or an intermediate body which in turn would produce a national executive or a government.

In this way, Schumpeter formulated a narrow concept of democracy. According to him, democracy was simply a political method, a mechanism for choosing political leadership. The citizens are given a choice among rival political parties who compete for their votes. Between elections the decisions are taken by politicians. At the next election, citizens can replace their elected officials.

Robert Dahl's contribution to narrow or procedural conceptualization of democracy is quite critical because he has offered the most generally accepted listing of what he terms the "procedural minimal" conditions that must be present for modern political democracy (or as he puts it, polyarchy) to exist.[9] He regarded the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens as a key characteristic of democracy. [10] In order to assure such responsiveness citizens must have opportunities to (1) formulate their preferences, (2) signify their

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[7] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 250-252

[8] Ibid. p. 260

[9] Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, " What Democracy Is...and Is Not", in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press), p. 45

[10] Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 1

preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective action, and (3) have their preferences weighed equally in the conduct of government.[11] Dahl continues to argue that the following institutions can bring about these opportunities:

1. Elected officials: Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.
2. Free and fair elections: Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
3. Inclusive suffrage: All adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.
4. Right to run for office: All adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government, although age limits can be higher for holding office than for the suffrage.
5. Freedom of expression: Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, and the prevailing ideology.
6. Alternative information: Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. What is more, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by laws.
7. Association Autonomy: To achieve their various rights, citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations and organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.[12]

Dahl himself mentioned that these guarantees constitute the two different dimensions of democracy: competition and political participation. [13] Some scholars writing after him like Samuel Huntington and George Sorensen added a further dimension to his two dimensional conceptualization of democracy: civil and

[11] Ibid. p. 2

[12] Robert A. Dahl, " From Democracy and Its Critics" in Philip Green (ed.), *Democracy: Key Concepts in Critical Theory* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), p. 64

[13] Ibid. p. 4

political liberties.[14] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset together with Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl went a step further. These writers added an "implicit" dimension to the conceptualization formulated by Huntington and Sorensen: multiple channels that that exist for representation of citizen interest beyond the formal political framework of parties, parliaments and elections, that is to explain, civil society and accountability.[15] Taking into consideration the contribution of these latter writers, in this study political democracy will be viewed as a system that meets the following criteria:

- Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power through regular, free, and fair elections that exclude use of force
- A highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, such that no major (adult) social group is prevented from exercising the rights of citizenship
- A level of political and civil liberties-- freedom of thought and expression, freedom of religion, freedom of information, freedom of assembly and demonstration, freedom to form and join organizations, freedom from terror and unjustified imprisonment - - secured through political equality under a rule of law, sufficient to ensure that citizens can develop and advocate their views and interests and contest policies and offices vigorously and autonomously.
- Also implicit in this definition are the notions that rulers will be held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens and their representatives and that multiple channels exist for representation of citizen interest beyond the formal political framework of parties, parliaments, and elections. [16]

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[14] Georg Sorensen, op. Cit., p.12, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 7

[15] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1990), p. 7 and Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, op. Cit. pp. 43, 44

[16] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset. op. cit., pp. 6, 7

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So this is the definition that will be employed in this study. Rather than calling it "minimalist definition of democracy", it may be more appropriate to refer to it as "expanded minimalist definition of democracy". Because, in addition to the dimensions included in Schumpeter's and Dahl's minimalist definitions of democracy, the definition employed in this study includes a wide range of civil and political rights guaranteed under rule of law, civil society and accountability. In the following session, I want to make some points related to above cited criteria more clear.

To begin with the criterion of competition, it is necessary to mention that competition is dependent on the existence of the following three conditions: "ex-ante uncertainty", "ex-post irreversibility" and "repeatability". [17] Ex-ante uncertainty means that there is some probability that at least one member of the incumbent coalition will lose in elections. Here, uncertainty is not the same as unpredictability: before the elections predictions on the possible outcome of the coming elections can be made. All that is necessary for outcomes to be uncertain is that it should be possible that the ruling party could lose.[18] "Ex-post irreversibility means the assurance that whoever were to win the elections, he or she will be allowed to assume office. The outcomes of elections must be irreversible under democracy even if the opposition wins.[19] The final feature of competition is that elections must be repeated. Whoever wins the elections would not use his/her office to make it impossible for the competing political forces to win next time. All political outcomes must be temporary: losers do not give up their right to compete in the future, to influence legislation, or to seek recourse to the courts. Unless the losers are given the political guarantees that their ability to contest future elections will be protected, the mere fact that elections have been held does not suffice to

[17] Adam Przewoski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, op. Cit., p. 16

[18] Ibid. p. 17

[19] Ibid.

qualify the regime as democratic. Only if the losers are allowed to compete, win and assume office, the regime is democratic.[20]

The second criterion, political participation, can be defined as participation in the process by which political leaders are elected and/or government policies are shaped and implemented.[21] The main forms of political participation can be listed as follows:

- Voting in local and national elections;
- Voting in referendums;
- Campaigning in the elections;
- Active membership of a political party;
- Active membership of a pressure group;
- Taking part in political demonstrations, industrial strikes with political objectives, rent strikes in public housing, and similar activities aimed at changing public policies;
- Membership of consumers' councils for publicly owned industries;
- Various forms of community action, such as those concerned with housing or environmental issues in the locality.[22]

The existence of channels for public participation in the political process is likely to increase the propensity for citizens to comply voluntarily with governmental rules and orders.[23] If people have had the opportunity to play a role in the selection of public officials, to communicate their views on public issues, and to influence decision makers, they are more likely to accept that governmental decisions are legitimate, even if these decisions are disliked.

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[20] Ibid. p. 18

[21] Antony H. Birch, op. cit., p. 80

[22] Ibid., p. 81

[23] Ibid., p. 82

Before moving to the issue of civil and political rights, it is necessary to emphasize that, in this study, with "political participation"; I mean the "voluntary political participation". Voluntary and compulsory participation can each be found in both authoritarian and democratic regimes. However, the relative proportions of these types of participation differ dramatically in authoritarian and democratic systems and help explain the differences between the two.[24] In the past, most of the communist regimes systematically excluded most kinds of voluntary participation- particularly competitive elections for high government office and the freedom to form independent associations- and introduced new forms of compulsory mass participation directed from above. Compulsory participation reached its apex in the period of full-fledged totalitarianism. Thus, compulsory participation is heavily associated with undemocratic regimes, whereas voluntary participation is mostly attributed to democratic regimes.

Without rights to basic liberties, democracy cannot be expected to function. Some writers tended to exclude political and civil rights from their studies of democratization due to the difficulty of finding any reliable empirical indicator for the degree of these rights but even these writers acknowledged that they constitute an essential aspect of democracy.[25] At the heart of the democracy lies the right of all citizens to have a voice in public affairs and exercise control over government, on equal terms with other citizens.[26] In order to make this right effective; on the one hand, there is the need for some political institutions, such as competitive, inclusive and fair elections, as I have argued before. On the other hand, exercise of this right is dependent on the guarantee of those human rights that we call civil and political which are inscribed in such conventions as the International Covenant on Civil and

[24] Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 12

[25] Tatu Vanhanen, *Prospects for Democracy: A Study of 172 Countries* (Routledge: London and New York, 1997), p. 37

[26] Janusz Symonides, *Human Rights: New Dimensions and Challenges* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998), p. 23

Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. By focusing on freedom of information, freedom of expression and freedom of association, I will try to make this issue more clear in the following paragraphs.

The requirements of freedom of information are essential in terms of citizen awareness of issues that might be placed on the agenda for collective decision.[27] The right of agenda setting is ineffective without meaningful information. Information and knowledge are required to be an equal participant in agenda setting. In a populous and complex society, information concerning current affairs and political decision-making will depend on dissemination of channels of mass communication.[28] Increased access to official information leads to greater public trust in the government and the democratic system.[29]

The main argument for the freedom of expression as a necessary condition of democracy is that it may enable citizens to have access to the basic information and arguments that can be utilized in the process of preference formation.[30] As already argued, in democracies, people's preferences are respected. But to make a preference, one should have knowledge of two or more possible ways of resolving a public problem or an issue. To have knowledge of two or more ways of resolving issues, different sources of information must be allowed to operate and people must be free to express their views on certain issues and persuade others. By this reasoning, people cannot really have preferences unless there is a considerable measure of freedom of expression.

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[27] Michael Saward, op. cit., p. 63

[28] James L. Hyland, *The Democratic Theory: The Philosophical Foundations* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 59

[29] Alexandru Grigorescu, " Freedom of Information Laws", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 50, No. 2, (March/April 2003), p. 34

[30] Michael Saward, op. cit., p. 89

If the democratic defense of a guaranteed right to freedom of expression relies primarily on its capacity to enable the formation preferences, the defense of freedom of association revolves around the importance of representing preferences within decision-making structures.[31] If it is important to achieve an accurate representation of people's preferences, then it is critical that freedom of association be enshrined so that people sharing the same aims come together, express their views and cooperate with each other in an attempt to shape laws and policies.

While introducing the criteria for democracy, it has been stated that political and civil liberties should be guaranteed under rule of law. The basic meaning of concept of rule of law is that the laws, not the will of individual persons or groups should rule and that no one, including organs of state should stand above law.[32] To ensure that those who make and administer the laws do not use their positions for their own advantages, laws must be distinguished from other types of rules and commands that have coercive force. Furthermore, laws must be clear, general, consistent with one another and constant over time.[33]

The importance of rule of law for democracy arises from three points.[34] First, as already argued, the rule of law states that the government and its officeholders, even the chief executive, are not above the law. If no one is the above law, then officeholders cannot abuse their immunity. They cannot determine the outcomes of their own legal disputes and they cannot favor their family and friends. Second, the rule of law moderates the passion for revenge. Legal process takes the prosecution of criminal offences out of the hands of aggrieved and places it in the hands of a professional prosecutor representing "the people". In this way, the cycle of private revenge is blocked. Third, the rule of law provides the kind of

[31] Ibid., p. 93

[32] Stephen L. Esquit, " Toward a Democratic Rule of Law", *Political Theory*, Vol. 27 No. 3, June 1999, p. 335

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., p. 342

predictability in human affairs that citizens need to carry out their individual life plans. This is a necessary condition for individual liberty, if liberty includes the freedom to formulate and carry out a rational plan of life. The rule of law allows individuals to form certain reasonable expectations about how others would behave and how their actions will be received. They can know what the law allows them to do and what is required of others.

While introducing the criteria for democracy, it has been stated that the notion of accountability is implicit in the definition of democracy employed in this study. Concern with public accountability originated in England in the seventeenth century, with the commercial classes' insistence that the king account for how their accumulated surpluses were spent.[35] The concept was redefined by the modern liberal theory and came to embody three related aspects: accountability with regard to public funds, responsibility with regard to the use of governmental power by politicians and civil servants and the executive's responsiveness with regard to anticipating public needs and sensibilities.[36] Thus, accountability tended to be defined in terms of responsibility of the governments and public officials to the citizens and accounting for actions and policies.

The accountability mechanisms limit the abuse of power and provide a system of periodic punishment for undesirable government policies and rewards for the desirable ones.[37] Persistent corruption, the absence of justice and the exclusion of the opinions of the people may result in a loss of confidence in the state. This, in turn, results in loss of state legitimacy. If this occurs, citizens may transfer their loyalty from state to other channels. This situation puts state in danger. Thus, the

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[35] Joy Marie Moncrieffe, "Reconceptualizing Political Accountability", *International Political Science Review* (1998), Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 389

[36] Ibid.

[37] Pranab Bardhan, "Democracy and Development: A Complex Relationship", in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker Cordon, *Democracy's Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 102

legitimacy of the state and the stability of the system are dependent on accountability to some extent.[38] Elections, separation of powers together with checks and balances between branches of government, political parties and civil society are instrumental in bringing about political accountability.

Civil society - - multiple channels that exist for representation of citizen interests beyond the formal political frameworks of parties, parliaments and elections - - is the last notion that I want to explain. Civil society consists of a number of organizations, both formal and informal: interest groups, cultural and religious organizations, issue-oriented movements, the mass media, research and educational institutions and so on.[39] What distinguishes civil society from political society is that civil society organizations are concerned with and act in the public realm without seeking to win control over state. It should be emphasized that civil society organizations are voluntarily formed and they are autonomous from the state By contrast, the purpose of groups in political society - - especially political parties - - is to win and exercise state power.[40] It should be emphasized that civil society is a voluntary formation and it is autonomous from the state. Only by being autonomous from the state and acting voluntarily, civil society can represent the interest of the citizens and contribute to democracy.

Civil society serves the development of democracy in many ways. First, civil society can enhance the representativeness of democracy by providing additional channels for the expression and pursuit of a wide variety of interests.[41] Second, it can monitor and restrain the arbitrary action of rulers, thus it increases accountability. Third, it can contribute to forming better citizens who are more

[38] Joy Marie Moncrieffe, op. cit., p. 395

[39] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset, op. cit,. p.27

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., p. 28

aware of the preferences of others and more self-confident in their actions.[42] Fourth, civil society provides an immediate layer of governance between the individual and the state that is capable of resolving conflicts and controlling the behavior of citizens without public coercion.[43] The process of participating within organizations fosters tolerance, trust, moderation and accommodation that facilitate the peaceful solution of conflicts. Fifth, through organizational practice civil society organizations train new leaders who may sometimes cross over into political arena.[44] Finally, by enhancing accountability, responsiveness and participation, civil society can strengthen state legitimacy.[45]

So, I have provided the criteria to determine if a regime is democratic. In the following chapters I will examine several aspects of political life in Uzbekistan and try to show that the post-Soviet regime in Uzbekistan fails to satisfy the criteria introduced in this chapter.

2. 3. The Characteristics of Authoritarianism

In this study, the term 'authoritarianism' will be used as a synonym for 'non-democratic governance'. In the same line, the term 'authoritarian regime' will be used as a synonym for 'non-democratic regime'. Thus, authoritarian regimes are the regimes that do not meet the criteria for democratic governance. These regimes suppress competition and participation.[46] They also violate or limit freedom of thought and expression, freedom of religion, freedom of information, freedom of assembly and demonstration, freedom to form and join organizations, freedom from

[42] Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, op. cit., p. 44

[43] Ibid.

[44] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset, op. cit., p. 28

[45] Ibid., p. 29

[46] Samuel P. Huntington, " How Countries Democratize", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 4 (Winter, 1991-1992), P. 581

terror and unjustified imprisonment.[47] Moreover, authoritarian regimes limit the autonomy of civil society organizations. [48] Authoritarianism is based on the centralized executive control and domination.[49]

The main purpose of the authoritarian regimes is to establish political elite's domination over society by weakening and destroying autonomous individual and collective behavior. Thus, authoritarian regimes aim at enhancing the power of authorities at the expense of autonomy of citizens.[50]

Samuel Huntington argued that non-democratic or authoritarian regimes have taken a variety of forms like monarchies, aristocracies, one-party systems, military regimes and personal dictatorships.[51] Paul Broker used a similar terminology with Huntington to categorize modern undemocratic regimes. He argued that there are three different types of modern democratic regimes: the party type of non-democratic regime, the military type of non-democratic regime and the personalist type of non- democratic regime.[52]

In one-party systems, the ruling party effectively monopolizes the power, access to power is through the party organization and the party legitimates its rule through ideology.[53] The communist party dictatorship that emerged from the October 1917 revolution in Russia is a prime example of one-party systems or party

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[47] Amos Perlmutter, *Modern Authoritarianism: A Comparative Institutional Analysis* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 8

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., p. 24

[50] Ibid., p. 25

[51] Samuel P. Huntington, " How Countries Democratize", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 4 (Winter, 1991-1992), p. 580

[52] Paul Broker, *Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 36-52

[53] Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 580

type of non-democratic regimes.[54] In the Soviet Union, Marxist-Leninist ideology and the domination of Communist Party was imposed over the society. Fascist party dictatorships which emerged during the 1920s-1930s –Mussolini's Fascist regime and Hitler's Nazi regime- were other examples of one-party systems. [55] In these systems, the party leader imposed the nationalist/racist ideology over state and society. The Second World War led to the destruction of the fascist regimes and to a huge expansion of communist party dictatorships. By the end of 1940's, communist party dictatorships were established throughout Eastern Europe and in China and North Korea and China. [56]

The military regimes are created by coup d'etats replacing democratic and civilian governments. Military exercises power on an institutional basis, with the military leaders either governing as a junta or circulating the top governmental positions among the top generals. Military regimes were observed in Latin America, Greece, Turkey, Pakistan and South Korea. Military regimes tend to be of shorter duration than one-party systems and personal dictatorships.[57] Military regimes generally have limited and short-term political goals. In most cases, the military regimes end when the military voluntary withdraw from power and relinquish power to civilians.

Personal dictatorship is a third type of non-democratic systems. The distinguishing characteristics of a personal dictatorship is that the individual leader is the source of authority and that power depends on closeness to or support from the leader. [58] All the important positions in the state are filled with the loyal

[54] Paul Broker, op. cit., p. 4

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Paul Broker, op. cit., p. 5

[58] Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit.,, p. 581

followers, relatives, friends, kinsmen and tribesman of the leader. The leader commands a web of informal networks and patron-client relationships.

Having defined authoritarianism and categorized authoritarian regimes, in the chapters following the historical background, I will try to show that rather than satisfying the criteria for a democratic regime, the post-Soviet regime in Uzbekistan has the characteristics of an authoritarian regime and that due to the attempts of Karimov, a personal dictatorship or a personalist type of non-democratic regime is established in the country in the post-Soviet period.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this section by I will provide a brief account of Uzbek political history and discuss that Uzbeks do not have a history of democratic participation in politics. Having been exposed to non-democratic forms of governance in pre-tsarist, tsarist and Soviet times, there is little - - if any - - experience that could constitute a democratic tradition in present day Uzbekistan.

3. 1. The Pre-Tsarist, the Tsarist and the Soviet Period

In the khanates that once comprised the present day Uzbekistan, people did not know what popular sovereignty meant. The khans claimed their throne and asserted legitimacy on the basis of lineage and maintenance of *sharia* (Islamic rule). The *ulema* (Islamic clergy) was also important in sanctifying khans and convincing the population to submit to their rule.[59]

The Tsarist and Soviet rule served to strengthen this pre-Russian authoritarian past of Uzbek society. Russian annexation of the lands including present-day Uzbekistan was realized through bloody wars and ruthless suppression of all kinds of autonomy and anti-Russian movements. Following annexation, the despotic form of government successfully barred participation of people in the

[59] Shahram Akbarzadeh, "The Political Shape of Central Asia", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 16 No.4(Fall 1997), p. 527

political process and pursued an intolerant policy toward any type of political dissent.[60]

When the Tsarist Empire came to an end with the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, an even more despotic regime, the totalitarian Soviet State replaced it. It was in Soviet era that the Uzbeks emerged as a nation. According to some writers, the name "Uzbek" can be traced back to the middle ages, but only as a tribal classification.[61] In 1924, the Soviet government in Moscow ordered the "national delimitation" of the vast territory of the Russian imperial province of Turkestan. In fact, prior to 1917, in Central Asia, identities were sub-national -based primarily on tribe, clan and family- or supra national -based on the Islamic community, or in the case of some intellectuals, on a pan Turkic homeland. In 1924, Moscow created new nationalities and assigned them the distinct formal languages, cultures and administrative structures.[62]

Thus, Uzbekistan was established by merging most of the territories of the three khanates of Turkistan: Bukhara, Khiva/Khorezm and Khokand.[63] Originally, Tajikistan was an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan, however in 1929, Tajikistan gained the status of a union republic. The delimitation left many Tajiks in Uzbekistan and a lesser numbers of Uzbeks in Tajikistan. There were accusations that Uzbek leaders had used their influence in Moscow to gain areas that should have become part of Tajikistan, including Samarkand and Bukhara. However, the whole responsibility did not lie with the ambitious Uzbek elite. Moscow also had a stake in locating the Tajik populated areas in Uzbekistan. By including different ethnic groups, like Tajiks, in the population of the republic of Uzbekistan, the

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[60] Hooman Peimani, *Failed Transition, Bleak Future?: War and Instability in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Westport: Prager Publishers, 2002), p.68

[61] Edward Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), pp. 31, 32

[62] John Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 47

Soviet government tried to undermine the potential chances for autonomy for the Uzbek Republic.

The national delimitation came as a response to the potential threat of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism in the Soviet empire.[64] Despite being artificial in the beginning, the boundaries of Uzbekistan and Uzbek nationality have acquired real meaning in the course of time due to Soviet policies.[65] For nearly seventy years, citizens of Uzbekistan have been carrying passports in which their identity was stamped as "Uzbek". They attended schools in Uzbek language. In political terms, Uzbek institutions provided a power base for the Uzbek elite. In this way, the idea of being Uzbek was rooted in the minds of people.

Having completed national delimitation the Soviet state engaged in some effort to consolidate new administrative system. The communist party was viewed as a key institution for realizing this aim. Following Soviet conquest of Central Asia, the recruitment of native elites in the party cadres became a priority. In response to the need to raise native recruitment, the policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativisation) was developed by the Soviet authorities. The main idea behind nativisation was that by drawing native cadres into the party, loyalty to other ideologies and Islam would be undermined.[66]

The late 1920's experienced the emergence of tensions between the native elite and the central authorities. Faizullah Khojaev, the head of the government of UzSSR, opposed the development of cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan. Some other

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[63] Donald S. Carlisle, "Soviet Uzbekistan: State and Nation in Historical Perspective" in Beatrice F. Manz (ed.), *Central Asia in Historical Perspective* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), p. 111

[64] Wiliam Fierman, " The Soviet Transformation", in William Fierman (ed.), *The Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), p. 17

[65] James Critchlov, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), p. 14

[66] Neil J. Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road* (Singapore: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), p.19

radical Soviet policies aimed at changing the traditions in the region, including emancipation of women, the assault on Islam and collectivization provoked further unease on the part of national elite of the UzSSR.[67] Having had consolidated power sufficiently, Stalin launched periodic purges of "bourgeois nationalists" in the party and the state apparatus in order to assure loyalty and conformity with Moscow's unpopular directive orders.[68] The purges resulted in the removal of the most prominent members of national elite, including Akmal Ikramov, the first secretary of the communist party, and Faizullah Khojaev, the head of the government, from the political scene. On the charges of aspiring to detach Uzbekistan form the Soviet Union and to make it a British protectorate, they were sentenced to death. The fates of Khojaev and Ikramov shocked the Uzbeks, since the names of these leaders had long been identical with Communist power in the republic.[69]

Following the purges, a younger generation with a technical rather than humanitarian education, which executed Stalin's every whim, replaced the previous native elite. In addition, Moscow also appointed several Russians in order to make up for the deficiency of educated personnel.[70] The key native figures of that period were Usman Yusupov (who in September 1937 succeeded Ikramov as the first secretary of the party) and Abdujabbar Abdurrakhmanov (who in 1938 became the head of government of UzSSR. They remained in these posts until they were transferred to Moscow in 1950.[71]

World War II brought a brief relief to Central Asia.[72] In an attempt to increase support for the war effort, Moscow eased its pressure on the republics and

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[67] Ibid.

[68] James Critchlov,op. cit., p. 13

[69] Ibid.

[70] Jonh Anderson, op. cit., p. 34

[71] Donald S. Carlisle, " Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan", in William Fierman, op. cit., p. 101

[72] James Critchlov, op. cit., p. 13

pursued a more tolerant policy toward Islam. As the war accelerated, millions of people from the European parts of the country migrated to Central Asia in order to escape German occupation. Factories, together with their personnel, moved to Central Asia. As a result of these developments, the native society was further disrupted and the foreign presence in the region was strengthened.[73]

Having experienced the Stalin's turbulent years, the difficulties of World War II and the policies aimed at eventual assimilation of the non-Russians into Soviet culture in the Khrushchev and the early Brezhnev periods, Uzbekistan entered into a relative era of stability in the latter years of Brezhnev.[74] Brezhnev years were marked by stagnation. He aimed at no social change as long as economic plan targets were met by the republics. In these years of relative peace, the First Secretary of Uzbek Communist party, Sharaf Rashidov, was given the liberty to manage the country as he wished, in return for his effectiveness in delivering high amounts of cotton to the center.[75] Under these circumstances, Uzbek elites, like the other elites of non-Russian republics, found a limited opportunity to reverse the Stalinist policies that distorted national history and culture.[76]

During Rashidov period (1959-1983), central aspects of Moscow's control of the republic faded. Uzbekistan continued to report successes, such as record cotton harvests, dramatic rises in Russian fluency among Uzbeks and successes in the fight against religion. However, in fact these achievements existed only on paper.[77] By promoting relatives, friends mostly coming from his own Jizzakh-

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[73] Ibid., p. 14

[74] ibid., p. 18

[75] Ibid., p. 20

[76] Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: Politics of Upheaval* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.14

[77] William Fierman, Political development in Uzbekistan: Democratization" in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 365

Samarkand region, forging alliances and bribing officials at various levels Rashidov succeeded in concealing the facts from the center.[78]

This style of governance of Uzbekistan came to an end in the mid-1980s when Moscow charged hundreds of top Uzbek officials of embezzlement and falsification of cotton harvest records.[79] Following Brezhnev's death in 1982, Soviet leadership engaged in efforts to reassert Moscow's control on Central Asia. Under Andropov, an extensive purge of Uzbek political establishment was launched. This purge, which was to last for five years (1983-89), aimed at breaking the local networks of power that had been built during the tenure of Rashidov.[80] The purge focused on role of Rashidov in fostering economic and political corruption. The condemnation of Rashidov and his style of governance constituted the central part of Moscow's attack on the Uzbek communist Party in the 1980s.[81]

At the height of the investigation in October 1983 Rashidov died of a hearth attack (or he committed suicide according to some allegations).[82] His sudden death paved the way for the appointment of Imanjan Usmankhojaev as the first secretary, since he was viewed as a person not connected to Rashidov.[83] However, within three years he was expelled from this position due to his ineffectiveness in fighting political corruption in Uzbekistan and replaced by Rafik Nishanov. However the tide of instability was not over. This time Nishanov's inability to calm down the interethnic clashes in the Ferghana Valley forced the Uzbek Communist Party to look for a new leader, who, it turned out, was Islam Karimov.[84]

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[78] John Anderson, op. cit., p. 36

[79] Roger D. Kangas, "Uzbekistan: Amir Temur Revisited" in Sally N. Cummings, *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 132

[80] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 24

[81] Ibid., p. 25

[82] John Anderson, op. cit., p. 56

[83] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 133

[84] Ibid.

Islam Karimov's rise to power and the policies he pursued thereafter have found wide coverage in the previous chapters. At this point, I would like to examine how the Soviet legacy in Central Asia bode ill for the post-Soviet democratization.

The Soviet administration continued the Tsarist practice of appointing all political elite and all officials without the involvement of the people living in the republic.[85] The symbolic function that the republican parliament and Soviet parliament played in the political life discredited parliament and elections in general as foundations on which a democratic political system could have been based.[86] In addition, both the Soviet government and republican governments pursued very harsh and intolerant policies towards all kinds of political opposition and thus they left a legacy of negative attitude toward opposition. By establishing a web of surveillance, the Soviet State tried to discover all sources of dissent and crush them immediately. In the atmosphere of terror, the police state created by the Soviet leaders fostered the fear towards the state and due to this fear people avoided criticizing the government. This situation started to change in perestroika period when the government showed more tolerance toward criticism. However, the repressive policies of the Karimov regime in the post-independence period once again reinforced the fear toward the state and it won't be an exaggeration to argue that there is not a big difference in the way that Uzbek citizens viewed the state in the Soviet period and in the post- Soviet period. To say it in another way, the Uzbek society still fears the state and thus avoids challenging it. As another obstacle for post-Soviet democratization, the Soviet single party system tried to block the formation of any kind of civil society by preventing the formation of interest groups representing and advocating the interests other than those described by the Soviet Communist Party.

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[85]Hooman Peimani, op. cit., p. 69

[86] Ibid.

Post-Soviet Uzbek politics remains dominated by the ruling elite who had served in government positions during the Soviet era. The bureaucratic machine that was developed during the Soviet era changed little in the post-Soviet period. The ruling elite which has gotten accustomed to undemocratic methods of governance in the Soviet period, showed little inclination to change their way of behaving and thinking in the post-independence period. This ruling elite has gained quite an important degree of wealth and influence in the Soviet period and continues to enjoy them in the post-Soviet period. Therefore, they have a stake to keep the political system as it is. Hence, they will try to block any kind of reform that can decrease their power and damage their interest.[87]

Legacy of the Soviet rule has some capacity to explain to some extent why Uzbekistan has chosen to follow an authoritarian path after independence. If there were some degree of democratic traditions and experience in democratic governance in the history of Uzbekistan, rather than viewing democratic institutions and practices as alien, Uzbek citizens would tend to understand the importance and necessity of them and spend much more effort to establish and maintain the key elements of democracy in their country.

3. 2. The Perestroika Period

Mikhail Gorbachev embarked on introducing economic and political reforms when he assumed power in March 1985. His reforms under the rubric of glasnost and perestroika arrived in some Soviet republics earlier than others and had affected some republics more profoundly than others. Uzbekistan was one of the republics that experienced both late arrival and limited impact of reforms. This situation was created by Gorbachev's negative attitude toward Islam and political purges that followed the exposure of the cotton-scandal in 1983. Gorbachev viewed Islam as a hindrance to both his reform initiatives and socioeconomic development of the society. Thus, while the other areas like Baltic republics were experiencing a

[87] International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan's Reform Program: Illusion or Reality* (*Asia Report No. 46)*, 18 February 2003, p. 27

sense of relief and more political openness, in Uzbekistan the Soviet government still maintained its repressive policies due to skepticism toward Islam. Moreover, after the revelation of cotton scandal, Moscow engaged in an effort to restore its control on the republic. This restrictive atmosphere limited the rise of informal groups and reform-oriented elites.[88]

However, this situation did not last long. Although Uzbekistan, like other Central Asian republics, lagged behind other republics in challenging the Soviet authority in the perestroika period, after 1989, the republican elite started to express their criticism towards center and demanded reform.[89] In a sense, the policies of Moscow paved the way for this situation.[90] In his attempts to acquire genuine legitimacy, Gorbachev tried to acquire the grassroots support in Uzbekistan. The masses had been encouraged to benefit from perestroika and glasnost by criticizing Uzbek officials and revealing their mistakes. Initially this policy gave the results that Moscow wanted. The elite of the republic was harshly criticized by the newspapers and many letters and telegrams were sent to the center reporting the mistakes of rulers at all levels.

However, this policy backfired when the Uzbek elite started to defend itself against Moscow's attempts to turn the masses against them. In cooperation with the cultural figures of the republic, that is to say together with writers, artists, scientists and scholars, national elites appealed to the national feelings of the people and argued that the purges were aimed at harming the pride and well-being of the whole nation not only the officials. Many articles appeared in the Uzbek media expressing resentment towards Moscow, arguing that much of the criticism of their country in Moscow newspapers were unjustified and was an insult to the whole society. There

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[88] Muhammad Islam, *Political Liberalisation in Post-Communist Central Asia: A Comparative Study,* Doctoral Dissertation, Louisiana State University, December 1999, p. 94

[89] Ibid.

[90] James Critchlow " Prelude to "Independence": How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment" in William Fierman, op. cit., pp. 147-151

was also an outcry against the term 'the Uzbek Affair', which was coined by Moscow officials and newspaper writers for a euphemism for corruption. As a result, the wounded feelings of Uzbeks brought about a national consensus of resistance to Moscow. The first USSR Congress of Peoples Deputies in the spring of 1989 proved to be a turning point for expressing this resistance. There, deputies of Uzbekistan voiced criticism toward Moscow by pointing out problems in the field of economy, environment and health.

Faced by this resistance and daunted by the experience of riots in Kazakhstan, which had followed First Secretary Kunaev's replacement by a Russian, Soviet authorities slowed down the purge and avoided appointing a Slav to the position of first secretary of Uzbek Communist Party.[91]

After the stormy days following the death of Rashidov, Uzbekistan started to breath in the atmosphere of perestroika. During the perestroika period, a number of new political groups emerged in Uzbekistan. In November 1988, a group of intellectuals founded Birlik (Unity), the first significant movement of opposition to the Communist Party of Uzbekistan.[92] One of the Birlik's main aims was to improve the position of Uzbek language. Birlik's program was also concerned with social, economic, ecological and health problems brought by Uzbekistan's role as a producer of raw materials, especially cotton.[93] Furthermore, Birlik's agenda has included human right issues and political dimensions. Birlik leaders underlined the necessity of making 'all power to the soviets' a reality and called for genuine Uzbek sovereignty within USSR.[94] Rejecting ethnic exclusivity, the charter of Birlik described membership as open to all Uzbek citizens.

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[91] Ibid., p. 151

[92] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 26

[93] William Fierman, op. cit., p. 367

[94] John Anderson, op. cit., p.66

At this point it is necessary to highlight the then ability of the incumbent political figures to adapt to the changing circumstances and borrow the agenda of the opposition movements that appeared during perestroika period. In a short time, the republican leadership seized the opposition's slogans and agenda regarding sovereignty, independence, national renaissance and rehabilitation of important figures in Uzbek history.[95] As will be seen later, as a result of this rapid adoption of the agenda of the opposition, Karimov strengthened his appeal in the eyes of the people. The opposition groups could not fight Karimov's tactics effectively. As compared to the opposition, Karimov had more opportunities to put his rhetoric into practice. With the effective control over media and with his connections to the mass of the population through the structures of power inherited from the Communist Party apparatus, Karimov had an important advantage over the opposition groups which were, to a large extent, led by a city based intelligentsia with only limited links to, or support from, the countryside. [96]This was not the only disadvantage of the opposition forces. They had to face a government that did not have a habit of dealing with opposition in a peaceful way; it viewed the smashing of opposition as the only policy option. Moreover, the public viewed the opposition forces with suspicion. Although the Communist Party of Uzbekistan has changed its name and departed from the old communist rhetoric in independence period, people still tended to see it as sign of continuity in an age of chaos. To the contrary, the opposition groups were

[95] Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 167

[96] Ronald Dannreuther, " Creating New States in Central Asia", *Adelphi Paper* (March 1994), p. 13

seen as threats to the fragile order preserved by Karimov. As result the views of opposition compared to that of the government seemed unattainable.[97]

[97] Shirin Akiner, "Social and Political Order" in Touraj Atabaki and John O'Kane (eds.), *Post- Soviet Central Asia* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), p.20

CHAPTER 4

CONCENTRATION OF POWER IN THE HANDS OF ISLAM KARIMOV

In this chapter, I will be examining how Karimov established his authority and the national and local levels. Moreover, I will also focus on Karimov's attempt to prolong his rule. Lastly, I will examine whether the legislative and the judiciary were able to check and balance executive authority effectively.

4. 1. Islam Karimov's Rise to the Presidency and the Executive

Islam Abdughanievich Karimov was born on 30 January 1938 in Samarkand. He attended the Central Asian Polytechnical Institute and graduated as a mechanical engineer. Afterwards, he attended Tashkent Institute of Economy and received a doctorate in economics. Having completed his education, he worked first at Tashkent Farm Machinery Plant. In 1966, Karimov started to work in the Uzbek SSR's Office of State Planning Agency (Gosplan). He continued to work for this office for seventeen years, becoming a vice-chairman of the agency in the early 1980's.[98]

Meanwhile, the developments at Uzbek political life were setting the scene for Karimov's future political carrier. After the sudden death of Sharaf Rashidov, Imanjan Usmankhojoev was appointed as the first secretary of Uzbek Communist Party. Usmankhojoev's rise to the position of first secretary paved the way for

[98] Resul Yalçın, op. cit., pp. 147, 148

Karimov's promotion to a position of political importance.[99] Having won the favor of Usmankhocaev, in 1983, Karimov was appointed Minister of Finance and in 1986, he became Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers and simultaneously Chairman of the State Planning Committee.

However, soon Usmankhojaev was ousted on the basis of the allegations that he was ineffective in fighting against corruption and Rafik Nishanov replaced him. Usmankhojaev's removal from office was not good news for Karimov because it seems that Nishanov did not favor Karimov. Nishanov ousted Karimov from office and sent him to the distant terrain of Kaska-Darya Oblast to serve as the Oblast Secretary of Kashkadaria. However, this did not prove to be fatal blow to the political carrier for Karimov. Fortunately for Karimov, Nishanov's inability to address the interethnic tensions in the Fergana Valley culminated in latter's removal from office and forced Uzbek Communist Party to look for a new leader.

Without much justification for its action, on 23 July 1989, the Central Committee of the Communist Part of Uzbekistan elected Islam Karimov First Secretary. Karimov's rise to the position of the party first secretary was unexpected.[100] Before 1986, he had never been a member of the party bureau nor had he held a position in the Central Secretariat, the normal personnel pool from which the previous appointees came.

Karimov's rise to this important position was unexpected but it was not without reason. The leading members of Uzbek elite of that period, including Skukhrullah Mirsaidov and Ismail Jurabekov, were of the opinion that the government in Moscow would not approve their candidacies, as they were seen as part of the old apparatus.[101] Under these conditions, they looked for an alternative

[99]Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 133

[100] Donald S. Carlisle, "Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbours" in Yacoov Ro'i (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 79

[101] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 133

leader that could be easily controlled by them. They supported Karimov because they believed that they could control Karimov and impose their own policies and wishes on him once he is in power.[102]

However, to the consternation of Mirsaidov and his supporters, things did not work in the way they wished. Once in power, Karimov engaged in a power struggle with them to consolidate his power. It can be argued that the August 1991 coup attempt against Gorbachev helped Karimov in this struggle. The failure of the coup benefited Karimov and weakened Mirsaidov who had aligned himself with the anti-Gorbachev coup.[103] Karimov had been on a visit on a visit in India just before the crisis broke out. Having immediately returned home, Karimov found that emergency measures were imposed in Tashkent by Mirsaidov and his allies who most probably hoped to profit from these measures and to replace Karimov when the opportunity arose.[104] After a brief period of hesitation, Karimov expressed his opposition to the coup attempt and anxious not to let his opponents seize the initiative, he declared Uzbekistan's independence on 31 August 1991. [105] As a result of his decisions to condemn the coup and to declare the independence of Uzbekistan, Karimov improved his position. To their consternation, Mirsaidov and his allies weakened their position by supporting the coup attempt.

It has been argued that post-coup Uzbek politics is marked by a "thaw" during which the country prepared for its first presidential elections.[106] The most important element of the thaw was that Karimov allowed a presidential race in

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[102] Donald S. Carlisle, op. cit., p. 79

[103] Ibid., p. 81

[104] Ibid., p. 82

[105] Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 53

[106] William Fierman, "Political development in Uzbekistan: Democratization" in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 378

which he permitted Muhammad Salih (Chairman of the Erk) to call for support. Moreover, other political forces such as Birlik and Islamic Renaissance Party were not persecuted as they had been in the previous months. It can be argued that Karimov's relatively tolerant policy towards the opposition in the immediate independence period had something to do with the fact that he was not very popular among the Uzbek elite and that he had felt threatened by the powerful position of prominent figures like Mirsaidov. It is probable that Karimov pursued a more tolerant policy towards opposition at the first stages of the independence in order to both gain the support of opposition forces in his power struggle against Mirsaidov and to increase his legitimacy in the eyes of Uzbek citizens. As will be seen, as he consolidated his power, he opted for pursuing a less tolerant policy towards the opposition.

The fact that Karimov pursued a relatively tolerant policy in the immediate post-coup period did not mean that he was fully committed to democratic reform and would let serious challenge to his position.[107] A closer examination of deadlines for registration reveals the fact that Karimov tried to hinder opposition groups by arranging election deadlines.[108] For example, the rule mandating that non-party organizations had to submit a list of signatures to the Central Election Commission by December 3 was not publicized until November 26, thus the groups other than registered political parties were given a quite limited time for gathering the necessary signatures.[109]

As the officially registered parties were not subject to such regulations, it was critical to acquire a registration from the authorities. Unlike Erk, which received official registration in September 1991, Birlik could not gain registration as a political party. After the Birlik *Popular Movement* received registration as a popular movement on November 12, 1991, Birlik *Party* applied for registration. To

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., p. 379

the disappointment of Birlik Party, it was denied registration on the grounds that the parties could not be registered with the same name as popular movements.

Having been denied registration as a political party, Birlik had to gather 60,000 signatures in order to gain the right to nominate a presidential candidate. However, as already noted the time was very limited and except for weekend vacation, Birlik had only one day to gather such a big amount of signatures. Although the Birlik supporters asserted to have gathered more than minimum, 63,000, the authorities rejected 25,000 of the signatures. As a result, the movement was not allowed to nominate Abdurrahim Polatov as a candidate for the election. Thus, while the smaller and less powerful Erk party was allowed to participate in the elections, the more powerful Birlik Party, which would pose a real challenge to Karimov if it was not allowed to participate in the elections, was blocked through the manipulation of election rules.

On December 29, 1991, the country's independence was endorsed in a popular referendum by more than 98 per cent of the electorate. In a parallel vote, Karimov won 86 per cent of the vote against his sole opponent, Muhammad Salih, who won the 12.3 per cent.[110] Karimov's victory was discredited by the fact that the media coverage of the electoral campaign was heavily in favour of him and that the two parties with the largest popular followings, the Birlik movement and the Islamic Renaissance Party, were prevented by the authorities from nominating candidates.[111]

The attempts of Karimov to silence political opposition will be examined in detail in the next chapter. Therefore, at this point I will cease examining Karimov's attitude toward opposition forces and shift my attention to Karimov's efforts to establish his authority at the level of regions and mahallas.

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[110] Giampaolo R. Capisani, *The Handbook of Central Asia: A Comprehensive Survey of the New Republics* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), p. 82

[111] James Critchlow, "Nationalism and Islamic Resurgence in Uzbekistan" in Hafeez Malik, *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 239

Since January 1992, the authority in the 12 regions (viloyat), 166 districts (tuman) and 108 cities (shahar), and in the 15 districts and 12 cities of the Republic of Karakalpakistan, has been vested in the governors (*hakim*).[112] The city of Tashkent has its own hakim. The critical point in this system of governance is that the hakims at the regional and Tashkent city level are appointed directly by the president and can be replaced at Karimov's discretion. Similarly, hakims at the regional level appoint and dismiss hakims at the district and city levels. In that way a strong degree of personal loyalty is engendered within the system.[113] It has been argued that Karimov has preferred to place loyal subordinates in strategic points like Samarkand, Fergana Valley and Tashkent.[114] Placing loyal governors in strategic positions is still not enough for Karimov. He also regularly rotates hakims, perhaps to give them a variety of experiences, or perhaps to prevent them from building their own power bases and eventually challenging the president.[115]

The president's attempts to strengthen his authoritarian rule can also be observed at the mahalla level. The Karimov regime has revived mahalla (neighborhood) system, which was traditionally the basic unit of local organization, by giving the mahalla the status of 'organs of government' in the constitution.[116] Mahallas have been created in towns and cities. The chairman of mahalla, aksakal, is elected by popular vote and his/her salary is paid by the central government. Although the government has especially emphasized that the mahalla system serves as a means to offer assistance to families, it also performs an important function of social control and has been used to extend the centralized control in each locality.[117]

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[112] Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), p. 7

[113] Ibid., p. 8

[114] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit, p. 137

[115] Ibid.

[116] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 32

[117] Ibid.

The mahallas, for example, are responsible for being president's 'eyes and ears' on the issue of Islamic extremism.[118] Aksakal leaders are supposed to note activities of 'suspicious individuals'. Thus, these organizations are not developing as independent and self-sustaining entities; they heavily depend on presidential authority.

Having examined how the president has established his authority at regional and mahalla levels, I want to turn my attention to another important theme: the broad range of political power that the president has. On December 1992, the extensive powers of the president were formalized when the Supreme Soviet adopted a new constitution.[119] The president of the Republic of Uzbekistan is the head of the executive authority. The president appoints and dismisses the prime minister and deputy prime ministers. He is the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The president appoints diplomats, represents the country and conducts negotiations with the heads of foreign countries, proclaims states of war, and, if necessary, states of emergency to restore order. He has the right to dissolve the *Oliy Majlis* (Parliament). He establishes National Security and State Control Services and appoints and dismisses their heads. He presents to the Oliy Majlis his nominees for the posts of chairman and members of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Higher Economic Court and the chairman of the Board of the Central Bank. He also appoints and dismisses judges of regional, district and city courts. He appoints and dismisses regional hakims (governors). He suspends and repeals any act passed by the bodies of state administration as well as hakims. [120]

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[118] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 135

[119] Article 89 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan

[120] For the broad range of political powers that the President has please see Articles 93 and 94 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Besides the extensive power of the president, the president's success in prolonging his rule is another cause of concern for post-Soviet democratization in Uzbekistan. To date, only two presidential elections took place in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. As already mentioned the first nationwide election was on 29 December 1991. On 26 March 1995, a referendum was held to extend Karimov's term until the year 2000. In the referendum, whose voter turn out was 96.6 per cent, 99.3 per cent of the voters approved extending president's term.[121] In the 2000 elections, only one rival to Karimov was allowed to declare his candidacy. This rival, namely Abdulkhafiz Jalalov, was a Karimov loyalist and he neither criticized Karimov's presidency nor put forward alternative views to those of the incumbent president.[122] The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) refused to send an observation mission citing the reason that no meaningful opposition candidate contested Karimov in the elections.[123] The U.S. government also declared the election "neither free nor fair" and said it "offered Uzbekistan's voters no true choice".[124]

Not surprisingly, Karimov won the 9 January 2000 contest with 91.9 per cent of the vote. Jalalov received a mere 4.17 per cent of the vote. Even Jalalov himself admitted to having voted for Karimov.[125] As in the Soviet era, turnout was implausibly high, 95 per cent of the 12.7 million eligible voters.[126]

In the referendum held on 27 January 2002, voters approved amending the country's constitution to extend the presidential term from five to seven years.

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[121] Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001:Uzbekistan*

[122] Roger D. Kangas, "From the Top Down" , *Transitions Online*, 20 January 2001
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[123] Ibid.

[124] Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001:Uzbekistan*

[125] Amnesty International, *Annual Report 2001: Uzbekistan*

[126] Ibid.

Karimov's current term in office will therefore end in 2007 rather than 2005.[127] According to the Constitutional Court's decision in 1999, the election held in 9 January 2000 was Karimov first presidential election under the 1992 Constitution, so Karimov can compete for vote in the elections to be held in 2007.

Against the background of such a broad range of powers of president and his attempts to prolong his term in office, the separation of powers and the capacity of legislative and judiciary to check and balance the executive branch acquire increasing importance. In the following sections of this chapter, I will examine the legislative and judiciary in Uzbekistan and discuss whether or not these branches are able to function as effective control mechanisms of the executive.

4. 2. The Legislative

The Oliy Majlis (Supreme Assembly) exercises legislative authority in Uzbekistan. The exclusive powers of the legislative include: the adoption and amendment of the constitution, approval of the budged submitted by the Cabinet of Ministers, the setting of taxes, election of the members of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Higher Arbitration Court of the Republic and ratification of the decrees of the president on the appointment and removal of the Prime Minister and the members of the Cabinet of Ministers.[128] However, the mere fact that wide-ranging powers have been formulated for the Parliament in the constitution does not mean that the Oliy Majlis was able to exercise these powers effectively and checked and balanced the executive. As will be examined in the following paragraphs, during the course time Karimov has succeeded in removing the opposition elements from the legislature, reducing the number of deputies in the parliament and establishing executive control on the legislature.

[127] Freedom House, Freedom House Country Ratings: Uzbekistan, 2002

[128] For the exclusive powers of the Oliy Majlis please see Article 76 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan

It can be argued that since independence the composition and the activities of the Oliy Majlis can be examined in three phases. The first phase covers the activities of the Supreme Council of the Republic of the Uzbekistan between 1989 and December 1994. This parliament played a quite important role in the life of the republic.[129] It adopted resolutions announcing state's sovereignty in 1990 and state's independence in 1991. The deputies of this parliament participated in the writing of the constitution of independent Uzbekistan. This parliament also adopted laws in the sphere of economic reform that regulated the transition to an economy based on free market system.

Apart from adopting the first constitution and declaring sovereignty and independence, it was this parliament that protested the president due to his undemocratic policies in a country where such protests are quite rare. In the fall of 1991, 200 deputies under the leadership of Mirsaidov expressed their dissatisfaction with the undemocratic policies of Karimov and signed a petition demanding Karimov's resignation. Of course, Karimov did not bow to the demands of the petition and did not resign. After the petition incident, Karimov also launched a campaign against Mirsaidov. As already argued Mirsaidov was a powerful member of Uzbek elite and supported Karimov's rise to the position of president. Karimov had felt threatened by the powerful position of Mirsaidov and Mirsaidov's role in preparing the petition that demanded his resignation alarmed Karimov further. On 8 January 1992, the post of Vice-President was abolished by decree and Karimov's main challenger, Mirsaidov was, thereby, removed from office. Mirsaidov was appointed State Secretary, but resigned from this position in a week. In August 1993, he resigned from his post in parliament in order to protest a new law that took effect in July 1992. According to this law, in exceptional cases the parliament could curtail the powers of the deputies prior to the expirations of their terms in office. In 1994, a well-publicized corruption campaign against Mirsaidov was launched and

[129] Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 152

he was found guilty of embezzlement and misuse of public founds, believed to have been fabricated by the government to disable a potentially powerful rival. [130]

The petition alarmed the president and led him to take measures to limit the influence of the parliament. It can be argued that the potential threat of challenge coming from parliament was one of the reasons that encouraged the Karimov regime to organize elections for a new parliament and reduce the number of deputies from 450 to 250. [131] Citing the reason that a new parliament is required to make sure that the reform program processed smoothly and without any interference, in September 1994, President Karimov announced that the old parliament would be replaced by a new one after the elections were held in the December of that year.[132] The parliamentary elections were held on 25 December 1994 with two further rounds of voting on 8 and 22 January 1995 and the new 250 member parliament was elected. The elections proceeded on the basis of the new law adopted on the 'elections to Oliy Majlis". Although the elections were multi-candidate (634 candidates stood for 250 seats), they were marked by irregularities including voter fraud, 'family voting', and severe restrictions on the registration of the candidates.[133] Candidates were only nominated by two government-sponsored parties- The People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU) (the successor to the Uzbek Communist Party) and the Progress of the Homeland Party-plus the regional legislative councils. The differences between the registered parties were really insignificant thus the electorate was once more denied a full range of political options.[134] According to the official results, the regional candidates won 167 seats in the new legislature. The PDPU gained 69 seats and the Progress of the Homeland

[130] William Fierman, op. cit., p. 387

[131] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 140

[132]Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. p. 56

[133] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 6

[134]Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1996: Uzbekistan*

Party won 14 places.[135] Although in theory PDPU had only 69 registered members, the 124 members of the 'non-affiliated' regional bloc were also the members of the PDPU, giving that party a much higher numbers of seats in the parliament de facto.[136]

Dissatisfied with the low number of party fractions in the parliament, which failed to give the appearance of multiparty system to the degree desired, the state supported the creation of a new party, Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan and the party was established just five years before the opening session of the Oliy Majlis in late February 1995. [137] Consequently, at the first session of the parliament, 47 deputies from the regional block had become members of the newly formed Adolat Party and they were officially registered as a fourth parliamentary fraction. This parliament worked in perfect harmony with the executive branch, in fact the first item in the of business of the Parliament was to issue a resolution on holding a referendum to prolong Karimov's tenure in office automatically.[138]

The third phase of activities of parliament in post-Soviet Uzbekistan started after the 5 December 1999 Oliy Majlis elections. In these elections, five parties competed for 250 seats. Following the election the party representation in the legislature was as follows: 48 seats belonged to the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, 34 seats belonged to Fidokorlor, 20 seats belonged to the Progress of the Homeland Party, 11 seats belonged to Justice Democratic Party, 10 seats belonged to Milli Tiklanish, 110 deputies were elected by the local governments and 17 deputies were independent.[139] Each of these parties was government-approved and supported the presidency of Karimov. The term "constructive opposition is

[135] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 6

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid., p. 7

[139] Roger D. Kangas, "Challenging Authoritarianism", Transitions Online, 20 January 2000.

often used in their manifestos, as all view themselves as offering "alternative programs" rather than being competitive parties.[140]

Before concluding the discussion on the legislature I want mention a change to be introduced after the parliamentary elections to be held in January 2004: the change from the unicameral legislature into a bicameral one. The new body will have 94-member upper chamber, the Senate, representing the wiloyatlar (regions), and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakistan. The upper chamber will be elected by local government bodies. [141] The lower chamber would comprise representatives of political parties and independent deputies. This 120-member body is supposed to be the professional part of the parliament, rather than convening only three or four times a year, as is the current practice, it will work on permanent basis.[142]

However, one should also take into consideration the fact that the structural changes alone will not guarantee a more independent legislative. In fact, the experience of bicameral systems in other CIS nations is gloomy. Almost, all of the CIS governments that have adopted a bicameral system–Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan–have arbitrarily disbanded parliaments when they failed to comply with the wishes of president. [143]

As one pessimistic commentator writing on the issue suggested, the change in the structure of legislature even can lead to undesired results for democratization in Uzbekistan. According to the changes to be introduced in the legislature, the central government is supposed to report to the Upper Chamber. Given the reality that the executive maintains strong control over the local government bodies

[140] Ibid.

[141] Roger D. Kangas, "Challenging the 'Island of Stability", *Transitions Online*, April 9, 2002.

[142] Alissher Ilkhamov, "A Bicameral Parliament in Uzbekistan?" , *Eurasia Insight*, 22 June, 2000

[143] Ibid.

(regional legislative bodies are headed by presidential appointees), this regulation means that the Government will report to itself and thus it will not be accountable. The Lower Chamber is supposed to submit the drafts to the Upper one for passage. This means the government through the Upper House can impose strict controls over the lower house.[144] Moreover, unicameral parliaments can theoretically impeach a sitting president with just one vote. Under the new proposal, the new parliament will need to embark on a more lengthy and complex procedural process to impeach the president.[145] I think it is premature to argue that the changes to be introduced in the structure of legislature will make matters worse but in the light of these arguments one can not be hopeful either.

As an overall conclusion, it can be argued that the parliament has not been able to function as a check on the executive branch. Given the fact that in Uzbekistan the right to initiate legislation is vested in the president and that the successive parliaments have been filled up by the supporters of the president after the removal of opposition figures such as Mirsaidov and Muhammad Salih, it will not be an exaggeration to state that the Oliy Majlis to date functioned as a rubber stamp body that did not go beyond approving the laws proposed by the executive.

4. 3. The Judiciary

Courts of general jurisdiction in Uzbekistan are divided into three tiers: district courts, regional courts and the Supreme Court. In addition, the Constitutional Court is charged with reviewing laws, decrees and judicial decisions to ensure their compliance with the Constitution. Military courts deal with all civil and criminal matters that occur within the military. Economic courts at the regional level that handles economic cases between legal entities.[146]

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Alisher Ilkhamov, op. cit.

[146] htttp://jurist.law.pitt/edu/world/Uzbekistan.htm

Although the Article 106 of the Constitution states that the judicial authority in Uzbekistan shall function independently from the legislative and executive branches, the judicial system is Uzbekistan is subservient to the executive branch.[147] The president has the power to appoint and dismiss judges, dictate the composition of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court. Removal of the Supreme Court judges must also be approved by the parliament but given the fact that Parliament is under the influence of President, this does not make much difference. To date, the courts have not challenged president's authority and have never ruled in favor of defendants charged with anti-state crimes. A number of opposition figures, including Shukhrullah Mirsaidov, the former vice-president of Uzbekistan, have been convicted on crimes. Although many of President Karimov's opponents have received amnesties, their criminal records remain. This blocks their possible candidacies for the future.[148]

It has been reported that bribe-taking and other forms of corruption are commonplace at courts at all levels.[149] Moreover, judges often decide on issues after only a cursory review of the accusation. The law still does not grant lawyers enough scope to gather evidence when preparing a defense.

State prosecutors play a decisive role in the criminal justice system.[150] They order arrests, direct investigations, prepare criminal cases and recommend sentences. If a judge's sentence does not agree with the prosecutor's recommendation, the prosecutor has a right to appeal the sentence to a higher court. Until 2001, judges whose decisions are overturned on more than one occasion could be removed from office. In 2001, the Parliament repealed this provision of the law.

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[147] Freedom House, *Nations in Transit: Uzbekistan*: 1989-1999

[148] Freedom in the Word, *Nations in Transit: Uzbekistan: 2002*

[149] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 7

[150] US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practises-2002: Uzbekistan*, 31 March 2003

However, judges in most cases continued to defer to the recommendations of prosecutors. As a result, in almost all cases, defendants are found guilty. [151]

[151] Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

THE RESTRICTION OF ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL VOICES

In this chapter, I will be focus on Karimov government's attempts to limit alternative voices in the country that oppose the authoritarian policies of the incumbent regime. These alternative voices include political parties (both secular and Islamic ones), civil society organizations, media outlets and minorities. While examining the regime's crackdown on these independent voices, I will at the same time give examples illustrating the government's violations of civil and political rights, such as freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of information.

5. 1. The Law on Political Parties

Under the Law On Political Parties which came into force on 26 December 1996, the political parties in Uzbekistan have the right to freely disseminate their ideas, hold meetings and conferences, publish newspapers, form parliamentary factions and take part in the elections.[152] However, all political parties must be registered with the Ministry of Justice and this allows the government to block some parties.[153] In fact, although the Constitution provides for the freedom of association, the government limits the exercise of this right by refusing to register opposition political parties and movements opposed to the established order.

[152] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 10

[153] Ibid.

In Uzbekistan, parties based on ethnic or religious lines together with the parties advocating war or subversion of the constitutional order are prohibited. The president, as the representative of citizens, has the right to suspend or revoke anyone's membership of a political party. Military and law enforcement personnel, members of the judiciary, foreigners and stateless persons cannot become members to political parties. In order to be considered for registration, together with constituent documents and registration fee, party organizations must submit a minimum of 5,000 signatures of citizens residing in no less than eight of Uzbekistan's 14 administrative regions. Party funding must be transparent. Parties are banned from using foreign bank accounts and accepting donations from state, foreign, religious and anonymous forces.[154]

5. 2. Loyal Opposition

In this section I will examine the four political parties and one social movement officially registered by Uzbek Ministry of Justice, the Popular Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (Halk Democratik Partiyasi), The Progress of Homeland Party (Vatan Taraqqiyoti Partiyasi), Justice Social Democratic Party (Adolat Social Democratic Partiyasi), National Revival Democratic Party (Milli Tiklanish Democratik Partiyasi), Self-Sacrifice Democratic Party (Fidokarlar Milliy Democratik Partiyasi) and People's Unity Movement (Halk Birligi Harekati). Before starting detailed examination, I want to emphasize the fact that these political parties do not provide the Uzbek citizens with real alternatives to the incumbent government. It has been argued that these parties hardly differ from one another and they are created and sponsored by the state to give the impression that the multiparty system existed in the country and to fend off the criticism that political opposition has been suppressed.[155] Moreover, as Paul Kubicek argues, Karimov encouraged the creation 'pocket' political parties (political parties known for their pro-government and unchallenging character) besides PDPU in order to

[154] For a more detailed account of the 'The Law on Political Parties' please see Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 160-162

[155] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 11, Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 175, Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 33

create rivalries in the loyal opposition and prevent these parties from being real opposition parties.[156] All these parties apart from PDPU lack political support and have little credibility in the eyes of citizens.[157] Founded by the intelligentsia of major cities, these parties failed to gain support in rural areas; indeed many rural people are not aware of their existence.[158] Furthermore, as already argued, although these parties are represented in the Oliy Majlis, they all firmly support the government and do not function as opposition.[159]

The most prominent political party continues to be PDPU which was formed as the successor to the Uzbek Communist Party on 1 November 1991, inheriting not only its property and bank accounts but also nearly half of its 650,000 members. [160] The PDPU may not be a completely different political party from the former Communist Party in its membership and in its membership structure but it has showed some signs of change by abandoning Communist ideology.[161]

Until 15 June 1996, Karimov remained the First Secretary of the PDPU and even after he resigned from the party, citing the reason that the president should remain above party politics, the party continued to support him. Although the PDPU has the largest membership, it has lost its influence on political life as more and more powers are vested in the president.[162]

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[156] Paul Kubicek, op. cit., p. 32

[157] International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten: Repression and Instability (*Asia Report No. 21*)*, 21 August 2001, p. 8

[158] Resul Yalçın, op. cit, p. 175

[159] International Crisis Group, op. cit. in note 157, p. 8

[160]Annette Bohr, op. cit., p 11

[161] Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 169

[162] International Crisis Group, op. cit. in note 157, p. 9

Progress of the Homeland Party was established at the end of May 1992. Its leader was former Birlik activist Usman Azim, who since his departure from Birlik has made peace with the government and became Karimov's adviser on youth issues.[163] The party committee tends to choose its members from business people, students, tradesman and intellectuals and claims to be the party of the intelligentsia, entrepreneurs and youth.[164] The fact that the party's own press service mentioned that the party's primary goal is not the struggle for power but rather cooperation with the government, it reinforces the argument that this party is not a true opposition party.[165]

As already mentioned, following the elections to Uzbekistan's first post-independence parliament in December 1994, the government sponsored the creation of a new party, the Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party, due to the concern that low number of factions in the parliament failed to give the appearance of a multiparty system. In the opening session of the parliament, 47 deputies from the regional block had become the members of the newly formed Adolat Party and registered as a fourth faction.[166] The Party leader is a well-known journalist, Anvar Djurabaev. The party advocates the implementation of a strong social policy paying more attention to the problems of low-income people and retention of the state's position in the economy. However, being poorly organized and weak, it is unable to compete with the other political parties let alone with the influential PDPU.[167]

National Revival Democratic Party (Milli Tiklanish Demokratik Partiyasi) was established in April 1995 by Aziz Kayumov. Dominated by scientists and artists, the party advocates a democratic and law-based society founded on the

[163] William Fierman, op. cit, p. 389

[164] Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 171

[165] William Fierman, op. cit, p. 389

[166] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 6

[167] Resul Yalcın, op. cit., p. 172

principles of the market economy and the revival of cultural traditions of the Uzbek people.[168]

The People's Unity Movement (Halk Birligi Harekati) was crated on 27 May 1995. Its leader is Rasulov Karim Rasulovich. This movement was initiated by the representatives of the various ethnic groups and leaders of various ethnic groups' cultural centers. It advocates harmony among the different ethnic groups in the country and the equal development of all people in Uzbekistan.[169]

It has been argued that it was not a coincidence that the Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party and the Halk Birligi Movement had been given the same names with the two of the important opposition movements that were not registered by the government, Adolat and Birlik. This was most probably done to displace the memory of the outlawed opposition movements.[170]

The last official party established in post-Soviet Uzbekistan is Self-Sacrificing National Democratic Party (Fidokorlar Milliy Demokratik Partiyasi). Established on 28 December 1998, the party advocates a political system based on the principles of liberal democracy and supports an economic policy based on open and free market principles.[171] The party attained 34 seats in the Oliy Majlis in 1999 elections. After its establishment, it has become the most closely associated with the president and it nominated Karimov in the 2000 presidential elections. It has been cited that Karimov was very much interested in the part's program that is why he wanted to be nominated by the Fidokarlar. [172]

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[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid., p. 173

[170] International Crisis Group, op. cit. in 157, p. 9

[171] Resul Yalcın, op. cit., p. 174

[172] Ibid.

In April 2000, the Fidokorlar National Democratic Party and Vatan Taraqqiyati Party merged and the united party kept the name Fidokorlar National Democratic Party. After the merging, Fidokarlar has become the second largest fraction in the parliament after the PDPU, with 54 deputies.[173]

5. 3. Secular Opposition

As already argued, Uzbekistan did not feel the impact of perestroika to the degree that other areas of Soviet Union did. But, however weak in their influence, perestroika and glasnost reforms still gave the way for the emergence of informal opposition groups. The first of the opposition groups was Birlik ("Unity") Popular movement that was established in November 1988 by Abdurrahim Polat. Birlik members were successful in organizing demonstrations in Tashkent at the end of 1988 and in 1989. Some of these demonstrations took place without official permission from the authorities.[174]

The attitude of Uzbek authorities to Birlik was not friendly. Until the latter stages of the Nishanov period, the Uzbek officials condemned the organization because for these officials, the demonstrations that Birlik organized caused chaos in the society. At the very end of the Nishanov era, the Uzbek Communist Party started to depart from its condemning attitude and admitted that informal organizations can play a positive role in addressing social and political problems. Dispatching of Abdurahim Polat and Mohammad Salih to Ferghana Valley by Nishanov to calm the uprising in the region can be considered an example illustrating this changing attitude on the part of the Uzbek authorities. [175]

At the first stages of Karimov era, the informal groups like Birlik were granted more breathing space than they had during the Nishanov era. They were

[173] International Crisis Group, op. cit.in note 157, p. 9

[174] William Fierman, op. cit., p. 367

[175] Ibid., pp. 368, 369

relatively free to operate, attract more supporters and issue publications to communicate their views to the Uzbek people. However, soon it became clear that the friendly attitude toward the opposition did not extend to who resorted to organizing rallies. The differentiation in Uzbek Communist Party's policy toward the two different wings of the Birlik become more evident when in October 1989, Supreme Soviet adopted the resolution "On Measures for the Stabilization of the Socio-Political Situation in the Republic". This resolution criticized the "extremists" who called for unsanctioned rallies and authorized the security forces to use clubs and handcuffs to keep civil peace.[176]

The authorities' differential treatment of two wings of the Birlik precipitated the hitherto united Birlik. Meantime, Birlik was suffering from some disagreements among its members and as result of these discrepancies, in February 1990, the moderate wing of the Birlik, whose leader was Muhammad Salih, broke with the Birlik and formed the opposition party *Erk* (Freedom/Free Will). The controversy between Erk and Birlik revolved around two issues.[177] First, some leaders of Birlik were of the opinion that public demonstrations should be used as a method of political struggle against the government. Erk leaders, on the other hand, opted for using parliamentary means to realize their objectives. Second, while Birlik was in favor of dissolution of the existing parliament, Erk defended reforming the existing parliament by replacing candidates who had communist tendencies. The critics of Erk attributed the disintegration of the Birlik to the loyalty of Salih to the government and alleged that by behaving in this way Salih created the opportunity for the government to divide and manipulate the opposition.[178] Some were even certain that Karimov has even urged Salih to break away from Birlik and to form his own organization.[179]

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[176] Ibid., p. 370

[177] Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p.123

[178] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 12

[179] William Fierman, op. cit., p. 372

As already argued, while the government registered Erk as a political party and in this way enabled Erk leader Muhammad Salih to compete in the 1991 elections, Birlik Party, which had more supporters than Erk and which was more critical of Karimov government, was denied registration and could not compete for vote in the elections. Since I examined 1991 elections in the previous chapter, I will now shift my attention to the post-election period.

Bolstered by his victory in the elections and alarmed by the events in Tajikistan and student demonstrations at home, Karimov shifted from his hitherto relatively tolerant attitude toward the independent opposition. After 1991 elections, the crackdown on the opposition forces gained momentum with the government arrests and harassments of individuals connected to Birlik and Erk.[180] The government also moved against the Uzbekistan's independent media. Publications of the Birlik Movement and the Erk Party and other free mass information outlets were banned.[181]

The growing repression led Salih to change his early opinion that the parliamentary means, rather than demonstrations, should be used in order to bring the desired chances to the political life of the republic. Consequently, Birlik and Erk decided to hold a joint demonstration to demand new parliamentary elections. However, on 29 June 1992, two days before the planned meeting, Abdurrahim Polat was assaulted and severely beaten by unidentified man near the Prosecutor's office where he had been called for questioning.[182] In the summer of 1992, Polat immigrated to Turkey and in February 1998, he moved to the United States.[183]

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[180] Josh Machleder, "Uzbekistan: Does It Have an Opposition", Eurasianet, January 29, 2003

[181] International Crisis Group, op. cit.in 145, p. 6

[182] Ibid., p. 5

[183] The official website of Birlik Party: http://www.birlik.net

In the following days, imprisonment, detention, beatings, harassment, disappearances of opposition members intensified.[184] On July 2, 1992, Muhammad Salih resigned from the parliament in protest of these repressive actions.[185] On April 6, 1993, Muhammad Salih was arrested and charged with being "the leader of revolutionary committee preparing plans for the toppling of the government". However, due to strong international pressure, he was released on 9 April. Having realized that it was no longer possible for him to remain in Uzbekistan as a leader of an opposition party, in mid-April he left the country for Turkey.[186] Muhammad Salih, who was asked to leave Turkey prior to the visits of Karimov to Turkey, moved to Norway in 1999. [187]

In March 1993, the Cabinet of Ministers passed a resolution that mandated re-registration of all public associations by October 1993. Considering that it would be useless, the Erk leadership did not seek re-registration but Birlik decided to apply for registration. Although Birlik leaders alleged that they mailed an application, the Ministry of Justice claimed that it never received such an application and it did not register Birlik.[188] Thus, the government managed to deprive the two most prominent opposition parties of legal foundation to exist and operate. As a result of denial of legal foundation, the opposition parties were forced to operate secretly or suspend their activities. Some prominent political activists were forced into voluntary exile.[189] Among the political activists that have remained in Uzbekistan, some are imprisoned for the violations of article 159 of the criminal code (which regulates the punishments to be given to those who engaged in efforts to overthrow government).

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[184] Josh Machleder, op. cit.

[185] The website of Erk Democratic Party available at http://www.uzbekisanerk.org

[186] Ibid.

[187] International Crisis Group, op. cit. in 145, p. 6

[188] William Fierman, op. cit., 388

[189] Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Government and Opposition Relations in Uzbekistan* (Washington: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1997).

Others remain on police lists and required to report on their activities to the authorities.[190]

Despite the growing repression against opposition, some efforts to establish organizations to challenge the Karimov regime were still made.[191] In the autumn of 1994, Shukrullah Mirsaidov and Ibrahim Boriev established *Haq Yol Adalot* (not to be confused with Adolat Social Democratic Party). However, this organization was unable to operate effectively and it ceased to exist after Mirsaidov withdrawal from political arena. In October 1995, opposition movements in Uzbekistan announced the creation of the Opposition Coordinating Center in Tashkent. The Center was led by Mirsaidov and it aimed to bring together the remnants of Erk, Birlik and Mirsaidov's own party, Haq Yol Adolat. However, after consistent harassment of himself and his family members, Mirsaidov announced his decision to leave politics in March 1998 and gave up his position in Opposition Coordinating Center declaring that it was impossible to coordinate the activities of various opposition groups.[192]

With releasing of five political prisoners in November 1994, the government's repressive policy toward the opposition started to soften. In January 1995, Uzbekistan's Minister of Justice met opposition figures including Muhammad Salih and Abdumanov Polat, the well-known dissident and the brother of chairman of Birlik, in Washington. This meeting was noteworthy in the sense that the government's representatives discussed the incumbent regime's vision of democracy with individuals who were previously accused of anti-state activities.[193]

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[190] Josh Macleder, "Alternative Political Voices in Uzbekistan", *Eurasianet*, January 27, 2003

[191] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 37

[192] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 14

[193] Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Government and Opposition Relations in Uzbekistan* (Washington: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1997).

Aware of the fact that Uzbekistan's poor human rights and democratization record were harming the efforts to gain greater access to development aid and to increase foreign investment, in mid-1996 Tashkent launched a campaign to improve its tarnished image.[194] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Soros Foundation's Open Institute and Human Rights Watch /Helsinki gained permissions to open their offices in Tashkent in this year. Before president Karimov's visit to the United States in June 1996, the Uzbek government had released 80 prisoners, including some members of Erk, who had been found guilty of anti-government activities. [195] Another event that signaled a relative liberalization was the granting of formal permission to Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan to hold a congress in Tashkent in September 1996. The chairman of that organization, Abdumanop Polat, was also allowed to return Uzbekistan for the first time in after more than three years in exile.

By October 1996 the thaw was over. Persecution of the opposition, a human right advocates and Islamic activists were resumed; restrictions on the freedom of association were restored. [196] The new law on political parties introduced in January 1997 increased the minimum number of members required for the registration of a political party from 3,000 to 5,000. In fact, in the repressive atmosphere of Uzbekistan it had been already difficult to find 3,000 people brave enough to join a party not controlled by the government and this change has made the plight of independent political parties worse.[197] It has been argued that Taliban's advance at that time in Afghanistan alarmed the Karimov regime about the impact of this development on the radical Islamic elements in the country and brought about more repression. Moreover, after October 1996, the economic situation in the country dramatically worsened due to poor cotton harvest that caused a 400 million US dollars in loss revenue. The economic problems in the country caused concern in

[194] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 17

[195] Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, op. cit.

[196] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 37

[197] Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1998: Uzbekistan*

Tashkent that social unrest would follow. Once more, this concern led to more emphasis on coercion.[198]

The 1999 bomb explosions in Tashkent, which killed 16 people, triggered a wide-ranging campaign of arrests and intimidation. [199] It has been argued that the authorities used the investigations into the bombings as a pretext to further clamp down on perceived sources of opposition.[200] The list of those reported to have been arrested and allegedly ill treated and tortured included the supporters of banned Islamic opposition parties and Erk and Birlik. [201]

Muhammad Salih was also accused of organizing the bombings in collaboration with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and was sentenced to fifteen years of prison in absentia. His three brothers were also imprisoned for alleged anti-state activities and collaboration with the terrorists.[202] On an international arrest warrant issued by Interpol at the initiative of the Uzbek government, Muhammad Salih was detained by the Czech authorities at Prague's Ruzyne airport. Following his detention, Uzbek authorities demanded Salih's extradition from the Czech authorities but on December 14 2001, Prague's Municipal Court ruled that Salih would not be extradited to Uzbekistan. [203]

An announcement by Karimov on April 4, 2002, created some discussion as to whether exiled political activists like Salih and Polat would be able return to Uzbekistan.[204] The Uzbek leader has stated that he was prepared to meet with exiled

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[198] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p.38

[199] U.S. Department of State, *1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, February 25, 2000

[200] Amnesty International, *Uzbekistan: Briefing in Human Rights Situation*, October 11, 2002

[201] Ibid.

[202] International Crisis Group, op. cit.in note 145, p. 7

[203] Uzbek Dissident Released in Prague. *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, December 12, 2001

[204] Josh Machleder, "Uzbekistan: Does It have an Opposition?", *Eurasianet*, January 29, 2003

opposition members who wanted return to Uzbekistan, provided that they were "constructive". This statement of Karimov raised skepticism rather than hope among some supporters of Birlik and Erk For example, Erk's Secretary General Otanazar Aripov argued that if Birlik and Erk should remain as real opposition groups, then they won't be registered under the current regime and their members will continue to face harassment.[205]

Before concluding this section on secular political opposition, I want to mention some positive developments regarding recent opposition activity. Birlik managed in April 2002 to hold a number of meetings–including seven regional congresses–without interference from the authorities.[206] Although, security forces had been working actively to prevent the congress from taking place by harassing and threatening Erk members, the Erk Party succeeded in holding its planned congress on 22 October 2003 in Tashkent.[207]

5. 4. The Islamic Opposition

Consistent with its history as a center of Islamic learning, Uzbekistan experienced a rapid Islamic revival during the late Gorbachev period.[208] The number of mosques increased dramatically, non-governmental religious organizations appeared, young and well-educated people embraced Islam and ties with Islamic organizations abroad were established.[209] After independence, the leadership viewed it necessary to reflect this growing interest the Islam to state

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Adam Albion, "Opposition Congress Held in Tashkent", *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, Vol. 3, No. 36, 24 October 2003

[208] Edward W. Walker, "Islam, Islamism and Political Order in Central Asia", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, no. 2 (Spring 2003), p. 36

[209] Elvira Mamutova, : Islamic Fundamentalism and Extremism in Central Asia", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5, 2000, p. 51

policies.[210] President Karimov took part in cultivating Islamic values by permitting the construction of mosques and restoration of Islamic holidays. He also showed his Islamic credentials by performing haj (pilgrimage) and swearing his presidential oath on Koran as well as on the Constitution.

While Karimov was using such kind of Islamic symbols as a means of increasing his appeal to the Muslim population, he was at the same time anxious of emergence of the political movements based on Islamic principles. He was aware of the fact that these political movements could function as a basis for political opposition to his secular rule. He was watching the developments in Tajikistan, where the opposition forces including Islamic elements were wreaking havoc on the government, with nervousness.

The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) and Adolat (Justice) were among the Islamic political movements that Karimov regard as threats. The Islamic Renaissance Party was established in 1990 as a movement that would embrace all the Muslims of the Soviet Union. Its trans-country and trans-ethnic aspiration was reflected in the IRP's founding congress: it was held in Astrakhan and included delegates from Dagestan, Azerbaijan, Tatarstan and Central Asia.[211] The Uzbek branch of the IRP was established shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union on January 26, 1992. The policeman invaded the founding congress of the party and arrested 400 delegates on the charges of holding an unauthorized assembly.[212] On the basis of the Article 57 of the constitution that prohibits the establishment of political parties with ethnic and religious features, IRP was banned in 1992. A subsequent campaign of arrest of thousand members of IRP followed this. Abdullah Otaev, leader of Uzbekistan branch of IRP, disappeared in December 1992. Although Tashkent declared that it had no information about the Otaev's

[210] Annette Bohr, op. cit. p. 27

[211] Shireen T. Hunter, "Religion, Politics, and Security in Central Asia", *SAIS Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer-Fall 2001), p. 74

[212] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 26

disppearance, observers generally believe that he was detained and killed by Uzbek security service.[213] After the disappearance of Otaev, IRP weakened and other more radical groups that emerged in Ferghana valley in 1991-1992 largely displaced it. These included *Tovba* (Repentance), *Islam Lashkarlary* (Fighters for Islam) and *Adolat* (Justice).[214]

Adolat (this is a different organization both from the officially registered Adolat Social Democratic Party and Haq Yol Adolat Party of Mirsaidov) was formed by some members of IRP who had become disillusioned with this party's refusal to demand an Islamic state. As an alternative, they set up Adolat that aimed at organizing an Islamic revolution to replace incumbent secular regime. One of the followers of Adolat stated the difference between the Adolat and IRP as follows: " The IRP is the puppet of the government, they want to be in the parliament, we have no desire to be in the parliament. We want an Islamic Revolution here and now-we have no time for constitutional games".[215]

In a short span of time, mosques controlled by Adolat mushroomed in the Ferghana Valley. Adolat's influence had grown so much that Karimov felt obliged to travel to Namangan before the 1991 elections. In this visit, Karimov gave his consent to the demand of the Adolat members that the Communist party buildings in Namangan should be converted into Islamic Centers and a women's hospital in order to gain the support of Adolat activists.[216] Karimov's electoral victory in the election put an end to his earlier tolerant attitude towards this group. During the

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[213] International Crisis Group, op. cit.in note 157, p. 12

[214] Ahmet Rashid, *Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 102

[215] Ibid., p. 139

[216]Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 26

crackdown on the group, hundreds of activists and sympathizers of Adolat were arrested but its leadership managed to escape to Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran.[217]

In 1998, some members of Adolat and Islam Lashkary who had fought in Tajik civil war joined their forces and formed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the objective of which was to overthrow Karimov regime and establish an Islamic caliphate in Uzbekistan and eventually in all of Central Asia.[218] The first target of IMU is the regime in Uzbekistan because the leaders of the movement think that If Karimov is toppled and the parts of the Fergana Valley are occupied by the Islamic Movement then that will create a domino effect in Central Asia, given that all the other regimes are in a much weaker position than Uzbekistan's regime.[219]

The leaders of the movement, Tahir Yoldashev and Juma Namangani had both strong relations with Adolat and Islam Lashkari previously. Among the IMU members there are Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Uighur Muslims from the Xinjiang province of China, some Chechens and of course Uzbeks. The group called itself IMU because in the organization the Uzbeks outnumber the other ethnic groups and the organization's first aim is to create an Islamic stet in Uzbekistan. [220]

The IMU is widely believed to have had bases in Northern Afghanistan and allegedly had connections with the Osama Bin Laden network, but it is not a purely Afghanistan related phenomenon. The IMU also has bases in Tajikistan and in fact it relies on these bases to launch incursions into Ferghana Valley and to control drug

[217]International Crisis Group, op. cit. in note 157, p. 13

[218] Edward W. Walker, op. cit., p. 37

[219] Poonam Mann, "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: Will It Strive Back?", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 26, No. 2, April – June 2002, p. 296

[220] Ibid.

trafficking routes.[221] The IMU has attracted attention because of its military activities including the cross border incursions into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and allegations by the government of Uzbekistan that it was behind bombings in Tashkent in February 1999.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir, (HuT), which was founded in 1952, is a truly international organization with recruits from all over the world.[222] It first emerged among Palestinians in Jordan and eventually gained popularity among Muslims in Middle East and South Asia.[223] The repression of Hiz-ut-Tahrir in the Middle East led some of its members to set up new quarters in Western Europe. It increasingly became popular in among second-generation immigrants in UK, Germany, Sweden and Denmark.[224] In Central Asia, the repression of organizations such as the Islamic Renaissance Party paved the way for the emergence of clandestine groups like Hizb-ut-Tahrir. The organization's first activities in Uzbekistan date back to early 1990's.[225] In Central Asia most of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir members are ethnic Uzbeks but the organization also includes ethnic Tajiks and Kyrgyz.

HuT aims to re-establish the historical caliphate in order to bring all Muslims under Islamic rule. It considers Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia and Iran illegitimate asserting that they do not meet the necessary criteria for a genuine Islamic state.[226] In Central Asia, overthrowing President Islam Karimov is a central goal. Despite its strong opposition to the governments in the region, it has never

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[221] Swante E. Cornell and Regine A. Spectator, "Central Asia: More than Islamic Extremism", *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2002, p. 196

[222] Edward W. Walker, op. cit., p.38

[223] International Crisis Group, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (Asia Report No. 58), 30 June 2002 , p. 3

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid., p. 14

[226] Ibid., p. 3

been proven that HuT has been involved in violence in Central Asia. [227] Its principal method is to distribute leaflets that urge Muslims to abide by Islamic rules and condemn corruption and social problems associated by Westernization and modernization.[228] It opposes the idea of seizing the state then forcing the society to accept an Islamic order. HuT aims to persuade the society to accept the ideas of the organization by using peaceful ways. According to the organization this would eventually lead to the collapse of the illegitimate regimes. Thus, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, in theory at least, plans a peaceful political struggle. However, there is little information about the Hizb-ut-Tahrir future plans. It has been argued that the further repression on the Hizb-ut-Tahrir can radicalize the movement and force it to shift from its peaceful methods.[229]

Having briefly introduced the main organizations that form the Islamic opposition in Uzbekistan, I want to shift my attention to the government's attitude towards these opposition forces. It can be argued that having realized the strength of Islamic groups, Karimov tried to avoid antagonizing these groups before he was elected president. Although the leader of Adolat group, Tahir Yoldashev, insulted him during his visit to Namangan, Karimov still avoided confrontation and he even bowed to some demands of Adolat because he needed their support in the coming election. However, once Karimov was elected, just like the secular opposition, the Islamic opposition started to suffer from more government repression.

Repression started with the elimination of Islamic Renaissance Party. The crackdown on Adolat, which led to arrest of over 100 leading activists of the organization, followed this. The Committee of Religious Affairs established firm control on the religious institutions and the government launched a mass arrest of

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[227] Ibid., p. 7

[228] Svante E. Cornell and Regine A. Spector, op. cit., p. 200

[229] International Crisis Group,*IMU and the Hiz-ut-Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign*, ICG Asia Briefing Paper, 30 January 2002

clergy that operated without the control of the government in 1993-4.[230] Beside clergy, ordinary Muslims become subjected to harassment just because of wearing beard or veils. Certain mosques that government regarded threatening were closed and attendance at others declined.

The crackdown intensified in 1997 after the murders of police officers in Namangan, which the government immediately blamed on "Wahhabis"[231]. Following the murders, the Uzbek elite militia poured into Namangan area and thousands of people were arrested. Since the media was not allowed to into the area, the full details of what had happened remained unclear.[232] The sweep then spread to other cities in the Ferghana Valley in January 1998 and continued till March. In 1998, the campaign went so far as to order the Institute of Oriental Studies to close its Islamic Studies Department.[233]

On May 1998, the Oliy Majlis revised the 1991 'Law on Freedom of Conscious and Religious Organizations' imposing new restrictions on religious groups.[234] The law requires that all mosques and religious groups more than 100 members be registered. The construction of mosques, the establishment of religious associations and teaching of theology also require official permission. Theology classes may not be taught in primary and secondary schools and will, instead, be

[230] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 27

[231] The Wahhabis are usually understood as an orthodox group of Sunnis that is dominant in Saudi Arabia. The term Wahhabi has been used incorrectly, indiscriminately and pejoratively by governments in former Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan, to describe radical Islamic groups perceived as threat to national security and stability.

[232] Bruce Pannier, "Uzbekistan – A Strong Man in Need of Friends", *Transitions Online*, 21 January 1998

[233] Ghoncheh Tazmini, "The Islamic Revival in Central Asia: a Potent Force Or Misconception?", *Central Asian Survey* (2001), Vol. 20, No.1, p. 73

[234] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 54

limited to theology colleges. The law also forbids the wearing of religious clothing in the public.[235]

Following the explosion of 5 bombs on 16 February 1999, which Karimov deemed an assassination attempt at his life, the repression on Islamic groups gained a new momentum. The government accused all opposition groups, including the IMU and secular groups like Birlik and Erk, of organizing the bombs.[236] At least two thousand people were called for questioning. Nineteen men were sentenced to death following trials that were deemed unfair by human rights organizations.[237] All the men tried and sentenced to death in connection with the bombings have reportedly been executed.[238]Human Rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch mentioned that security forces used torture methods during the campaign including electric shock, beating with batons and temporary suffocation with a plastic bag, coined 'the bag of death'.[239]

During the U.S. bombings of Afghanistan in October 2001, many of the IMU camps were destroyed, the organization has lost its financial support from the Taliban and Al- Qaeda and IMU leader Juma Namangani was reported killed, although his body never found.[240] There are even some reports that allege that he is still alive and his death is a misinformation that he fabricated himself.[241] In any event, it has been argued that Namangani's death won't influence the future fortunes

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[235] Ibid.

[236] Ahmed Rashid, op. cit., p. 150

[237] Human Rights Watch, World Report 1999: Uzbekistan

[238] Amnesty International, *Uzbekistan: Briefing on Human Rights Situation,* 11 October 2002

[239]Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999: Uzbekistan*

[240] Martha Brill Olcott, The War on Terrorism in Central Asia and the Cause for Democratic Reform", *Democratizatsya*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Winter 2003), p. 88

[241] Poonam Mann, op. cit., p. 299

of the IMU much in terms of finance, because he did not play an important role in finding financial supplies for the organization.[242]

Despite the massive arrests of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir members, the adherents of the movement are increasing in regions bordering Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, particularly among unemployed youth who are paid to distribute the movement's religious leaflets.[243]

It has been argued that smashing of Hizb-ut-Tahrir and IMU by using means such as imprisonment and death sentences will not make Uzbekistan safer as long the conditions that helped to create and sustain the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir remain unchanged.[244] These include the harsh policies of Karimov regime towards devout Muslims, repression of any kind of political opposition, increasing level of unemployment, poverty and persistent government corruption. Widespread discontent caused by government repression has been instrumental in bringing about growth of radical Islamic groups. For many, well-organized underground Islamic groups are the only means for expressing frustration.[245]

5. 5. Civil Society

In Uzbekistan independent NGOs are relatively a new phenomenon and have stirred up suspicion. The suspicion on the part of government has brought about governmental attempts to control the NGO sector.[246] This was achieved

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[242] *The Times of Central Asia*, 30 November 2001

[243] Martha Brill Ollcott, op. cit., p. 90

[244] Poonam Mann, op. cit., p. 300

[245] Ibid.

[246] Fiona B. Adamson, *Building Civil Society form Outside: An Evaluation of Democracy Assistance Strategies in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan*, Report prepared for the Columbia University Project on Evaluating Western NGO Strategies for Democratisation and the Reduction of Ethnic Conflict in the Former Communist States, p. 9

through a number of means including: establishing government NGO's, attempts to install government personnel as leaders of NGOs, preventing the setting up local NGOs through threats and bureaucratic difficulties and monitoring NGO activities.[247]

The law on associations states that all groups must register with the Ministry of Justice, or with local vilayat government if they are locally formed.[248] The requirement of prior registration opens the door for significant restrictions for the associations since it provides the government with the opportunity to deny the registration to the associations that it views undesirable.[249] In practice, the government has been generous in permitting registration to NGOs that work on issues such as women, health and environment, but only if they do not deal with politics and avoid criticizing the authorities.[250] To the contrary, the Ministry of Justice rejected the applications of NGOs that it viewed hostile and tried to replace these independent organizations with the Uzbek government created several semi – state bodies.[251] These include the National Center for Human Rights, the Foundation to Support Freedom of Media and the National Center for Public Opinion Studies. Abdummanop Polat calls these GONGOs (government organized-NGOs) and argues that they can't function independently of the government and have made very little effort to bring about democratization.[252]

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[247] Ibid.

[248] Freedom in the World Ratings 1989-1998: Uzbekistan

[249] S. Horton and A. Kazakina, " The Legal Regulation of NGOs" in M. Holt Ruffin and Daniel C. Waugh, *Civil Society in Central Asia* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 42

[250] Abdummanop Polat, " Can Uzbekistan Build Democracy and Civil Society" in M. Holt Ruffin and Daniel C. Waugh, op. cit., p. 147

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid., pp. 154, 155

The government's policy toward the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) is a good example illustrating the regime's tackling of independent and critical NGOs. Starting from 1992, the HRSU sought registration. However, until March 2002, the government had repeatedly frustrated the efforts of HRSU to register officially citing a number of technical difficulties in the submitted documentation. [253] To replace HRSU the government established National Center for Human Rights. In March 2002, the government registered the HRSU on the eve of Karimov's visit to Washington. Many observers attributed the recognition of the group to the pressure exerted on the Ministry of Justice by the international community, along with Karimov's desire to polish his image prior to the U.S. trip.[254]

Some organizations examining the civil society organizations in Uzbekistan such as Freedom in the World regards the Mahalla Foundation as a part of civil society in Uzbekistan. However, this remains a disputable issue because in today's Uzbekistan mahalla organization cannot function autonomously; it is controlled by the government. By making use of mahalla organization, Karimov has established an element of control at the micro-social level and a highly efficient information network that he no doubt intends to use to prevent any further opposition activity against his rule.[255] Thus, rather than helping democratization, mahalla organizations contribute to authoritarianism in Uzbekistan. For this reason, it will not be appropriate to refer to mahalla as a civil society organization for the aims of this study.

Trade unions exist in Uzbekistan as an instrument of management rather than as a means of interest group-based collective bargaining.[256] That is to say, workers cannot collectively bargain under the umbrella of trade unions and advance

[253] S. Horton and A. Kazakina, op. cit., p. 43
[254] Josh Macleder, "Alternative Political Voices in Uzbekistan", *Eurasianet*, January 27, 2003

[255] John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia* (London: McMillan Press, 1999), p. 122

[256] Freedom in the Word, *Nations in Transit: Uzbekistan: 1989-1998*

their interest. Rather, through the trade unions the government controls the activities of workers and imposes its wishes on the workers. About 25 per cent of the country's labor force is in the main trade union that is under the aegis of control of Ministry of Labor.[257]

Universities only fulfill a pedagogical function. They do not function as a civil society organization because universities do not criticize the policies of the government and suggest alternative policies. Public policy research institutions are associated with government agencies and they tend to facilitate rather than analyze government policy.[258] Even externally supported think thanks, such as the Center for Economic Research sponsored by the United Nations Development Program, do not present alternatives to government policy.

5. 6. Media

The Constitution provides freedom of expression and press; however, in practice the government restricts these rights severely. Following the brief period of media liberalization in the final years of the Soviet era and the immediate post-independence period, the Uzbek regime moved quickly to re-establish strict control.[259] In December 1993, a compulsory re-registration of the mass media was announced as a result of which many independent publications were outlawed.

The law against 'Offending the Honor and Dignity of the President" limits the ability to criticize the president. Journalists and ordinary citizens remain afraid of expressing views critical of the president.[260] Although censorship is outlawed in

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[257] Ibid.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 40

[260] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997: Uzbekistan*, January 30, 1998

the constitution, before May 2002, all newspapers had to submit a copy to censor's office prior to publication. The result was a national press that almost nobody read, full of news of the cotton harvest and official decrees.[261]

On 13 May 2002, pre-publication censorship was officially lifted after the chief censor, Ervin Kamilov, was fired and the State Inspectorate for the Protection of State Secrets was disbanded. However, two days later, the authorities summoned Tashkent newspaper chief editors and told them that they now had the responsibility for censorship. One newspaper editor reportedly responded by employing staff from the old state inspectorate.[262]

After the abolition of censorship, several articles on topics as unemployment and poverty that would not previously have been published appeared in some newspapers. [263] However, in many cases when a critical article was published, the authorities immediately called in journalists or editors that wrote them to warn them not to stray too far.[264]

In August 2002, parliament passed five new amendments to the press law, holding editors and journalists responsible for the content of articles they write and publish. [265] As a result, although the prior censorship was abolished, the journalists tended to retain self-censorship because they are potential subjects of persecution by the government. Journalists rarely dare to cover official corruption, human rights abuses or the activities of opposition political parties and Islamic organizations.[266]

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[261] International Crisis Group, op. cit. in note 87, p. 7

[262] Human Rights Watchl, *World Report 2003: Uzbekistan*

[263] Ibid.

[264] International Crisis Group, op. cit. in note 87, p. 9

[265] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002: Uzbekistan*, March 31, 2003

[266] International Crisis Group, op. cit. in note 87, p. 8

The government restricts the distribution of newspapers and other publications from Russia and other neighboring states. The citizens can buy Western publications only in hotels in big cities, but these publications are very expensive.[267] In October 2002, the government formally ended its official monopoly of the Internet. In the past, all Internet service providers were required to route their connections through a state-run server, Uzpak, and the Government blocked access to content that it considered harmful.[268]

The government refused to allow Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and the Voice of America to broadcast from within the country, despite the Government's agreement with RFE/RL to allow this activity. Both stations broadcast on short wave from outside the country and many citizens cannot access these radio stations because of the short-wave transmission that is used.[269] Four state-run channels, which fully support the government, dominate television broadcasting. Cable television exists but access to cable television is beyond the financial means of most citizens. There are between 30 and 40 privately owned television stations and 7 privately owned radio stations. In general broadcasters practice self-censorship and avoid criticizing the national government but enjoyed limited ability to criticize local governments.[270]

5. 7. The Ethnic Minorities

The Uzbek Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens irrespective of their origin. However, since independence the incumbent regime has engaged in policies which emphasized the de-facto privileged status of the Uzbek ethnic group.

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[267] Media Sustainability Index:: Uzbekistan available at http//www.irex.org/msi

[268] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Experiences for 2002: Uzbekistan*, March 31, 2003

[269] Media Sustainability Index:: Uzbekistan available at http:// www.irex.org/msi

[270] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Experiences for 2002: Uzbekistan*, March 31, 2003

The newly revised national histories, the laws aiming at improving the status of Uzbek language and the disproportionate representation of ethnic Uzbeks in the highest echelons of power are some indicators of the privileged status of Uzbeks in the country.[271] This is not the place to examine Karimov's regime dealing with each ethnic group in detail. Rather, in the following paragraphs, I will briefly examine the government's attitude toward the Russians and Tajiks because they are the most populous minorities living in the country. [272]

Since independence, the position of Tajiks has not improved. Efforts by Tajiks in Uzbekistan to expand Tajik-language education, publishing and television have been largely thwarted by the government. Tajiks have also been marginalized from the new areas of economic activities. Tajiks also lack significant political representation at the highest level.[273]

Tajiks in Uzbekistan has formed organizations to counter "Uzbekisation" of Tajiks. An organization calling itself the National Cultural Center of the Tajiks and Tajik-speaking People sent letters to the United Nations, to Western embassies in Uzbekistan and to the Uzbek government complaining of discrimination against Tajiks in the republic. The Samarkand Group which is formed in 1989 questioned the number of Tajiks living in Uzbekistan.Against the official figure of 600,000, they believed the actual figure to be 3.9 million. The group persuaded several Tajiks designated in their passports as Tajiks to reregister themselves as Tajiks.

The organizations aiming at protecting the rights of Tajiks against Uzbek chauvinism, like Samarkand Society, has suffered from government repression. Meeting and rallies of these organizations were prohibited and the head of

[271] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 31

[272] According to Freedom House statistics published in 2002, Uzbeks constitute the 80 per cent of the population followed by Russians (6 per cent), Tajiks (5 per cent) and others (6 per cent).

[273] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 50

Samarkand Group was imprisoned for unknown reasons.[274] Arrest of the leaders and members of Tajik community in 1992 weakened the organization considerably and transformed in into a loose network of sects.[275] The only achievement that the Tajik community claim is the recognition of ethnic Tajiks as a nationality group in Uzbekistan and Tajik as an official language.

The active recruitment of ethnic Tajiks by the IMU has resulted in increased repression on Tajik minority in Uzbekistan. In August 2000, large numbers of Tajiks living in the mountains along the Tajikistan-Uzbekistan border were forcefully evacuated and resettled, with large number arrested for suspected complicity with militants. While this caused verbal protest by Tajikistan, Tajiks in Uzbekistan remained quiescent.[276]

Following independence, a rapid decline of in the number of Russians in managerial and administrative skills was observed. The previous over-representation of Russian speakers in many spheres has been reversed and now they are generally under-represented in the critical areas of political and economic life. The Russian-speaking citizens complain about Uzbek nationalism at different levels.[277] This includes "street nationalism" when non-Uzbeks are harassed, intimidated and attacked by people on the streets. It has also been reported that Uzbek officials discriminate against non-Uzbeks at work places and other spheres.[278] There have been complaints that ethnic Russians are being pushed out of their jobs to be replaced by ethnic Uzbeks.[279] The Uzbek government discriminates

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[274] Roger D. Kangas, "Uzbekistan: Evolving Authoritarianism", *Current History*, Vol. 582, No. 4(April 1994), p. 180.

[275] www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr.mar/data/uzbektaj.html

[276] Ibid.

[277] http://www.humanrights-fsu.com/Ethnic_minorities_in_Uzbekistan_statya_032603.doc

[278] Ibid.

[279] www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/data/uzbruss.htm

against Russian education. The authorities discourage Russian teachers and more than 55.000 of them left the country. Schools do not receive adequate amount of Russian textbooks.[280]

It was not until January 1994 that the Russian community in Uzbekistan was permitted to establish its cultural center.[281] The Other non-Uzbek communities were allowed to do so long before. However, the center's newspaper, *Vestnik Kulturu*, was closed by Uzbek authorities following the publication of the first issue.

Like the other Soviet Republics, in 1989 Uzbekistan adopted a law 'On the State Language' that granted Uzbek the status of the sole state language within the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.[282] Although the new language law made Russian the 'language of interethnic communication', it also required employees in the state sector as well as those serving the population to know enough Uzbek for the fulfillment of their job opportunities.[283] However, due to the material and organizational constraints, this language legislation could not be implemented. As result, in December 1995 a revised version of the law 'On State Language' was adopted. The revised edition removed the controversial article that had made it obligatory for state-sector employees to know Uzbek. The new law established the date for the completion of the transition to the Latin script as September 2005. However, whereas the 1989 edition of the Uzbek language law a secondary but protected status, the 1995 edition put it on a par with all other languages other than Uzbek.[284]

[280] Igor Kotler, op. cit., p.9

[281] Annette Bohr, op. cit., p. 32

[282] Ibid.

[283] Ibid., p. 33

[284] Ibid.

The main Russian response to these deteriorating position and the Uzbek language laws that improved the position of Uzbek language at the expense of Russian has been migration. The remaining Russians in Uzbekistan have kept a low political profile and generally supported Karimov in the elections. Russian speakers have not put forward demands for cultural and political autonomy.[285] Chances of Russian protest of the incumbent regime seem low. Ethnic Russians in Uzbekistan seem likely to deal with grievances in the future as they have in the past: through reliance on Moscow to pressure Uzbekistan and through immigration to Russia.[286]

[285] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 52

[286] www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/data/uzbruss.htm

CHAPTER 6

THE FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE

Without understanding the factors that facilitated the establishment of authoritarianism in post-Soviet Uzbekistan this study will be incomplete. It is necessary to understand the factors that helped Karimov to strengthen his authoritarian rule and the reasons that explain why most of the citizens avoided resisting authoritarian policies of Karimov. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I will be focusing on domestic and international factors that shaped the failed democratization process.

6.1. Domestic Factors

In this section I will deal with the domestic factors that helped Islam Karimov to strengthen his authoritarian rule in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. These factors are the weakness of social support for democracy, the lack of a strong middle class, the effects of region-based politics, problems of post-Soviet transition and Karimov's use of ideology to justify his authoritarian rule.

6.1.1. The Weakness of Social Support for Democracy

It has been asserted by many authors that outside Central Asia there is little understanding of the historical traditions of authority and government of the region.

Arguably, there exist a strong tradition of autocratic rule both in Uzbekistan and Central Asia.[287]

Gregory Gleason argues that Uzbeks adhere to different norms of behavior in politics compared to the Kyrgyz and the Kazaks.[288] Instead of traditions of tribal democracy, which were strong among nomadic peoples, Uzbek people tended to adhere to the traditions of hierarchy and authoritarianism, which characterizes the sedentary people of the river valleys. Among nomadic people discussion is considered positive. However, among the sedentary people, disagreement and opposing a decision are considered to be rude; whereas obeying is regarded as polite and the right form of behavior.

According to Gleason, the tradition of authoritarian rule in Uzbek society has something to do with the semiarid type of agriculture in Central Asian valleys.[289] The inefficiency of water necessitated respect to the authority that took and enforced the decisions regarding distribution of water and oversaw and punished those that did not abide by the rules. Gleason mentions an anecdote in order to emphasize the importance of water management and explain how the potential sources of opposition were viewed and treated by the Uzbek society between 13th and the early 20th centuries. [290] When the position of *mirab* (water master) fell vacant due to death or some other reasons, a new one was chosen by a contest. After the contest, the losing candidates were put to death in order to eliminate the contenders for this important and administrative and social post.[291] So, the opposition was not given a change to survive.

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[287] Kadir Z. Alimov, " The Rediscovery of Uzbek History and Its Foreign Policy implications" in S. Frederick Starr (ed.), *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 231

[288] Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p. 117

[289] Ibid., p. 37

[290] Ibid., p. 38

[291] Ibid.

It is possible to argue that Central Asian traditions of patriarchy, popular submissiveness, respect to authority and elders partly explain for limited reaction to repressive actions of the current regime. Present-day Uzbek life is still marked by importance of *hurmat* (respect). Elders are respected in the family without question and the authority relations in the family find their reflection in the political life. In present day Uzbekistan the state has been making use of the traditional notions of *mahalla* (neighborhood) and the *aqsakal* (assembly of elders) to impose effective control on society and further its legitimacy. The Karimov regime establishes a direct link between mahalla and the republican government. Thus, just as a mahalla resident is expected to conform to the norms of mahalla and the decisions of *aqsaqal*, one is supposed to comply with the state regulations and fulfill the wishes of the head of state, President Islam Karimov. Here Islam Karimov is implicitly presented as the *aksaqal* of the state. In this way, Karimov tries to improve his legitimacy in the eyes of the Uzbek citizens and assure compliance.

Having explained how the tradition of authoritarian rule is used by Karimov regime to consolidate its authoritarian rule, I want to continue by examining how post-Soviet democratization in Uzbekistan suffers from lack of social base for the main components of democracy. Western conceptualizations of human and civil rights are based on the rights of individual not on the rights of community. In Central Asian societies, including Uzbekistan, individual is subordinate to the society.[292] It will be too optimistic to expect that people who have socialized in a political culture that subordinates individual to society will quickly embrace the notions of civil and political rights based on individual rights.

Without commitment to democracy and trust, tolerance and mutual respect among people democracy cannot flourish. If there is no social base for democracy, the mere existence of democratic institutions cannot create and maintain democracy

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[292] Paul Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia: Curse or Cure?", *Third World Quarterly* (1998), Vol. 19, No. 1 (March 1998), p.30

in a country. Unfortunately, post-Soviet Uzbek democratization suffers from the lack of these elements in political life. Division along regional and tribal lines together with the Soviet legacy of cynicism weakens the trust, tolerance and respect in the society.[293] The erosion of trust is something that post-communist societies have to overcome. Under communism, people distrusted their colleagues and friends fearing that they were the agents of the government and would report them to the authorities if they engaged in opposition activity. This legacy of cynicism has survived in the post-communist period. People still can not trust other people and can not cooperate with them. Thus, this suspicion obstructs collective action in post-Soviet societies. With regard to commitment to democracy, the picture is not brighter. In the post-Soviet period, the majority of the ordinary citizens complained not about authoritarianism and lack of democratization, but about high prices, scarcity of goods, the corruption and the poor quality of public health care.[294]

6.1.2. The Lack of a Strong Middle Class

It has been argued that the lack of a strong middle class is one the factors accounting for the failed transition to democracy in Central Asia.[295] In Central Asian Republics, including Uzbekistan, the middle class consists of professionals, such as teachers, doctors and engineers, many of whom depend on payments from the state budget and, of small businessmen, mainly traders. The entrepreneurs are heavily dependent on local and central authorities and thus their situation is insecure. The important players on the political scene are the ruling elite who control the natural resources. Their power is unlikely to be challenged or influenced by a middle class, which is dependent on the state.[296]

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[293] Ibid.

[294] Boris Rumer, *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), p. 31

[295] Anna Matveeva, op. cit., p. 35

[296] Ibid.

The post-Soviet privatization is a factor that perpetuated the weak position of the middle class vis-à-vis the ruling elite. In an attempt to enlist the support the ruling elite, Karimov let them 'buy' the factories and properties that they managed during the Soviet period.[297] In fact, Islam Karimov himself has a controlling share of the main Uzbek trading house responsible for shipments to foreign countries.[298] Thus, it can be argued that the middle class did not improve its position as a result of privatization. Still, a small but powerful elite hangs on the economic power and Karimov uses the distribution of economic resources of the country in order to assure loyalty to himself.

6.1.3. The Effects of Region-Based Politics

The formation of the Uzbek SSR in 1924 brought together people who had lived under three different khanates and had been settled in various parts of Russian Turkestan into one national republic. [299] Uzbeks citizens in the eastern part of the Republic (Ferghana Valley), once part of the Khokand Khanate, viewed themselves and were viewed by others as culturally and linguistically distinct from Uzbek citizens living in the northern, southern and western parts of the republic. Those Uzbeks who had lived under the Khivan Khanate were often confused with Tajiks due to their physical and linguistic similarities. People occupying the southern parts of the Bukharan Khanate were not considered Uzbeks at all. In sum, before the advent of Soviet rule, there were identifiable distinctions among the indigenous population living in the northern eastern, eastern, central, southern and northwestern parts of the territories later formed the Uzbek Republic.[300] The original five oblasts into which Uzbekistan was divided by the Soviet administration following its

[297] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 142

[298] Ibid.

[299] Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions and Pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 83

[300] Ibid.

formation roughly corresponded to these regional distinctions prevalent among the indigenous population before the establishment of Soviet State. In the course of time, the Soviet administration reinforced these regional distinctions by using the regions as a basis for the distribution of the economic resources and recruitment of native cadres.[301]

In present-day Uzbekistan, regionalism is still part of the political reality. Donald Carlisle notes that regional divisions, which provide perspectives on loyalties and geographic power bases of Uzbek politicians, can be deemed as the most important division among the Uzbeks.[302] There are five regions in Uzbekistan: The Tashkent Region, the Fergana Region, the Samarkand/Bukhara Region, The Khorezm Region and Surkhandarya/Kashkardarya Region.

The Uzbek state in post independence period has denied the existence of regional divisions and represented such kind of divisions as a threat to the unity of the country. However, it is not easy to make people forget their past affiliations in a short time.[303] The existence of politicians representing their own regions is indicative of existence and importance of regional divisions. The prominent clans of Rashidov and president Karimov come from the Samarkand region. Former Vice-president Mirsaidov and his supporters represent the Tashkent region.[304] In the 1991 presidential elections, an overwhelming majority in Khorezm supported Muhammad Salih, a Khorezmi opposition leader.[305] The elite in each region tends to form their own alliances and for the most of the time top elite of each region is in competition with the elites of other regions for political power. Today the elite of

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[301] Ibid., pp. 86, 87

[302] Donald S. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan" in William Fierman, *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation,* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), p.96

[303] Shahram Akbarzadeh, op. cit., p. 520

[304] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 138

[305] Shahram Akbarzadeh, op. cit., p. 520

Samarkand region dominate the Karimov administration and observers note that the elite of other regions are somehow being excluded and their powers curtailed.[306]

It can be argued that regionalism, which survived in the post-Soviet period, can function as stumbling block in way to democratization. Loyalty to a particular region makes it difficult for people to subordinate these kinds of particularistic loyalties and their bonds to a particular region to countrywide political engagement and responsibility.[307] In this way, division along regional lines limits the prospects for development of inclusive political parties and imposes barriers in the way of collective action.[308]

6.1.4. Problems of Post-Soviet Transition

The context in which Uzbekistan gained independence was hardly conducive for the establishment of democratic rule.[309] Independence came to Uzbekistan not as a result of national independence struggle but due to the collapse of the Soviet state. The Uzbek republican elite did not engage in an effort to end the Soviet rule over Uzbekistan. Therefore, they did not enjoy legitimacy that could have been the consequence of such an effort. Moreover, the Uzbek elite, which was exposed to varying degrees of control of the Moscow in Soviet period, did not have enough experience to rule the county without the directives and the help of the center. To make the matters worse, the republican elite inherited a troubled country. Being aware of the fact that it would be unable to solve the economic and social problems in the short run and alarmed by the emergence of popular dissent and

[306] Roger D. Kangas, op. cit., p. 168

[307] Bruce Parrott, "Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization", in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), op. cit., p.14

[308] Anna Matveeva, "Democratization, Legitimacy and Political Change in Central Asia", *International Affairs*, Vol. 75 No.1, 1999, p.33

[309] John Anderson, op. cit., p. 106

instability, the Karimov regime opted for a political system that is intolerant to the expression of any kind of opposition.

In economic terms, Uzbekistan came to face severe problems after independence brought by the demise of the all-union economy.[310] The collapse of trade and supply networks of the Soviet economy proved to be a serious challenge to the Uzbek leadership. Having little to offer other than raw and semi-processed commodities for export, the economy of the country became highly dependent on the world commodity prices. The transition from centrally planned economy to market economy has been a painful experience. The Karimov regime argued that the tough and comprehensive measures required for the economic recovery necessitate strong leadership. Thus the dire economic conditions were used as excuses for the delay of democratic reforms.[311]

The potential for ethnic conflict was another reason that prompted the political elite of Uzbekistan to opt for repressive policies.[312] As already explained, Uzbekistan was created as a multiethnic state. Ethnic diversity started to increase in the latter decades due to waves of migration during the Second World War and following the Second World War. Throughout the Soviet period, although inter-ethnic relations in Uzbekistan were in general cordial, social boundaries between the immigrants and the indigenous groups were strongly maintained. For instance, mixed marriages were rare. In the last decade of the Soviet rule, when control of the central government started to weaken and the economic conditions deteriorated, hitherto suppressed interethnic tensions exploded into open conflict. In 1989, over one hundred people were murdered in the clashes between Mesketian Turks and Uzbeks. Thus on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic relations in Uzbekistan were quite tense. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the communist

[310] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 61

[311] Adrian Treacher, " Political Evolution in Post-Soviet Central Asia", *Democratization*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Autumn 1996), p.316

[312] Resul Yalcin, op. cit., p. 302

ideology, which helped to keep ethnically diverse people together, disappeared and nationalism to a large extent replaced communist ideology. So, in the post-Soviet period, the danger of ethnic conflict was even bigger. Faced with this situation, the political elite of the country, which learned the art of governance in the Soviet period, resorted to the method that it knew best: the use of force. When the exaggerated danger of Islamic fundamentalism was added to this already troubled situation, the Karimov regime tended to engage in every effort to silence political opposition and to legitimate the authoritarian character of the regime on the basis of the threats to the stability:

> I admit: perhaps in my actions there are signs of authoritarianism. But this I explain as follows: in certain periods of history, especially during the construction of statehood, strong executive power is necessary. It is necessary to avoid bloodshed and conflict, to preserve in the region inter-ethnic and civil harmony, peace and stability, for which I am prepared to pay any price.[313]

6.1.5. Karimov's Use of Ideology to Justify His Authoritarian Rule

Marxist-Leninist ideology had been the source of political legitimacy for the Soviet Union. The collapse of Soviet Union discredited the communist ideology which it was built on. When the values of Marxist-Leninist ideology lost their credibility in the eyes of Uzbek citizens, an ideological vacuum emerged in the post-Soviet political space.[314]

In the years following independence this ideological vacuum has been filled by the incumbent regime in an effective way. One cannot ignore the fact even an undemocratic regime cannot guarantee its survival without gaining a certain degree

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[313] Islam Karimov quoted in Andrew F. March, "The Use and Abuse of History: 'National History' as Transcendental Object in Islam Karimov's 'Nationality of Independence' ", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 21., No. 4 (Fall 2002), p. 372

[314] Resul Yalçın, op.cit., p. 86

of legitimacy in the eyes of people it rules. It can be argued that in this respect the ideological vacuum that emerged after the end of Soviet Union provided the Karimov regime with a good opportunity. After independence, Karimov engaged in efforts to formulate a new ideology, Uzbek nationalism, and he came to use this ideology to legitimize the regime and strengthen his authoritarian rule.

In the post-Soviet period the government has made use of propaganda to create (where necessary) and foster a national consciousness.[315] 'The Ideology of National Independence', as Karimov has dubbed it, has been elaborated by over the entire period of independence in a series of texts written by the President or by the academics and intellectuals coming from the fields of political science, philosophy, economics, religion, law and literature.[316] Karimov underlines the importance of the ideology by arguing that "Concerning Uzbekistan, the process of strengthening independence and the search for one's own path of renewal and progress are not possible without a single, all national idea, an ideology of national independence, which is shown by the experience of world community and the practice of the newly independent states".[317] Moreover as he argues, a single ideology is required to unite groups and individuals around a single national banner and to secure the priority of the higher interests and goals of the nation and the state.[318]

Karimov tries to present the Ideology of National Independence as the incarnation of the glorious values, aspirations and moral principles of the multi-national population of Uzbekistan.[319] The "national ideology" is depicted as representative of what the nation really wants. At this point, I should add that Karimov argues that the interests, goals and values of the national ideology are

[315] Shahram Akbarzadeh, op. cit., p. 535

[316] Andrew F. March, "State Ideology and the Legitimation of Authoritarianism: the Case of Post-Soviet Uzbekistan", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 8 No. 2 (June 2003), p. 217.

[317] Islam Karimov quoted in ibid., p. 221

[318] Islam Karimov, quoted in ibid.

[319] Ibid., p. 219

compatible with those of Uzbek society. In this way, Karimov uses identification as a way of to legitimize the incumbent regime by relying on the assumption that the citizens want to be governed by a regime that shares the same interests, values and the goals as themselves.[320]

Having highlighted the importance of the state ideology for the unification of the nation and having equated this ideology with the interests, values and goals of the Uzbek society, the Karimov regime uses ideology in order to delegitimize the opposition to the incumbent regime. Arguably, since the state ideology included everything for the well being of the nation and since the incumbent regime is guided by this ideology, the opposition parties which challenge the Karimov regime were operating against the interests of the Uzbek society.[321] So the compromise with the opposition is out of question because this would be in violation of the interest of the Uzbek Society.[322]

Having examined how the Karimov regime uses the state ideology to legitimize itself and delegitimize the opposition, I want to focus attention on another issue: the history re-writing. In the post independence period nationalist history writing in Uzbekistan has presented a deliberately falsified version of history that places Amir Temur at the heart of Uzbek civilization in spite of the fact that Timur had fought against the invading Uzbek tribes coming from the northwest.[323] Nationalist historiography in Uzbekistan has praised Timur as a vise and benevolent ruler and has pictured the Timurid era as the golden age of the Uzbek civilization. The statues of Amir Timur have been erected all over the republic, including the one in the center of Tashkent, and the Timurid era has become the focus of attention for historians and nationalist propagandists.

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[320] Ibid.

[321] Ibid., p.223

[322] Ibid., p. 225

[323] Shahram Akbarzadeh, op. cit., p. 537

The construction of the cult of Timur is a key to understand Karimov's self-legitimation attempts.[324] The rehabilitation of Timur post-Soviet Uzbekistan goes beyond the rehabilitation of a national hero to inspire national pride by the use of historiography after a long period of colonization. Central to the aims of the Karimov regime's rehabilitation of Timur is to draw attention to the importance of strong leadership and centralized statehood in Uzbek history.[325] In the hands of Karimov, history becomes an instrument to justify his acts and give meaning to the present. Thorough use of history, the strong leadership and centralized statehood is presented not as the product of self-interest of the ruling elite but as the reflection of the genuine values of Uzbek society, which survived in the course of history.[326] Here, once again, we observe Karimov's attempts to gain legitimacy by identifying the values of the Uzbek society with the authoritarian character of the incumbent regime. Moreover, by pointing out how a strong leader – Timur- was able to overcome external threats, maintain internal stability and create a state wherein economy and culture can flourish, the Karimov regime tries to emphasize the necessity of a strong ruler for the well being of Uzbekistan.

6.2. International Factors

In this section I will focus on international factors that accounts for strengthening of authoritarian rule in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. These factors are Tajik Civil War, the Russian minority and the effects of September 11.

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[324] Andrew F. March, op. cit., in note 189, p. 376

[325] Ibid., p. 376

[326] Ibid., p. 382

6.2.1. Tajik Civil War

The Tajik Civil War had many causes. Tajikistan was not ready for independence.[327] It was the poorest and most externally dependent of all Soviet Republics. It did not have an effective security force, which could maintain stability in the country. The psychological impact of Mujahiddin victory in Afghanistan was another reason behind the war.[328] In April 1992, Afghan Mujahiddin took control of Kabul. Islamic opposition in Tajikistan was emboldened by this development; they came to think that they could do the same in Tajikistan. There were also an ideological conflict between communism and Islam. After 1991, Islamic Renaissance Party struggled hard to end the continuing power monopoly of former Tajikistan Communist Party elite. This was also a reason for the war.[329]

Without denying the fact that all these above mentioned factors played a role in bringing about the civil war, it is necessary to emphasize that the main reason behind the war was the competition among four major historical–geographic regions in Tajikistan: Leninabad (Khojent), Kurgan Tepe, Kulab and Gorno-Badakhshan. [330]

In first direct presidential elections that occurred on November 1991, Rahman Nabiev, a former communist leader and representative of Leninabad region defeated Davlad Khudonazarov, the representative of the Gorno-Badakhshan region. [331] Yet, the opposition refused to accept the result and considered themselves

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[327] Barnett R. Rubin, "Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery" in Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Synder (eds.), *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 141

[328] Ibid., p. 129

[329] Ibid., p. 143

[330] Ibid., p. 143, Krill Nourzhanov, "Seeking Peace in Tajikistan: Who is the Odd Man Out?", *Central Asia Monitor*, (1998), No. 6, p. 15

[331] Rafis Abazov, "Independent Tajikistan" in Sally N. Cummings (ed.), *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 60

victorious.[332] The Gorno-Badakhshan and other regions remained unsympathetic to Nabiev's leadership.

After Nabiev assumed office, the opposition organized massive demonstrations in order to protest the government. As a result of the demonstrations of opposition, Nabiev decided to give concessions and agreed to form a coalition, which included a few opposition figures coming from Pamiri, and Garmi regions that had been long excluded from power.[333] However by the end of 1992, Kulyabi and Khojendi regional elites, assisted by Uzbekistan and Russia, launched a counteroffensive against opposition forces.[334] This development amounted to a civil war, which ended only when the two sides concluded a power sharing agreement in June 1997. As a result, The Tajik government legalized the member parties of the united Tajik opposition.[335]

Events in neighboring Tajikistan have provided Karimov with an ideal excuse to justify his authoritarian rule. He portrayed the democratic and Islamic movements of Tajikistan as radical, posing dangers to stability and ill-suited for Central Asia in the transition period. According to the Uzbek government, the proliferation of opposition forces and demands for radical reforms prepared the way for the Tajik civil war.[336] As he argued, at this transitory stage Uzbekistan is not ready for democracy and authoritarian governance is the right and necessary form of government:

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[332] Ibid.

[333] Murial Atkin, op. cit., p. 101

[334] James P. Nichol, "Tajikistan: Current Developments and U.S. Interests" in Lydia M. Buyers, *Central Asia in Focus: Political and Economic Issues* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), p. 27

[335] Hooman Peimani, op. cit., p. 65

[336] Stuart Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-1997: Domestic Considerations*", Central Asian Survey* (1999), Vol. 18 No. 1, p.42

> Developments in Tajikistan, Georgia and elsewhere in the CIS where opposition leaders have taken power have shown that first it is necessary to secure and defend the most sacred human right - - the right to life. Only after that come other rights, including the right to democratic freedom. For those living in areas where Islamic extremists operate the greatest priority is not the freedom of speech or other democratic principles but security and freedom from fear. [337]

Having condemned the Tajik opposition as radical and dangerous for stability, the Uzbek government started to claim that there are links between the Tajik and the Uzbek opposition. [338] In this atmosphere, it became possible for him to start an attack on domestic opposition. As the Tajik Civil War continued, members of Uzbekistan's main democratic parties came to suffer from more harassment by the security services; censorship of Erk's newspaper gained momentum and the legislation on political parties was made more restrictive.[339] Furthermore, blamed for financially assisting 'fundamentalists' in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan's Muslim community came to face more government repression.

6. 2. 2 The Russian Minority

It has been argued that the Russian minority can function as a positive factor in post-Soviet democratization. [340] This can be attributed to two reasons. First, if the Russian minority engages in advancing its own agenda it can form an opposition platform challenging the incumbent regimes that pursue policies favoring titular ethnic groups. In order to avoid antagonizing the Russian Federation, the incumbent regimes can pursue more tolerant policies toward the opposition groups formed by the Russian minorities as opposed to their policies

[337] Islam Karimov quoted in Andrew F. March, op. cit., p. 372

[338] Ibid.

[339] Ibid., p. 43

[340] See Muhammad Islam, op. cit., p. 76

toward opposition groups formed by other ethnic groups. Second, the Russian speaking minorities have better education than other ethnic groups and they are important for the economy of the countries they live in because they form an important portion of the technological elite and skilled industrial workforce. So, the governments of these countries tend to avoid repressive policies towards them in order to limit their exodus and preempt bad relations with Russia.

Contrary to the argument put forward in the previous paragraph, the Russian minority in Uzbekistan did not prove to be a positive factor for post-Soviet democratization in Uzbekistan and in fact it can be argued that it helped the Karimov regime to strengthen its authoritarian rule.[341] At the time of independence, almost two million ethnic Russians were living in the republic and they made up 8.3 per cent of the total population and 34 per cent of population of the capital city, Tashkent. The size of ethnic Russians in proportion to Uzbeks, who made up 71 per cent of the total population, was small. Furthermore, the Russian population in the republic was in constant decline, mainly due to out-migration. [342] Their proportion to total population decreased to 3.4 according to 2000 estimates.[343] Besides suffering a constant decline in their relative size in the independence period, the Russian minority is also marked by its political inactivity. Most Russians refrained from participating in active politics to redress their grievances for fear of reprisal from the government. To the disappointment of the opposition groups, the Russian minority supported Karimov in the elections in the belief that as compared to other viable alternatives such as the nationalists and Islamic governments, the incumbent regime is the best alternative for the protection of their interests in the post-Soviet period.[344]

[341] Ibid., pp. 77-82

[342] Ibid., p. 78

[343] Resul Yalçın, op. cit., p. 108

[344] Muhammad Islam, op. cit., p. 79

6. 2. 3. The Effects of 11 September

After independence, the US and to some extent other Western powers have tried to link good relations with the newly independent states of Central Asia to the state of democratization in these countries. Organizations such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has generally responded more willingly to the needs of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan than to the overtly authoritarian regimes in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.[345]

In the aftermath of the 11 September attacks, anti-terrorism became the guiding principle of the US foreign policy. As a result, a major restructuring of Washington's foreign relations has been experienced. In Central Asia, the change in US priorities was felt immediately. Before 11 September, US was mainly interested in the development and exploitation of Caspian oil and gas reserves; it paid limited attention o the security issues in the region. After 11 September, this situation changed in a dramatic way. Uzbekistan and, to a lesser degree, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan suddenly became frontline states in the US led struggle against the Al Qaeda and Taliban network.

Well before September 11, Central Asian states were threatened by the instability in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been unstable for over two decades. Before the coup on April 27, 1978 Afghanistan was a monarchy. Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) launched a coup on April 27, 1978, killed Daoud Khan and seized power. Having seized power, PDPA government initiated a campaign of radical land reform accompanied by mass repression in the rural areas that resulted in the arrest and execution of tens of thousands. The government's repressive measures, particularly its attempt to reform

[345] John Anderson, op. cit., p. 192

the society through terror, provoked uprisings throughout the country that amounted to a civil war.[346]

The war escalated in 1980 when the Soviet Union dispatched nearly 100,000 soldiers to that country to support pro-Moscow Afghan government. After the dispatch of Soviet soldiers, the war took the form of fighting between several Afghan Mujahaddin groups and the joint forces of the Soviet troops and pro-Soviet Afghan government. [347]In 1989 the Soviet forces withdrew and in April 1992 the pro-Soviet Naijibullah regime in Kabul was overthrown by the Mujahiddin coalition and Afghanistan was declared an Islamic republic. [348] However, this did not bring stability to the country. This time, civil war in the country resumed in the form of struggle between the Pushtun population in the south and the east and the ethnic minorities of the north – Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkmen.[349]

The predominantly Pushtun Taliban emerged in late 1994 as a movement composed of taliban (literally students) from Islamic *madrasahs* (seminaries) who were living as refugees in Pakistan. They promised to bring peace to Afghanistan, establish law and order, disarm the population, and impose *sharia* (Islamic rule). Until they captured Kabul in 1996, Taliban expressed no desire to rule the country. However, after the capture of Kabul, Taliban committed itself to rule the country according to *sharia* and export their Afghan-style radical Islam to neighbouring countries. Afghanistan provided the Islamic militants from Pakistan, Iran, the Central Asian republics and China's predominantly Muslim Xinjiang Province with sanctuary and financial support through smuggling. For example, in 1998, one of the leaders of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Tahir Yuldashev, fled to

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[346] Human Rights Watch, *Backgrounder on Afghanistan* available at http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/afghan-bck1023.htm

[347] Hooman Peimani, op. cit., p. 78

[348] Neil J. Melvin, op. cit., p. 99

[349] Ahmed Rashid, "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism", *Foreign Affair*s, Vol. 78, Issue 6(November/ December 1999), p. 4

Afghanistan and Taliban rejected a request to extradite Yuldashev. In late August 1999, another leader of theIMU, entered Krgzstan from Afghan territory with 800 soldiers and threatened to invade Uzbekistan. Pious borders of Central Asian states facilitated the penetration of armed insurgents form Afghanistan into Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Thus, for Uzbekistan the growing security interest of US in Central Asia came as golden opportunity. Suddenly, the Islamic threat that Tashkent faced locally was transformed into a global problem. This change meant that US military and economic resources would be used in fighting Osame Bin Laden and Taliban.[350]

Uzbekistan was the most enthusiastic participant in the US-led anti-terrorism campaign. In fact as early as 1998, Karimov had granted the United States the permission to conduct clandestine efforts against Al Qaeda. After 11 September, he offered bases for US forces at Karshi-Khanabad and for German forces at Termez. Uzbekistan also provided the United States with a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid.[351]

In post-September 11 period, the opening of US bases in Uzbekistan raised the concern that leaders in Washington and other Western capitals will be more reluctant to force the states of the region to introduce democratic reforms for the fear of uncertainty it would cause.[352] However, some observers also drew attention to some positive signals. For example, Martha Brill Olcott argued that Karimov regime has agreed at least in principle to support political reform as part of the strategic partnership with the U.S., after years of insistence that Uzbekistan would

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[350] Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, " New Friends, New Fears in Central Asia", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 81, No. 2 (March/April 2002), p. 64

[351] Ehsan Ahrari, "The Strategic Future of Central Asia: A View from Washington" , *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring 2003), p. 164

[352] Martha Brill Olcott, op. cit., p. 86

go its own way.[353] However, one can not still trust Karimov easily; time will show how sincere he was while promising democratic reforms. Moreover, the US administration does seem to be willing to exert much pressure on Uzbek leadership for democratic reform. In March 2002 the US Department issued a statement criticizing the referendum which extended Karimov's term in office. However, two days after the publishing of that report, a tripling of aid for Uzbekistan was announced.[354]

It is premature to evaluate the long-term effects of US-Uzbek partnership in the war against terrorism on post-Soviet democratization in Uzbekistan, but it can be argued that in the short-run this partnership emboldened the Uzbek government and it came to increase its repression on devout Muslims. The Uzbek government came to use the anti-terrorism campaign as a pretext to arrest and to jail even the Muslims who are not associated with radical groups such as Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

[353] Ibid., p. 93
[354] The New Republic, August 18 & 25, 2003

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, political democracy has been viewed as a system that meets the following criteria:

- Meaningful competition among political parties for positions of government through free, fair and regular elections.
- Political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, such that no major (adult) social group is prevented from exercising this right
- Political and civil liberties-freedom of thought and expression, freedom of religion, freedom of information, freedom of assembly and demonstration, freedom to form and join organizations, freedom from terror and unjustified imprisonment-secured through rule of law.
- Existence multiple channels for representation of citizen interest beyond the formal political framework of parties, parliaments, and elections, that is to say civil society.
- Accountability secured through elections, separation of powers, political parties and civil society.

When several aspects of political life in Uzbekistan are examined, it is seen that current regime falls short of satisfying these criteria. To judge by its constitution, Uzbekistan is a democratic state. Multi-party system, separation of powers and the respect for civil and political liberties are guaranteed by the constitution. However, these rights exist only on paper; they can't be exercised in

reality. Only a loyal opposition is allowed to exist by the government. The executive branch dominates over the judiciary and legislative. The government regards civil and political rights a luxury for the citizens and thus does not hesitate to violate them.

It would be a mistake to argue that in post Soviet Uzbekistan democratization - the change from less (or no) competitive elections to more competitive ones, from less to more political participation, from severely restricted to better protected civil and political rights, from less to more accountable government and from weak (or non-existent) to a stronger civil society – took place. Having consolidated his power, Islam Karimov took steps to obstruct rather than facilitate the development of competition, participation, autonomous civil society, accountability and the exercise of civil and political rights. In this way, Islam Karimov established an authoritarian regime in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. He took every necessary step to increase its authority at the expense of citizen autonomy. Today, the access to power in Uzbekistan is dependent on loyalty or closeness to Islam Karimov. He appoints his loyal supporters to strategic positions. Moreover, the administration is dominated by the people coming from the same region as Islam Karimov, Samarkand. The elite of other regions are somehow being excluded and their powers curtailed. Thus, it can be argued that the regime in Uzbekistan has the characteristics that Samuel P. Huntington specified for personal dictatorships.

I think the most competitive election that was held in Uzbekistan to date was the one in December 1991. Although Islamic Renaissance Party and Birlik Party were prevented from competing for votes in 1991 election, the Erk Party, which was a less powerful and less challenging opposition party (but still a real opposition party), was allowed to run against Karimov.

In the post-election period, the government set out to take measures to make it impossible for the genuine opposition parties to compete for votes next time. By denying registration, the government robbed the genuine opposition parties

of legal ground to exist, operate and compete in the elections. To give the appearance of multi-party democracy, a loyal opposition was created in the place of a real opposition. The loyal opposition has avoided criticizing the government and failed to provide an alternative to it.

These parties also lack political support and have little credibility in the eyes of citizens. Thus, these parties have very limited –if any- chance of coming to power. In the elections which were held in 2000, a candidate representing one of these loyal opposition parties, Abdulhafiz Jalalov, who himself admitted voting for Islam Karimov, run against Karimov. To judge by this evidence, one can safely argue that meaningful competition does not exist in Uzbekistan today.

In Uzbekistan participation in the process by which political leaders are elected or government policies are shaped and implemented is also severely restricted. All citizens are entitled to vote in the elections and voter-turn out rates which are above 90 per cent are reported officially, but as argued in the previous paragraph, competition does not exist in Uzbekistan and voting in elections in which there is no alternative to the government does not make sense.

While explaining participation in the second chapter, active membership of a political party and active membership of a pressure group were included in the definition of participation that is used in this study. In the repressive political atmosphere of Uzbekistan, people hesitate to join political organizations that are not controlled by the government because opposition activists are under close scrutiny of the government and they frequently face prison and torture.

Civil and political rights of Uzbek citizens are also violated by the government. The government severely restricts freedom of speech and press. Although the constitution prohibits censorship, newspapers, radio and television stations retain self-censorship and avoid covering sensitive issues such as corruption and human rights abuses because they fear persecution by the government.

Journalists who dare to cover these subjects are subjected to beatings and imprisonment. By 1993, the government effectively banned the publications of opposition parties Birlik and Erk. Moreover, the government restricts the access of Uzbek citizens to foreign media outlets.

The government also limits the right of assembly and association. It continues to ban unauthorized public demonstrations and meetings. The Constitution requires that all organizations must be registered formally with the government and this requirement gives broad power to the Ministry of Justice to limit the opposition activity. The government refuses to register political parties and civil society organizations that are critical of government. Also in violation of the freedom of association, the Constitution and the law on political parties bans parties based on ethnic and religious lines.

The law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations restricts religious freedom. It forbids the wearing of religious clothing in the public, prohibits teaching of religious subjects at public schools and bans private teaching of religious subjects. The government's campaign against the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir has resulted in persecution of even the Muslims who are not associated with these groups. The security forces arbitrarily detain and arrest pious Muslims and plant narcotics, weapons and Hizb-ut-Tahrir literature on them to justify their arrest.

The Constitution provides for the separation of power but in reality executive dominates over the legislative (the Oliy Majlis) and judiciary. At present, three types of organizations have the right to nominate candidates for election to the Oliy Majlis: registered political parties, legislative councils at the regional (vilayat) level and "voters' initiative groups" that have collected signatures of 8 per cent of voters in a constituency. Since regional legislative councils are headed by hakims (governors) which are appointed by the president it is unlikely that a regional legislative council will nominate a candidate who is critical of government. In

Uzbekistan the Ministry of Justice denies registration to genuine opposition parties so these parties cannot nominate candidates for election to the Oliy Majlis.

It is also unlikely that a citizen initiative group can nominate a candidate critical of the government because to do so it has to gather the signatures of 8 per cent of voters in a constituency and in the repressive atmosphere of the Uzbekistan it will be difficult to find many people who would dare to support a candidate that is not pro-governmental. In reality, all these difficulties have guaranteed the election of successive parliaments that did not challenge the government.

With regard to the judiciary, the picture is not brighter. Since the president has the power to appoint and dismiss judges, the judiciary cannot function independently of the executive branch. The dominance of executive over the legislative and judiciary, restrictions on media and silencing of the opposition decrease the chances that citizens make the government account for its policies and exacerbate the danger of abuse of power by the government.

Thus, a thorough examination of several aspects of political life in Uzbekistan reveals the fact that Post-Soviet Uzbekistan did not move in democratic direction. One can even argue that Uzbekistan in the late perestroika period and in the early independence period was even freer than Uzbekistan today because then there was more breathing space for opposition parties, civil society organizations and media in those days. In the course of time, Karimov's policies to consolidate his authority resulted in deterioration in the situation in the country.

While consolidating his power and increasing dose of authoritarianism in the country, Karimov was helped by many factors. Uzbekistan has been exposed undemocratic forms of governance in pre-Tsarist, Tsarist and Soviet periods. Therefore, most of the Uzbek society views democracy as alien and do not understand the importance and necessity of democracy. Most of the Uzbek society is

more concerned with economic difficulties than democratic reform. Thus, as far as their basic needs are satisfied they do not tend to challenge the government.

Although Karimov has come to justify his repressive policies in the name of stability, I should add that while opting for repressive policies, Karimov's only concern was not stability. More than stability, he was preoccupied with securing his position and eliminating rivals to himself. His aspiration for eliminating all legitimate channels for opposition has pushed the people to more violent means to express dissent. 1999 bomb explosions, which were interpreted as an assassination attempt against Karimov by many observers, have indicated how suppression of dissent can lead to violent reaction.

It took centuries for the Western world to adopt more or less democratic forms of government. It has been only more than a decade that the totalitarian Soviet State, which controlled the every aspect of life, has collapsed and it is unrealistic to expect that newly independent states will transform into full-fledged democracies in a short time. However, what is striking about the political situation in Uzbekistan is the fact that even gradual democratic reform is not realized in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The incumbent political leadership does not show any commitment to democratic reform. They have a stake in preserving the system as it is; they don't want to lose the power and wealth they enjoy in the present system. They are also quite successful in preserving the system as it is. All they do is to take window-dressing steps in order to stave off international criticism. This leads me to think that democratic reform will not be carried out by the present leadership.

The replacement of the current leadership by a new one can facilitate transition to democracy in Uzbekistan but it does not guarantee democratization by itself. The new leadership must be committed to democratic reform or there must be some mechanisms that will push the new political elite to engage in reform to bring about democratization. For example, if the new leadership cannot succeed in legitimating themselves though identification or if they fail at gaining legitimacy

thorough meeting the basic needs of the citizen, they can opt for making democratic reform to gain legitimacy. Or the reverse can occur. That is to say, that the Uzbek state can overcome economic problems, the citizens will be less pre-occupied with economic difficulties and thus they may tend to pay more interest to the democratic reform. This situation will place more pressure on the new leadership. Lastly, if the international context changes and if the outside world puts more pressure on the new leadership this can also play a role in facilitating democratic reform.

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