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**Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy (2001-2012):**

**The Pendulum Diplomacy between the US and Russia**

*Master thesis*

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# Diploma thesis

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## **Annotation**

This diploma thesis analyses the formation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy since 1991. It argues that Tashkent's foreign policy decisions were primarily influenced by its relationship with Moscow and Washington D.C. The regime of Islam Karimov endeavoured to maintain its independence and status of regional leader in Central Asia. This was possible thanks to its alternating cooperation with either Russia or the US. For the purposes of this diploma thesis this process will be called pendulum diplomacy. The actual pendulum diplomacy is analysed in the second and third chapter of this study while the first chapter serves as an analytical frame for this analysis. It attempts to describe the environment in which the Uzbekistan's foreign policy was developed and characterises the principal challenges with which it had to cope.

## **Keywords**

Uzbekistan, foreign policy, diplomacy, geopolitics, balance of power, Central Asia, Russia, the United States of America, Islam Karimov

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have written the submitted diploma thesis individually and used solely the specified academic sources.
  
2. I also agree that this diploma thesis shall be available to the public for the purposes of research and study.

In Prague May 10, 2014

Bc. Václav Lídí

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## Introduction

Uzbekistan will presumably become a strategic partner of the United States in broader Central Asia after the departure of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan planned for the end of 2014. This time both Tashkent and Washington are more careful because the memory of their close cooperation between 2001 and 2005 and its infamous demise is still fresh. Nonetheless, it seems that the two will have to inevitably find common ground as Americans need a firm foothold in the region and President Islam Karimov's regime seeks security guarantees against Moscow. Recent Ukrainian crisis heralds Russia's more aggressive approach to the post-Soviet area that has to be taken into account. Covert invasion of Russian army into Crimea has to be seen as a new stage of Moscow's emancipation that is aimed at the restoration of its former powerbase in Eurasia.

Russia recently revived its zeal for the post-Soviet integration as stated in the first lines of Vladimir Putin's article from November 2011 in Moscow daily *Izvestiya* calling for creation of the Eurasian Union.<sup>1</sup> Putin's regime based its legitimacy on economic success and soaring living standards.<sup>2</sup> However, this economic upsurge was heavily based on export of hydrocarbons that is according to many Russian economists such as Aleksey Kudrin no longer possible.<sup>3</sup> Hence, Russia's regime returned to legitimizing its existence through foreign policy achievements. It seeks to establish its domination over the area of the former

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Putin, "A New Integration Project for Eurasia: The Future in the Making," *Izvestiya*, 3 October 2011, <http://www.russianmission.eu/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3>.

<sup>2</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*. (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): 123-130.

<sup>3</sup> Martin C. Spechler, "Russia's Lost Position in Central Asia." *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 4 (2013): 1-7.



## Diploma thesis

Soviet Union at all costs.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, Uzbekistan is a pivotal state in Russia's quest to encompass Central Asia into its sphere of influence.

This diploma thesis "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy 2001-2012: The Pendulum Diplomacy between the US and Russia" will focus on the creation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy prior to 2012 when Tashkent suspended its membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization.<sup>5</sup> The core of the thesis is defined by the turn of the years 2000 and 2001. This period was characterised by a significant increase of threat of radical Islam connected with the Batken Wars in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and with the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. on 9 September 2001. The Al-Qaeda attacks in the US led to a decisive shift in the balance of power in Central Asia because in response the Americans established their principal military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Nonetheless, some overlaps into the 1990s are inevitable as the thesis aims at capturing Uzbekistan's foreign policy in its entirety.

Uzbekistan's foreign policy was formed in response to many internal and external challenges that affected, and sometimes threatened, the newly independent state. This thesis considers as the paramount challenge for Tashkent's foreign policy the relationships with the United States as the only world's superpower and with the Russian Federation as a former colonial metropolis. I argue that Uzbekistan's balancing between the two powers represents the most important feature of its foreign policy after 1991. Tashkent tended to counterbalance the influence of Russia with the influence of the US and vice versa. Other

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<sup>4</sup> Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*. (London: Blackwell, 2003): 83-85.

<sup>5</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „Uzbekistan without the CSTO.“ *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 20/10/2013, last visited: 20/10/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12652-uzbekistan-without-the-csto.html>.

international players such as China or India had during first two decades of Uzbekistan's independence significantly lower impact on the creation of its foreign policy and formulation of its principal priorities.

The triangle relationship amongst Tashkent, Moscow and Washington D.C. was predominant. For instance, if the grip of Moscow became too tight as in the beginning of 2001, Karimov's regime voluntarily accepted closer cooperation with the US and even allowed them to build a military base in Karshi Khanabad. However, in 2004 and even more after the Andijan events from May 2005 Karimov felt that the cooperation with Washington brought more unpleasant commitments than potential benefits. As a consequence, he decided to close down America's base and once again to ally himself with the Kremlin. This shift marked Uzbekistan's accession into the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Finally, the last turnover occurred in 2012. Tashkent suspended its membership in the CSTO and began talks with Washington about a possibility of restoration of its military presence in Uzbekistan and the post-2014 security situation in broader Central Asian region.<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the shifts of the Uzbek foreign policy orientation between Russia and the US are termed the "pendulum diplomacy".

As a consequence, the principal aim of this diploma thesis is to provide a thorough analysis of this phenomenon. This study endeavours to answer especially the following three research questions: What were the chief goals of Tashkent's foreign policy? What were the factors that influenced the creation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy? Which specific factors

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<sup>6</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, "Will the US and Uzbekistan Revisit their Strategic Partnership," *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 27/3/2013, last visited: 18/11/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12683-will-the-us-and-uzbekistan-revisit-their-strategic-partnership.html>.

and causes played a decisive role in the case of Uzbekistan's most significant foreign policy turnovers in 2001, 2005 and 2012?

In terms of organization, this study is divided into three main parts. The first chapter focuses on the challenges that influenced the creation of the newly independent state and the formulation of its foreign policy. Four major challenges formed the foreign policy of Tashkent. These were the geopolitical position of Uzbekistan, the state-building and nation-building, the challenge of transforming Uzbekistan's economy, and the threat of radical Islam. Each of these challenges or factors is discussed in their respective subchapter 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4. The second chapter is devoted to the development of Uzbekistan's relations with the Russian Federation. The chapter is divided into three subchapters. The subchapter 2.1 begins with the attaining of independence in December 1991 and ends with the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. on 9 September 2001. The subchapter 2.2 is restricted by the 9/11 events and the Andijan crisis of May 2005 and consecutive turnover on Russia. The subchapter 2.3 begins with the aftermath of Andijan events and ends with Uzbekistan's suspending of its membership in the CSTO in December 2012. For the sake of better comparison the third main chapter is divided identically but it is dedicated to the US-Uzbek relations and their possible prospects. The work represents a case study with the necessary contextual and theoretical background.

The objective of the diploma thesis is to define the principal factors present in the formulation of the Uzbek foreign policy, both on the internal and external level. The main theoretical paradigm of this study is the realist theory on balance of power. This paradigm was best described by Hans Morgenthau in his book *Politics among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace* and later developed by Kenneth N. Waltz in his book *Theory of International Politics*. This theoretical framework proved to be particularly helpful for me to

clarify, when analysing, the behaviour of Uzbekistan in its relation to the two most important international players in Central Asia – Russia and the United States. Furthermore, this diploma thesis draws on from the geopolitical and geostrategic models of Halford J. Mackinder described in his classic *Democratic Ideals and Reality* and of Nicholas Spykman in his article *Geography and Foreign Policy*. These geopolitical models have been recently further developed by Zbigniew Brzezinski's works, most notably in *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*.

The study applies realist and to some extent neorealist theory of international relations as its theoretical paradigm. I argue that it best meets the conditions of the state of affairs in Central Asia and in the world system at large. More specifically, the political situation fulfils the five principal core premises of the realist theory. Firstly, the question of war and peace is paramount for the Central Asian regimes. Structural anarchy prevails in Central Asia as the region does not have a single undisputed central authority which would be able to solve strives amongst the regional and supra-regional actors. As a result, this leads to a security dilemma for Central Asian regimes and undermines regional cooperation and tends to increase prevailing international tensions. Secondly, in Central Asia, the quest for enhancement of political and economic power of particular state actors is crucial. Those international actors that would fail in this endeavour would be absorbed or enthralled by other actors.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, in Central Asian environment, the geographically-based groups ergo sovereign national states are predominant. Fourthly, I claim that Uzbekistan and its neighbours as well as outside powers with interests in the region are guided by the logic of national interests and hence their behaviour can be regarded as rational. National interests

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<sup>7</sup> Ole R. Holsti, "Theories of International Relations." In *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, edited by Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 1-43.

are defined in terms of survival, security, power and relative capabilities. Fifthly, the nature of the international system defines the central problems for states and therefore their actions respond primarily to external, rather than domestic political forces. In this particular case we could argue that non-state actors such as radical Islamists are present in Central Asia; however, they can be regarded usually as an external threat associated with another state. Moreover, the influence of these non-state actors in Central Asia is usually exaggerated by Western political scientists.

According to Hans J. Morgenthau, the balance of power is achieved when the efforts of some states to overthrow the existing *status quo* are counterbalanced by pressures exerted by other states in order to maintain it. The balance of power, or power equilibrium, serves to preserve the stability of the system without destroying the multiplicity of the elements composing it. When an outside force disturbs the system or tries to change one or more elements composing it, it results in the restoration of either the original or a new equilibrium.<sup>8</sup> Morgenthau defines five different methods of achieving a balance of power - divide et impera policy, territorial or other compensations, arms races, forging of alliances and the holder of the balance.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of Central Asia, I argue, that Uzbekistan can be considered the holder of the balance. This term designates an actor which is unable to change the equilibrium by itself but that is capable of maintaining the equilibrium if it is in its interest. Perhaps the most famous example of this capability is the case of the Great Britain in the age of splendid isolation. Identically, Uzbekistan does not have the capacity to change or destroy the

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<sup>8</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948): 123-129.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*: 134-146.

equilibrium but it certainly has the means to maintain it. The principal instrument in this endeavour, I claim, is Uzbekistan's pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia. I argue that it is in the interest of Uzbekistan to play the role of the holder of the balance. On one hand, it prevents Russia from restoring its hegemony in the region and, on the other hand, it hinders the US from destroying Karimov's regime as it pushes for democratization. As a result, I assume that to preserve the balance of power in Central Asia is the *raison d'état* of Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

Although this study uses some reductionist criteria, the concept of the balance of power elaborated by Kenneth N. Waltz also provides valid explanations for the situation in today's Central Asia. Waltz claims that states are unitary actors that seek as minimum gains their own preservation and as maximum gains universal hegemony. They strive to achieve their goals either through internal balancing, which means increasing their economic and military strength, or through external balancing ergo forging an alliance.<sup>10</sup> Uzbekistan uses both internal and external balancing in order to maintain the equilibrium. In this regard the gradual transformation of the economy is essential as well as the reform of the military and of the military doctrine that strictly forbids pooling Uzbekistan's military strength with others which would presumably lead to losing of its independence. The various international agreements which Uzbekistan concluded either with Russia or with the US are described in this study as well.

Furthermore, this diploma thesis also applies the geopolitical and geostrategic models as they can clarify the behaviour of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, its causes and possible

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. (Berkeley: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979): 114-127.

consequences. The pioneer of geopolitics<sup>11</sup> British geographer Halford J. Mackinder who was the first one to coin such terms as pivot, heartland, inner and outer crescent<sup>12</sup>, or the dichotomy of thalassocracy and tellurocracy.<sup>13</sup> Mackinder included the Central Asian region into the pivot area already in 1904 in his work *The Geographical Pivot of History*.<sup>14</sup> Both Syr Darya and Amu Darya Rivers flow into the Caspian Sea; an endorheic drainage making the entire area inaccessible to the sea-power. Therefore, the pivot area is the basis of the development of the land-power.<sup>15</sup> Hereafter, Mackinder renamed the pivot area as Heartland but its main purpose as the basis for land-power remained. After the First World War, Mackinder considered the newly liberated East Europe to be the cornerstone for the control of the Heartland. He concluded that whoever would rule the Heartland would be able to control the entire Eurasia and as a consequence would be able to destroy the sea-power of the inner and outer crescent.<sup>16</sup> Holding different views than his greatest critic Nicholas Spykman, Mackinder believed that with the technological development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the land-power will be superior to the sea power.<sup>17</sup> In his book *Democratic Ideals and*

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<sup>11</sup> Other prominent pioneers of geopolitics were Friedrich Ratzel, Alfred Thayer Mahan and Rudolf Kjellén.

<sup>12</sup> Inner crescent consists of areas that are directly adjoined to the Heartland and are important for its control. Outer crescent consists of territories that are usually divided from Eurasia by sea and which are unimportant in geopolitical sense.

<sup>13</sup> Thalassocracy equals sea-power; tellurocracy equals land-power.

<sup>14</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace." *Foreign Affairs* 21 (1943): 595-605.

<sup>15</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History." *The Geographical Journal* 23 (1904): 421-437.

<sup>16</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. (Washington: National Defence University Press, 1942): 105-127.

<sup>17</sup> Donald W. Meinig, "Heartland and Rimland in Eurasian History." *The Western Political Quarterly* 9 (1956): 553-569.

*Reality*, Mackinder summarized his final statement about the importance of the East Europe as follows:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland,  
Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island,  
Who rules the World-Island commands the World.<sup>18</sup>

This perspective was challenged with the end of the Cold War and the advent of the US world primacy. This period witnessed the incorporation of the larger part of the Mackinder's East Europe into the West. Some scholars such as Chris Seiple claim that in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the key region for the control of the Heartland shifted from the East Europe to the broader Central Asia.<sup>19</sup> This is a conclusion which both the principal contenders in the region admit by their actions, either consciously or unconsciously. Seiple argues that with these amendments, Mackinder's theory should serve as a sound foundation for the American foreign policy up to the present day.<sup>20</sup>

The geopolitical and geostrategic models of Zbigniew Brzezinski are based on Mackinder's theory. For him, Eurasia constitutes the chessboard on which the great game for global primacy is played. As a consequence, the United States as the sole global superpower has to control Eurasia in order to maintain its world primacy. Brzezinski distinguishes two types of states that are important for the dominance in Eurasia. At first, the active geostrategic actors are states with the capacity and national will to exercise influence or

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<sup>18</sup> Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals*, 105-112.

<sup>19</sup> Neil Megoran, "Revisiting the Pivot: The Influence of Halford Mackinder on Analysis of Uzbekistan's International Relations." *The Geographical Journal* 170 (2004): 347-358.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.



power behind their borders. In the post-Soviet space there is only one active geostrategic player, which is obviously Russia. Secondly, the geopolitical pivots are states not significant for their power or capacity, but for their sensitive location which is denying the geostrategic players the access to important areas or resources. According to Brzezinski, there are three geopolitical pivots in the post-Soviet area – Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. He claims that if Russia was able to establish its dominance over these three states it would restore its imperial status and thus would represent significant threat to the US primacy in Eurasia. On the contrary, if these states were firmly attached to the West, it would weaken Russia and most likely support its democratization.<sup>21</sup> According to Brzezinski, the Kremlin is well aware of this fact and it would endeavour to re-establish its sway in the post-Soviet area at all costs. This was clearly visible during the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008. In this instance, Russia was willing to risk rather an all-out war than to accept Georgia's accession into the NATO and its liberation from its political and economic influence. This was also closely connected with Russia's attempt to bypass any possible alternative routes for export of hydrocarbons from Azerbaijan and Central Asia that lead through Georgia.<sup>22</sup> The Ukrainian crisis and Russia's attempt to dismember the largest European state represents yet another proof of Kremlin's neo-imperial designs.

In conclusion, we could assume that the key to control of the Heartland shifted from Eastern Europe to the post-Soviet space where the most important is the troika of the aforementioned states. Perhaps, if Mackinder would have written his theory in the advent of the 21<sup>th</sup> century, the first sentence would be approximately as follows:

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<sup>21</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. (London: Basic Books, 1998): 1-148.

<sup>22</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Putin's Imperial Designs Are Reminiscent of Stalin's." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 3 (2008): 50-52.

Who rules Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan commands the Heartland...

At this point it should be also emphasized that geopolitics cannot be perceived as a clairvoyance or ability to foretell the future. Its purpose is indicative and as such can only give us a solid basis for the making of foreign policy. That is possible because along with human nature, the geographical conditions represent one of the most permanent factors in the history of mankind.

The topic of Uzbekistan's foreign policy and its making is elaborated in numerous academic works. Most important for this diploma thesis are the various studies written under the auspices of the Central Asia – Caucasus Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in Washington D. C. However, this phenomenon has never been treated in its entirety and in such a scope as this study intends to. The principal contribution of this work will be the analysis of the Uzbek pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia. This study aims to prove that this feature of Uzbekistan's foreign policy was the most decisive factor in the foreign policy decision making process of this country. Above all, this diploma thesis contributes to the study of Central Asia by attempting to use the above mentioned balance of power theory and geopolitical models in attempt to answer the above mentioned research questions.

This study employs a balanced variety of academic resources foremost from western, Russian and Central Asian authors. As previously stated, the theoretical paradigm of this thesis is based on realist and neorealist approaches of Hans Morgenthau<sup>23</sup> and Kenneth N. Waltz.<sup>24</sup> Regarding geopolitics, the most important are the works of Halford J. Mackinder,<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 1948.

<sup>24</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979.

Nicholas J. Spykman<sup>26</sup> and Zbigniew Brzezinski.<sup>27</sup> The first chapter, “The Foundations of the Uzbek External and Internal Policy” is divided into four subchapters which deal separately with the topics of Uzbekistan’s geopolitical position, political transformation, economic transformation and the threat of radical Islam. The most important sources for the first chapter were the works of Kathleen Collins<sup>28</sup> and Frederick S. Starr<sup>29</sup> that are offering helpful insight into the formation and maintaining of the power structures in post-Soviet Central Asia. The studies of Erica Marat are very valuable in order to understand the military situation and military reform in Uzbekistan.<sup>30</sup> The economic development of Uzbekistan was thoroughly described in studies of Martin C. Spechler.<sup>31</sup> The political Islam in Uzbekistan was best depicted by Adeb Khalid,<sup>32</sup> Maria Elisabeth Louw,<sup>33</sup> Vitaly V. Naumkin<sup>34</sup> and

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<sup>25</sup> Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 1942.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas J. Spykman, “Geography and Foreign Policy I.” *The American Political Science Review* 32 (1938): 28-50.

<sup>27</sup> Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Frederick S. Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Erica Marat, *The Military and the State in Central Asia: From Red Army to Independence*. (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Martin C. Spechler, *The Political Economy of Reform in Central Asia: Uzbekistan under Authoritarianism*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Adeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Maria Elisabeth Louw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia*. (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle*. (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2005).

Johan Rasanayagam.<sup>35</sup> The studies of Russian or Central Asian authors e.g. Sergei Abashin,<sup>36</sup> and K. L. Syroezhkin<sup>37</sup> are also focusing on Uzbekistan's internal developments. Especially, studies produced by Russian and Central Asian authors are usually slightly biased by their patriotic view and therefore have to be treated more critically than other sources. On the other hand, these works tend to be more descriptive and contain useful facts and data.

The second chapter, "Russian Federation in Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy", is equally based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources used in this chapter are bilateral agreements and treaties between Russia and Uzbekistan as well as other official documents. The academic resources composing the core of this chapter are the works of Maulen Ashimbaev,<sup>38</sup> Marlène Laruelle<sup>39</sup> and Aleksander Kazantsev.<sup>40</sup> For the description of the Andijan crisis which is important part of this chapter were chosen the studies of Shirin Akiner<sup>41</sup> and Margaret Meier.<sup>42</sup> The third and final chapter, "The United States of America in

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<sup>35</sup> Johan Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: The Morality of Experience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Sergei Abashin, *Natsionalizmy v Srednei Azii: v poiskakh identichnosti*. (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> K. L. Syroezhkin, *Tsentral'naya Aziya segodnya: vyzovy i ugrozy*. (Almaty: Kazakhstanskii institut strategicheskikh issledovaniy pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Maulen Ashimbaev, *New Challenges and New Geopolitics in Central Asia: After September 11*. (Almaty: Kazakh Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic Kazakhstan, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> Marlène Laruelle, "Russia in Central Asia: Old History, New Challenges?" *Europe-Central Asia Monitoring Working Paper 3* (2009).

<sup>40</sup> A. A. Kazantsev, *Bol'shaya igra s neizvestnymi pravilami: Mirovaya politika i Tsentral'naya Aziya*. (Moscow: Fond Nasledie Rossii, 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment*. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> M. Meier, *Srednyaya Aziya: Andizhanskii stsenarii*. (Moscow: Evropa, 2005).

Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy" mostly draws from the analytical articles written by experts from the Central Asia – Caucasus Institute as some of these events are quite recent and thus have not been yet elaborated as monographs. The chief secondary sources used in this chapter were written by Shahram Akbarzadeh<sup>43</sup> and John C. K. Daly.<sup>44</sup> All the primary and secondary sources were used carefully taking into account the possible bias of their authors.

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<sup>43</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda*. (London: Zed Books, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> John C. K. Daly, *Anatomy of a Crisis: US-Uzbek Relations, 2001-2005*. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2006).

## 1. The Foundations of the Uzbek External and Internal Policies

This chapter will endeavour to answer the first research question related to the nature of the factors that influenced the formation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. It will also spell out the reasons why Uzbekistan, from a geopolitical perspective, is the most important state in the Central Asian region and thus is considered by Brzezinski to be the geopolitical pivot.<sup>45</sup> Uzbekistan's foreign policy formulation has been starkly driven by turbulent internal developments within the newly independent state since 1991. In Uzbekistan the processes of state-building and nation-building went underway simultaneously in a similar fashion as in most post-colonial states.<sup>46</sup> These processes had not taken place undisturbed; rather, they were heavily deformed and shaped by the challenges which the newly born Uzbek state had to face.

Firstly, the geopolitical position together with the ethnic diversity of the region gravely influenced the foreign policy making of Tashkent. Uzbekistan's central location in the region represented both a blessing and a curse for its foreign policy. It gave the country possible advantages but simultaneously engendered its potential, to a varying degree, for strives against all of its neighbours. Secondly, there was the challenge of constructing a modern political system which would satisfy all the new and the traditional power brokers. Uzbekistan's political system proved to be stable enough as it underwent three periods of internal instability, namely in the advent of the 1990s, at the turn of the century, and between 2004 and 2005. At this point it should be mentioned that in the case of Uzbekistan as in other post-colonial states it is very intricate to distinguish between elements of domestic and

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<sup>45</sup> Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, 44-47.

<sup>46</sup> Luca Anceschi, "Integrating Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Making: the Cases of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey* 29 (2010): 143-158.

foreign policies. Hence the regimes usually use them freely in achieving its chief goal – maintaining and strengthening its own power and regime survival.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, Uzbekistan's interactions with Russia, the United States and others were driven primarily by the internal actors and challenges encountered in Uzbekistan's domestic politics.

Thirdly, after 1991 Uzbekistan was forced to rebuild its own economy almost from scratch. In addition, the ruling elite was clearly wary of the possible impact of rapidly deteriorating living standards and hence opted for a gradual reform of the economy towards the establishment of free market. The chosen reform strategy deeply influenced the interaction between Uzbekistan and the Western countries, the latter having constantly encouraged Tashkent to speed up the reform process. Fourthly, Uzbekistan had to cope with Islamic radicalism. Especially, the Islamic challenge and the regime's response to it could be considered as the most important accelerator of both Uzbekistan's internal and external policies. All the four challenges represented chief influences behind the formulation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy and the pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia constituted the Karimov's regime answer to them.

### ***1.1 The Geopolitical Challenge***

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the second half of 1991 led to the establishment of five sovereign Central Asian states which had never existed under this form and within these borders before. They were basically a product of the Soviet national delineation of the 1920s and 1930s; a deliberately artificial process.<sup>48</sup> Uzbekistan and its

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<sup>47</sup> Neil J. Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road* (London: Harwood Academia, 2000), 88-93.

<sup>48</sup> Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: CUPress, 2000), 222-230.

foreign policy makers had to cope first of all with the new geopolitical environment. This subchapter would use Nicholas J. Spykman's academic articles as the model for assessment of Uzbekistan's geopolitical position.<sup>49</sup> According to Spykman, three most important factors influencing the geopolitical position of any state are its size, world-location and regional-location. Firstly, the factor of size serves as an indicator of a state's power to resist the pressure from other states and may affect the choice between war and diplomacy as instruments of national policy.<sup>50</sup> Uzbekistan is a double landlocked country<sup>51</sup> which covers the area of 447 400 square kilometres. It is the third largest state in Central Asia. Moreover, it has by far the most central position in the region.<sup>52</sup> The principal inhabited areas are located in the vicinity of the region's three most important rivers, namely Syr Darya, Amu Darya and Zarafshon. Large areas of the country are covered with either deserts such as Kyzyl Kum or Kara Kum and with mountain ranges such as Tian Shan and Hindukush located on its eastern borders.<sup>53</sup> As Spykman claims, the factor of size can only become an element of strength if under effective centralised control.<sup>54</sup> This condition is very difficult to meet in the case of Uzbekistan as the country is de facto divided into three distant and inadequately interconnected units. The Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan and the Khorezm region with their centres in Urgench and Nukus in the north-west of the country

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<sup>49</sup> Nicholas J. Spykman, "Geography and Foreign Policy I." *The American Political Science Review* 32 (1938): 28-50; Nicholas J. Spykman, "Geography and Foreign Policy II." *The American Political Science Review* 32 (1938): 213-236.

<sup>50</sup> Spykman, "Geography and Foreign Policy I., 28-50.

<sup>51</sup> The only other double landlocked country in the world is Lichtenstein.

<sup>52</sup> Rafis Abazov, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Central Asia*. (New York: Plagrave MacMillan, 2008): 111-119.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>54</sup> Spykman, "Geography and Foreign Policy I., 28-50.



are functionally separated from the core of Uzbekistan by deserts and distance. For its part the Ferghana Valley with administrative centres in Namangan, Andijan and Farghona in the east is separated from the core of the state by mountains. The core of Uzbekistan is formed by the central territory encompassing cities of political importance such as Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara.<sup>55</sup>

According to the CIA World Factbook, in 2011 Uzbekistan had 28,1 million inhabitants which represents one half of the population of the entire Central Asia.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, its population is relatively homogeneous, with more than 80 percent of its citizens being ethnic Uzbeks. The ethnic minority groups are represented by Russians, Tajiks, Kyrgyzs, Karakalpaks and Tatars. Most importantly, there are large minorities of ethnic Uzbeks in the neighbouring states. In Afghanistan lives 1,2 million Uzbeks, in Tajikistan 1 million, in Kyrgyzstan 500 thousand, in Kazakhstan 490 thousand and in Turkmenistan approximately 250 thousand.<sup>57</sup> In the early 1990s, Uzbekistan utilized these minorities to acquire the status of regional power. Tashkent meddled in the Tajik Civil War between 1992 and 1997 in order to maintain a strong position of Uzbek ethnic minority in the Khujand area. However, this attempt was unsuccessful as the victorious Kulob faction allied with Russia and made peace with the United Tajik Opposition which controlled the eastern areas of Tajikistan, especially Gorno-Badakshan.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Tashkent supported the ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum who controlled the area surrounding Mazar-e

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<sup>55</sup> Abazov, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas*, 111-119.

<sup>56</sup> Jim Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests." Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>58</sup> Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism*, 93-97.

Sharif but had been defeated in 1998 by Taliban and banished from Afghanistan. Uzbek minorities in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan do not have such strong position and as such were never directly used in Uzbekistan's foreign policy.<sup>59</sup>

Apart from the size of territory and population, the size and composition of natural resources of particular state play also key role. Uzbekistan is a world leader in terms of reserves as well as in the production and export of gold and uranium. There are also important deposits of ferrous minerals such as copper, iron, zink, lead and manganese and nonferrous minerals such as bauxite, gold, molybdenum, silver, tungsten and uranium.<sup>60</sup> Two of the largest enterprises in the country are mining and metallurgical-producing complexes. Almalyk complex handles copper, zink, gold and lead. Navoi complex handles gold and uranium production.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Uzbekistan possesses vast reserves of coal and natural gas which makes it energy independent.<sup>62</sup> According to BP's Statistical Review of World Energy from 2012, Uzbekistan disposes of 600 million barrels of proven oil reserves and an estimated 39,7 billion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves. These reserves are negligible in terms of world oil reserves, but represent about 0,6 percent of world's gas reserves.<sup>63</sup> The most important pipeline for the export of Uzbekistan's natural gas into Russia and Kazakhstan is the Russian-owned Central Asia – Centre Pipeline system. Moreover, in August 2012 Uzbekistan began to export its natural gas into China through the Turkmenistan

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<sup>59</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda*. (London: Zed Books, 2005), 39-44.

<sup>60</sup> Juan Miranda et al., *Central Asia Atlas of Natural Resources – Asian Development Bank*. (Hong Kong: Asian Development Bank, 2010): 63-67.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem: 63-67.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem: 50-59.

<sup>63</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests," August 21, 2013.

– China pipeline. It was built by joint venture of Uzbekistan’s state-owned hydrocarbon transit monopoly Uzbekneftegaz and the China National Petroleum Corporation.<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, Spykman describes the factor of world-location. Whereas the factor of size is modified by climate, topography, natural resources, population and technological development, the importance of the world-location is conditioned by the relationship to the contemporary centres of world power and changes in routes of communication.<sup>65</sup> The centres of world power in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are quite distant from Uzbekistan as they are either in the northern Atlantic or northern Pacific area. However, there are at least efforts to revive the Silk Roads narrative and upsurge the level of transport passing through Central Asia. Since the mid-1990s the Western governments began to aim their policy at the South Caucasus and Central Asian region. The principal reason for this shift was the discovery of the vast energy potential of the Caspian Sea basin. Because of this, the United States and the European Union soon launched a series of initiatives such as the Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia (TRACECA), the Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe (INOGATE), the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline or the New Silk Roads Act.<sup>66</sup> The competition for the Central Asian energy resources was soon dubbed the New Great Game after the great-power rivalry of the British and Russian Empires in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>67</sup> This time, however, the great-power system was no longer binary and

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<sup>64</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>65</sup> Spykman, “Geography and Foreign Policy I., 28-50.

<sup>66</sup> Sébastien Peyrouse, *The Economic Aspects of the China-Central Asia Rapprochement*. (Stockholm: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2007), 9-18.

<sup>67</sup> Marlène Laruelle, *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies*. (London: Ashgate, 2011), 7-15.

the importance of railways was replaced by the importance of pipelines.<sup>68</sup> Great Britain was replaced by the US and the list of contenders was soon joined by other regional powers such as China, Iran, India or Turkey.<sup>69</sup>

As a third factor that influences the geopolitical position of the state, Spykman defines the factor of regional-location. According to him the most beneficial position for a state is betwixt several weaker neighbours.<sup>70</sup> This is definitely true for Uzbekistan; however, it is made void by the presence of far more powerful states in the vicinity of the entire Central Asian region. At the same time, the security and political interests of the US as the world's sole superpower are also present in the region. The frontier territories of Uzbekistan are rather disadvantageous in nature.<sup>71</sup> For instance, the Ustyurt Plateau in Karakalpakstan serves for the smuggling of narcotics as it is rather difficult to control it.<sup>72</sup> The same applies for the mountainous borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan which are continuously used by drug traffickers and radical Islamists. Indeed, Uzbekistan has border demarcation disputes with all the neighbouring countries except for Afghanistan.<sup>73</sup>

If we look again at Spykman's model, it is clearly visible that Uzbekistan's geopolitical position is both advantageous and disadvantageous depending on the direction

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<sup>68</sup> Mohammed E. Ahrari, "The New Great Game in Muslim Central Asia," *McNair Paper* 47 (1996): 50-62.

<sup>69</sup> Lena Johnson, "Russia and Central Asia," in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, edited by Roy Allison et al. (London: Brookings Institute Press, 2001), 95-99.

<sup>70</sup> Spykman, "Geography and Foreign Policy II., 213-236.

<sup>71</sup> Abazov, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas*, 111-119.

<sup>72</sup> M. P. Arunova, "Narkoopasnost' s yuga." In *Tsentral'naya Aziya v sisteme mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii*, edited by B. A. Zair-Bek et al. (Moscow: Moskovskaya tipografiya Nomer 6, 2004): 313-326.

<sup>73</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests," August 21, 2013.

taken by the country's foreign policy. The size of its territory, population and natural resources is beneficial for spreading its political influence. Nevertheless, the territory of Uzbekistan is topographically indented and thus much of the state's energy is devoted to controlling its own territory. The world-location of Uzbekistan is becoming more advantageous with the reappearance of the Silk Road narrative in the Western political discourses in the 1990s. However, the country still lies on the absolute politico-economic periphery of the contemporary world. Moreover, the regional-location of Uzbekistan is rather disadvantageous as the Central Asian region is ringed by several regional or continental powers. This clearly obliterates Uzbekistan's relative advantage as being the most populous state in Central Asia with central location. Hence, Tashkent had to compensate the relative weaknesses of its geopolitical position by the external balancing ergo the pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia. Moreover, the central position and its strong connection with the region prove that Uzbekistan holds the role of geopolitical pivot of the broader Central Asian region. If the tellurocracy were able to control Uzbekistan, it would easily sway the rest of the region to its will. The same logic could be used in case Uzbekistan was backed by the thalassocracy. In that case it could decisively strengthen its capacity to proclaim its regional leadership status. However, both the tellurocracy and thalassocracy have their price for offering their support and that is the reason why Uzbekistan has to play them against each other.

## ***1.2 The Political Challenge***

The political system of post-Soviet Uzbekistan is most of all linked with the person of Islam Karimov. He had become the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in the course of 1989 and remained the most powerful figure up to

this day.<sup>74</sup> He was elected president in 1990 by the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR and then in the only partially free elections in the history of Uzbekistan, he was reelected by the popular vote in 1991.<sup>75</sup> Karimov's first term should have initially expired after five years; however in 1995 it was extended by a nationwide referendum until 2000. In 1999 Karimov won the next presidential elections and two years later his term was extended again by referendum until 2007.<sup>76</sup> In 2007 Karimov won the presidential elections again. It is likely, however, that he will not participate in the next presidential elections scheduled for the beginning of 2015 due to his deteriorating health and age. The constitutional amendment from 2011 which shortened the mandate of the president from seven to five years could be seen as a sign of this development.<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, for the Russian and American policy in Uzbekistan the personality of Islam Karimov represents unchangeable constant with which it has to reckon up to the near future.

On the 8th December 1992 Uzbekistan adopted a new constitution. It formally implemented the separation of government among the judiciary, the legislature represented by unicameral parliament named the "Oliy Majlis", and the executive formed by the presidential administration and the government. In 2004, a constitutional amendment was adopted introducing a bicameral parliament.<sup>78</sup> Yet in fact, the entire political system is exclusively dominated by president and his administration. The local state officials are

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<sup>74</sup> B. K. Sultanov, *Tsentrāl'naya Aziya: 1991-2009 g.* (Almaty: Kazakhstanskii institut strategicheskikh issledovaniĭ pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan, 2010)192-202.

<sup>75</sup> Slavomír Horák, *Střední Asie mezi východem a západem.* (Prague: Karolinum, 2005), 48-54.

<sup>76</sup> Eldar Ismailov et al., *Central Asia 2006: Analytical Annual.* (Stockholm: Central Asia and Caucasus Press, 2007), 282-284.

<sup>77</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests," August 21, 2013.

<sup>78</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on December 8, 1992.

personally appointed by the president, the so-called opposition parties in parliament are oppositional in name only, and the judiciary is directly supervised by members of the presidential administration.<sup>79</sup> Karimov himself does not conceal that the regime is not fully democratic. In his opinion, a certain level of autocratic rule is necessary for a smooth economic transformation and foremost for the preservation of the internal stability of the country. He often compares the relative inner stability of Uzbekistan with the internal turmoil and civil wars of Tajikistan or Afghanistan in the 1990s.<sup>80</sup>

The landscape of political parties in Uzbekistan was not changed much since the beginning of the new millennium. Most important political parties as of 2012 are the Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party that succeeded the former Communist Party of Uzbek SSR; the Liberal Democratic Party founded by government connected businessmen; the National Revival (Milliy Tiklanish) comprising state-supported intellectuals, and the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan which is guaranteed 15 out of 120 chairs in the lower chamber of the parliament by law.<sup>81</sup> The former Fidokorlar (Self-Sacrifice) National Democratic Party merged with the National Revival Party in 2008. All of these political parties vociferously support Karimov's regime. The real opposition parties Birdamlik, Birlik, Erk, Free Farmers and the Sunshine Coalition are illegal and their leaders are either exiled or imprisoned.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Maria Pikulina, "Power Structures and Problems of Law Implementation in Uzbekistan," in *Realities of Transformation: Democratic Politics in Central Asia Revisited*, edited by Andrea Berg et al. (Hamburg: Nomos, 2006), 143-146.

<sup>80</sup> Stuart Horsman, "Independent Uzbekistan: Ten Years of Gradualism or Stagnation," in *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia*, edited by Sally N. Cummings. (London: Routledge, 2003), 47-51.

<sup>81</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests," August 21, 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem.

While the formal political system is unambiguously dominated by Islam Karimov, the informal political system of Uzbekistan's clans is more difficult to tame. Clans are informal organizations based on an extensive network of kinship and fictive or perceived kinship relations.<sup>83</sup> Three factors explain the importance of clans in Uzbek domestic politics. Firstly, the clan structures were preserved in Uzbekistan and Central Asia because of the late state formation caused by colonialism. Secondly, it was because of the delayed formation of a nation-state identity and finally because of the existence of economic shortages and of the non-existent or deformed market economy.<sup>84</sup> Territoriality plays an important role in clans' identification and in the definition of inter-clan relations. The most important of the clans are Samarkand-Bukhara clan, Tashkent clan, Ferghana clan, Kashkadarya-Sukhandarya clan and Khorezm clan.<sup>85</sup> Karimov, as was the case of the longest serving Soviet First Secretary Sharaf Rashidov, represents the interests of the Samarkand-Bukhara clan.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, he has to continuously balance all the other clans as they hold the real power in Uzbekistan.<sup>87</sup> As a consequence of the Reagan-Thatcher revolution and the Washington consensus, the Central Asian states were pressured by the West at the beginning of 1990s to give up their

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<sup>83</sup> Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23-32.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, 43-44.

<sup>85</sup> K. L. Syroezhkin, *Tsentral'naya Aziya segodnya: vyzovy i ugrozy*. (Almaty: Kazakhstanskii institut strategicheskikh issledovaniy pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan, 2011): 111-115.

<sup>86</sup> Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan," in *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, edited by Yaacov Roi et al. (London: F. Cass, 1995), 109-115.

<sup>87</sup> Frederick S. Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, 2006): 9-12.



allegedly inflated state apparatus. However, the state apparatus was in fact underdeveloped and therefore the Central Asian leaders had to rely heavily on informal clan structures.<sup>88</sup>

Uzbekistan's national army, the largest armed force in Central Asia, is another important pillar of Karimov's power. In 2013 it comprised of 24 500 ground force troops, 7 500 air force troops, 16 000 joint troops, 19 000 internal security troops and 1 000 members of guard troops. In 2011 the defence sector expenses amounted to ten percent of Uzbekistan's budget. Even though Uzbekistan is internally a rather stable country, there appeared three periods of increased internal political instability. The first period of Uzbekistan's internal instability was closely connected with the chaos resulting from the fall of the Soviet Union. In 1989, the Ferghana valley was engulfed with ethnic violence targeted against the local Meskhetian Turks.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, the following year bloody clashes erupted between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyzs in the vicinity of Kyrgyzstan's cities Osh and Ozgen.<sup>90</sup> This conflict was never entirely suppressed. On the contrary, in 2010 another series of interethnic clashes occurred in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan which led to the emigration of hundreds ethnic Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan.<sup>91</sup>

Post-Communist elite led by Islam Karimov had to face in early 1990s dual threat of nationalists and Islamists. The nationalist political parties Birlik and Erk were strong enough

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<sup>88</sup> Stephen Blank, "Rethinking Central Asia and Its Security Issues," *Unidad de Investigación sobre Seguridad y Cooperación Internacional Discussion Papers* 28 (2012): 9-20.

<sup>89</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), 94-104.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>91</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests." Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

for the leader of Erk Muhammad Solih to stand in the first presidential elections against Karimov.<sup>92</sup> The secular opposition was suppressed by 1993. Its leaders were either exiled or persecuted.<sup>93</sup> However, the Islamic opposition was harder to suppress. Uzbekistan's Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf and the Islamic Renaissance Party of Uzbekistan held firm position in Tashkent. In Ferghana valley several Islamist organizations successfully challenged the central government. This notwithstanding, the Islamic opposition was analogically suppressed in 1992 and 1993.<sup>94</sup> As a synthesis of this dual threat Karimov created a new state ideology based on a mixture of the traditional moderate Islam and Uzbek nationalism.<sup>95</sup>

The second period of the internal instability began in February 1999 with the reported assassination attempt on President Karimov. In the summer 1999 and 2000, armed incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan occurred and they reached the territory of Uzbekistan in 2000. Finally, third period of the internal instability took place in 2004 and 2005. In the first year there were several bomb attacks in Tashkent and Samarkand regions. In May 2005 the Karimov's regime was endangered by the events in Andijan. In general, the Central Asian regimes are far more jeopardized by the internal than external threats. Subsequently, Uzbekistan became more willing to cooperate with an external partner in response to the internal crisis that directly challenged its very existence.<sup>96</sup> However,

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<sup>92</sup> Horák, *Střední Asie*, 48-54.

<sup>93</sup> Sultanov, *Tsentrāl'naya Aziya*, 192-202.

<sup>94</sup> Horsman, "Independent Uzbekistan," 47-51.

<sup>95</sup> Sergei Abashin, *Natsionalizmy v Srednei Azii: v poiskakh identichnosti*. (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2007): 195-201.

<sup>96</sup> Blank, "Rethinking Central Asia," 9-20.

analogically when the internal threat was over, Tashkent endeavoured to minimize the external threat, in this case through strengthening of Russia's or America's influence in the region. Since 1991 the regime survival has represented the top priority for Tashkent's internal and external policies. Accordingly to the realist paradigm, the quest for enhancement of political and economic power constituted crucial task, otherwise the regime would fall. In this sense, the balance of power policy represents the *raison d'état* of Uzbekistan's foreign policy as it helps it to cement and preserve Karimov's regime. Moreover, the political and military might of Uzbekistan bestows it the position of the holder of the balance in the region. In other words, it is not only beneficial for Tashkent to closely cooperate either with Washington or Moscow but also vice versa. It is in the best interests of both the US and Russia to improve their relations with Uzbekistan because this way they hinder each other from attaining hegemony over Central Asia.

### ***1.3 The Economic Challenge***

To build a self-reliant and developed economy was the key objective in order to attain full national independence. From the beginning Islam Karimov favoured a gradualist approach which meant to avert the potential financial crises and the sharp slump of the living standards which could possibly radicalize the population.<sup>97</sup> Tashkent leadership decided that it would first put into effect only "small scale privatization" and housing reform.<sup>98</sup> However, hypothetically, even if they had launched a "large scale privatisation" there was simply not

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<sup>97</sup> Anders Aslund, *How Capitalism Was Built: The Transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 11-28.

<sup>98</sup> Richard Pomfret, "Central Asia after Two Decades of Independence," *United Nations University Wider* 53 (2010): 1-6.

enough capital and potential buyers to carry it out successfully. Karimov declared several times that he opposed the shock therapy applied by the Russians and that he preferred the Asian approach to transformation. He especially admired the South Korean model with its emphasis on traditional values of stability and hierarchy.<sup>99</sup>

Karimov's approach at first paid off. Already in 1996 the level of industrial output from 1991 had been reached and in the terms of general output performance Uzbekistan was the most successful state in the post-Soviet space including the Baltic States based on the starting position in 1991.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, this economic success was only thanks to high world market price of several export raw materials such as cotton, gold and uranium. In 1996 the price of these raw materials fell sharply and consequently the entire Uzbekistan's economy went down.<sup>101</sup> Because of the effects of the Dutch disease,<sup>102</sup> in 1996, the Uzbek currency *som* was made inconvertible though it had been introduced only three years earlier. The convertibility was renewed only in October 2003 when the world prices of cotton and gold rose again.<sup>103</sup> The world financial crisis of 2008 did not affect Uzbekistan's economy strongly because the country remains isolated from the world economy and is protected by high tariffs.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Martin C. Spechler, *The Political Economy of Reform in Central Asia: Uzbekistan under Authoritarianism*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 28-34.

<sup>100</sup> Pomfret, "Central Asia," 13-14.

<sup>101</sup> Spechler, *The Political Economy of Reform*, 43-47.

<sup>102</sup> Dutch disease is economic term for a situation when the low diversification of exports and dependence of the economy on these exports leads to its vulnerability.

<sup>103</sup> Sultanov, *Tsentral'naya Aziya*, 215-231.

<sup>104</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests," August 21, 2013.

Although Karimov's economic reform primarily focused on lowering Uzbekistan's dependence on Russia, economic integration with Russia may have higher returns in the short run in comparison with other options. This conclusion has received increasing support since 2003 and was one of the reasons for Tashkent's integration with the Eurasian Economic Community in 2006.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, Karimov realized that many of the promising Western initiatives such as the TRACECA project remain largely on paper.<sup>106</sup> This attitude changed when the US Congress began sending financial support to Uzbekistan again in 2009. Furthermore, the departure of NATO from Afghanistan was echoed with the restoration of the Silk Road narrative. It was recently voiced several times by the former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.<sup>107</sup>

Neighbouring Afghanistan is considered by the United Nations to be the world's principal exporter of opiates since 2000. Its economy is at least from 2002 completely dependent on the poppy cultivation.<sup>108</sup> Half of the Afghan production of opiates is exported through Pakistan and India, the other half through the "Northern Route" of Central Asia.<sup>109</sup> One of the most important Central Asian smuggling corridors passes through Uzbekistan

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<sup>105</sup> Martina Reiser and Dennis de Tray, "Uzbekistan," in *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*, edited by S. Frederick Starr et al. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2007), 193-209.

<sup>106</sup> Serkan Yalcin, "Revitalizing the Eurasian Trade: Prospects from the TRACECA Project," *Akademik Arastiznatur Dergisi* 33 (2007): 26-38.

<sup>107</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests," August 21, 2013.

<sup>108</sup> Arunova, "Narkoopasnost' s yuga," 313-326.

<sup>109</sup> Kairat Osmonaliev, *Developing Counter-Narcotics Policy in Central Asia: Legal and Political Dimensions*. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2005), 12-23.

from Termez and Bukhara to Urgench and Nukus.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the area between Samarkand and Karshi is one of the chief redistribution hubs for Central Asia. Besides, not only the export of drugs rises but also the drug consumption in Central Asia itself.<sup>111</sup> The drug traffickers are getting incessantly bolder. For instance, the Russian border troops in Tajikistan registered approximately 25 border clashes with the armed smugglers in the area under their jurisdiction in 2003 only.<sup>112</sup> As it will be seen later in the text, in the light of this statistics the armed incursions of the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan do not look so appalling. Moreover, Russia's assistance is vital for the local regimes in their struggle against drug-trafficking. Ironically, Russia itself is the largest consumer of narcotics in the world with 2,5 million of drug-addicts.<sup>113</sup>

Apart from the trade in narcotics, the reciprocal situation of Russian and Uzbek minorities represents an important economic topic as well. In 1989 there were in Central Asia approximately 9,5 million members of the Russian diaspora. Just in Uzbekistan there were 1,6 million ethnic Russians in 1989 but half of them left before 2006. This was mainly because of their perceived second class citizen status after the fall of the Soviet Union. For example, Russian language in Uzbekistan lost its status as the language of interethnic communication in 1995.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, education in Russian language was generally

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<sup>110</sup> Arunova, "Narkoopasnost' s yuga," 313-326.

<sup>111</sup> Sébastien Peyrouse, "Drug-trafficking in Central Asia," *Institute for Security and Development Policy - Policy Brief 8* (2009): 1-4.

<sup>112</sup> Osmonaliev, *Developing Counter-Narcotics Policy*, 12-23.

<sup>113</sup> Carol R. Saivetz, "The Ties that Bind? Russia's Evolving Relations with Its Neighbors." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45 (2012): 401-412.

<sup>114</sup> Sébastien Peyrouse, "The Russian Minority in Central Asia: Migration, Politics and Language," *Kennan Institute Occasional Papers* 297 (2008), 1-13.

suppressed and the possibility of the dual citizenship rejected. As a consequence, Uzbekistan's economy had to cope with the loss of mostly qualified labour force for which the country did not have any substitution in the first few years.<sup>115</sup>

On the other hand, there is a steady flow of Uzbek seasonal workers into the Russian Federation. Roughly two million Uzbeks worked seasonally abroad in the first half of 2000s and more than two thirds of them did so in Russia. Their remittances in the first half of the 2000s were estimated to constitute eight per cent of the Uzbek GDP.<sup>116</sup> The largest share of those seasonal workers originates from the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, by far the poorest region of Uzbekistan.<sup>117</sup> The presence of Russian minority in Uzbekistan and Uzbek minority in Russia was in the past exploited by Moscow in order to gain influence over Uzbekistan.<sup>118</sup> Illegal migration in both countries causes increasing rates of criminality. Several intergovernmental agreements have been concluded to address this issue.<sup>119</sup> Among other these agreements allow Russia to open reciprocally offices of its Ministry of Interior, Federal Migration Service and Federal Security Service in Uzbekistan.<sup>120</sup> However, it is dubious whether it will have any practical consequences in the near future.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibidem, 13-28.

<sup>116</sup> Erica Marat, *Labour Migration in Central Asia: Implication of the Global Economic Crisis*. (Singapore: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2009), 5-11.

<sup>117</sup> Reuel R. Hanks, "A Separate Space: Karakalpak Nationalism and Devolution in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52 (2000), 939-953.

<sup>118</sup> Marat, *Labour Migration*, 12-20.

<sup>119</sup> "Soglashenie mezhdru Pravitelstvom Rossijskoj Federacii i Pravitelstvom Respubliki Uzbekistan o sotrudnichestve v borbe s nezakonnoj migraciej." Treaty signed on July 4, 2007 in Moscow.

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem.

Another important supranational challenge for Uzbekistan's economy is the question pertaining to irrigation and water management. The system of water management in Central Asia did not work well during the Soviet era. The Aral environmental catastrophe serves as an example of this development. Nonetheless, its functioning worsened after the Central Asian states achieved their independence. The upstream countries Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are almost steadily in strife with the downstream countries Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. It should be noted that the problem here does not lie in the lack of water but rather in its ineffective distribution.<sup>121</sup> Russia in this case supports rather the upstream countries as it hopes to acquire contracts for the construction of new dams and other components of infrastructure there.<sup>122</sup>

Regarding the economic transformation, we can conclude that Uzbekistan is heavily dependent on the export of its cotton production, gold, uranium and natural gas. This was proved in 1996 when its economy almost collapsed after the decrement of the world prices of cotton and gold. Therefore, Uzbekistan has to maintain economic relations with its purchasers under any conditions. Otherwise any attempt to attain economic autarchy would inevitably lead to a political and social disaster. Uzbekistan also needs to cooperate with its neighbours in broader Central Asia in the case of other trans-national economic challenges, namely drug-trafficking, water management, Russian diaspora in Uzbekistan and Uzbek diaspora in Russia. This mutual dependence also narrows Uzbekistan's foreign policy ability to manoeuvre. As we see, although Uzbekistan has favourable geopolitical conditions to become regional leader, they are almost nullified by its economic interdependence on

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<sup>121</sup> Shavkat Rakhmatullaev, "Facts and Perspectives of Water Reservoirs in Central Asia: A Special Focus on Uzbekistan," *Water 2* (2010): 307-320.

<sup>122</sup> Eldar Ismailov et al., *Central Asia 2008: Analytical Annual*. (Stockholm: Central Asia and Caucasus Press, 2009), 417-421.



neighbouring states. This Gordian knot could be cut off only through cooperation with sufficiently strong external partner. Unfortunately for Tashkent's policy makers all reasonable choices are narrowed to cooperation either with the US or Russia. However, Washington pressures for the economic liberalisation and Moscow for its own economic dominance. Both options are inadmissible for Karimov's regime and hence it has to pursue the policy of the balance of power. It can comply with the wishes of either party only as much as it does not run counter its own interests.

## ***2.4 The Islamic Challenge***

Radical Islam represented the greatest challenge by far for the new regime in Tashkent. President Karimov sought to utilize the Islamic revival for his own ideological outcomes. As a former Communist, he considered Islam to be more of a set of traditions, culture and morals than a religion.<sup>123</sup> However, there were others who deemed that the Islamic revival should have been accompanied by the cleansing of its practices. In the early 1970s and 1980s the first proponents of the fundamentalist teaching<sup>124</sup> appeared in Central Asia. The most influential among them were the two Muhammadjan Hindustoni's disciples Rahmatullah-alloma and Abduhvali qori.<sup>125</sup> Both claimed that Central Asian Islam had to be purified even by all means including violence and as opposed to Hindustoni they considered

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<sup>123</sup> Leonid Levitin, *Uzbekistan na istoricheskom povorote: Kriticheskie zametki storonnika Prezidenta Islama Karimova*. (Moscow: Vagrius, 2001): 247-254.

<sup>124</sup> Islamic fundamentalism is a belief that Islam should be cleansed off of alien influences and return to its fundamentals - the Quran and the Sunnah.

<sup>125</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Papers* 77 (2007): 14-19.

Jihad<sup>126</sup> to be mainly a violent way of spreading the word of Allah.<sup>127</sup> The supporters of Hindustoni waged a prolonged ideological struggle with the proponents of Abduhvali qori and other salafists.<sup>128</sup> This struggle which had been only underground prior to the dissolution of the Soviet power consequently spread into the streets and mosques. Almost every mosque in the early 1990s became a battleground between the Hanafi<sup>129</sup> conservatives and Wahhabi<sup>130</sup> fundamentalists.<sup>131</sup> In 1989, the protests of the thousands of Muslims even led to the dismissal of the unpopular Central Asian Mufti<sup>132</sup> Shamsuddin Bobokhanov.<sup>133</sup>

The most arduous situation was in the densely inhabited Ferghana valley. In the local administrative centre Namangan several volunteer groups such as Adolat, Islam Lashkorlari or Towba emerged in the beginning of 1990s. These had at first only substituted the work of the local police force. However, subsequently they radicalized and effectively seized the

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<sup>126</sup> Jihad is one of the religious duties of every Muslim. There are two commonly accepted meanings of Jihad: an inner spiritual struggle and an outer physical struggle.

<sup>127</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Papers* 77 (2007): 14-19.

<sup>128</sup> Salafism is term synonymous with wahhabism.

<sup>129</sup> Hanafi madhab is one of the four schools of jurisprudence within Sunni Islam. It is predominant in Central Asia and rather moderate and tolerant to other religions.

<sup>130</sup> Wahhabi movement is an ultra-conservative sect or branch of Sunni Islam. The movement is predominant especially on the Arabian Peninsula. Almost every fundamentalist in Central Asia is being wrongly labelled as Wahhabi since the early 1990s.

<sup>131</sup> Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, edited by S. Frederick Starr et al. (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2011), 312-315.

<sup>132</sup> Mufti is a Sunni scholar or in the case of Uzbekistan head of semi-official organization overseeing Islamic practices in the country.

<sup>133</sup> Maria Elisabeth Louw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia*. (London: Routledge, 2007), 21-25.

power in the city. The leader of Adolat Tahir Yuldashev planned to transform the Ferghana valley into Islamic state with the rule of sharia law.<sup>134</sup> The last and the most audacious act of the Namangan's fundamentalists represented the seizure of the local city hall in December 1991.<sup>135</sup> They had arranged a meeting there and required the presence of the president who in fact arrived only a few hours later. Karimov's subsequent negotiations with Yuldashev and other Namangan's religious and civil representatives had a formative impact on the way he dealt with political Islam in the future. The most important lesson for Karimov was that the protesters were internally divided into two distinct groups. One much larger group focused solely on demands of socio-economic character whereas the other significantly smaller voiced predominantly religious demands.<sup>136</sup> Hence, he decided to utilize this divide and to satisfy as much as possible the former group. The latter group ought to be dealt with the use of force. This, in fact, happened in the first months of 1992 when the military reinstated the capital's control over the Ferghana valley.<sup>137</sup>

After 1992, period of relative internal peace followed as the radicals had been either persecuted or had fled into Afghanistan and Tajikistan where they joined the local civil wars. However, as the war in Tajikistan was nearing to its end, Yuldashev, along with his friend and a successful field commander of the United Tajik Opposition Juma Namangani, decided to create the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in 1998.<sup>138</sup> This organization was propelled

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<sup>134</sup> Sharia is the moral code and religious law of Islam.

<sup>135</sup> Babadjanov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley," 320-322.

<sup>136</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>137</sup> Kenneth Weisbrode, *Central Asia: Prize or Quicksand?* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001): 23-27.

<sup>138</sup> Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle*. (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2005), 68-70.

with the goal of creating an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, in the hatred towards the Karimov's regime and foremost by the needs of the drug traffickers which represented its main source of revenue.<sup>139</sup> It even proclaimed Jihad against the Uzbek government in August 1999.<sup>140</sup> The organization led two successful campaigns of raids into Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan one year later. These actions had been seriously threatening the international and security status quo in the region. For example the Kyrgyz army proved to be absolutely unprepared to suppress incursions of such a scale.<sup>141</sup> In ideological terms, however, the IMU was quite unsophisticated. Yuldashev was not an outstanding ulama<sup>142</sup> as his alleged mental predecessor Abduhvali qori, for instance he even claimed that the IMU practiced the Hanafi madhab which would mean that they could have been no slafists who practiced exclusively the Hanbali<sup>143</sup> madhab.<sup>144</sup> This weak ideological prowess leads to the possible conclusion that the Islamic rhetoric was more or less an umbrella for the real interests of the organization – the narcotics trafficking.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Zurab Todua, *Ekspansiya islamistov na Kavkaze i v Tsentral'noi Azii*. (Moscow: IN-OKTAVO, 2006): 179-187.

<sup>140</sup> The Call to Jihad by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, August 25, 1999.

<sup>141</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb-ut Tahrir*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

<sup>142</sup> Islamic scholar.

<sup>143</sup> Hanbali madhab is one of the four schools of jurisprudence within Sunni Islam.

<sup>144</sup> Olcott, "Roots of Radical Islam," 14-19.

<sup>145</sup> Slavomír Horák, "Politický islám ve Střední Asii: radikální islamisté nebo utlačovaní muslimové?" In *Politická moc versus náboženská autorita Asii*, edited by M. Slobodnik et al. (Bratislava: Chronos, 2006): 97-107.

Everyone expected a new round of incursions in summer 2001 but the members of the IMU had to help their allies from Taliban and al-Qaeda in their fight against the Afghan Northern Alliance and then with the American forces. As a consequence of the American invasion, the IMU had been decimated and its military leader Namangani allegedly killed.<sup>146</sup> As noted earlier, Russia had not been particularly politically active in Central Asia in the advent of 1990s and did not assist Karimov in suppressing the Namangan crisis. The situation significantly changed when Vladimir Putin became the prime minister of Russia in 1999. This coincided not only with the incursions of the IMU but also with the inception of the Second Chechen War. Hence, since Moscow and Tashkent found a common enemy, they collaborated very closely throughout this period. An example of this can be the Southern Shield military exercise of the CIS in 1999 which focused precisely on the elimination of the IMU kind of threat.<sup>147</sup> However, this partial Russian success was almost completely reversed as a consequence of the US intervention in Afghanistan.

Throughout the 1990s Karimov's regime utilized and exaggerated the threat of Islamic radicalism to its own ends.<sup>148</sup> With the demise of the IMU it was essential to find another Islamic adversary which was discovered in the Hizb-ut Tahrir al-Islami. Although this organization has slightly similar goals as the IMU, in other words, the creation of an Islamic Caliphate under the rule of the sharia, their respective methods differ significantly. The HTI is a solely non-violent movement striving to attain its aim through propaganda

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<sup>146</sup> Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 151-167.

<sup>147</sup> Sultanov, *Tsentral'naya Aziya*, 192-202.

<sup>148</sup> Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, 96-100.

work.<sup>149</sup> Nonetheless, this did not avert the ruling regime to turn its attention towards the organisation and persecute its real and supposed members.<sup>150</sup> The accelerators of the HTI support among the Uzbek populations are chiefly poverty, unemployment, corruption and nepotism. Moreover, it is not unlikely that some frustrated members might resort to the use of force as it happened probably in Andijan in May 2005.<sup>151</sup>

There are several versions of the Andijan crisis. The two most taken for reference are the official government's version and the version of the Western human-rights activists. According to the official government's version, a group of trained militants attacked post of the Uzbekistan's police and an army base in the vicinity of Andijan on 12th May. They acquired in this way plenty of weapons and military vehicles.<sup>152</sup> The armed group then stormed the Andijan prison in the middle of the night and armed part of the inmates. Some of those inmates were allegedly members of the local branch of the HTI called Akromiya after its founder Akrom Yuldashev.<sup>153</sup> After the storming of the local prison the militants advanced into the centre of the town. Along the way, they unsuccessfully attempted to neutralize the local headquarters of the National Security Service. Later, they had reached the Babur square in the centre and occupied the local city hall, taking hostages in the process.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 151-167.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>151</sup> Louw, *Everyday Islam*, 25-28.

<sup>152</sup> M. Meier, *Srednyaya Aziya: Andizhanskii stsenarii*. (Moscow: Evropa, 2005): 42-48.

<sup>153</sup> Babadjanov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley," 334-338.

<sup>154</sup> Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment*. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2005), 16-23.

In the morning, the government's reinforcements arrived from Tashkent and the Babur square was being filled with a crowd of onlookers. Some sources even claim that the citizens of Andijan were encouraged by the militants to come to the square. It is possible that, the militants wanted to repeat the Tulip Revolution which ousted in the spring of the same year the Kyrgyz president Askar Akaev.<sup>155</sup> However, in comparison to Akaev, Karimov's reaction was much more resolute. When it became clear that the negotiations with the militants would be unsuccessful, the president decided that the town hall would be stormed by the special forces of the Ministry of Interior. The militants were swiftly defeated but with the cost of many civilian lives; over 200 people were killed according to the government estimates.<sup>156</sup>

The other version claims that there were at least 750 casualties and that the Akromiya movement was possibly just fabricated by Uzbekistan's regime. For instance, there are no references about the restoration of Caliphate in Yuldashev's most famous book *A Path to the True Faith*. Hence, it seems that the trial with Andijan's businessmen who were accused of being members of Akromiya was motivated economically rather than religiously. According to some witnesses, the armed militants were actually relatives of these businessmen who were so desperate that they tried to storm the local prison.<sup>157</sup> Nonetheless, the situation was exaggerated and skewed by the Western media which simply expected another colour revolution. The Western governments soon followed suit, which had dire consequences for Karimov's regime which, in turn, had to sue for help from Russia which, again in turn, was

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<sup>155</sup> Meier, *Srednyaya Aziya*, 64-77.

<sup>156</sup> Babadjanov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley," 334-338.

<sup>157</sup> Johan Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: The Morality of Experience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-7.

more than willing to comply.<sup>158</sup> Thus the internal challenge of Uzbekistan's Islamists significantly influenced its Uzbekistan's foreign policy and relation to Russia that now seemed as the only guarantor of the survival of Karimov's regime. However, this logic changed with the planned withdrawal of the ISAF from Afghanistan as will be explained more thoroughly in the third chapter dealing with the relations between the US and Russia.

The threat of radical Islam to Uzbekistan is important for two reasons. Firstly, it represents by far the greatest peril to the preservation of Karimov's regime. Secondly, it constitutes the principal factor behind the turnovers of Uzbekistan's foreign policy on either Washington or Moscow. This also clearly proves the fact that it is impossible to distinguish between Tashkent's internal and external policy as their goals are the same as well as the methods used to their achievement. The Islamic movement of Uzbekistan's incursions, the Andijan events and the withdrawal of the ISAF from Afghanistan are game-changing processes. In this sense, Uzbekistan was obliged to respond to them in order not to lose its role of the holder of the balance. It chose pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia as response to these events. Moreover, it is important to underline that since 2001 consider both these Uzbekistan's potential allies counter-terrorism as one of their policy imperatives. Hence, Karimov's regime will always find a common language with either of them. In the field of counter-terrorism Washington, Moscow and Tashkent are heavily interdependent and this will not change in the nearest future.

The pendulum diplomacy policy provided the answer or reaction on the four factors that mostly influenced Uzbekistan's foreign policy making. In varying degree, these challenges or drivers have influenced the entire Uzbekistan's post-1991 development. We

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<sup>158</sup> Akiner, *Violence in Andijan*, 30-41.



can label these four drivers the causes of the Uzbekistan's foreign policy or its foreign policy making process and the pendulum diplomacy their solution. It is not yet possible to evaluate whether this policy brought a tangible and tenable success. However, we can say with certainty that Uzbekistan by its actions plainly refused to be a mere figure on the chessboard of great powers. It deliberately sought to change its status from geopolitical pivot to a geostrategic player. Nevertheless, it had to free itself to its own disadvantage from the influence of the United States and Russia. This was not an easy task and to this point Uzbekistan has been failing. But the game is still on.

## 2. Russia in Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy

This chapter will endeavour to answer the research question about which factors and causes played the decisive role in the case of Uzbekistan's most significant foreign policy turnovers in 2001, 2005 and 2012. It will also attempt to describe the gradual evolution of relations between Uzbekistan and Russia that were heavily influenced by Tashkent's pendulum diplomacy. The Russo-Uzbek relations are marked by the common history of both peoples being part of one state for more than one hundred years. Russian conquest of the Kokand khanate, Bukhara emirate and Khiva khanate began with the storming of Tashkent in 1865 and was fully completed two decades later.<sup>159</sup> The present states borders and to a greater extent even the individual national identities of the Central Asian states were created under the Soviet auspices in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, in the process of national delineation.<sup>160</sup>

During the course of the Soviet era, Uzbekistan was one of the most tranquil parts of the Soviet Empire, more so during the reign of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic Sharaf Rashidov between 1959 and 1983.<sup>161</sup> However, the situation altered dramatically with the deaths of Brezhnev and his *protégé* Rashidov. Soon after acquiring power in Moscow Mikhail Gorbachev unravelled the so-called cotton affair. His investigators proved that the Uzbeks had been actually delivering much less cotton than they had claimed in the statistics and for which they had been paid by the Soviet centre. Therefore, Gorbachev unleashed a mass purge of the Communist Party which was,

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<sup>159</sup> Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, 198-200.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*, 222-223.

<sup>161</sup> Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty, 108-121.

however, perceived by the Uzbeks as a nationalist move. Hence, Rashidov quickly gained the esteem among the Uzbeks as a national hero instead of a corrupt Communist whom in fact he was.<sup>162</sup> In the beginning of 1990s, the Uzbek nationalists from Birlik and Erk started to request preferential status for the Uzbek language and the ulama, together with believers who simultaneously requested for the broadening of their religious rights.<sup>163</sup> Nonetheless, the Uzbek political elite still could not imagine the possibility of the independent existence of their state. As a result, Islam Karimov wholeheartedly supported the coup d'état in August 1991. This proved to be the gravest political mistake of his career as the real power had already resided not in the Soviet centre but in the republics.<sup>164</sup> The Supreme Soviet of the USSR hastily declared the independence of Uzbekistan on 31st August 1991. From that time onwards, Uzbekistan's foreign policy should have been focused primarily on the preservation of its independence.<sup>165</sup>

On the 21st December 1991 in Almaty Uzbekistan's leader attached his signature to the Belavezha Accords and thus definitely terminated the existence of the Soviet Union.<sup>166</sup> One of the principal reasons for the transformation of the Soviet Union into the Commonwealth of the Independent States was Russia's unwillingness to continue the cooperation with the more backward regions of the post-Soviet area, especially with Central Asia. This organisation soon proved to be dysfunctional and inefficient. The Westernizers

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<sup>162</sup> Ibidem, 108-121.

<sup>163</sup> James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty*. (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991), 99-104.

<sup>164</sup> Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia*, 94-104.

<sup>165</sup> Nicole J. Jackson, *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, debates and actions*. (London: Routledge, 2003): 121-126.

<sup>166</sup> Soucek, *Inner Asia*, 258-263.

and Atlanticists who held power in the Kremlin in the advent of 1990s believed that swift transformation and Europeanization was only possible if they succeeded in abrupt severing of ties with their former colonies.<sup>167</sup> However, the Westernizers were soon relieved by pragmatists who asserted that the means of Russia's retaining its great-power status and importance did not rest on cooperation with the West but rather in the renewal of its dominance in the near abroad.<sup>168</sup> The so-called Primakov's doctrine of 1997 emphasized that Russia had to regain its position in the post-Soviet space first, in order to regain its former position on the international political arena. Besides, it toyed with the old fear of the spread of radical Islam in Central Asia and subsequently into Russia proper.<sup>169</sup> This logic was fully grasped after the election of Vladimir Putin into the office of the Russian president. He was the first Russian head of state who dared to proclaim officially that the dissolution of the Soviet Union represented the most serious "geopolitical catastrophe" of the twentieth century and that Russia's primal aim should be to reverse it.<sup>170</sup>

It is also necessary to mention that the relationship between Uzbekistan and Russia was heavily altered by the perception of the eurasianists and neo-eurasianists who saw Central Asia and Russia as parts of a single politico-cultural unit of Eurasia. Eurasianism, as a political ideology, was created in the 1920s in Central and Western Europe by prominent

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<sup>167</sup>Maulen Ashimbaev, *New Challenges and New Geopolitics in Central Asia: After September 11*. (Almaty: Kazakh Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic Kazakhstan, 2003), 92-95.

<sup>168</sup>Marléne Laruelle, "Russia in Central Asia: Old History, New Challenges?" *Europe-Central Asia Monitoring Working Paper 3* (2009): 1-11.

<sup>169</sup>Robert H. Donaldson, and Joseph L. Noguee. *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*. (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2009): 321-335.

<sup>170</sup>Uwe Halbach, "Vladimir Putin's Eurasian Union: A New Integration Project for the CIS Region?" *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Comments 51* (2011): 1-4.

Russian émigrés such as Peter Savitsky, Nikolai Trubetzkoy or Dmitry Svyatopolk-Mirsky. It was a typical third way movement that claimed Eurasia to be a distinct continent with its own culture, space and destiny. In comparison with the West, Eurasianists defined this new continent not on the basis of common history but of geography. The vital axis of Eurasia was defined by the steppe corridor surrounded by belts of tundra, taiga and deserts. The entire area of Central Asia was considered to be a natural part of Eurasia. This was emphasised by the belief that Eurasia was defined by the duality of Slavs and Turanians, and Orthodox Christianity and Islam.<sup>171</sup> The Eurasian idea was resurrected in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union by Lev Gumilev, Aleksander Panarin and Aleksander Dugin. Even though the Eurasianists movement is quite heterogeneous and ideologically influenced, it definitely had an impact on the formulation of Russia's foreign policy towards Central Asia and on the perception of this region. Aleksander Panarin for instance endeavoured to purify the idea of multiethnic empire and Eurasian messianism that was partly forgotten during the Soviet era.<sup>172</sup> Aleksander Dugin directly connected the restoration of Russia's great-power status with regaining control over Central Asia. He considered Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as determinant actors in Central Asia.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Marléne Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*. (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2008): 1-39.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibidem*: 70-107.

<sup>173</sup> Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy Geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*. (Moscow: ARTOGEYA-tsentr, 2000): 202-205.

## ***2.1 Russo-Uzbek Relations prior to 9/11***

Uzbekistan began to consider itself to be the main strategic power in the region after the dissolution of the Soviet Union given its population and central location.<sup>174</sup> Its political elite perceived Russia as the principal opponent of their leading role in Central Asia. The other Central Asian regimes were considered to be naturally inferior to Tashkent. The regional position of Moscow should have been weakened through the multi-vector diplomacy. This was perceived as the creation of close ties between Uzbekistan and other regional and global actors, chiefly with the United States, Israel, Turkey, Iran, the People's Republic of China and the European Union.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, Karimov's regime was willing to support any opportunity for the establishment of structures enabling deeper cooperation within the post-Soviet space that would not include Russia such as the GUUAM, the Partnership for Peace Centrazbat initiative or the Organization of Central Asian Cooperation.<sup>176</sup>

However, it was not possible to break all the ties with Russia because it was necessary to create at least a solid framework for their mutual relations and their interactions in the Commonwealth of the Independent States. As a result, the two countries officially recognized each other on 20th May 1992.<sup>177</sup> This official recognition broadened on 30th May 1992 when Boris Yeltsin and Islam Karimov signed in Moscow the Treaty on the

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<sup>174</sup> Slavomír Horák, "(Ne)závislost Střední Asie na Rusku (případ Uzbekistánu)." *Pražské sociálně vědní studie* 9 (2006): 11-18.

<sup>175</sup> Ian Cuthbertson, "The New Great Game." *World Policy Journal* 11 (1994): 31-44.

<sup>176</sup> Anceschi, "Integrating Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Making," 143-158.

<sup>177</sup> "Protokol ob ustanovlenii diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii mezhdru Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan." Protocol signed on March 20, 1992 in Kiev.

Foundations of the Interstate Relations, Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty included mutual recognition of state independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity between both parties. It also provided for the regular consultations on issues of mutual interest. Both Moscow and Tashkent acknowledged that they belonged to the common military-strategic space which should have been jointly defended on the grounds of the CIS Collective Security Treaty from May 1992.<sup>178</sup>

In March 1994 another round of the high level negotiations took place in Moscow. On 2 March, Yeltsin and Karimov signed another set of agreements which further expanded the previous provisions, firstly military cooperation agreement which underlined that the parties had the obligation to prevent anyone from using their territory for an attack carried against the other signatory party. In addition, this document stated that when the need arises, the parties might be under the necessity to provide the territory for the military installations and troops of the other party.<sup>179</sup> This proved to be a determining aspect in their future relations. Secondly, the declaration of the comprehensive cooperation was devoted primarily to the broadening of the economic and cultural ties of the signing parties.<sup>180</sup> This particular agreement was deepened in 1998.<sup>181</sup> This upsurge in the interactions between these two states was only a logical process as they had to create the diplomatic basis for further interaction. After this top level meeting in March 1994 mutual cooperation took a downturn.

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<sup>178</sup> “Dogovor ob osnovakh mezhgosudarstvennykh otnoshenii, druzhby i sotrudnichestva mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan.” Treaty signed on May 30, 1992 in Moscow.

<sup>179</sup> “Dogovor mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan o sotrudnichestve v voennoi oblasti.” Treaty signed on March 2, 1994 in Moscow.

<sup>180</sup> “Deklaratsiya o razvitii i uglublenii vsestoronnego sotrudnichestva mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan.” Declaration signed on March 2, 1994 in Moscow.

<sup>181</sup> Leszek Buszynski, “Russia’s New Role in Central Asia.” *Asian Survey* 45 (2005): 546-565.

The principal reasons for the cooling of the relations with Russia were to be found in Uzbekistan's foreign policy ambitions in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Tashkent sought to utilize its large minorities in both countries aiming at strengthening of its influence over them.<sup>182</sup> In May 1992 Uzbekistan assisted in forging an alliance between the northern Tajikistan region of Khujand, mostly inhabited by ethnic Uzbeks and the southern region of Kulob. This Khujand-Kulob alliance eventually defeated the forces of the United Tajik Opposition and thus won the Tajik Civil War.<sup>183</sup>

However, the pro-Uzbekistan Khujand faction was not included in the peace agreement which was signed in June 1997 in Moscow.<sup>184</sup> This was because of the support the Kulob faction had received from Moscow in course of the war and thus Moscow was able to outmanoeuvre the Khujand group.<sup>185</sup> Karimov was outraged with the loss of Uzbek influence in Tajikistan and decided to support the attempted coup d'état planned on October 1997 by Tajik colonel of ethnic Uzbek origin Mahmud Khudoiberdiev. Nevertheless, Khudoiberdiev's attempt had been defeated and the Tashkent's regime lost the remnants of its influence in Tajikistan. It openly favoured the cooperation with Moscow from here onwards.<sup>186</sup> The ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum in Afghanistan represented another pillar of Uzbekistan's influence in broader Central Asia. After the Taliban's conquest of Kabul in 1996 Uzbekistan's diplomacy aimed at creating a regional initiative which would

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<sup>182</sup> John Lough, "The Place of the Near abroad in Russian Foreign Policy." *International Relations* 11 (1993): 21-29.

<sup>183</sup> Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism*, 93-97.

<sup>184</sup> Ashimbaev, *New Challenges*, 96-98.

<sup>185</sup> Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism*, 93-97.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibidem*.



help stopping the Taliban's advance and thus save Dostum's position.<sup>187</sup> Tashkent even tried to include Moscow into this initiative but they did not manage to do anything significant until the final fall of Mazar-e Sharif and Dostum's escape from Afghanistan in the end of 1998.<sup>188</sup> Hence, by the end of 1998 Uzbekistan's aspirations on the regional leadership in Central Asia were in tatters. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan remained firmly under Russia's influence. Turkmenistan maintained its strict neutrality and Afghanistan got almost entirely conquered by Taliban.

Although it seemed that the situation could not get worse, this was not the case. The bomb attacks in February 1999 in Tashkent and the armed incursion of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan undermined not only the international ambitions of Uzbekistan but also the existence of Tashkent's regime.<sup>189</sup> Islam Karimov did not have any choice left other than to cooperate more closely with Moscow and its new power broker, Vladimir Putin. In December 1999 Vladimir Putin visited Tashkent still as the prime minister. He primarily discussed military cooperation on the background of the IMU attacks. In May 2000 Putin visited Uzbekistan once again, this time already as the president of the Russian Federation. He alleged publicly that any threat to Uzbekistan was a threat to Russia and promised deeper military cooperation.<sup>190</sup> In the same month Islam Karimov undertook his first official visit to

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<sup>187</sup> Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 39-45.

<sup>188</sup> Ashimbaev, *New Challenges*, 96-98.

<sup>189</sup> Roy Allison, "Central Asian Military Reform," in *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia*, edited by Sally N. Cummings. (London: Routledge, 2003), 215-226.

<sup>190</sup> Ashimbaev, *New Challenges*, 81-83.

Russia and even noted that Russia was a strategic partner for Uzbekistan.<sup>191</sup> Even though Uzbekistan in 1999 had refused to extend its membership in the Collective Security Treaty, it joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in June 2001, marking thus an improvement in its relations with Russia.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, Uzbekistan took part in the CIS military exercises Southern Shield which were organized in the summers of 1999 and 2000.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, any progress with Uzbekistan was erased by the American presence in Central Asia after 9/11 when Tashkent became the most important partner of Washington in the area.

In the meantime, the SCO gradually transformed under the impulse of Russia and China into the principal barrier against the spread of the US influence in Central Asia. The anti-American aspect of the SCO was highlighted after the US invasion into Iraq in 2003 and the consequent wave of the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>194</sup> In order to strengthen its influence in Uzbekistan, the SCO established there the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in November 2003.<sup>195</sup> In the same year Russia, in response to the American presence in Central Asia, opened its military base near the Kyrgyzstan's city of Kant. This base also represented a signal for Tashkent which was very sensitive to the

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<sup>191</sup> Mikhail Konarovsky, "Central Asia and the War against Terrorism: A View from Russia." In *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after 9/11*, edited by Elizabeth Van Wie Davis et al. (Plymouth: Rowan and Littlefield, 2007): 34-38.

<sup>192</sup> Erica Marat, *The Military and the State in Central Asia: From Red Army to Independence*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 83-84.

<sup>193</sup> Allison, "Central Asian Military Reform," 215-226.

<sup>194</sup> Meppen, "US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options," 29-43.

<sup>195</sup> Stephen Aris, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Tackling the Three Evils. A Regional Response to Non-Traditional Security Challenges or Anti-Western Bloc?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 (2009): 469-470.

establishment of any new Russian military installations near Uzbekistan's borders.<sup>196</sup> The Russo-Uzbek relations improved proportionally to the cooling of the relations between the US and Uzbekistan. It was only a matter of time until Tashkent would switch sides and turn its back on the Americans.

## ***2.2 The Russian Turnover in 2005***

The shift in the mutual relations between Russia and Uzbekistan already occurred in August 2003 when Vladimir Putin visited Islam Karimov in Samarkand. This was the first top level meeting since the arrival of the American troops.<sup>197</sup> On 16 July 2004 the treaty on strategic relations was signed between Moscow and Tashkent. The parties committed themselves to broadening their mutual cooperation and agreed on holding regular consultations at the highest level, close military cooperation and deepening regional integration.<sup>198</sup> The turnover towards Russia clearly unravelled after the Andijan crisis of May 2005. On 5 June 2005 the annual SCO meeting had been held in Astana where Moscow officials organized the collective appeal to the US to issue a firm deadline for their operations. This was interpreted as a splendid signal by the US that they were no longer welcomed in the region. The leaders of the SCO also vociferously criticized the colour revolutions which were indirectly blamed on the US.<sup>199</sup> At this particular meeting India, Pakistan and Iran participated as observers. This sent a clear signal that the goal of the SCO

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<sup>196</sup> Meppen, "US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options," 29-43.

<sup>197</sup> Horák, "(Ne)závislost Střední Asie na Rusku," 11-18.

<sup>198</sup> "Dogovor o strategicheskom partnerstve mezhdru Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan." Treaty signed on July 16, 2004 in Tashkent.

<sup>199</sup> Socor, "The Unfolding of the US-Uzbek Crisis," 44-57.

is the circumscription of the American influence and not the creation of a military organization.<sup>200</sup>

Russia's top politicians also supported Uzbekistan verbally. The Minister of Defence Sergei Ivanov proclaimed that Russia opposes the export of revolutions to the CIS states, no matter where and what colour.<sup>201</sup> The Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov labelled the Andijan crisis as a Taliban-like provocation.<sup>202</sup> The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs vigorously seconded its Russian counterpart when it stated that Islam Karimov's actions in Andijan were a legitimate use of force against the "three evils" of separatism, terrorism and extremism.<sup>203</sup> In the course of 2005 Islam Karimov visited Russia four times, either on working visits or on multilateral meetings within the CIS.<sup>204</sup> In September 2005 the first common military exercise of the Russian and Uzbek armies was organized on the territory of Uzbekistan in the Farish training range and the screenplay of the exercise resembled the Andijan events.<sup>205</sup> Economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Russia was expanding as well. In January Tashkent stated that since 1991, Russia alone had so far invested one billion dollars in Uzbekistan's oil and gas industry.<sup>206</sup> The Russians offered investments into the hydrocarbons infrastructure, especially into the Central Asia - Centre and Bukhara – Ural

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<sup>200</sup> Charles E. Ziegler, "Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2008: Axis of Authoritarianism?" *Asian Survey* 49 (2009): 135-145.

<sup>201</sup> Frost, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization," 92-96.

<sup>202</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Plymouth: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 159-160.

<sup>203</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>204</sup> Ismailov, *Central Asia 2005*, 307-310.

<sup>205</sup> Socor, "The Unfolding of the US-Uzbek Crisis," 44-57.

<sup>206</sup> Ismailov, *Central Asia 2005*, 307-310.

pipelines. They also planned to invest into the development of the gas fields in Shahpakhty and Kungrad in Karakalpakstan, in Kandym, Khauzak and Shady in Bukhara oblast, near the Aral Sea in Zhambay, in Ghissar region next to Karshi and Urga and in Kuanysh and Akhchalak which lie on the Ustyurt Plateau.<sup>207</sup> In December 2005 the dollar debt of Tashkent toward Moscow was also finally settled, through joint Russo-Uzbek production of forty Ilyshin IL-76 strategic airlifters for China in the Tashkent Chkalov Aviation Production Association.<sup>208</sup>

The Russo-Uzbek relations had reached their apex on 14 November 2005 when Islam Karimov and Vladimir Putin signed the treaty on the alliance relations. The alliance relations were considered to be only one level below the full-blown alliance. This notwithstanding, in the body of the treaty was stated that any aggression against one of the signatories would be considered as an aggression against both of them. Both parties also explicitly stated that they would deepen their military cooperation and that they will combine their efforts in the struggle with extremism and terrorism.<sup>209</sup> As a logical consequence of this deal, Uzbekistan offered Russia the use of the military airbase near Navoi.<sup>210</sup> Moreover, during the meeting of the Interstate Council of the Eurasian Economic Community, held in St. Petersburg on 25 January 2006, the Protocol on Uzbekistan Joining the Treaty on Founding the EEC was passed. Analogically, on 17 August 2006 the Collective Security Treaty Organization

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<sup>207</sup> Laruelle, "Russia in Central Asia," 1-11.

<sup>208</sup> John Berryman, "Russia and China in the New Central Asia: The Security Agenda." In *Russia and China in the New Central Asia*, edited by Roger E. Kanel et al., (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 152-167.

<sup>209</sup> "Dogovor o soyuznicheskikh otnosheniyakh mezhdru Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan." Treaty signed on November 14, 2005 in Moscow.

<sup>210</sup> Alexander Cooley, *Great games, Local Rulers: The New Power Contest in Central Asia*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 121-130.

approved the Protocol on Restoring Uzbekistan's Membership in the CSTO.<sup>211</sup> This marked the definite end of the US-Uzbek honeymoon that lasted from 1999 to 2005. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan did not wish to stay in Russia's fold indefinitely as was proved in the following years and only utilized Russia to balance the unpleasant US influence.<sup>212</sup> As soon as the US pressure for conducting investigation on the Andijan events, democratization and economic liberalization lowered, Tashkent officials began to work on improving its relations with the West. They were well aware of the fact that the only counterbalance to Russia's influence in Central Asia was the US. Hence, Karimov's regime was from the start very restrained and tried to minimize its activities in Moscow-led integration structures.

### ***2.3 Russo-Uzbek Relations after Andijan***

Uzbekistan's turnover on Russia in 2005 was primarily motivated by security concerns for Karimov's regime. As a consequence, their mutual cooperation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization can be viewed as the principal indicator of the nature of their relations. With regards to the CSTO, Uzbekistan had to cope with the fact that it was no longer the ineffective extension of the CIS as was the case when Tashkent firstly suspended its membership in the CST CIS in 1999.<sup>213</sup> Since 2002 the CSTO was transformed into full-

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<sup>211</sup> Ismailov, *Central Asia 2006*, 307-310.

<sup>212</sup> Eldar Ismailov et al., *Central Asia 2007: Analytical Annual*. (Stockholm: Central Asia and Caucasus Press, 2008), 303-310.

<sup>213</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „CSTO Minus Uzbekistan: Implications for Collective Security in Central Asia.“ *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 8/8/2012. Last visited: 20/10/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12539-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2012-8-8-art-12539.html>.

fledged military organization modelled after the fashion of the NATO.<sup>214</sup> The CSTO holds annually joint military exercises “Rubezh” and joint anti-narcotics exercises “Kanal” since 2004.<sup>215</sup> Member states are able to purchase Russian military equipment at domestic Russian prices. Equally important is also the joint training of officers which is usually carried out at the Russian military academies.<sup>216</sup> In 2004 the Collective Rapid Reactions Forces of the CSTO were created. This could give Moscow a legitimate lever for interfering or even intervening in the Central Asian region. The supreme political body of the CSTO is the Council of Collective Security which is comprised of the heads of member states. Other important institutions of the alliance are the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers and the Council of Defence Ministers. The normal operation of the CSTO is managed by its secretariat in Moscow headed by the Russian General Nikolai Bordyuzha since 2003.<sup>217</sup> The location of the CSTO’s secretariat unravels the fact that it is a mere extension of the Russian army. There is also a very vague distinction between what military complexes belong to the CSTO and what to the Russian army.

Uzbekistan deliberately curbed deeper integration within the CSTO since the moment of its return into the alliance in 2006. It sought to preserve the regional status quo, but was not successful in this attempt. This was also the reason why Tashkent already in 2008

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<sup>214</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „Uzbekistan without the CSTO.“ *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 20/10/2013. Last visited: 20/10/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12652-uzbekistan-without-the-csto.html>.

<sup>215</sup> Yuliya Nikitina, "Rol' Organizatsii dogovora o kollektivnoi bezopasnosti v Tsentral'noi Azii." In *Regional'naya integratsiya Tsentral'noi Azii: Problemy i perspektivy*, edited by Rustam Khaidarov.( Dushanbe: Irfon. 2006): 47-55.

<sup>216</sup> Laruelle, “Russia in Central Asia,” 1-11.

<sup>217</sup> Frost, “The Collective Security Treaty Organization,” 92-96.

suspended its membership in the EEC.<sup>218</sup> Karimov stood strongly against the deepening of economic ties with Russia. He also disputed Russia's decision to build hydro-electric power stations and dams in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in order to diminish Uzbekistan's dependence on the distribution of water from the duo of upstream countries.<sup>219</sup> Because of Uzbekistan's passivity concerning development of the CSTO and joining the Collective Rapid Reaction Force, this initiative got under explicit Russia's and Kazakhstan's control.<sup>220</sup> The Charter of the CSTO was heavily amended at the summits of the organization in December 2010 and December 2012 against Uzbekistan's will. Primarily, closer mutual coordination of foreign policy was approved. In addition, possibilities for the use of the CRRF were significantly broadened. Tashkent was also against the decision that the member states of the CSTO should in the future agree unanimously on the stationing of the military installations of the third party on the territory of any member state. Uzbekistan perceives this as indirect veto for the establishment of foreign military bases in member states for Moscow.<sup>221</sup> It is, however, necessary to emphasize that this regulation does not apply for the already present foreign bases in the area, namely, the US military base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan,

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<sup>218</sup> Eldar Ismailov et al., *Central Asia 2008: Analytical Annual*. (Stockholm: Central Asia and Caucasus Press, 2008), 303-310.v 2008

<sup>219</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>220</sup> Roger N. McDeromt, "CSTO Absorbs on Uzbek Tremor." *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 8/8/2012. Last visited: 20/10/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12543-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2012-8-8-art-12543.html>.

<sup>221</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Concept: No Base, No Blocks but National Interest.” *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 9/5/2012. Last visited: 20/10/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12557-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2012-9-5-art-12557.html>.



the German base in Uzbekistan's Termez and the French base in Tajikistan in the vicinity of Dushanbe.<sup>222</sup>

Tashkent refused to sign the joint political declaration in the end of the December 2011 CSTO summit. In reaction to this Uzbek decision, Byelorussian President Aleksander Lukashenka proposed that Uzbekistan should immediately leave the CSTO.<sup>223</sup> This in fact happened on 20 June 2012 when Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified its allies about suspending its membership in the CSTO. The official reason for the suspension of membership was the disapproval with the planned policy of the CSTO towards Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the NATO in the end of 2014.<sup>224</sup> It is remarkable that the suspension of membership of Uzbekistan in the CSTO was made public only on 28 June 2012. Moreover, Vladimir Putin visited Tashkent at the beginning of June. Subsequently, both these facts could indicate that Islam Karimov was willing to stay in the CSTO if Russia had given him security guarantees against post-NATO Afghanistan. In regard to the Uzbek reaction, Russian answer was negative.<sup>225</sup>

Soon afterwards, in September 2012, Uzbekistan promulgated its new foreign policy doctrine. This step was a substantial evidence of the new shift in Tashkent's foreign policy as it sought to cope with the post-2014 international environment.<sup>226</sup> The first significant aspect was the clear rejection of stationing of foreign military bases on its territory, with the sole

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<sup>222</sup> A. A. Kazantsev, *Bol'shaya igra s neizvestnymi pravilami: Mirovaya politika i Tsentral'naya Aziya*. (Moscow: Fond Nasledie Rossii, 2008): 128-132.

<sup>223</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „CSTO Minus Uzbekistan: Implications for Collective Security in Central Asia.“

<sup>224</sup> Tolipov, „Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Concept: No Base, No Blocks but National Interest.“

<sup>225</sup> Roger N. McDeromt, “CSTO Absorbs on Uzbek Tremor.“

<sup>226</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Concept: No Base, No Blocks but National Interest.“

exception of an already functioning German military base in Termez. Secondly, the foreign policy doctrine stated that Uzbekistan will not take part in any military bloc.<sup>227</sup> In this case, it is necessary to underline that Uzbekistan does not consider the SCO as a military bloc. Uzbekistan supports the deepening of cooperation with the Peoples Republic of China. Both countries signed an agreement on strategic partnership in June 2012.<sup>228</sup> Thirdly, the new doctrine emphasized that no Uzbekistan's military units will take part in any peacekeeping missions.<sup>229</sup> Fourthly, Uzbekistan refused any meddling of external powers into regional affairs in Central Asia. This fourth premise in particular will be especially difficult to fulfil as three out of five Central Asian states are members of the CSTO alongside with Russia. Furthermore, Uzbekistan's and Russia's foreign policies should be directed by the agreement on alliance relations from 2005. This document is not only still valid but was also branded as a key component of the Russo-Uzbek mutual security in the course of the state visit by Russia's Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov to Tashkent in December 2012.<sup>230</sup>

The chief reason for Uzbekistan's suspension of membership in the CSTO is the attempt of Vladimir Putin to intensify integration of the post-Soviet space. In October 2011, Putin announced the plan on creation of the Eurasian Union further confirming Tashkent's doubts about Moscow's goals in the post-Soviet area.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, Tashkent was alarmed by Russia's intentions to build its second military base in Kyrgyzstan's Osh. Any military installation in Osh would, due to its geographical position, mean the de facto control onto the

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<sup>227</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>228</sup> Roger N. McDeromt, "CSTO Absorbs on Uzbek Tremor."

<sup>229</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Concept: No Base, No Blocks but National Interest.”

<sup>230</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „Uzbekistan without the CSTO.“

<sup>231</sup> Uwe Halbach, "Vladimir Putin's Eurasian Union, 1-4.

access to the Ferghana valley.<sup>232</sup> Uzbekistan perceived as threatening the proposed Eurasian Economic Union which will in 2015 encompass three of its neighbours, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This could significantly harm Tashkent's economy.<sup>233</sup> Above all, Uzbekistan will likely utilize the withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan in 2014 and become a key component of the US strategy in Central Asian region. Thus, Uzbekistan's pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia aims at imposing its leading role in Central Asia.<sup>234</sup> As it seems, Tashkent was unable to learn from its experience in the 1990s when it had to realize that it does not have enough power to become the regional leader.

The CSTO without Uzbekistan will suffer from Uzbekistan's defection. On the other hand, Uzbekistan's suspension of membership will pave the way for deeper integration that the other member states aim for.<sup>235</sup> Moreover, Russia and its allies will have their hands free to focus on post-2014 Afghanistan that represents their priority in Central Asia. As Vladimir Putin proclaimed during Russia's Security Council in May 2013, the ISAF weakened neither the Taliban nor the drug traffickers. Afghanistan's army is too languid to cope with all these threats on its own.<sup>236</sup> Moscow as well as all its regional allies fears the overflow of the Arab

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<sup>232</sup> Carol R. Saivetz, "The Ties that Bind? Russia's Evolving Relations with Its Neighbors." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45 (2012): 401-412.

<sup>233</sup> Alexander Libman and Evgeny Vinokurov. "Eurasian Economic Union: Why Now? Will It Works? Is It Enough?" *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* (2012): 29-43.

<sup>234</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, „CSTO Minus Uzbekistan: Implications for Collective Security in Central Asia.“

<sup>235</sup> Martin C. Spechler, "Russia's Lost Position in Central Asia." *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 4 (2013): 1-7.

<sup>236</sup> Stephen Blank, „A New Turn in Russia's Military Policy in Central Asia?“ *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 5/29/2013. Last visited: 20/10/2013, [www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12742-a-new-turn-in-russias-military-policy-in-central-asia?.html](http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12742-a-new-turn-in-russias-military-policy-in-central-asia?.html).

Spring into its Central Asian backyard.<sup>237</sup> It was Uzbekistan who blocked the deployment of the CRRF in Kyrgyzstan in order to solve ethnic clashes occurring in the vicinity of Osh in 2010.<sup>238</sup> The situation in Central Asia represents a strong dilemma for Russia's foreign policy makers. They need to strengthen regional integration in order to be prepared for the post-2014 security threats, which is only possible with the active involvement of Uzbekistan. Any attempt to deepen security or economic integration in Central Asia without Tashkent is simply meaningless.<sup>239</sup> The principle variable in Central Asia is how the situation after the withdrawal of the ISAF from Afghanistan will develop. Uzbekistan could realize that only Russia is able to provide credible security guarantees and hence return to its fold. Nonetheless, close cooperation with the US seems presently as more likely option.

Tashkent's relations with Moscow after 1991 could be divided into two phases. The first phase which roughly corresponds with the first decade of Uzbekistan's independence was marked predominantly with Karimov's endeavour to emancipate from Russia as much as possible. However, in the end of the 1990s Uzbekistan was endangered by the threat of radical Islamists and hence had to request assistance from Russia. This signified the second phase that was characterized by the pendulum diplomacy between White House and the Kremlin. Uzbekistan represents geopolitical pivot that Russia has to command in order to control broader Central Asia. Nonetheless, it does not have enough capability to gain control over Uzbekistan unless it is willing to cooperate at least in the inception. This premise could, however, change in the near future. In 2008 Moscow attempted to indirectly establish its

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<sup>237</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>238</sup> Spechler, "Russia's Lost Position in Central Asia," 1-7.

<sup>239</sup> Christopher A. Hartwell, "A Eurasian (or a Soviet) Union? Consequences of Further Economic Integration in the CIS." *Business Horizons* 56 (2013): 411-420.

control over the geopolitical pivot of Azerbaijan. In 2014 it is trying to directly gain control over the geopolitical pivot of Ukraine. And perhaps after the withdrawal of the ISAF from Afghanistan, similar scenario will be enacted in the case of Uzbekistan. Russia's attempts to control Uzbekistan as a geopolitical pivot failed in 2001 and 2012 because there was simply other strategic choice of alliance with the United States. However, after the withdrawal from Afghanistan the manoeuvring range of Washington will be substantially narrowed. Americans have to give Tashkent clear vision of equal strategic partnership otherwise they could lose Central Asia indefinitely.

### 3. The United States in Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy

This chapter would focus on the position of the US in Uzbekistan's foreign policy and its pendulum diplomacy. According to Brzezinski, Uzbekistan represents an important geopolitical pivot in Eurasia. Hence, if the US wants to attain its global primacy, they need to have significant influence over Uzbekistan or even to control it. The close cooperation between Tashkent and Washington would have twofold effect. Firstly, it would help Uzbekistan gain the position of regional leader which it seeks since 1991. Secondly, it would give the US a firm foothold in the region and deter Russia from completely dominating Central Asia. Putin's regime could eventually fall if its proposed reintegration of the former Soviet Union area failed. This would consequently lead to democratisation of Russia's politics and liberalisation of its economy.

In the first half of 2001 Uzbekistan's elite had to face the reality of the inevitable renewal of Russia's great-power position in Central Asia. The only thinkable alternatives were represented by the dominance of China or the uncontrollable spread of Islamist militants from Afghanistan. In this regards, the events of 9/11 seemed to Karimov and his entourage as a *deus ex machina* which gave them the much desired strategic choice. Uzbekistan sought to establish a close cooperation and possibly an alliance with the US since the early 1990's; however, it was not until the Bush administration needed an ally in the region that the prospective of a rapprochement with Uzbekistan was broached.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Marlène Laruelle, "US Central Asian Policy: Still American Mars versus European Venus?" *Europe-Central Asia Monitoring Policy Brief* 26 (2012): 1-6.

### ***3.1 The US-Uzbek Relations prior to 9/11***

The diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Uzbekistan were established on 19 February 1992.<sup>241</sup> In 1996 Islam Karimov had unofficially visited the US where he opened Uzbekistan's embassy and had held a meeting with President Clinton.<sup>242</sup> In 1997 Uzbekistan and the US initiated the military cooperation which included the first military exercise of the Central Asian Battalion (Centrazbat) formed in 1995 under the aegis of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.<sup>243</sup> It was the following year when the US Congress passed the Silk Road Strategy Act which signalled that America shifted its focus to Central Asia and South Caucasus. This Congress initiative aimed at the development of the market economy and democracy in the post-Soviet region and at its emancipation from Russia.<sup>244</sup>

In April 1999 Karimov visited the US again on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of NATO. Just before the summit began, the leaders of Uzbekistan, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan signed the protocol regarding Uzbekistan's accession into GUUAM.<sup>245</sup> Uzbekistan was one of the countries that in the course of 1990s had most consistently voted identically as the US delegation in the General Assembly of the UN, demonstrating thus its constant support to American actions in the international

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<sup>241</sup> John C. K. Daly, *Anatomy of a Crisis: US-Uzbek Relations, 2001-2005*. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2006), 66-68.

<sup>242</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>243</sup> Marat, *The Military and the State*, 105-108.

<sup>244</sup> Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 62-71.

<sup>245</sup> Daly, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 68-77.

arena.<sup>246</sup> Tashkent fostered the enlargement of NATO in 1999 and remained neutral when the same military bloc bombarded Belgrade in April 1999 hence supporting tacitly the US intervention in Yugoslavia and undercutting Russia's diplomatic strategy on the ground. Uzbekistan even closely cooperated with Israel, the US chief ally in the Middle East, regardless of the negative bias shared by the other Muslim countries.<sup>247</sup> Throughout the 1990s Tashkent perceived closer cooperation or even alliance with the US as the ultimate aim of its foreign policy. The strategic partnership with the US would help Uzbekistan allegedly establish its regional dominance in Central Asia. In opposition to Russia, the US were not interested in direct political control of the region and thus offered Tashkent manoeuvring space. In other words, at this point, the US were a master that Uzbekistan was willing to follow.

### ***3.2 The American Turnover in 2001***

Uzbekistan was the first state in the region to offer its assistance to the US in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. On 17 September Uzbekistan's ministry of interior signalled that they are willing to provide the airspace and military bases for the awaited American invasion into Afghanistan.<sup>248</sup> Three days later George W. Bush claimed in the US Congress that al-Qaeda was apart from Taliban also

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<sup>246</sup> Frederick S. Starr, "A Regional Approach to Afghanistan and Its Neighbours," *Strategic Asia* 1 (2008): 346-348.

<sup>247</sup> Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia*. (New York: Groove Press, 2003): 86-91.

<sup>248</sup> Marat, *The Military and the State*, 81-83.



closely interrelated with the IMU and the Egyptian fundamentalist movement Islamic Jihad, thus justifying American presence in Uzbekistan.<sup>249</sup>

The US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld visited Uzbekistan in October and November and negotiated with Tashkent the status of forces agreement. This not only provided Americans with access to Uzbekistan's airspace but also provided the airbase in Karshi Khanabad to the US.<sup>250</sup> In March 2002 the SOFA<sup>251</sup> was followed by the Strategic Partnership Agreement which the Uzbek party had specifically demanded and which included the commitments regarding democratization.<sup>252</sup> In 2002, 25 American delegations visited Uzbekistan. In March 2002 Islam Karimov visited officially Washington for the first time.<sup>253</sup> Uzbekistan became part of Donald Rumsfeld's vision of the modern, transformed military force that would be able to lever small, mobile and highly lethal military capabilities from multiple locations to meet the US defence requirements for the new century.<sup>254</sup>

At the end of 2002 some of Uzbekistan's representatives signalled to the Americans that they need more support in order to neutralize the internal opposition to the alliance with the US. However, the Americans did not want to bother with the Uzbek internal shenanigans. This proved to be the US chief mistake when dealing with Uzbekistan as the clique

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<sup>249</sup> Daly, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 68-77.

<sup>250</sup> Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 72-79.

<sup>251</sup> Status of forces agreement.

<sup>252</sup> Kurt H. Meppen, "US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options," in *Anatomy of a Crisis: US-Uzbek Relations 2001-2005*, edited by John C. K. Daly et al. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2006), 13-29.

<sup>253</sup> Daly, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 68-77.

<sup>254</sup> Meppen, "US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options," 13-29.

supporting the anti-US course eventually prevailed in the second half of 2005.<sup>255</sup> Another fatal blow to the US-Uzbek relations resided in the behaviour of western NGOs and the US Congress Helsinki Committee. This official body requested that it democratizes and did not take into account the internal brakes that could hinder this process. The Helsinki Committee emphasized only the so-called third basket of the human rights and almost omitted that it is closely interwoven with the first two baskets dealing with security and economic issues.<sup>256</sup> The year 2003 saw the beginning of the deterioration of the relationship between Uzbekistan and the US because of the ceaseless accusations on the breaches of human rights in Uzbekistan and the appearance of the colour revolutions phenomenon.<sup>257</sup>

In the SOFA there had been no mention of the payments for the use of the Karshi Khanabad airbase because the Uzbek side assumed that they would obtain enough financial support on the grounds of the alliance relations. However, this financial support was since 2003 frozen by the Congress because of the poor respect of human rights in Uzbekistan. Hence, Uzbekistan offered the US the amendment of the SOFA six times between 2003 and 2005 as it hoped to get the lease.<sup>258</sup> This thinking was in no way illogical since the Americans paid for the use of their airbase in Manas and even Germany paid Tashkent for the use of their military base in Termez. Washington assumed that Uzbekistan needed them more than they do and that it was not necessary to change the existing SOFA. However, Tashkent already in the beginning of 2005 limited the number of flights from Karshi

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<sup>255</sup> Daly, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 77-89.

<sup>256</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>257</sup> Vladimir Socor, "The Unfolding of the US-Uzbek Crisis," in *Anatomy of a Crisis: US-Uzbek Relations 2001-2005*, edited by John C. K. Daly et al. (Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme, 2006), 44-57.

<sup>258</sup> Meppen, "US-Uzbek Bilateral Relations: Policy Options," 29-43.

Khanabad. It had been officially explained as a consequence of the poor state of runaways but this allegation was meant as a signal to the Americans which they did not heed. Therefore, it is impossible to exclude that even without the Andijan crisis the US would preserve their airbase in Uzbekistan.<sup>259</sup>

The final split with the US occurred right after the Andijan crisis which was accompanied by a hysterical coverage in Western media and even by some members of the US Congress such as John McCain.<sup>260</sup> This notwithstanding, Tashkent offered the US to take part in the investigation commission that consisted of the representatives from Russia, China, India, Pakistan and all the other Central Asian countries. However, Washington rejected this proposal and insisted on forming its separate commission. That was something Tashkent was not willing to permit. Moreover, the US helped transporting 439 people to Romania who allegedly escaped after the Andijan events from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan. Tashkent considered them to be either terrorists or their accomplices. As a result, this American decision only aggravated the crisis.<sup>261</sup> On 29 July the US was requested to leave the Karshi Khanabad airbase within 180 days. This represented enormous interference in the supply of logistics of the ISAF as all the flights from Europe had to be diverted to Bagram, Kandahar and Manas.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>260</sup> Daly, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 90-106.

<sup>261</sup> Jim Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests." Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

<sup>262</sup> Ibidem.

### ***3.3 Second American Turnover in 2012***

Following 2005 Tashkent officially claimed that the Andijan uprising was an evidence of the US plot against Karimov's regime and that Americans yearned for another colour revolution.<sup>263</sup> Since November 2011 the US Congress denoted Uzbekistan as a country of particular concern for severe religious and other human rights violations that could lead to the US sanctions.<sup>264</sup> Nonetheless, the possible US sanctions would have only small impact on Uzbekistan's economy as their mutual economic cooperation lacks significant progress. For instance, in 2012 the US export into Uzbekistan amounted for no more than 285 million dollars while the Uzbekistan's export into the US was even smaller – 26 million dollars. Moreover, these statistics were starkly influenced by Tashkent's purchase of four Boeings 767 which were delivered just in 2012. The only substantive example of intense economic cooperation is the joint venture of General Motors and the Uzbek state-owned automobile company Uzavtosanoat which is called GM Uzbekistan. It was formed in 2008 and annually manufactures 200 thousands cars for Central Asian markets.<sup>265</sup>

According to Islam Karimov, post-2014 Afghanistan will represent the chief threat for the entire Central Asian region. Hence, Tashkent wants to prepare as best as it can. It signed a declaration on deepening of relations with Russia in June 2012, agreement on strategic partnership with China in June 2012 and similar agreement with Kazakhstan in

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<sup>263</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, "Will the US and Uzbekistan Revisit their Strategic Partnership." *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 27/3/2013. Last visited: 18/11/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12683-will-the-us-and-uzbekistan-revisit-their-strategic-partnership.html>.

<sup>264</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests." Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibidem*.

June 2012.<sup>266</sup> However, Karimov's regime assumes that the key for its security will be the relationship with the US. This relationship is evolving around the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan through Uzbekistan's territory. The withdrawal is not possible through Pakistan because of deteriorating relations between Islamabad and Washington.<sup>267</sup> Islam Karimov firstly signalled that it could be possible to discuss the transit of non-lethal goods and equipment through Uzbekistan at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008. The Northern Distribution Network began its operation in January 2009 stretching all the way from Latvia across Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to Afghanistan.<sup>268</sup> Uzbekistan intends to utilize this opportunity as much as possible. For instance, it adopted a law stating that all international truck traffic carrying cargos heavier than fifty tons will pay one dollar per kilometre for transfers using Uzbekistan's roads and fee of two dollars per kilometre if the axial load exceeds the norms.<sup>269</sup> This will particularly concern all oversized military vehicles such as tanks and other armoured vehicles. For Americans the newly built railroad between Uzbekistan and Mazar-e Sharif is also overwhelmingly important. It is the only rail

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<sup>266</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests." Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

<sup>267</sup> Murod Ismailov, "Post-2014 Afghanistan: A Security Dilemma for Its Northern Neighbours." *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 5/9/2012. Last visited: 18/11/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12560-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2012-9-5-art-12560.html>.

<sup>268</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests." Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

<sup>269</sup> Erkin Akhmadov, "Speculations on a US Military Presence in Uzbekistan." *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 5/9/2012. Last visited: 18/11/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/12562-field-reports-caci-analyst-2012-9-5-art-12562.html>.

connection between Afghanistan and Central Asia and hence it represents enormous strategic importance for the US army in terms of logistics.<sup>270</sup>

In the fiscal year 2003 the US Congress denied assistance to the government of Uzbekistan unless it made substantial progress in meeting commitments to respect human rights, establish a multiparty system, and ensure free and fair elections, freedom of expression and the independence of media. In the fiscal year 2008, the US congress even added a provision blocking Uzbekistan's government officials from entering the US if they were deemed responsible for events in Andijan or having violated human rights.<sup>271</sup> However, since the fiscal year 2009 Americans slowly began to soften this policy in order to unlock the possibility of opening of the Northern Distribution Network which was unofficially conditioned by the US financial aid.<sup>272</sup> At the same time, Uzbekistan also began providing electricity to northern Afghanistan which was considered as a signal of goodwill towards Washington. That Uzbekistan is more willing to cooperate with the US also signaled its suspension of membership in the EEC in 2008.<sup>273</sup>

The relations between Uzbekistan and the US were fully restarted at the first Annual Bilateral Consultation (ABC) in December 2009 in Washington. This international format was developed as a reaction to the changed situation in Central Asia. The US realized that in

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<sup>270</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>271</sup> Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests." Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

<sup>272</sup> Aigul Kasymova, "US to Cut Aid to Central Asia." *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 24/4/2013. Last visited: 18/11/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/12698-us-to-cut-aid-to-central-asia.html>.

<sup>273</sup> Eldar Ismailov et al., *Central Asia 2008: Analytical Annual*. (Stockholm: Central Asia and Caucasus Press, 2008), 303-310.v 2008

the regional security field Uzbekistan became a key partner for their effort in Afghanistan.<sup>274</sup> In December 2010 the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Tashkent and personally thanked Islam Karimov for the cooperation on the NDN. In February 2011 the second ABC took place and in October of the next year Secretary Clinton visited Uzbekistan. Here, she announced the “New Silk Road Vision” to turn Afghanistan into a regional transportation, trade, and energy hub linked to Central Asia. The third ABC took place in Tashkent in August 2012.<sup>275</sup>

In 2012 Uzbekistan requested NATO support in the sphere of military education and also unofficially required weapons and ammunition transfers from the US, Denmark and the United Kingdom. It wanted foremost armoured vehicles, mine detectors, helicopters, navigation and night vision goggles.<sup>276</sup> In March 2013 Uzbekistan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov met his US counterpart John Kerry in Washington and they began officially negotiating transfers of military equipment.<sup>277</sup> Bishkek that recently fell under strong Russian influence claimed that the US had to leave the transit centre in Manas by the end of 2014 as its purpose will vanish with the termination of the ISAF. There are speculations that Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev was promised by Vladimir Putin

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<sup>274</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>275</sup> Nichol, “Uzbekistan: Recent developments and US Interests.” Congressional Research Service Report prepared for members and committees of the US Congress, August 21, 2013.

<sup>276</sup> Erkin Akhmadov, “NATO to Transfer Military Equipment from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan.” *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 27/3/2013. Last visited: 18/11/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/12684-nato-to-transfer-military-equipment-from-afghanistan-to-uzbekistan.html>.

<sup>277</sup> Ibidem.

an aid package amounting to one billion dollars if he terminates the US lease of Manas.<sup>278</sup> If the Americans leave Manas they will be without permanent military bases in Central Asia. This would significantly lower their influence in the region unless they cooperate deeper with Tashkent. The United States is examining the option of establishing a military base in Uzbekistan. On one hand this would maintain the US presence in Central Asia and on the other it would give Uzbekistan leverage against Russia. Moreover, the existence of a US military base on Uzbekistan's soil would represent strong security guarantee against possible threat of attacks from post-2014 Afghanistan.<sup>279</sup> There were recent reports that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is regaining strength and plans to realize new military campaigns on the territory of Uzbekistan.<sup>280</sup> Hence, all scenarios of possible future development in region are opened.

Washington was given second chance for reset of its relations with Tashkent. Uzbekistan's leadership is at present pressured from every side, by militant Islamists in the south, gradually more and more assertive China in the east and neo-imperial Russia in the north and even by the internal insecurity caused by the question of succession. Hence, the closer cooperation with the West and especially the US seems as the only reasonable choice left to Karimov's regime. However, the West should remember that the principal goal of Tashkent is to preserve the current regime and thus it should not require democratization and economic liberalization in the near future. Western primacy in Eurasia is at stake and therefore some sacrifices have to be made. Russians began their pressure on the South

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<sup>278</sup> Jacob Zenn, "What Options for US Influence in Central Asia after Manas?" *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 8/3/2013. Last visited: 18/11/2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12668-what-options-for-us-influence-in-central-asia-after-manas?.html>.

<sup>279</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>280</sup> Ibidem.



Caucasian geopolitical pivot in 2008 and in 2014 they continued with the direct attack on the Ukrainian geopolitical pivot. It is only matter of time until they try to subdue the geopolitical pivot of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's pendulum diplomacy was oscillating between the US and Russia since the end of the 1990s. However, it is possible that current turnover could represent the final oscillation of this policy that has been already exhausted. One of the chief aims of the balance of power policy is to maintain the equilibrium and thus safeguard stability in system without destroying its elements. This was one of the maxims of Uzbekistan's foreign policy of the past two decades. Nonetheless, Moscow changed rules of the game once it began an attempted process of dismemberment of its neighbouring state. At present, turnover towards Russia would mean utter subordination and on these grounds is unacceptable for Karimov's regime. Therefore, the US has a unique chance to push away the pendulum of Uzbekistan's foreign policy to their side for once and for all.

## Conclusion

The study considers Uzbekistan's pendulum diplomacy between the United States and Russia as the paramount feature of Tashkent's foreign policy since its independence. The research questions were: What were the chief goals of Tashkent's foreign policy? What were the factors that influenced the creation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy? Which factors and causes played the decisive role in the case of Uzbekistan's most significant foreign policy turnovers in 2001, 2005 and 2012? They will be addressed in this order.

The pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia was mainly driven by the interests of Islam Karimov's regime. There were three overriding priorities for Tashkent's policy-makers. The first priority was to maintain Uzbekistan's independence. The second priority revolved chiefly around the preservation of the current regime and the arbitrary position of its leader. The last priority was the continuous pursuit of regional leadership in Central Asia. When either the US or Russia threatened Uzbekistan's independence, Karimov's regime or its quest to establish its dominance in Central Asia, Tashkent quickly launched close cooperation with the other of the two. I argue that in this regard Uzbekistan fulfilled the role of the holder of balance as described in the realist theory of the balance of power. It enjoyed a position strong enough to deny either Russia or the US full dominance in Central Asia, however not having enough capabilities to dominate the region itself. Uzbekistan thus plays an analogical role in relation to Central Asia as the United Kingdom played during 19<sup>th</sup> century in relation to continental Europe and its great-powers. Hence, the answer to the first research question is independence, maintenance of the internal *status quo* and a drive for regional dominance.

As already mentioned, the pendulum diplomacy policy represented the answer or reaction on the four challenges that were elaborated in the first chapter. Uzbekistan disposes of an advantageous location in the heart of Central Asia. It is the home to one half of region's population and has large and influential minorities in almost every neighbouring state. Moreover, Uzbekistan has on its territory important natural resources. All Central Asian regimes are much more sensitive to internal than external threats. Hence, Uzbekistan was more willing to cooperate with external powers when it felt jeopardized internally either by the IMU or during the crisis in Andijan. The New Silk Roads narrative is important for Karimov's regime as it enables Uzbekistan to expand its exports and with better economic performance increase its legitimacy. Nonetheless, Uzbekistan is at present on the politico-economic periphery of the world system as all the political and economic powers lie either in northern Atlantic or northern Pacific. Uzbekistan's neighbours are rather weak states. This relative advantage is, however, nullified by the presence of great-powers on the edges of Central Asia. Most of them are in possession of nuclear weapons or in the process of acquiring them. The interests of great-powers in Central Asia hindered any Uzbekistan's successful attempts to become the regional leader. Especially, Russia as former colonial metropolis and the US as the only world's superpower impeded Uzbekistan's ambitions to control Central Asia. Hence, Tashkent's foreign policy rests on the balance of power approach in relation to these two great-powers. I argue that Karimov's regime endeavours to play these two states against each other in order to dominate Central Asia.

The political and economic environments were for Uzbekistan's foreign policy making equally important as its geopolitical position. For the examined period, Islam Karimov represented a firm constant which both Washington and Moscow always had to take into account. His behaviour or foreign policy choices were principally altered by informal political environment of Uzbekistan's clans and traditional power brokers. Formal

political system defined by the constitution does not have any significant influence. The presidential vertical can easily command the executive, the legislature and even the judiciary. The real threat for Uzbekistan's regime comes from within. Therefore, there is no clear division between internal and external policies as they both serve one overriding purpose which is to maintain the current regime. Hence, foreign policy is often used for internal purposes as was for instance the case of close cooperation with the SCO states after Andijan events. There is also no clear division between Uzbekistan's internal and external economic interests. First of all, Uzbekistan is heavily dependent on export of its cotton production, gold, uranium and natural gas. This was proved in 1996 when its economy almost collapsed after the decrement of the world prices of cotton and gold. Therefore, Uzbekistan has to maintain economic relations with its purchasers. Otherwise any attempt to attain economic autarchy would inevitably lead to disaster. Uzbekistan also needs to cooperate with its neighbours in broader Central Asia to address other trans-national economic challenges, namely drug-trafficking, water management, Russian diaspora in Uzbekistan and Uzbek diaspora in Russia. This mutual dependence also narrows Uzbekistan's foreign policy ability to manoeuvre. As we see, although Uzbekistan has favourable geopolitical conditions to become regional leader, they are almost nullified by its economic dependence on abroad, by internal jeopardy of its political system and by the presence of more powerful states on the margins of Central Asia.

The gravest peril for Karimov's regime and its internal stability, however, is radical Islam. In this study it was thoroughly described that Islam began to radicalize in the 1980s. The first attempt from Islamists to turn the Ferghana valley into an Islamic state in the inception of 1990s was unsuccessful. This notwithstanding, the clash between Islam Karimov and Namangan radicals starkly influenced the forming of Uzbekistan's state ideology and its foreign policy. The new wave of Islamic radicalism at the turn of

millennium was already closely interwoven with the development in both the US and Russia. The beginning of the Second Chechen War in 2000 corresponded with the Second Batken War. As a consequence, the IMU allied itself with Al-Qaeda which perpetrated terrorist attacks on the US soil in 2001. Hence, having a common enemy, the US and Russia wanted to cooperate more closely with Uzbekistan. Karimov's regime did not hesitate to utilize this opportunity to crack down its real or supposed opponents on the grounds that they were radical Islamists. Once again Tashkent exploited external developments for internal purposes. The IMU was soon destroyed or disabled and hence Tashkent needed a new archenemy which was found in the Hizb-ut Tahrir al-Islami. All opponents to Karimov's regime were thus labelled members of either the IMU or HTI and their persecution as a part of the War on Terror. Similarly, members of these organizations were accused of the Andijan events of May 2005. Radical Islam became a two-edged sword as it represents on one hand a threat to Karimov's regime and on the other hand its ideological instrument for suppression of dissent.

All four challenges of geopolitical position, political and economic transformations and radical Islam endangered the fulfilment of the fundamental goals of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The independence of Uzbekistan and Karimov's regime were compromised by its disadvantageous geopolitical position, economic dependence on export of resources, turbulent internal political environment and radical Islam. In a similar way these challenges hindered the attempted effort of Uzbekistan to gain regional leadership. The only solution, I argue, how to achieve these aforementioned goals under the conditions of four challenges was the pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia. At this moment, it is also possible to answer the second research question: What were the factors that influenced the creation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy? The creation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy was influenced by four major factors which were the geopolitical, political, economic and radical Islamist

challenge. Hence, the next part of this chapter will be devoted to the phenomenon of the pendulum diplomacy that represents an answer to aforementioned challenges and in this way will be addressed the third research question: Which factors and causes played the decisive role in the case of Uzbekistan's most significant foreign policy turnovers in 2001, 2005 and 2012?

In the course of the 1990s Uzbekistan attempted to establish its hegemony over Central Asia. This venture, however, failed completely when Tashkent lost its influence in Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the end of 1990s and was even challenged on its own territory by the IMU incursions. Karimov's regime realized that it was unable to ensure its own security and thus it began to work more closely with Russia under Vladimir Putin. Although close cooperation with Russia would mean strengthening Karimov's regime, it would also put an end to Tashkent's aspiration to become a regional power and in the longer run it could even endanger its own independence. Therefore, Uzbekistan's ruling elite perceived the engagement of the US in Afghanistan as an unrivalled blessing. The Americans impeded Russia's attempts to establish its rule over Central Asia and thus reinforced Uzbekistan's independence. The strategic partnership with the US could have been perceived as the nascent form of Uzbekistan's leadership in Central Asia. Above all, in the beginning of 2000s Americans vociferously supported Karimov's regime as they believed that it was the only barrier preventing the spill-over of radical Islam from Afghanistan into broader Central Asia. However, Americans subsequently demanded more democratisation and economic liberalization that would as a result undermine the position of Islam Karimov and the traditional clan power brokers. As we can see, cooperation neither with Russia nor with the US was ideal. On one hand, the Russians were preventing Uzbekistan from attaining its regional leader status in the shorter run and independence in the longer run. On the other hand, the Americans began to imperil Karimov's regime and its internal backers with their

actions. Uzbekistan's foreign policy makers therefore had to decide which danger was more acute at the moment and to behave accordingly.

In 2005 America's demands on their own investigation commission and democratization threatened not only Uzbekistan's independence but Karimov's regime as well. The principal goals of Uzbekistan's foreign policy were more acutely threatened by the US and hence the turnover on Russia and the SCO countries was almost inevitable. I argue that this turnover was only a tactical decision because Uzbekistan's cooperation with both the EEC and the CSTO was detached and lukewarm. Already in 2008 Uzbekistan left the EEC and in 2012 suspended its membership in the CSTO. Tashkent's ruling elites were simply afraid of closer integration in the post-Soviet space, even more so under the auspices of Moscow. This would again jeopardise Uzbekistan's independence and any chances of becoming the regional leader. Moreover, the Americans changed significantly their attitude towards Uzbekistan after the Andijan events. That was made possible because of the new President Obama's administration that started organising the withdrawal of the troops from Afghanistan. The US need both secure route for the retreat and a strategic partner in Central Asia after their airbase in Kant, Kyrgyzstan is disbanded in 2014. For these reasons the US became to behave more pragmatically in relation to Tashkent. Hence, at present, we are witnessing the second turnover of Uzbekistan's foreign policy on the US after 9/11. The Americans pledge to support Tashkent's independence and security against post-2014 Afghanistan. They will help to elevate Uzbekistan to the position of regional prominence thanks to mutual special relations and strategic partnership. And most importantly, the US will not go against Karimov's regime, at least in near future. This means that all the three principal goals of Uzbekistan's foreign policy shall be fulfilled. Hence, the turnover on the US seems as much more pleasant perspective than becoming enthralled in the Russia-

dominated Eurasian Union in 2015. Nevertheless, another turnover is not to be excluded as Americans might easily repeat their previous mistakes.

The importance of Uzbekistan and its pendulum diplomacy will be on rise in the near future. As was already mentioned in this analysis, broader Central Asia is recently being perceived as a key for the control of the Heartland. Every great power has interests there at present. The principal contenders are, however, still the United States and Russia, the prime examples of thalassocracy and tellurocracy. Uzbekistan represents for them the key to Central Asia or the geopolitical pivot. On one hand, for the US the control of Uzbekistan ensures its primacy on the Eurasian chessboard. On the other hand, for Russia the control of Uzbekistan represents one of the key steps in renewal of its hegemony in the post-Soviet area and its weakened great-power status. However, Uzbekistan's foreign policy does not try to comply with either Russia's or America's wishes but it wants to attain its own goals. These goals are full national independence, preservation of Karimov's regime and the status of regional leader. And the principal instrument for fulfilling and maintaining these goals is the pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia.



## Summary

This diploma thesis deals with the creation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. It attempts to answer three main research questions: What were the chief goals of Tashkent's foreign policy? What were the factors that influenced the creation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy? Which factors and causes played the decisive role in the case of Uzbekistan's most significant foreign policy turnovers in 2001, 2005 and 2012? It claims the principal aims of Uzbekistan's foreign policy were threefold. Firstly, it was the preservation of Uzbekistan's independence. Secondly, it was the strengthening and securing of Karimov's regime. Finally, it was the attempt to become the regional leader in Central Asia.

Subsequently, the study maintains that the foreign policy formulation was altered by four processes or challenges which the regime in Tashkent had to cope with. These were namely the challenge of geopolitical position, establishing of a viable political system, transforming the command economy, and the threat of radical or political Islam. Uzbekistan's pendulum diplomacy between the US and Russia is a new term coined for the purposes of this study. I argue that Tashkent was prone to change abruptly its strategic partner in order to secure its three strategic imperatives. Hence, there occurred three turnovers of Uzbekistan's foreign policy in 2001 on the US, in 2005 on Russia and in 2012 on the US again. Both in 2001 and 2012 Russia threatened Uzbekistan's chances on becoming a regional leader and in the long term possibly its independence. On the other hand, the US in 2005 threatened predominantly the foundations of Karimov's regime with its thrust for democratization and liberalization. This study also emphasizes that Uzbekistan plays the role of the holder of balance. In other words, it does not have enough power to dominate the region but it is strong enough to hinder other states to do so. Uzbekistan could be also designated as geopolitical pivot ergo state which is not able to exert its power

successfully behind its borders but whose control significantly strengthens the geostrategic players. Simply to control Central Asia without Uzbekistan is impossible. This will prove to be the case more considerably in the future. Russia plans to create the Eurasian Union in 2015 and Uzbekistan will definitely represent one of its key components. Analogically, the United States are leaving Afghanistan by the end of 2014 and they plan to use Uzbekistan as the anchor for their Central Asian policy. This development leaves significant space for Karimov's regime to manoeuvre in the form of the pendulum diplomacy.

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