

ISSN 0971-9318

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

(JOURNAL OF HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION)
NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC, United Nations

Vol. 9 Nos.1-2

January - June 2005

UZBEKISTAN SPECIAL

Political Transition and Parliamentary Elections, 2004

Aftab Kazi

The Election Experience in Uzbekistan

J.D. Agarwal and Aman Agarwal

Parliamentary Elections in Uzbekistan, 2004

M.K. Dhar

Uzbekistan's Experiment with Democracy

John Cherian

Democratisation and Political Process in Uzbekistan

Nalin Kumar Mohapatra

Tradition and Modernity in Uzbekistan

K. Warikoo

Uzbekistan: Entering a New Phase of Market Economy

R.G. Gidadhubli

India-Uzbekistan: Emerging Partnership

Meena Singh Roy

Challenges of Religious Extremism in Uzbekistan

Ramakant Dwivedi

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Editor : K. WARIKOO

Assistant Editor : SHARAD K. SONI

© Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, New Delhi.

- * All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electrical, mechanical or otherwise without first seeking the written permission of the publisher or due acknowledgement.
- * The views expressed in this Journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation.

SUBSCRIPTION

IN INDIA

Single Copy (Individual)	:	Rs.	200.00
Annual (Individual)	:	Rs.	400.00
Institutions	:	Rs.	500.00

& Libraries (Annual)

OVERSEAS (AIRMAIL)

Single Copy	:	US \$	15.00
		UK £	10.00
Annual (Individual)	:	US \$	30.00
		UK £	20.00
Institutions	:	US \$	50.00
& Libraries (Annual)		UK £	35.00

The publication of this journal (Vol.9, Nos.1-2, 2005) has been financially supported by the Indian Council of Historical Research. The responsibility for the facts stated or opinions expressed is entirely of the authors and not of the ICHR.

***Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* is indexed and abstracted in
PAIS International (OCLC Public Affairs Information Service), USA**

*Subscriptions should be sent by crossed cheque or bank draft in favour of
HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION,
B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi - 110029 (India)*

Printed and published by Prof. K. Warikoo on behalf of the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029. Printed at Print India, A-38/2, Mayapuri-I, New Delhi-64 and published at New Delhi.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Hridaya Kaul
New Delhi (India)

Mr. Alexander Veigl
Secretary General
IOV
Vienna (Austria)

Prof. Devendra Kaushik
Chairman
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
Institute of Asian Studies
Kolkata (India)

Dr. Osmund Boppearachchi
Director of Research at CNRS
and Professor, Sorbonne
Laboratory of Archaeology
University of Paris (France)

Prof. I.N. Mukherjee
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi (India)

Prof. Mahavir Singh
Director
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
Institute of Asian Studies
Kolkata (India)

Prof. Harish Kapur
Professor Emeritus
Graduate Institute of
International Studies
Geneva (Switzerland)

Prof. Touraj Atabaki
International Institute of Social
History
University of Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Dr. Sanjyot Mehendale
Executive Director
Caucasus and Central Asia Program
University of California
Berkeley, USA

Dr. Lokesh Chandra
Director
International Academy of
Indian Culture
New Delhi (India)

Prof. M.P. Lama
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi (India)

CONTRIBUTORS

Prof. Aftab Kazi is a Politologist and a Senior Fellow of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University in Washington, DC. He participated as an independent International Observer for the Parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan.

Prof. K. Warikoo is Director, Central Asian Studies Programme, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Prof. J. D. Agarwal is Professor of Finance and Chairman, Indian Institute of Finance, Delhi. He participated as an Independent International Observer for the Parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan.

Prof. Aman Agarwal is Professor of Finance and Director (Offg.), Indian Institute of Finance, Delhi.

M.K. Dhar is a former Diplomatic Editor of the Hindustan Times and a leading political and strategic commentator. He participated as an Independent International Observer for the Parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan.

Dr. John Cherian is Deputy Editor, *Frontline*. He participated as an Independent International Observer for the Parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan.

Dr. Nalin Kumar Mohapatra is Project Fellow, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata.

Prof. R.G. Gidadhubli is former Director, Centre for Central Eurasian Studies, University of Mumbai, Mumbai.

Dr. Meena Singh Roy is Research Officer, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

Dr. Ramakant Dwivedi is Associate Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Vol. 9 Nos. 1-2

January - June 2005

CONTENTS

Editor's Page		1-3
Political Transition and Parliamentary Elections, 2004 in Uzbekistan	<i>Aftab Kazi</i>	5-16
The Election Experience in Uzbekistan and its Parallels with Indian Experience: Norms and Standards	<i>J.D. Agarwal</i> and <i>Aman Agarwal</i>	17-33
Parliamentary Elections in Uzbekistan, 2004	<i>M.K. Dhar</i>	34-40
Uzbekistan's Experiment with Democracy	<i>John Cherian</i>	41-45
Dynamics of Democratisation and Political Process in Uzbekistan	<i>Nalin K. Mohapatra</i>	46-70
Tradition and Modernity in Uzbekistan	<i>K. Warikoo</i>	71-80
Uzbekistan: Entering A New Phase of Market Economy	<i>R.G. Gidadhubli</i>	81-92
India-Uzbekistan: Emerging Partnership for Peace and Development	<i>Meena Singh Roy</i>	93-123
Challenges of Religious Extremism in Uzbekistan	<i>Ramakant Dwivedi</i>	124-140
DOCUMENT		
Speech of Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan at the first joint session of <i>Oliy Majlis</i> , Tashkent, 28 January 2005		141-166
BOOK REVIEW		
Central Asia, the Great Game Replayed: An Indian Perspective	<i>K. Warikoo</i>	167-171

Editor's Page

Situated between the two giant Central Asian rivers – Syr Darya and Amu Darya, and bordering the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan as well as Afghanistan, Uzbekistan is well described as the heart of Central Asia. Encompassing a territory of about 448,000 sq. kms. and with a population of over 25 million, Uzbekistan is the most populous country in Central Asia. Being surrounded by other Central Asian Republics and having no common border with Russia or China, Uzbekistan enjoys a unique geopolitical location in Central Asia. Historically speaking, Uzbekistan being the successor to the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand dominated the Central Asian region from fourteenth to nineteenth century. And the ancient oasis cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, Urgench, Shahr-i-Sabz, Khiva, Andijan, Tashkent etc. – all in Uzbekistan, have been important centers of religious and cultural importance throughout Central Asia. Bukhara and Samarkand have been known as the great centers of Islamic theological studies. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of independent Uzbekistan changed the balance of power in this region. Being conscious of the richness of their natural resources, agriculture and their ancient and rich historico-cultural heritage and unique geopolitical position, Uzbekistan and its people harbour the aspiration to be the regional power in Central Asia.

Once independent, Uzbekistan like other Central Asian Republics found itself faced with challenges of ethnic and national identification, problems of economic, political and social transformation. Even after the end of cold war, new challenges to the security, stability and sustainable development of nation states came to the fore. Terrorism, religious extremism and its militarized manifestation, ethnic conflict, drugs and arms trafficking have been the main threats to the territorial integrity, inter-ethnic harmony and socio-cultural equilibrium, peaceful co-existence and economic development of the newly independent

countries in Central Asia and their transitional economies. That the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov's priorities have been to ensure peace and security, stability and sustainable development, demonstrates that the Uzbek leadership has been fully alive to the threats to security and stability of the independent Republic. The three main planks of Karimov's policy have been to maintain and consolidate Uzbekistan's independence and sovereignty, to ensure domestic social and political stability and following a cautious approach to economic reform in order to save the Uzbek society from the ill effects of globalisation. As a means to consolidate the sovereignty of Uzbekistan, a policy of reducing its dependence on Russia, diversification of economic relations and making new alliances outside the CIS has been adopted. Uzbekistan moved closer to the US and Europe, besides being the member of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. At the same time indigenisation of Uzbekistan's security and defence structures has been undertaken.

At the economic level, a policy of gradual economic reform has been adopted, which is different from the radical reforms and liberalization in some other Central Asian Republics and CIS countries. Self-sufficiency in food grains has been achieved as a result of diversifying crop pattern and shifting some area of crop production from cotton to grains, fruits and vegetables. Uzbekistan also achieved self-sufficiency in energy resources, besides optimum utilisation of its mineral resources, particularly gold and copper. The foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan has also increased.

At the domestic level, President Karimov has been quite conscious of the threat from domestic dissent and religious fundamentalists to his regime in Uzbekistan. He has, in unambiguous terms, rejected the ideas of "politicization of Islam and Islamisation of politics", drawing a clear distinction between the cultural and spiritual value of Islam and its misuse for gaining and exercising political power. He views Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to Uzbekistan by seeking to disrupt stability, civil and inter-ethnic harmony, by discrediting democracy and secular polity, multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. In his recent interview to a

Russian journal *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (14 January 2005), President Karimov recognized that Islamic fundamentalism and extremism being represented by *Hizbut-Tahrir*, *Al-Qaeda*, *Muslim Brotherhood* etc. are getting stronger. He stressed the need to promote traditional Islam in order to neutralize the threat of Islamic fundamentalists and extremists.

As regards the domestic dissent, President Karimov pointed to the processes of domestic protest and socio-economic problems as important factors responsible for the ‘colour revolutions’ in Ukraine and Georgia. In his January interview to the Russian paper, Karimov even visualized the possibility of a coup in Kyrgyzstan, which has been borne out by the subsequent events. That explains his calculated steps to introduce changes in the structure of Uzbek parliament making it bicameral and encouraging professionals to enter legislature. Elections to the first such bicameral parliament (*Oliy Majlis*) as well as regional, district and city Councils (*Kengashes*) took place in a peaceful and orderly manner on 26 December 2004, with over 200 International Observers present, watching and monitoring these elections. During the past fourteen years of its independence, Uzbekistan has moved along a path of gradual development of democracy, socially oriented market economy, the nation-building process by keeping the indigenous ethno-national culture and traditions as the core of the independent state of Uzbekistan. Being an US partner in its campaign against global terrorism, Uzbekistan is viewed by America as an important, reliable and strong bulwark against regional instability, narco-trafficking and Islamic fundamentalism.

K. Warikoo



Oliy Majlis
The Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan

POLITICAL TRANSITION AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, 2004 IN UZBEKISTAN

Aftab Kazi

BACKGROUND

The Republic of Uzbekistan recently held the Parliamentary elections to replace the existing unicameral *Oliy Majlis* (Parliament) with a bicameral structure. This was a major political development in the modern history of Uzbekistan. Previously, the *Oliy Majlis* institutionalized the Supreme Court and institutions of presidency and *hokims* (Local administrators) under the Constitution. Uzbekistan's gradual political development strategy reflects processes inherent in the considered levels of its political culture and relevant changing phases. Within a framework of geopolitics, this article explains the gradual political development strategies adapted by some new Republics of the former Soviet Union, particularly Uzbekistan with a focus on political culture and its relevance to the gradual political development, hence implications of political reform over the Parliamentary Elections held on December 26, 2004.

Ever since independence in 1991, like other newly established republics of the former Soviet Union (FSU), the government of Uzbekistan under President Islam Karimov focused upon the search for an appropriate model of socio-economic and political development. The processes of nation and state-building have never been so easy, particularly amid the ongoing socio-economic transitions region-wide and a major post-Cold War structural transition within the international system itself, ranging in-between the bipolar, multipolar and unipolar world systems. While the economic and political transitions became a priority for all, some states under their own socio-political culture and unique regional geopolitical circumstances, particularly ramifications of the ongoing civil wars in the neighborhood chose to adapt a relatively

slow, but gradual political development strategy. Internal and regional security aspects were thus prioritized to accompany transformation, as seems to be the case in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek leadership was more concerned about educating their public first, before introducing new political reforms. Geographical proximity with Europe led FSUs in Baltic and other Salvic regions to engage in a relatively faster transition process, but given the landlocked status of Central Asia, its leadership realized that an effective socio-political reformation would be possible only with unlocking of the region through alternate routes of transportation hence with considerable levels of economic stability. Regional security environment thus played a very important role in adapted schemes of transitions. Even the Kyrgyz Republic felt the need to slow down its relatively faster transition process in order to balance between the domestic realities and regional geopolitical complexities.

Like other Central Asian states, Uzbekistan appears to be cautious about the speed of socio-political transformation, yet it is trying not to ignore the reformation trends in the world community. The Uzbek argument about gradual political reform rests upon the following three arguments: first, the leadership wants to educate the public before any new political reform is introduced; secondly, the leadership wants assurance that the regional security environment is supportive in terms of democratization; and thirdly it seems to be waiting for the opportunity being connected worldwide through alternate routes of transportation, which according to the Uzbek perceptions is a necessary condition in the nation and state-building process. Uzbekistan's gradual transition strategy thus does not discard democratization, but is associated with the processes of domestic and regional political socialization. Most Central Asian leaders, appear to balance their political realism by responding simultaneously to the demands of the international community and attempts to engage in political modernization, albeit within the parameters of their own geopolitical location and domestic circumstances. Uzbeks, like rest of Central Asia, cautiously observe the political developments in other parts of FSU and learn from their own unique experiences. Recently, President Karimov

POLITICAL TRANSITION AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

explained that the Parliamentary elections of 2004 have been a school of learning for Uzbekistan, indicating about the reformation strategy through learning from experience.

Learning from the post-Soviet transitional crises in Caucasus, Tajikistan and Russia, the leadership of Uzbekistan prioritized national security matters focusing upon a gradual yet orderly transition. Economically, Uzbek leadership appears impressed by the development models of China and Singapore. Politically it is attracted to the western styled secular democracy. The new states without a previous history of competing political parties have to cultivate a new political culture, which evolves over time to compliment the democracy building with calculated checks and balances to ensure peaceful processes of societal change. The post-independence unicameral parliament in Uzbekistan was responsible to introduce political reform in stages. The nature of terrorist activities of a fundamentalist kind could have derailed the secularly oriented evolutionary reform path in Uzbekistan, however, the government was able to survive such hurdles and the Oliy Majlis went ahead with the major Parliamentary reform and elections.

INSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES

The emergence of democratically oriented political parties in Uzbekistan was initially based on freedom of expression. However, early liberalism that helped evolve *Erk* (Freedom) and *Birlik* (Unity) parties, in fact miscalculated geopolitics, hence the political culture and the environment it operates within. Hence the need to balance the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society. According to both official and non-official perceptions of the Uzbek political culture, democratization must not mean chaos. Nevertheless, the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU) openly advocated the formation of a theocratic state against the constitutional spirit of secularism. Ramifications of the Afghanistan crisis, particularly the terrorist attacks in 1999 and 2004 in Tashkent imposed corrective restrictions on democratically oriented mutually tolerant behavior. *Ozod Dehqonlar* (Free Peasants) party of peasants allied themselves with *Erk*

and *Birlik*, while other regionally based parties such as *Adolat* (Justice), *Fidokorlar* (Patriots), *Miliy Tiklanish* (National Renaissance), *Liberal-Democratic Party* and the *People's Democratic Party* managed to grow, despite inter-party as well as the tolerable differences with the government. These parties refined themselves either alone or by mergers with other groups and saw the utility of political coalition with the government despite perceptual divide. Opposition parties formed immediately after the collapse of Soviet Union in many cases gradually lost public appeal in Uzbekistan by failing to explain the objectives of a responsible democracy. By the time the Parliamentary elections 2004 were planned, leaders of *Birlik* and *Erk* were already based overseas. Their party structures within Uzbekistan could not muster much public support, amid the competition with five other relatively new political parties. *Erk*, *Birlik* and *Ozod Dehqonlar* could not gather the required 8% signatures of registered voters to demonstrate their public support bases for registration as qualified parties under the article 23 of election laws. Under these circumstances, the *Oliy Majlis* announced the establishment of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to prepare for the Parliamentary elections. CEC started its work in March 2004. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan requires that the Parliamentary elections be held on the last Sunday of December, hence the day of December 26, 2004 came in order.

The new rules of electoral conduct were designed to respond to the criticism of Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) over national referendum for an extension on presidential office term conducted in January 2002. OSCE, among other things largely focused upon the lack of voter education, women participation and information related to the reasons for election and the individual, collective and mass media behavior and conduct. CEC acknowledged OSCE and recommended to *Oliy Majlis* to incorporate these suggestions into electoral laws to ensure a fair and transparent election. It particularly focused upon the educational awareness campaign for both eligible and non-eligible voters.

POLITICAL TRANSITION AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The bicameral House of Representatives was envisaged by *Oliy Majlis*, which amended the Constitution on July 22, 2002 to enshrine this new institutional development by year 2005. The Central Election Commission, as an independent apolitical body under the Constitution, supported by autonomous institutions and regions supervised the election process. The outgoing *Oliy Majlis* decided that the lower house -the legislative chamber- consist of 120 seats, while the upper house -Senate- have 100 seats with 6 senators from each region. The President was authorized to appoint 16 members from artisans, professionals and other less represented or non-vocal individuals/groups for an overall representative balance in society. The December 26 elections aimed to institutionalize this major political development in Uzbekistan's democratic evolution. For the first time, the people of Uzbekistan were to exercise their right to elect a new *Oliy Majlis* with two chambers. Constitutional changes regarding the distribution of political power between the executive and legislative bodies and between the offices of President and Prime Minister were coupled with a nationwide public awareness campaign to educate the nation about the newly introduced structural reforms, the rights and duties of citizens as well as the role of mass media in modernizing societies. The government of Uzbekistan earnestly responded to international apprehensions about political transition by striving toward a broad-based public participation and fair electoral processes. Although many international non-governmental organizations do not acknowledge these efforts, constant fears about activist extremism spreading throughout the region and relevant security concerns in Uzbekistan, however, make many such international apprehensions appear somewhat contradictory.

Parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan provided the largest eligible voter population in Central Asia, approximately 14 million of Uzbekistan's nearly 25 million total population, the opportunity to cast vote (Approx. 11 million are under age 18). Citizens aged 18 and over, with 5 years inland residency were constitutionally eligible to vote through secret ballots (Parliamentary contest age is 25 years minimum) for both *Oliy Majlis* and *Kengashes* (Councils) of people's deputies

at regional, district and city levels. The article 23 of Elections Law encouraged political parties and/or independent contestants without criminal record with substantial support by the voter initiating groups including party membership at the district level (8% of voters) to contest and register with the offices of the Ministry of Justice in the districts. Military and security apparatus personnel were declared ineligible. Political parties and independents were encouraged to reapply, if their applications did not meet the constitutionally defined registration standards in the first application. Registered political parties in Uzbekistan included (in alphabetical order) *Adolat*, *Fidokorlar*, *Miliy Tiklanish*, *Liberal-Democratic Party* and the *People's Democratic Party*. The application by the opposition *Birlik* party was initially rejected. Reportedly *Birlik* was given additional chances to reapply, albeit without success due to the minimally required number of party membership to establish its support base and for party's advocacy of dual citizenship, a subject that contradicts with clauses in the Constitution. A *Birlik*-associated politician based overseas privately confirmed the relatively small number of membership in *Birlik* and *Erk*, assuming that some party members may be able to contest elections as independents.

The new electoral laws required that candidates must win at least 33% of the registered vote to be declared successful, barring which another election would be held. Senate elections were scheduled within 3 months after those to the lower house. Parties and individuals were prohibited from receiving donations. The CEC received funds for electoral expenses allocated by the national government to distribute among contestants, both parties and independents for their personal campaign organization. The CEC was assigned to ensure that all contestants received television campaigning time appropriately. The most important aspect was the three months long (September-November) nationwide political education campaign to inform the public about the nature of the new bicameral House of Legislation and its role in the prospects, problems and processes of democratic transformation. Many national and international scholars specializing in political reform

POLITICAL TRANSITION AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

were invited to address the planned political education seminars. The idea of educational campaign was to dispel the previously held international concern about the lack of public information on political reform. CEC enthusiastically planned and executed the Parliamentary elections anticipating a rewarding satisfaction. While some international groups criticized the electoral process for one or another reason and appeared indecisive about sending observers, CEC on her own invited independent international observers from almost all over the world to monitor the elections process. However, the major step forward in terms of political development is that Uzbekistan's gradual political development strategy reflected processes inherent in the considered levels of its political culture and relevant changing phases

ELECTORAL CONDUCT AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

On December 26, 2004 due to the second round of elections in Ukraine attracting worldwide attention, Parliamentary election in Uzbekistan was a modestly covered event internationally and that was limited to preconceived notions. World media projection about lower voter turn out did not materialize. Independent foreign observers witnessed large crowds of eligible voters exercising their votes through secret ballot. Besides, the CIS Observer Mission with some 68 delegates was in Uzbekistan to observe the elections. CEC on its own invited approximately 185 independent observers worldwide. Since the electoral preparations began in March 2004, OSCE first decided not to send any observers; then resolved to send a Limited Observation Mission (LOM) of 21 members at the last minute, approximately two weeks before the election, which was restricted to only five districts and that was before December 26, but not on the election day. LOM's absence from the polls on the election day together with a formal statement by OSCE about the conduct of election led to controversies about the rejection of opposition party participation. Independent foreign observers however, witnessed a well-planned and executed electoral process. Nevertheless, the OSCE/LOM acknowledged

improvements in the electoral process, but concluded it did not meet the OSCE standards. Most reports on the election nevertheless failed to note that these elections demonstrated the gradual and controlled evolution of Uzbekistan's political system. As illustrated by the developing individual identities of the five other pro-government parties, Uzbekistan may not have complied with OSCE standards totally, but is moving in the direction of a more liberal and pluralistic system.

On December 26, 2004 official figures registered approximately 85% of the 14.32 million registered voters in Uzbekistan voting to elect the 120-member Legislative Chamber of the reformed bicameral *Oliy Majlis* and *Kengashes* (Councils). A total of 527 candidates from different parties filed applications. The opposition parties *Birlik*, *Erk* and *Ozod* were unable to participate in the election, having been barred in accordance with article 23 of the Central Election Commission Election Laws for failing to provide signatures of at least 8% of the registered voters in districts contested to demonstrate an essential voter support base. Before the election day, they announced a boycott. The CEC had disqualified candidates, arguing they filed applications with false signatures. However 517 candidates from five political parties, independents and in coalition with the ruling *Liberal Democratic Party* contested the elections.

The OSCE office in Tashkent claimed that the CEC denied it access to registration documentation related to approximately two-thirds of nominated candidates from opposition initiative groups, who were unable to contest. In spite of this significant setback, other evidence from the electoral process since March 2004 suggests attempts at limited government dialogue with the opposition. The *Birlik*, *Irk* and *Ozod* opposition parties were officially permitted to stage public demonstrations outside the U.S. Embassy and OSCE office on November 26 and December 1, 2004 respectively. In the Uzbek context, this was a novel development.

On Election Day, foreign observers wanting to exchange notes with OSCE monitors found the LOM invisible at the polling stations.

POLITICAL TRANSITION AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

However, discussions among the international observers from 35 countries (68 of which were from CIS countries) confirmed a feeling that the brief OSCE statement focused on its limited pre-election day opposition activities and less on the nine-month long overall electoral process and the actual polls on election day. The relative absence of the LOM at the polling stations, and the speed of the OSCE press release the very next day, led to speculations among observers that the OSCE statement may have been prepared by its Tashkent office alone without involving the LOM. In the same spirit, a BBC broadcast on the morning of Election Day predicted “a lower voter turnout because of the rejection of opposition party candidates” before voting had even begun. Yet at numerous polling stations, independent foreign observers present at the polling stations witnessed crowds lining up to cast ballots.

Three separate groups of international observers offered opinions and impressions on the conduct of the elections on December 27, 2004. The CIS observers’ group was led by Vladimir Rushailo, and predictably lauded the process and called elections free and transparent by international norms in a press conference. Rushailo only admitted to minor problems and claimed OSCE officials agreed with the CIS observers group’s conclusions. Secondly, a statement issued by Ambassador Lubomir Kopaj, head of the OSCE’s LOM acknowledged that the mandated 30% quota for women in the House of Legislation was a significant development. However, he criticized the elections for not being democratic by OSCE standards, citing the lack of “political pluralism by blocking opposition parties from contest and depriving voters from genuine choice”. This statement acknowledged the limited scope of LOM to operate only in five electoral districts selected a week prior to election, but not on the polling day. The third category was a group of independent foreign observers who were personally present at polling stations in large numbers. They were not asked for a joint public press statement. Their common opinion is hence impossible to establish, though most consulted by this author were impressed by the professionalism in actually carrying out the elections.

Comparatively speaking, the CIS mission's credibility suffers from its record in earlier elections, seeming to be soft-hearted in monitoring, perhaps given similarities in political culture among the various CIS countries. The strength of OSCE statement was its acknowledgment of some major developments, particularly on women participation. Yet its greatest weakness was the inadequate scope of the LOM, which had not been able to observe the entire electoral process. The CEC has yet to comment on the OSCE's statement that it denied the OSCE access to registration information.

The OSCE's statements reflect a simplistic view of the contestants in the election, especially of the five parties that were indeed allowed to contest the election. The OSCE and international media have routinely dismissed these parties simply because of their cordial relations with the ruling party. However, particularly in societies where a political party culture is nascent and only gradually evolving, these parties cannot be simply dismissed citing lack of pluralism. Although at their creation, these parties may have had little separate identity, they have since developed into political parties with different characters and ideological bases, indeed establishing their own contacts with like-minded political movements in the west and elsewhere. Although this does not amount to the creation of a western-type multi-party democracy, it does allow voters a modicum of choice and signifies the gradual political evolution taking place in Uzbekistan.

Moreover, results of the first round of elections refute claims by some critics that the ruling party interfered in the process to gain an overall majority seats. Results demonstrated that the *Liberal Democratic Party* won a majority of votes, but that was restricted to 34.3 percent vote. The *Popular (People's) Democratic Party* came next with 23.4 percent. The *Fidakorlar* won 18 seats, the *Milliy Tiklanish* 11, and *Adolat* 10 seats. This reflects a trend in evolutionary pluralism in a political sense. The end result of election demands that the *Liberal Democratic Party* would have to rely on coalition strategy to maintain status quo. Coalition strategy is commonly practiced among

POLITICAL TRANSITION AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

all states including the advanced democratic societies. Uzbekistan's experience reflects a major political development in transition societies.

A full-fledged observer mission with active participation at polling stations and possible mutual exchange of thoughts between OSCE/LOM and independent foreign observers could have helped to clarify these critical issues.

CONCLUSIONS

OSCE criticism of the referendum held in 2002 was a major impetus for introducing the electoral laws that have been applied since then and the pre-election political education and awareness campaign. Interaction with voters at polling stations and common folks in city markets, who voted early before opening shops, enabled independent observers to conclude that elections were conducted in an orderly manner within the gradually reforming operating levels of political culture in Uzbekistan. Meetings with officials and local experts suggested that a simultaneous creation of relatively liberal think tanks working together with parliamentary reform and gradually liberalizing electoral processes reflected a commitment towards gradual political development. These approaches were stated especially by representatives of the Center for Political Studies, a liberal think-tank at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent, which considered Uzbekistan would learn more from the OSCE's constructive criticism.

Uzbekistan's elections may not have been conducted at the standards established by the OSCE. Yet different political cultures cannot be judged uniformly outside their operating domains. Comparing Uzbekistan's elections with West European elections is unlikely to provide contextually correct conclusions. A deeper understanding of regional realities indicates that the elections were a step forward in the electoral process, hence forming part of a gradual approach toward the creation of pluralism. Despite the controversy over the rejection of opposition parties, the December 26 elections introduced different

political parties with their own identities, notwithstanding their coalition with the ruling party, and a commendable electoral management.

Leaders of nearly 95 percent literate Central Asia, irrespective of their Soviet past, are the founding fathers of their new nation-states. They seem to visualize formidable plans for the economic and political development, with great care taken to consider the unique realities of their own socio-political cultures. The majority of the regional states have so far effectively avoided the eruption of societal conflicts, which otherwise have marred much of the former USSR. A well-planned strategy of gradual political development could prove to be the answer to modernization in regions experiencing serious geopolitical stress. Meanwhile, faster strategies of political transformation have experienced serious backlash, not least in the nearby Caucasus. There is good reason to argue that the pace of broad-based political reform in Central Asia could be increased, if the region was assisted to cope with the problem of its landlocked position, for example through alternate routes of economic and political communication. Amid pressures of a slowly stabilizing economy and waves of region-wide militant extremism, the processes of political reform in Uzbekistan appear genuine. Uzbekistan has successfully carried out the electoral process to the surprise of many independent international observers in spite of the geopolitical obstacles in its path.

The Parliamentary elections were well organized and transparent, hence a substantial step forward in the democratic transition, which legitimize Uzbekistan's strategy of gradual political development amid the tortuous processes of nation-state-building and complex geopolitical and strategic transitions not only in Central Asia, but worldwide.

THE ELECTION EXPERIENCE IN UZBEKISTAN AND ITS PARALLELS WITH INDIAN EXPERIENCE: NORMS AND STANDARDS*

J.D. Agarwal and Aman Agarwal

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan in a short span of 14 years, having studied democracies, has been able to induce systems to strengthen legislative power to have a radical transformation for a healthier social and economic life for its people. This is clearly reflected in the golden words of President Dr. Islam Karimov's address to the nation while announcing 1st September as the Independence Day on 31st August 1991. The socio-economic growth and his forward looking outlook for the Uzbek people, reflects a pure soul and a true leader wanting the best for his pupil. Being a true leader and people's man, Karimov has acted as the motivating force to have had Openness, Justice and Transparency in functioning of the government.

The supreme legislative body – *Oliy Majlis* (The Parliament), under the guidance and leadership of Buritosh Mustafaev conducted fair and smooth election with over 85.1% of vote count (see Table). This has been achieved considering the constraints of tuning to the electronic electoral process, tuning to international norms, financial constraints, the bad experiences of elections by the neighbouring CIS nations under the newly adopted two-chamber parliamentary system, namely "The Senate

* Based on the keynote address delivered at the International Conference on "Legal Aspects of Ensuring Openness, Publicity and Transparency in Organizing and Carrying Out of the Elections – International Experience, Norms and Standards", organized by Central Election Commission (Uzbekistan), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Uzbekistan), ISRS (Uzbekistan), MJ Administration of Bukhara Region (Uzbekistan) on 16-17 September 2004.

of *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan” and “The Legislative Chamber of *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan” as is observed in most democratic setups. The task of organizing and carrying out of elections to the lower chamber to formulate the Senate, first time in Uzbekistan, at the shoulders of Central Election Committee has been vital and challenging.

TABLE
Preliminary Results of Elections

Regions	Number of voters	Number of votes cast	Percent
Tashkent city	12,36,607	10,01,651	81.0
Andijan	12,97,947	11,39,597	87.8
Bukhara	8,28,978	7,16,236	86.4
Djizzakh	5,10,793	4,52,562	88.6
Navoi	4,74,086	3,81,639	80.5
Namangan	11,38,834	10,05,590	88.3
Samarqand	15,40,761	13,05,024	84.7
Sirdarya	3,41,964	2,97,166	86.9
Surkhandarya	9,77,338	7,98,485	81.7
Tashkent region	14,49,616	11,93,033	82.3
Ferghana	16,61,508	1,4,25,937	87.4
Khorezm	8,24,543	7,00,037	84.9
Qashqadarya	12,26,010	10,60,498	86.5
Karakalpakstan	8,44,724	7,19,704	85.2
TOTAL	1,43,23,709	1,21,97,159	85.1

Source: Central Election Committee, Republic of Uzbekistan
(<http://www.elections.uz>)

ELECTION EXPERIENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

Under President Karimov's guidance, in the last 13 years towards economic growth¹, democracy, societal enrichment and international acceptability, the electoral process would be smooth, just, transparent and equitably participative, I feel his re-election to lead the state to new heights is an apt decision of the Uzbek people. His words and actions towards the creation of institutional mechanisms of protection of human rights, and also development of democratic institutions and structures of a civil society, including activity of non-government organizations in Uzbekistan and their interaction with public authorities have motivated the Uzbeks to work harder and develop respect for the country.² The announcement of the year 2004 by President Islam Karimov as the "Year of Kindness and Mercy" is a step towards the same.

One must not forget that the key to the foundation of democracy in a country is the electoral process. Having attained a certain level of stability, most democratic countries, which have a strong belief in the process of elections, adopt ethical norms and standards in conducting elections to assign value to the voice of the people through the exercise of their franchise to elect the government of their choice. This is only possible when the citizens have respect along with freedom to express. In order to have appropriate norms and standards matching international criteria for conducting of election, it is necessary that an appropriate legal framework is developed and adhered to by all the political parties. The code of ethics which may be prescribed for the purposes of carrying out elections smoothly can only be enforced through an appropriate legal framework. This legal framework would provide the confidence and trust in the minds of the people of the country about the fairness of election and value of their vote/ franchise.

Elections act as the main instrument through which a democratic polity expresses its choice. Decisions made by the people in elections have socio-political implications, which base the foundation for a stronger economic and social nation.³ However, these decisions themselves act as the result of an individual's optimization by the voter and organizational optimization by the political formations. Economics

bundled with operations research has developed sophisticated tools and methods for the analysis of such optimization problems. It has been observed that in last few decades, these tools have increasingly been applied to analyse and study the impact of elections and the electoral behavior for democracy to have stronger foundations, not leaving economic growth behind. Politics is seen as a market activity in which individual preferences (votes) are revealed and translated into outcomes (public policies) through a particular production process.

Given the economic growth of GDP around 3.2 % for last 5 years in Uzbekistan, the inflation has been brought under control (with 0.9% in 2004 by State Statistic Committee as compared to 4% in 2003), taxes have been reduced from 45% (in 1999) to 30% for individuals and 37% (in 1996) to 18% for judicial persons, a strong growth path is foreseen. This has been made possible as a result of a balanced monetary, credit, tax and budgetary policy along with structural transformations in the economy.⁴ All these measures brought into action, can be well observed to have been outlined as the aspirations and dedications of the Uzbek people.

It is vital to note that the principle “*from the strong state to a strong civil society*” is consistently realised in a democratic Uzbekistan. For this institutions like the constitutional court, authorized person of the *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan on human rights, the national center on human rights, the institute of monitoring of current legislation, the committee on democratic institutes, non-governmental organizations and self government citizen’s institutions of the *Oliy Majlis* (The Parliament), the Central Election Committee, the department on human rights of the Ministry of Justice have been instituted and are in place. The relevance of election as a socio-political need in a democratic set up is observable; however, to understand elections, its bearings on the society and the political set up, we must also understand the economics behind the electoral process.

ECONOMICS OF ELECTIONS

Economics has given us ways and means to understand and appreciate the relevance of socio-economic activities. As Samuelson⁵ says, “Economics is the study of how people and society end up choosing, with or without the use of money, to employ scarce productive resources that could have alternative uses”. We can observe the same given the electoral process as well, where in “the democratic method is the process of participation, specifically through voting, in the management of society, where voting is understood to include all the ancillary institutions (like parties and pressure groups) and social principles (like freedom and equality) that are necessary to render it significant.”⁶ Given this, the elections are a reflection of people’s perception of their rights and participation in an equitable growth through an elected governmental process. In a growing economically liberal environment, as can be seen in Uzbekistan, a democratic process of governance is vital for sustained, stable and safer socio-economic environment. IT has fuelled this process in a physiological way and by facilitating a more transparent and quick means. Literature suggests that the study of elections and the electoral process has been based on two distinct theoretical traditions.⁷ One comprising of three subsections outlining the research as: social choice theory⁸ public choice theory⁹ and spatial theory.¹⁰ On the other hand the other set of theoretical tradition of electoral studies is less formal and more interested in concrete political problems.¹¹

The sense of contributing as a part of the government, having been chosen by the people, helps develop a mature democratic society. It is generally perceived that the insignificant weight of the single vote would induce a rational individual to save time and effort by not voting. However, voting power is statistically found to be related directly or indirectly to the probability that one additional vote can affect the final outcome of the election.¹² In India we have written epics of old times, when the kings and village heads in many regions were chosen by the voice of the people. This enabled develop transparency, more confidence and fear of a societal run state.

Downs' rational voter hypothesis (RVH) was firstly developed in 1957, where he who argued that citizens will rationally evaluate the costs and the expected benefits of voting versus not voting and will cast a ballot only if the benefits exceed the costs.¹³ The model of potential voter behavior given by Downs was

$$R = PB - C$$

Where,

R = the net benefits gained by citizens in return from going to the polls;

P = the subjective probability that the individual's vote will be decisive in determining the desired outcome;

B = the differential utility derived by a voter from the success of his preferred candidate;

C = the opportunity cost of voting (in utility terms).

Riker and Ordeshook (1968) further elaborated Downs' model of voter participation in such a way that a citizen would decide to vote only if

$$R = PB + D - C$$

Where, D represents the utility generated by carrying out the social obligation to vote. In their model Riker and Ordeshook suppose that the act of voting yields benefits such as the sense of fulfilling a duty unrelated to the effects of a vote on the outcome.

These attempts to explain voters' participation rate can be further classified in accordance with the nature of data used in the empirical investigations. It has been found that some studies analyze the impact of elements belonging to the political and institutional environment surrounding the event of the election. These studies have been grouped as politico- institutional models of voting behaviour. Institutional variables such as the presence of national competitive electoral districts or the degree of proportionality in the votes/seats ratio allow for international comparisons and cross-section as well as time series analysis.¹⁴ However, on the other hand, political variables such as the degree of competition between parties or candidates, the degree of party's strength and the amount of campaign spending have been used

in order to perform time-series analysis. This has been done in an attempt to explain the decline of voter participation rate over time in the USA. Other studies, which we call socio-economic models of voting behavior, focus on variables related to the economic and demographic structure of the eligible voter population. The control variable vectors being the gender, race and education level. However, other variables such as personal income, have been used as main explanatory variables, following the work of Frey, who suggested an income/turnout relationship. He supported the view that the choice to participate in the political process is characterized by a model of consumption behaviour as opposed to voting as an investment.

Ordeshook¹⁵ helped summarise the literature to understand as to how spatial preferences serve as a convenient structure to analyze many issues like

- a. the extent to which bicameralism limits outcomes relative to a unicameral legislature;
- b. how parliamentary procedures such as issue-by-issue voting can yield stability;
- c. how strategic voting might limit the power of the agenda setter;
- d. how the agenda setter's power is increased by expanding the class of agendas at his disposal;
- e. the circumstances under which strategic voters vote sincerely and therefore, the circumstances under which it is impossible to ascertain the sophistication of committee members.

ELECTIONS AND MACROECONOMICS

Economic literature that studies electoral phenomena is that which relates elections with macroeconomic policies. This emphasizes the impact of elections and party differences on fiscal and monetary policies carried out by governments. The earlier models form the electoral-cycle theory, while the second group goes under the name of partisanship theory. The electoral-cycle theory is based on the fact that economic movements just before an election can be decisive. Voters reward

incumbents for prosperity and punish them for recession.¹⁶ This would further imply that spurts in economic growth just before an election will benefit incumbents. In electoral-cycle models the macroeconomic performance is analysed through the observation of real and nominal macroeconomic variables, such as, unemployment, inflation, growth rates, budget deficits, interest rates and the growth in money supply. Many economists, however, believe that citizens as economic agents are too 'rational' to be manipulated by self-interested politicians. According to rational expectation theory, citizens would see that the government have attempted to stimulate the economy beyond its natural capacity and hence realizing this, they would react.

As pointed out earlier, democratic elections other than being an opportunity to evaluate the performance of incumbents, are also instruments for popular choice between different alternatives. The alternatives are represented by competing parties with alternative policies. However, several studies have highlighted the fact that incumbent governments can influence the nature of the policy that will be implemented after that they are out of office and they have presented models of how parties might do so strategically.

ELECTIONS AND THE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Mudambi & Navarra,¹⁷ have outlined that several decades of virtual neglect, the comparative study of electoral systems is undergoing a lively revival. Scientific analyses of electoral laws and their political consequences include a large number of relevant concerns:

- a. the proportionality of the translation of party shares of the vote into party seat shares in the legislature;
- b. the number of political parties and their organizational structures;
- c. the strategic co-ordination of parties in electoral competitions and the ideological polarization of the electorate;
- d. the interaction of political and economic cycles;
- e. the stability of political regimes as measured by the longevity of governing cabinets;

ELECTION EXPERIENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

- f. voter participation, the sense of voter efficacy and the perception of voter legitimacy;
- g. the representation of racial, ethnic and other group interests.

The stability of political regimes as measured by the longevity of governing cabinets has been analyzed to be a vital factor in the economic literature contributing to the success of democracy and economic growth of a nation.

INDIA'S EXPERIENCE

India is a Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic and the largest democracy in the world. The modern Indian nation state came into existence on 15th August 1947 and became Republic of India on 26th January 1950. Since then free and fair elections have been held at regular intervals as per the principles enshrined in the Constitution, Electoral Laws and System. The Constitution of India has vested in the Election Commission of India the superintendence, direction and control of the entire process for conduct of elections to Parliament and Legislature of every State and to the offices of President and Vice-President of India.

An electoral system is understood as a set of laws that regulate electoral competition between and within political parties. Specifically, the concern for the laws and rules governing as to how parties make their nominations, how parties form (explicit or tacit) electoral coalitions, how citizens vote and how their votes are translated into seats. These issues concerning the impact of election rules on the number of parties and, therefore, on electoral competition is linked to the Duverger's law and hypothesis. Duverger¹⁸ states that the law that plurality based elections in single-member districts generally result into two-party politics and on the other hand his hypothesis states that proportional election systems generally give rise to multi-party politics.

In India, the elections are conducted according to the constitutional provisions, supplemented by laws made by Parliament. The major laws are Representation of the People's Act, 1950, which

mainly deals with the preparation and revision of electoral rolls, the Representation of the People's Act, 1951 which deals, in detail, with all aspects of conduct of elections and post-election disputes. The Supreme Court of India has held that where the enacted laws are silent or make insufficient provision to deal with a given situation in the conduct of elections, the Election Commission has the residuary powers under the Constitution to act in an appropriate manner.¹⁹

The Election Commission of India, a permanent Constitutional Body²⁰ was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950. The Commission transacts its business by holding regular meetings and also by circulation of papers. All Election Commissioners have equal say in the decision making of the Commission. The Commission, from time to time, delegates some of its executive functions to its officers in its Secretariat. The main functional divisions are Planning, Judicial, Administration, Information Systems, Media and Secretariat Coordination. The territorial work is distributed among separate units responsible for different zones into which the 35 constituent States and Union Territories of the country are grouped for convenience of management. The gigantic task force for conducting a countrywide general election consists of nearly five million polling personnel and civil police forces. This huge election machinery is deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission and is subject to its control, superintendence and discipline during the election period, extending over a period of one and half to two months.²¹

In the performance of its functions, Election Commission is insulated from executive interference. It is the Commission which decides the election schedules for the conduct of elections, whether general elections or bye-elections. Again, it is the Commission, which decides on the location of polling stations, assignment of voters to the polling stations, location of counting centres, arrangements to be made in and around polling stations and counting centres and all allied matters. The Commission normally announces the schedule of elections in a major Press Conference a few weeks before the formal process is set in motion.

ELECTION EXPERIENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

Indian elections are the largest event in the World with over 671 million (aprox. 60%) voters' participation in the last elections in 2004. This is more than the total population of US, EU, and Australia, UK, Japan and many other nations. Also the total number of voters' participation is much more than the combined voters' population of the US, UK, EU, Australia, Canada and Japan taken together. Also the 2004 elections had a participation of over 200 political parties. Such a large participation base in a multi-party system has not been observed by any democratic country anywhere else in the world. This also builds upon ensuring transparency, fairness and efficiency of the democratic setup within India. The conduct of General Elections in India for electing a new Lower House of Parliament (Lok Sabha) involves management of the largest event in the world. The electorate exceeds 668 million who vote in 800,000 polling stations spread across widely varying geographic and climatic zones.²² Polling stations are located in the snow-clad mountains in the Himalayas, the deserts of the Rajasthan and in sparsely populated islands in the Indian Ocean.

The media has been a prime role player in conduct of fair and just elections. The Election Commission has a comprehensive policy for the media. It holds regular briefings for the mass media-print and electronic, on a regular basis, at close intervals during the election period and on specific occasions as necessary on other occasions. The representatives of the media are also provided facilities to report on actual conduct of poll and counting. They are allowed entry into polling stations and counting centres on the basis of authority letters issued by the Commission. They include members of both international and national media.²³

For having a sound and sustained electoral process, the involvement and development of an appropriate International Co-operation framework is enriching for the electoral system. India has been the founding member of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA), Stockholm, Sweden. In the recent past, the Commission has expanded international contacts by way of sharing of experience and expertise in the areas of Electoral

Management and Administration, Electoral Laws and Reforms. Delegates of the Commission have visited Sweden, U.K, Russia, Bangladesh, and the Philippines in recent years. Election Officials from the national electoral bodies and other delegates from several countries - Russia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, South Africa, Bangladesh, Thailand, Nigeria, Australia, the United States and Afganistan have visited the Commission for a better understanding of the Indian electoral process. The Commission has also provided experts and observers for elections to other countries in co-operation with the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat.²⁴ This helps develop a more firm and appropriate system as per the nations requirement. The CEC of the Republic of Uzbekistan organized series of International Seminars prior to the conduct of elections for the lower house on 26th December 2004. A membership of the above institution and steps taken by India in the past to strengthen its electoral process have facilitated the CEC in this regard.

CONCLUSION

The vision and dream of President Islam Karimov for his people, visible from the growth achieved by the nation in last 14 years is clearly reflected by the voice of the Uzbeks for electing a government through peaceful, transparent and fair elections. As many as 200 International Observers were invited to oversee the elections. The largest contingent was from India. The International Observers were free to move anywhere in the country and were freely interacting with print and electronic media. Free interactions were facilitated by CEC with media, voters and electoral officers.

Buritosh Mustafaev and his CEC team ensured that the electoral process observes appropriate Legal Aspects for Ensuring Openness, Publicity and Transparency in Organizing and Carrying Out of the Elections maintaining international norms and standards. Models analyzing political markets state that as equilibrium analysis has been fundamental to market economics, equilibrium analysis also ought to be fundamental to the understanding of elections presented by various

ELECTION EXPERIENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

researchers and practitioners in last three months prior to election day. This is visible from the adaptation of international norms, electronic voting systems, security measures and over 85.1% voters' participation without fear in the recent elections in Uzbekistan. When we look at India, the Election Commission of India has taken several new initiatives in the recent past. Notable among these are, a scheme for use of State owned electronic media for broadcast/telecast by political parties, checking criminalisation of politics, computerisation of electoral rolls, providing electors with Identity Cards, simplifying the procedure for maintenance of accounts and filing of the same by candidates and a variety of measures for strict compliance of Model Code of Conduct, for providing a level playing field to contestants during the elections. These to a large extent have been kept under consideration while drafting the charter for the elections in Uzbekistan. As Rousseau said democratic governments emerge as a response to the conflict of interests characterizing the state of anarchy. Such a government was understood as the way to satisfy the common interests of the community.

India's entry and sustained growth in the last decade opens up immense possibilities for becoming a truly favoured global democratic nation and economy. India has benefited from the old heritage (dating back to 7000 years), traditional value system and economic and societal norms. These have empowered India and Indians to accommodate and adjust with changing times and scenarios over the history. We have seen times when there was free movement of labor and capital in the golden arena of our nation Bharat. Today's globalization does encompass part of it, wherein capital and trade is certainly an issue. The gradual privatization and the consequent need to regulate investments; the growing importance of private investment and the emergence of the mixed-market economy are some of the characteristics of the political economy of India resulting from its engagement with the global economy in the 1990s. If we are really talking of a globalized world, then we need to free ourselves of these barriers and allow the market mechanism to freely flow and be part of this large society. India is a country with one of the largest democracy

of the world and has had the experience of conducting election successfully ever since its independence in 1947. The total number of voters in India (671 million) far exceeds the total population of America and it also exceeds the total population of the whole of Europe along with a participation of over 200 political parties (largest multi-party system base observed by any democratic country globally). All this builds upon ensuring transparency, fairness and efficiency of the democratic setup within India. It is because of the legal framework, the openness, fairness, transparent and autonomy of election commission charged with the responsibility of conducting elections, the elections are held.

The lower chamber of the parliament of Uzbekistan, consisting of 120 deputies, was formed through the two rounds of election – on main elections on 26 December 2004, when 62 deputies were elected, and on re-elections on 9 January, when the remaining 58 deputies were elected. The Liberal-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan won the majority of seats during the second round of elections – 34.2%. People's Democratic Party followed with 23.3%. From Fidlokor Party 18 members were elected, from Milliy Tiklanish Party – 11, Adolat Party - 10. Fourteen deputies were elected from the initiative groups of voters. The implementation of 30 percent quota for female candidacy has had a positive effect on gender balance at the Legislative Chamber. 18% of the elected deputies are women, which is 2.5 times more than in the parliament elected in 1999. In terms of their occupation, 18.3% of the elected deputies are lawyers, 21.7% economists, 10% represent the industrial, construction and communication sector, 7.5% agriculture, 20% education, science, culture and healthcare, 12.5% are entrepreneurs and almost 16% represent the NGOs. Together with parliamentary deputies, people of Uzbekistan elected representatives in local Councils of People's Deputies. Soon the senators for parliament's upper chamber would be elected among them at the Councils' sessions. Hence one more stage of the parliament reform – forming the Senate is ahead. Under President Islam Karimov's guidance, in the last 14 years, the nation has taken steps towards economic growth,

ELECTION EXPERIENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

democracy, societal enrichment and international acceptability. We feel happy that the electoral process has been smooth, just, transparent and equitably participated and the duly elected government is functioning well.

REFERENCES

1. All macro-economic indicators like manufacturing, agriculture, trade have been sustainably up for last 6 years on a continuous basis. As compared to last year itself, the manufacturing rose by 9.6% (in place of 2.5% the year previous), heating and energy increased, oil by 7.9%, gas by 7.6% and coal by 15.3%, diesel by 12.2%, compressed gas by 23.6%. Steel production increased by 8.4% and nonferrous metals by 13.1%, cement by 27.4% and carpets by 22%. Silk and cotton yarn increased by 14.2%, cars by 2 times, TVs by 47.8%, and other consumer technology and carpets by 2 times and clothing by 7.5%. Cargo turnover grew by 3.2% and passenger turnover by 6.8%. Retail trade increased by 4% and services by 9%. Foreign trade increased by 27.4%, exports by 38.3% and imports by 17.1%. Keeping in mind that for last half decade the BOT has been positive (Ministry of Economics, Uzbekistan, 2004).
2. *Jahon Information Agency, Political Reforms and Process of Democratization in the Republic of Uzbekistan*, 2004, Embassy of Uzbekistan in India.
3. G.V.G. Krishnamurthy, "Conducting Election in the Largest Democracy in the World", Seminar at Indian Institute of Finance, July 2004.
4. Ministry of Economics, *Uzbek Economy shows Stable Growth in January-February 2004*, press release, 2004.
5. P. Samuelson, *Economic*, 9th ed., McGraw-Hill, 1976.
6. A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper and Row, 1957.
7. G.W. Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
8. K.J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1951; A. Gibbard, "Manipulation of Voting Schemes: A General Result", *Econometrica*, Vol.41, 1973, pp.587-601; T. Schwartz, *The Logic of Collective Choice*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986; A. Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, San Francisco, Holden-Day, 1970.

9. J.M. Buchanan, and G. Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1962; P.A. McNutt, *The Economics of Public Choice*, London, Edward Elgar, 1996.
10. A. Downs, n.6; J.E. Enelow, and M. Hinich, *Advances in the Spatial Theory of Voting*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990; M.J. Hinich, "Voting as an Act of Contribution", *Public Choice*, Vol.36, 1981, pp.135-40; T.R. Palfrey, "Spatial Equilibrium with Entry", *Review of Economic Studies*, Vol.51, 1984, pp.139-136; T. Romer, and H. Rosenthal, "Bureaucrats versus Voters: On the Political economy of Resource Allocation by Direct Democracy", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.93, 1979, pp.563-587.
11. M. Duverger, *Political Parties Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State*, New York, Wiley, 1954; A. Lijphart, and B. Grofman, *Choosing an Electoral System*, New York, Praeger, 1984; A. Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies. 1945-1990*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994; D.W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Law*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1971; G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976; R. Taagepera, and M. Shugart, *States and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989.
12. N. Frohlich, J. A. Oppenheimer, J. Smith, and O.R. Joung, "A Test of Downsian Voter Rationality: 1964 Presidential Voting", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.72, 1978, pp.178-97.
13. Ram Mudambi and Pietro Navarra, *The Economics of Elections: A survey of the Literature*, Working Paper 007-00, 2000.
14. R.W. Jackman, "Political Institution and Voter Turnout in the Industrial Democracies", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.81, 1987, pp.405-23; G.B. Powell, Jr., "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.80, 1986, pp.17-43.
15. P.C. Ordeshook, "The Spatial Analysis of Elections and Committees: Four Decades of Research", pp.247-70 in D.C. Mueller, (ed), *Perspectives on Public Choice*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
16. Ram Mudambi and Pietro Navarra, n.13.
17. *Ibid.*

ELECTION EXPERIENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

18. Duverger, n.11.
19. Election Commission of India (ECI), 2004 at <http://www.eci.gov.in>
20. Originally the commission had only a Chief Election Commissioner. It currently consists of Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners, for a long time, though it had only the Chief Election Commissioner. For the first time two additional Commissioners were appointed on 16th October 1989 but they had a very short tenure till 1st January 1990. Later on 1st October 1993 two additional Election Commissioners were appointed. The concept of multi-member Commission has been in operation since then, with decision making power by majority vote. It is vital to also understand the appointment and tenure of Commissioners to ensure an appropriate functioning of the electoral body. Since it is the Prime Minister which is elected via the electoral process, the President appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners in India. They have tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court of India. The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from office only through impeachment by Parliament. (Krishnamurthy, 2004; ECI, 2004)
21. Election Commission of India (ECI), 2004 at <http://www.eci.gov.in>
22. Election Commission of India (ECI), 2004 at <http://www.eci.gov.in>
23. Aman Agarwal, Muhammad Rao Aslam, Namita Datta, Hettiarchhige Don Bernard S. Perera, Tshewang Norbu and Venkiteswaran Ramakrishnan, "Impact of Governance on Economic Development in South Asian Region", *Finance India*, XVI No 2, June 2002. Presented at Columbia University, New York, USA, (November 2000).
24. Krishnamurthy, n.3; Election Commission of India (ECI), 2004 at <http://www.eci.gov.in>

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN UZBEKISTAN, 2004

M.K. Dhar

The Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan has taken a significant step towards joining the league of democracies by holding first-ever direct elections to its new bicameral parliament which were, without doubt, free, fair and transparent and would be a pride to the comity of Islamic nations. Some 12.19 million voters of both sexes, or 85.1 per cent of the 14.32 million registered electorate out of a population of 25 million cast their votes on December 26. The voting procedure was held by international observers from as many as 35 countries conforming to democratic standards, which ruled out chances of bogus voting, intimidation or inducement to influence the outcome. The orderly and peaceful manner in which the elections were conducted throughout the country's 14 regions testified to the organisational capacity of the Election Commission and authorities responsible for law and order though fundamentalist forces, with roots in neighbouring countries, such as, Afghanistan and Pakistan, have been trying to destabilize the regime by committing terrorist attacks. They failed to trigger any violent incidents before or during the elections. This ensured a high voter turnout and participation by women in large numbers. The enthusiasm of the voters was strong in both urban and rural areas, reflecting a strong consciousness among the people of their democratic rights and their exercise in shaping the country's future. In the capital city of Tashkent 81 per cent of the voters cast their ballots and in the most populous Ferghana Valley the percentage was as high as 87.4. The Djizzakh region, which is largely rural, recorded the highest 88.6 per cent vote due mainly- to active mobilization of the political parties in the fray.

It will be wrong to judge Uzbekistan from the standards of democratic countries with strong traditions of voting going back to centuries or many decades. Uzbekistan, when part of the former Soviet Union, did not have democratic elections under a single Communist

Party system. It was only when it became free after the break-up of the USSR some 13 years ago that it began to shape its own destiny and take the affairs of state in its hands, without looking towards Moscow. After having overcome the teething troubles of development and creating the necessary legal and constitutional framework, that Uzbekistan has embarked on the path of democratic governance. The process began with the creation of a single chamber *Oliy Majlis* and holding of elections which marked the beginning of evolution of fully democracy in the country. On the basis of experience gained over the years, the Constitution and the laws have been further amended to inject more democracy, with the necessary safeguards to prevent chaos or growth of forces intent upon destabilizing the country or working at the behest of foreign masters with ulterior motives.

But the process of democracy has now evolved and there is no going back on it. At the present moment there is a national consensus on the need of speedy economic development, reform and privatisation. There is also agreement on letting the people have greater say and part in their governance through democratic means, on devolution of power and government accountability with regards to its performance and implementation of the promises made and the developmental goals identified. At the same time it became necessary to prevent civilization of democracy and politics by allowing all and sundry to join the electoral fray with varying appeals, not necessarily promoting unity, multi-polarity, multi-culturalism and democratic development. As the state has taken full responsibility of financing political parties during elections, it needs to ensure that the contesting organisations have a measurable mass base and are not small outfits formed just to extract some money from the Election Commission, or individuals with no following and no future. Therefore, fundamentalist and terrorist groups and parties have been banned from contesting and even operating within the country. Uzbekistan has taken the lead among Islamic nations in fighting fundamentalism and terrorism in a transparent and thorough manner and putting itself on a steady growth path based on the principles of unity, equality and secularism. It is felt, that economic and

social development and democracy must go hand in hand and no extraneous influences should be allowed to impede the growth of either.

There are five political parties contesting the elections to Parliament-the *Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan* which put up 113 candidates; the *People's Democratic Party* - 106; *Fidokorlar National Democratic Party* - 85; *Milli Tiklanish Democratic Party* - 59 and *Adolat Social Democratic Party* - 69. In addition initiative groups of voters had put up 57 candidates. There were, thus 489 candidates for 120 seats in the Legislative Chamber of the *Oliy Majlis*. A remarkable feature is that 30 per cent seats in the legislative chamber are reserved for women and the parties have, therefore, to make sure to give sufficient representation to women in their list of candidates to ensure the reservations provided under the law. This is a great step towards women's empowerment and granting them equal status in society and in the democratic organs of governance. Uzbekistan thus becomes the only democratic country in the world to ensure reservation for women in parliament by law.

To be able to contest the election, a political party must prove to the Election Commission that it has the support of at least 50,000 citizens who must sign its application. Similarly voters' to initiative groups can also apply for registration with the support of at least 300 voters of the respective electoral districts. Only after registration can these groups collect the signatures of citizens for a candidacy. Professional clergymen or religious organisations and associations cannot contest the elections lest they entice voters with appeal to religion. Members of the Armed forces, police and national security service also are barred from contesting. The intention is to ensure that the parties and citizens interest groups participating are serious about contesting and command verifiable mass support.

The Government assumed all costs related to the election campaign of the political parties which are forbidden from raising funds from the public or business organisation or from foreign organisations for this purpose. The Central Election Commission determined the amount of money to be paid to each contesting candidate for the

Legislative Chamber. The amount is transferred to the settlement account of the political party to be spent on pre-election campaign through the mass media and meetings in their constituencies. The candidates must maintain an account of their expenses. This is to ensure equal opportunity to all candidates to fight and to eliminate the role of money power. However, for their day-to-day functioning, the parties are allowed to raise funds from their supporters within the country, including businessmen. But they are forbidden to receive contributions from foreign countries, international organisations their representative offices and subsidiaries, enterprises with foreign investments and foreign citizens. The finances of the parties are supervised by the Ministry of Justice to which reports are made about their income and expenditure. In this manner a check is exercised on interested foreign governments, institutions, organisations or individuals from interfering in the elections, as well as, in the internal affairs of Uzbekistan.

Elections took place simultaneously for 120 seats of the Legislative Chamber (Lower House) of Parliament, and for regional, district and city *Kengashes* (Councils of People's Deputies) through 8,048 polling stations in Uzbekistan and 40 in the country's embassies abroad. Several hundred thousand persons were mobilized for election duty, drawn from all walks of life: teachers, academics, office workers, private individuals and others. The voters were issued ballot papers on production of their voter slips and passport which is issued to every adult person on attaining the age of 18 years and is produced as proof of identity. Under the law, a candidate has to get at least 33 per cent of the polled votes to get elected. This is the reason why only 60 of the 120 candidates were elected in the first round on December 26 and in the remaining 60 constituencies none of the candidates scored the qualifying mark. Under the law, fresh poll is to be held between two candidates who scored the highest vote within two weeks and the one who polls the larger vote will get elected.

Elections to the upper chamber, the Senate will also take place directly and the candidates should be men of eminence and experience, competent to review legislation passed by the lower house and fully

representing the interests of the regions which they will represent. In addition, the President will nominate 16 members to the Senate including eminent citizens and representatives of science, technology, the arts etc. The Senate will now discharge some of the functions hitherto performed by the President and also approve the appointment of the Prime Minister and his cabinet, the Public Prosecutor and his deputies, chairman of the National Security Service and diplomats assigned to other countries. The Constitutional amendments have increased competitiveness among political parties, including their regional and local institutions, intensified the activities of voters initiative groups and self-government institutions and increased political consciousness and legal understanding of the people. The presence of five parties in the fray has made it possible for the voters to exercise a wide choice on the basis of their programmes and strategy to solve different public issues. For instance, the *People's Democratic Party*, the biggest in the country promises to protect the interests of all sections of the population. The *Adolat* demands further democratization of the country's laws in order to confer more rights on the people. The Liberals seek economic development while preserving the traditions and further liberalisation of the economy in order to let private enterprise get a free play. The *Fidokorlar* wants development to be accompanied by social justice and full protection of the rights of workers as also job guarantee. While the party representing the interests of free entrepreneurs feels that greater development will generate more employment, the other insists on social employment guarantee for the jobless people. But all are agreed on the need to preserve national unity, secularism and the country's integrity and keeping out hostile outside forces bent upon depriving the country of its freedom and independence.

Having taken all precautions to ensure free and fair voting and allowing parties to articulate their views on different subjects freely, the Election Commission does not claim infallibility and is open to learn from the experience. Even though the OSCE mission concluded that the elections "fell short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections," it took note of the many positive

features, such as 30 per cent quota for women, state funding of parties for contesting elections and positive voting for candidates on the ballot paper. While Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Buritosh Mustafoyev promised to look into the OSCE complaints, the Foreign Minister, Sadiq Safaev said action process encountered many bumps and the experience gained is truly valuable for future elections. There is common agreement on the point that democracy is on the rails and proceeding smoothly. Further enrichment through greater opportunities for public debate and discussion and expression of dissent will be a continuous process. What the Government is trying to prevent is division in the ranks of the people over issues of freedom and development, mutual acrimony and bitterness over political, social and religious issues at a time when the security situation in the entire region is extremely delicate, with international forces of terrorism and destabilisation in full play. Many countries under the occupation of foreign forces have yet to regain their freedom and democracy. But Uzbekistan, having chosen the secular and democratic path, is determined to stick to it and meet all challenges to its continuance and further enrichment.

Democracy is yet another bond between India and Uzbekistan. India has been watching with keen interest and appreciation the evolution of democracy in Uzbekistan, with which it has maintained economic and cultural contacts over the centuries, and feels confident that the country will remain stable, strong and secular and bilateral relations will receive a fillip.

While inaugurating the first joint session of the newly elected two Houses of Parliament, President Islam Karimov acknowledged that the elections had given a powerful impulse to a drastic revival and increase of activity of political parties and public organisations. The very fact that all eligible political parties that participated in the elections had gained enough seats in the Legislative Chamber demonstrated that they had sufficient support among the people. Out of the 54 independent candidates who contested 14 were elected. The voters demonstrated political and civic maturity, an ability to shape their lives and future on

the basis of recognized democratic values. They had supported the stand that “regulated economy” and “manageable democracy” models were unacceptable to them. They would stick to the principle of gradual transformation to the Uzbek model of reforming and modernizing the state and the society. He also ridiculed statements, such as, Uzbekistan was not yet ripe enough for democracy and the people needed to think about poverty reduction first, and only then conditions for promoting democracy and political and economic reforms would emerge. Such an approach stemmed from lack of knowledge of history, distrust of the creative capacity of the people and lack of understanding of objective global processes that dynamically change the modern world.

The strengthening of independence, democratization and society renewal shall remain the government’s primary and most important objectives. Only upon laying this foundation the country can and must tackle the problems of poverty reduction and overall economic development to make it a modern and prosperous state. This invariable truth “will penetrate the flesh and blood of everyone who lives on our soil.”

President Islam Karimov has outlined the tasks before the new Parliament – to attain serious and well considered balance of powers between legislative, executive and judicial branches. Some of the President’s powers would be transferred to the Upper Chamber – and to the Government and the role and responsibility of the Prime minister would be enhanced. Specific legislative measures are to be undertaken to enhance the sovereignty and independence of the judiciary. It is also intended to strike a balance between the interests of provinces and the state at large as the Senate, consisting mostly of representatives of local *Kengashes* will represent the interests of the provinces. The long-term task, while reforming the statehood and society, is to implement the chosen model of modernization – transition from a strong state to a strong civil society. The role and influence of political parties and civic institutions on political decision-making will now considerably enhance in a new era of democratic transformation of Uzbekistan.

UZBEKISTAN'S EXPERIMENT WITH DEMOCRACY

John Cherian

The elections in Ukraine in the last week of December 2004 received a lot of international attention. The Uzbekistan government held elections to the lower house of Parliament on 26 December 2004 in a comparatively fair manner, though without such publicity.

As recent events have illustrated, Western-style democracy is yet to strike root in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In fact, the leaderships of many of these countries are wary of the West using “democratic elections” to topple governments and install regimes subservient to its interests. They have watched with increasing trepidation as the West went about methodically supervising “regime changes” in former Yugoslavia, Georgia and, recently, Ukraine.

Uzbekistan seems determined to chart out its own path as it tries to evolve into a multi-party democracy. Since Uzbekistan declared independence in 1991 in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, the country has known only one leader, Islam Karimov. Like his counterparts in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, he is a holdover from the Communist era. Karimov was quick to chart out an independent political path, taking care not to annoy either the United States or Russia on important policy matters.

Karimov believes that Uzbekistan is not ready for Western-style democracy. Neighbouring Tajikistan is only now emerging from a costly civil war. Afghanistan, with which Uzbekistan shares a border, continues to be volatile and remains a threat to the stability of the region. Karimov has repeatedly emphasised that “evolution, not revolution” is the answer to the country's political problems. Karimov obviously is wiser now, especially after recent events. He does not want a “rose revolution”, which threw out Eduard Shevernadze in Georgia, or an “orange” version, which shook up Ukrainian politics.

The elections to the lower house of Parliament in December was a measured step forward in the democratic “evolution” of the country. The people will vote later this year to elect members of the upper house. The country will have a two-tier legislature (*Oliy Majlis*) similar in some respects to the Indian Parliament. The government had invited more than 200 international observers to witness the elections to the lower house. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also sent a “limited” observers mission. There was also an independent mission representing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Five parties participated in the elections to choose 120 members.

The five parties - *The People’s Democratic Party*, the *Adolat* (Justice) *Social Democratic Party*, *Milliy Tiklanish* (National Renaissance), *Fidokorlar* (Self-Sacrificers) and the *Liberal Democratic Party* - have all pledged their support to President Karimov. The parties are also subsidised by the state. “Financing of parties will curtail corruption,” said an official. Citizens’ groups were also allowed to field candidates.

The Uzbek government did not permit the main Opposition parties, *Erik* (Freedom), *Birlik* (Unity) and *Ozod Dehqonlar* (Free Peasants) to participate. Communists also did not figure in the electoral fray. Government officials pointed out that each of the five parties had their own newspapers and were given free air time on radio and television. Thirty per cent of the seats in the lower house are reserved for women.

On an average, there were around three candidates competing for a seat. This correspondent witnessed heavy polling in booths in Samarkhand and surrounding areas. Party observers and citizens’ groups kept a keen watch on the proceedings. Every voter had to carry his or her passport. Citizens over 16 years old are issued passports. Voters deposited the ballot paper in a transparent glass box. A senior official contended that it was the right of every country to choose its government in its own way. He denied that the government was going through the electoral exercise owing to “pressure from outside”, though

he acknowledged that some countries were trying to influence the course of events in his country “from outside”.

The Central Election Commission described the vote as “open and honest”. Its spokesman, Sherzod Kudratkhodzhaev, announced that the turnout was around 85 per cent. He said that 60 candidates had been elected. No party-wise break-up of the victorious candidates was given at the press conference, which was attended also by the international observers. The complaints of another 60 candidates were being investigated, Kudratkhodzhaev said.

The OSCE observers’ group was critical about the way in which the elections were conducted but the head of the CIS observers mission, Vladimir Rushailo, said that the elections were “free and open”. A senior diplomat based in Tashkent, commenting on the elections, said that perceptions were bound to differ. “You have to decide whether the glass is half full or half empty,” said the diplomat.

The Islamic Opposition parties are all operating underground. Critics of the government say that the Islamist threat is being exaggerated by the government in a bid to get support and paint itself as a victim of international terrorism. However, for the first time, there were two suicide bombings in Tashkent in June 2004. The targets were the U.S. and Israeli embassies. Earlier last year there were bomb explosions in Tashkent and the historical city of Bukhara. According to government officials, they were carried out by activists belonging to the banned Islamist group, *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*. Another group, the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU), has claimed credit for the some of the attacks.

Karimov’s critics call him a ruthless dictator but he is credited with having provided stability to the country. Uzbekistan is geo-strategically important. In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, the government of Uzbekistan allowed the U.S. to open a large military base in the country. The base is crucial for U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and is the largest in Central Asia, housing a thousand troops. Some analysts believe that this is the reason why the Bush

administration is not exerting too much pressure on the Karimov government on the issue of multi-party elections and human rights. Most of the criticism on this score in recent times has come from countries in the European Union (E.U.).

There are indications that Uzbekistan is once again tilting towards Russia. Most of the lucrative energy and other business deals signed this year have gone to Russian companies. The U.S. wants Uzbekistan's oil and gas reserves to be routed to Japan. Japan is an important player in the region and has invested heavily in Uzbekistan. China is equally keen to tap the country's substantial energy reserves and Russia could lend it a helping hand in doing this. Uzbekistan, Russia and China are members of the closely knit Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Both Karimov and Russian President Vladimir Putin have viewed with growing suspicion the West's missionary zeal in imposing its version of democracy. Washington had cancelled a non-military aid of \$18 million to Uzbekistan on the basis of the country's human rights record. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has scaled back its operations in Uzbekistan. Russia has refrained from criticising Uzbekistan's human rights record.

Uzbekistan is the Central Asian country with the biggest population (26.5 million). It is rich in minerals, especially oil and gold. Cotton continues to be its major agricultural produce; it is the second largest cotton producer in the world.

Tashkent, the capital, has received a facelift. This correspondent, who visited the country after a gap of seven years, saw new buildings housing multinational companies and government offices. The new Parliament building, designed in the Uzbek style of architecture, is a magnificent structure. There is no trace left of the innumerable statues of Vladimir Lenin that once adorned the streets of the capital.

Tashkent is the only Central Asian city with an underground "metro" system, which was built in the mid-1970s. The "metro" is being expanded. The streets are full of South Korean cars assembled in the

UZBEKISTAN'S EXPERIMENT WITH DEMOCRACY

country. Though salaries are low, housing, transport and energy are heavily subsidised by the government.

However, there are serious economic problems. Unemployment is one such. Analysts say that the gap between the rich and the poor has widened after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are allegations of cronyism based on ethnic and clan linkages being encouraged by the government. Government officials admit that creating jobs for the burgeoning population is one of the main challenges. In the past one decade, the population has gone up from 22 to 26 million. The government hopes that the big joint ventures it has embarked on with Japanese, South Korean and Chinese companies will provide the bulk of the new jobs.

Courtesy: *Frontline*, 14 January 2005

DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRATISATION AND POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

Nalin Kumar Mohapatra

After attaining “independence without desiring it” the political elites of the newly independent countries of Central Asia promised to build a democratic political system guided by rule of law and a constitution with provisions for human rights, separation of power, independent judiciary, regular holding of elections, etc. generally considered to be the key features of a democratic form of government. Uzbekistan, which is considered as “hub” of Central Asia due to its geographical location, vast natural resources and rich history, has been engaged in tackling the problem of how to consolidate the democratization process in the post-Soviet phase and at the same time maintain its stability in view of its transitional problems.¹ Nevertheless, to have a broader understanding of the nature of democratisation process in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to assess the performance of its democratic institutional structure since attainment of independence and also the role of informal political process in shaping the democratic process of the country. The present paper examines some of these issues in a broader perspective to have a clear understanding of Uzbekistan’s democratisation process.

It is, therefore, important to look at the nature of political developments in Uzbekistan in the aftermath of its independence in late 1991. It may be mentioned that when the dissolution of the Soviet Union was unavoidable, the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan declared its independence on 30 August 1991 and the People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan became the successor of Communist Party of Uzbekistan. The first step towards democratisation in Uzbekistan was the holding of the presidential election in December 1991. The opposition *Birlik* party, which came into forefront after the introduction of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, and also played a crucial role in highlighting the problems faced in Uzbekistan during the Soviet period

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

in the fields of education, environment, language and literature, was not able to register itself, as it failed to collect the required number of members necessary for getting nomination for its candidate as President. With the result, the *Birlik* leader, Polatov, considered to be a popular leader and a potential challenger to Karimov failed to contest the election.² However, Muhammed Salih the leader of *Erk* party (a breakaway faction of *Birlik*) contested the presidential elections. In the election, President Karimov secured 86 per cent of vote while his opponent Salih got a mere 12 percent of vote.³

After receiving the mandate in his favour President Karimov made efforts to consolidate his hold over the politics of Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet phase. Islam Karimov made it clear on a number of occasions that the transitional nature of socio-economic and political situation required a strong leadership to ensure unity and integrity of the Republic and fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people. He further pointed out that the “Western notion of democracy couldn’t be applicable to the situation prevailing in the Republic as it is likely to promote political instability and developmental process will be at stake.” He was critical of Western media for having “repeatedly made Uzbekistan appear to be some kind of African dictatorship”.⁴

First competitive election to the newly established supreme legislative-parliament established after the enactment of the Constitution in December 1992, took place in December 1994. All political parties, registered prior to 22 September 1994, when the law on election to the new legislature-*Oliy Majlis* was passed, were allowed to contest the election.⁵ On the basis of this regulation two political parties got the opportunity to contest the election, the *People’s Democratic Party* (PDP) and the *Vatan Tarakkiyati* (Progress of Fatherland Party). Unlike the political parties of advanced democratic countries, the *Progress of Fatherland Party* in its election manifesto, did not attack its opponent party PDP. The main objectives of the party as outlined in its election manifesto are to create a law governed state.⁶ In this election 69 Deputies were elected from the PDP, 14 from the *Progress of Fatherland Party* and 167 deputies were nominated from the local

council. However, 124 members from the “non-affiliated” regional blocs were also members of the People’s Democratic Party, thus giving the party a higher de facto majority of 193 seats out of 250 seats in *Oliy Majlis*.⁷

In the aftermath of this parliamentary election, President Karimov by following his other Central Asian counterparts used the mechanism of referendum for extending the term of his office. In fact, this provided an opportunity to President Karimov to contest the 2000 presidential election and to bypass the constitutional provision under article 90 which provides that a person cannot contest election for more than two terms.⁸ The new Parliament which met on 24 February 1995, decided to extend the terms of office of President till 2000 through a referendum. The reason cited for extending the terms of office of President, as Erkin Khalilov, the Chairman of Parliament pointed out, was to “ensure the consistency of the reforms which are being carried out in the republic” and that 238 out of 247 members had backed the proposal.⁹ Even the opposition parties in parliament did not oppose the move. In the referendum, which was held in March 1995, out of 99.6 percent of the electorate reported to have participated, 99.4 percent approved the proposal of extending the term of the office of President Islam Karimov.¹⁰

At the same time President Karimov also resigned in 1996 from the People’s Democratic Party stating that “only a non-partisan Head of state could act as a guarantor of the country’s constitution and respect for human rights.”¹¹ This act of Karimov closely bears a resemblance to the delegative model of democracy as espoused by G. O’Donnell.¹² The Uzbek parliament, which met on 20 August 2000, decided to hold the next presidential and parliamentary elections. It also abolished the five percent margin for party blocs and now all the five political parties were to get an opportunity to contest elections.¹³ The Central Election Commission (CEC) laid down certain pre-requisites for the candidates in the elections to parliament in the month of October 2000. Some tough measures were also taken to check the number of candidates by imposing the minimum age limit of 25 years, and banning

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

those working in the religious organisation as experts, or holding the post of *Imam* and other such leading positions in religious organisations.¹⁴ In comparison to the 1994 parliamentary elections where only two parties were allowed to contest the elections, the Central Election Commission, in accordance with Article 21 of the law on elections to the supreme assembly of the republic of Uzbekistan, decided to allow *People's Democratic Party* of Uzbekistan, (PDPU), *Adolat Social Democratic Party*, *Vatan Taraqqiyati* (Progress of the Fatherland Party), *Fidokorlar* (self-sacrificers) *Party*, and *Milliy Tiklanish* (National Revival Party of Uzbekistan) to contest the forthcoming elections to the parliament.¹⁵ The election result announced by the CEC showed that candidates nominated by the local authorities rather than political parties had won the majority of the seats. Of the 250 seats, 48 went to *People's Democratic Party* of Uzbekistan, the reincarnation of the former Communist Party, 34 to *Fidokorlar Party*, *Adolat Social Democratic Party* secured 11 seats, *Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party* secured 10 representative and *Vatan Taraqqiyati* (*Progress of the Fatherland Party*) secured 20 seats and rest of the seats were won by citizen's group and local council nominees.¹⁶

Regarding the process of election, the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, Najmiddin Komilov noted that elections had taken place on democratic principles and in accordance with the laws on elections candidates were nominated from different parties and initiatives groups and stood. Thus, according to Komilov the democratic election process was developed in Uzbekistan. Even international observers like OSCE headed by Madeline Wilken stated that, "they had assessed all aspects of the election campaign and elections" and that "there have been many improvements in the legislative structure since the first independent election in 1994. We are pleased to note that first steps towards democracy had been taken during the years of independence".¹⁷ Despite some allegations of electoral irregularities in the parliamentary elections from certain quarters, if one compares the election of 1994 with the 1999 election one can definitely notice that efforts were made towards further

democratisation in Uzbekistan with participation of five parties in the parliamentary elections and attendance of international observers in the process of elections.

The process of democratisation was pepped up by the presidential election held in January 2000. The Central Election Commission in its meeting on 28 August 1999 authorized all five parties to participate in the presidential elections. However, political parties like *Adolot Party*, *Watan Taraqqioli* (Progress of the Fatherland Party), *Milliy Tiklanish* (National Revival Party) nominated Islam Karimov for the post of President, instead of nominating their own candidates PDP, the largest political party in Uzbekistan, nominated Abdulhafiz Jalalov as its presidential nominee.¹⁸ But Islam Karimov contested the election as a nominee of *Fidokorlar Party* (Self-Sacrificers). In his election speeches, Karimov made an impassioned plea before the people to vote for him in order to ensure progress, prosperity and freedom of the people and to secure a comfortable life for them. In contrast to Karimov, “Jalalov never uttered a single word against his opposition candidate Karimov and talked more about spiritualism”.¹⁹ The Election to the post of President was held on 9 January 2000 with about 92.57 percent of the population taking part. The results came out on 10 January 2000 and President Karimov received 11,147,621 votes accounting for nearly 91.9 percent of the total votes. His competitor Abdulhafiz Jalalov received 505,161 votes or 4.17% of the total votes.²⁰

In the aftermath of the 11 September incident many scholars argue that apart from change in the geopolitical situation one can also see a marked change in the perception of political elite about the existing political situation in the respective Central Asian Republics. The political elite in Central Asia suddenly realised the need to promote democracy in the hope of forging good equation with Washington and in the meantime getting aid. The Karimov regime also made similar attempts. This can be gauged from the fact that during his visit to Washington in March 2002, President Karimov agreed to further democratise the country. He hoped to get necessary US aid to

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

overcome the transitional economic problems. The United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework signed on 12 March 2002 dealt extensively with this aspect.²¹

One noteworthy development that took place in the direction of the democratization process of Uzbekistan in the aftermath of 11 September incident was the holding of referendum to extend the term of President and establishing a bi-cameral legislature. Similar exercises was earlier held in Kazakhstan. The referendum that took place in January 2002, was approved by overwhelmingly majority, with 93.65 per cent of the electorate approving the creation of a bicameral parliament and 91.78 per cent of the electorate approving the extension of President's term from five to seven years.²²

The creation of a bicameral legislature has in fact been a landmark event in the democratic development of the Republic since its attainment of independence in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At the seventh session of the *Oliy Majlis* the need to create a bicameral legislature was stressed to improve the effectiveness of the legislature, further democratising the country and to ensure the balanced development of the country.²³ *Oliy Majlis* Chairman, Erkin Khalilov observed that "creation of a second chamber would improve the professionalism of parliament while extension of the presidential term would allow Karimov through reform programmes" thus sharing the views of President Karimov.²⁴

The composition of the Senate as outlined by President was as follows – 6 deputies from every constituency- local *Kengash*- will be elected from the region. This was done to ensure equal representation to the entire region irrespective of their size, whether it will be the Karakalpakistan region or the Tashkent city. Besides, President will nominate 16 members with eminence to the house. The members from the region will be elected by the local *Kengash* in their joint seating by a secret vote. The basic function of the house as President Karimov outlined in his address to the *Oliy Majlis* at its 8th session is to "ensure

democratic balance and accord between legislative and executive branches of government, to exclude duplication of their function, to assist the bodies to dispatch their mission".²⁵

With the creation of a bicameral legislature Uzbekistan, would have an arrangement that has been prevailing in like India and the USA. In the Indian context, the upper house plays an important role in ensuring smother functioning of legislature and providing opportunity to men of letters to participate in the affairs of state by using their expert opinion in day-to-day governance of the country. At the same time bicameral legislature by giving representation to all regions of the country also provides equal opportunity to participate in the affairs of the state.²⁶

The recent election to Uzbekistan's *Oliy Majlis*, which in fact is the third one since independence and first one since the referendum of 2002, took place in December 2004. However, it needs to be mentioned here that in contrast to earlier elections which were held for 250 constituencies, the December 2004 election was held for 120 constituencies. As per the report of the Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan 489 candidates took part in the election out of which 54 were independent. In this election five political parties *Adolat* (Justice), *Fidokorlar* (Self Sacrificers), *Liberal Democratic Party*, *Milliy Tiklanish* (National Revival), and the *People's Democratic Party* took part. According to the CEC report, *Liberal Democratic Party* of Uzbekistan secured largest number of seat with (34.2% of deputies), followed by *National Democratic Party* with 23.3% of deputies. 18 deputies from *Fidokorlar*, 11 from *Milliy Tiklanish* and 10 from *Adolat* were elected.²⁷ As regards the conduct this of election, the CIS observers stated that elections in Uzbekistan "legitimate, free and transparent." They pointed out only "insignificant shortcomings and omissions" that "did not have a substantial impact on the free expression of voters' will and on the voting results."²⁸ However, the OSCE, which also sent its observers to the election, gave a diametrically opposite report from that of the CIS observers. According to the OSCE, the election in Uzbekistan felt "short of OSCE commitments

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

and other international standards for democratic elections.”²⁹ As the Uzbek electoral law lays down that a party must be registered as an official political party nine months before a poll in order to participate in the election. Opposition groups like *Birlik*, *Erk*, and *Ozod Dehkontar* could not participate in this election. However, an Indian observer who went to Uzbekistan as an International Election Observer told this author that the “election was well organized, without any lawlessness anywhere, without any incident of booth capturing, proper display of voters lists, proper identification of voters’ identity by seeing their passports, in presence of representatives of various candidates/political parties, and usage of specially designed ballot boxes.”³⁰

The Karimov government of Uzbekistan in recent years has been making efforts to promote civil society and human right record of the country. The Uzbek government opened in June 2003 the Institute of Civil Society Research which has been organizing seminars and workshops for promoting the idea of civil society in Uzbekistan. Besides, there are about 2,500 private Non-Governmental Organizations in Uzbekistan, which in recent years have been playing a crucial role in articulating the needs and aspiration of the people.³¹ Earlier in May 2003 the Uzbek government had allowed registration of a human right organisation *Ezgulik*.³² Freedom House, in its July 2004 statement about the human right situation of the country, reported “Recently, however, there have been a number of noteworthy developments—in part in response to criticism and pressure from democratic governments, international NGOs, and domestic Uzbek rights groups—that demonstrate signs of a willingness on the part of the government to address some of the gravest human rights issues in that country.”³³

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM AND DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

Apart from elections, the Uzbek political authority adopted a Constitution, in December 1992. A glance over the various provisions

of the constitution shows that it made adequate provisions for protecting the rights of the citizen and enshrined a number of articles, which are necessary for fostering the democratisation process in the republic.³⁴ One of the draft laws adopted by the Uzbek parliament at its 27 April 2003 and subsequently passed by it gave immunity from prosecution after the President leaves from the post. Under the law, former presidents become members of the Senate, the upper house of parliament, for life, as it would enable the legislature to take advantage of a former president's knowledge of state affairs.³⁵

Apart from constitutional amendment, other mechanism through which the President tries to control the affairs of the republic is through his power of appointment and removal of regional governors. Uzbekistan has been divided into twelve regions (*Viloyat*), Karakalpak Autonomous region and Tashkent city. Like in the centre, the provinces are also having one governor and council. The power to appoint and remove these governors gave much leverage to the President to control the affairs of the state.³⁶ Similarly to ensure direct contact with local level a new state body in 1992. The State Control Committee Under the President of Uzbekistan was created. The main function of this body is to effectively implement programmes and policies issued by the Central government. President Karimov also supported the move to have regional local bodies and administrative heads of the *raion*, city.³⁷ The other mechanism through which the Uzbek President able to exert control over the political affairs of the country is through his power of appointment and removal of high officials.

Many scholars argue that the nature of democratisation process of a country can also be judged by the efficiency and effectiveness of political parties. In Uzbekistan, in the first parliamentary election only two political parties contested the election. However in comparison to the 1994 parliamentary election, during the December 1999 elections five political parties contested the election. Nonetheless, the parties are not quite strong enough to ensure a speedy democratisation of the country. Gregory Gleason writes about the nature of political parties in Uzbekistan, "Although these parties typically have policy priorities they

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

support, they do not seek to win control of the government. Functioning more as interest groups than as genuine, competing political parties, they help create a false sense of political pluralism in the country.”³⁸ The two opposition parties *Erk* and *Birlik* were not able to register themselves as political party. The leader of *Erk* party Muhammed Solih who contested the first presidential election against Karimov is currently living in exile abroad, as he was charged with attempt to murder the President. However in 2003 the Uzbek government as a conciliatory gesture allowed both the parties to organise their party conference in Uzbekistan.³⁹

Over the years the power of the President of Uzbekistan has grown enormously. President Karimov himself admitted this fact after casting his vote to the referendum on extension of the term of the President and establishment of a bi-cameral legislature on 27 January 2002. President Islam Karimov, said: “At a certain stage of historic change you need a strong will and a certain figure... and you have to use some authoritarian methods at times”. He further says, “Authoritarian power will diminish with the rise of political consciousness.”⁴⁰ President Karimov’s view resembles to some extent with that of Samuel Huntington, who explains that if social mobilization of the masses takes place but the political institution is not capable to meet the demand generated through social mobilization than “institutional decay” would take place. So in order to prevent the “institutional decay” some degree of authoritarian government is necessary.⁴¹ In the post-Soviet phase, many Western political analysts also support this view. For example, Adrian Leftwich points out that “What the West should do is to support only those dedicated and determined developmental elites who are seriously bent on promoting economic growth, *whether democratic or not*. For by helping them to raise the level of economic development it will help them to establish or consolidate the real internal conditions for lasting democracy”.⁴² Stephen Sestanovich, who acted as a Special Advisor to the US Secretary of State and Ambassador-at-large for the former Soviet Union from 1997 to 2001 explains a similar viewpoint that is currently

prevailing in Central Asia as a whole. According to Sestanovich, “there is a widespread belief in Central Asia that democracy is not right for the region.”⁴³ Frederic Starr also examines Karimov’s approach to the democratisation process from the perspective of strengthening the country’s sovereignty, ensuring political stability as well as guarantee higher economic growth.⁴⁴ Many even argue that the growing authoritarian tendencies of President Karimov can also be attributed to the lack of historical experience of democratic tradition in the republic. This can be gauged from the increasing role of informal political process of the country in influencing the political process of Uzbekistan and frequently using the historical figures to legitimize his rule, as Sally N. Cummings, says President Karimov’s act of praising historical figures like Tamerlane is an indicator of this trend.⁴⁵

INFORMAL POLITICAL PROCESS AND UZBEK DEMOCRACY

Apart from political institutions like legislature, executive and judiciary which play a crucial role in shaping the political process of a country, the informal political process is also important. Uzbekistan being an oriental country cannot be immune from the traditional socio-cultural ethos, which to some extent shapes the political process. Analysing the features of “Hydraulic society”, Karl A. Wittfogel argues that the political leadership has to perform diverse functions like managing water resources, controlling flood waters, relocating flooded fields. Similarly the political structure in such a hydraulic society was arranged vertically in which the ruler rules with the aid of his personal cohorts performing various civil and political functions Gregory Gleason argues that the nomadic people settled in a particular area where there were large water resources, which led to the growth of *Mohalla* and important role of community. This in turn led to people’s deference to their leader who was known as *Mirab*. It has been mentioned in old literature of Uzbekistan that when the post of *Mirab* fell vacant due to death or for some other reasons, the *Mirab* was chosen through a competition. Candidates who wanted the post had to pass a

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

competition in which they were required to build a canal. One who guided water to its destination first won the test and became a new *Mirab*. Karl Wittfogel too believes that semi-arid agricultural societies require centralised decision making authority.⁴⁶

Another important trend in Uzbekistan's political culture that plays a crucial role in its political structure is the role of *Hurmat*. In Central Asia an individual has no personal identity of his own and every thing is owned by community, for example they share even their food also with family. Everybody pays respect to their elders and the society has been patriarchal. Since society is a natural extension of family, the elder person of the family being also the head of the community commands obedience from his kinship group. A person's well-being comes to be closely related to the well being of his family, society and clan. Nobody questions the decision of elders. Everybody acts according to the wishes of the elders.⁴⁷ A good example of how traditional political institutions gained legitimacy in the post-Soviet phase can be evident from the role of *Mohalla* in the post-Soviet Uzbek politics. The government has recognised the crucial role of the *Mohalla* in the post-Soviet phase. The government of Uzbekistan granted *Mohalla* the autonomy it needs to function. There are around 8,043 *Mohallas*, each consisting of 2,000 to 3,000 people. Unlike in the past, presently *Mohalla* leaders are elected on the principle of competitive elections with secret ballot. In December 2002, speaking on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Uzbek Constitution, President Karimov declared 2003 as the "Year of the *Mohalla*" and promised to take effective measures in increasing the status of the *Mohalla* by expanding the scope of the legal authority of *Mohalla* officials.⁴⁸ It may be noted that even during the Soviet period, the government realizing the importance of *Mohalla* as it used to perform many functions, had accorded it a legal status.⁴⁹

In her study of the nature of political development and public perception both in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan Nancy Lubin found tradition, culture, order and discipline playing a crucial role in shaping the political process. While conducting this study a large number of

respondents expressed their support to democracy in these two republics, they opined that since there is no tradition of democratic rule, democracy is not the ideal form of government to solve the current problems these republics are facing today. Similarly around 49 per cent of the respondents in Uzbekistan felt that it is the government which can bring order to the society. However, a minority of the respondents who supported the “Western form of Government” also gave contradictory statements during the survey conducted by Nancy; for example, many of them supported President Karimov stating that President Karimov is heading the best form of government since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This survey prompted Nancy to comment that support to their leader and obedience to them are rooted in their culture and tradition.⁵⁰

An other important arena of informal political process, which also plays a crucial role in shaping the politics of Uzbekistan, is the role of clan and regional factors. In fact during the Soviet period too there was competition among these regional groupings for strengthening their position in Uzbek political apparatus. The ascendance of Sharaf Rashidov as the First Secretary of Uzbekistan marked the beginning of dominance of Samarkandi clan in Uzbek politics. The dominance of Samarkand region in Uzbek politics came to temporary halt after the demise of Rashidov. Usmankhojaev and Nishanov belong to Ferghana and Tashkent region respectively. However the removal of Nishanov again brought the Samarkandi clan to power. Islam Karimov who belongs to Samarkandi clan became the First Secretary of Uzbekistan and subsequently became the President of Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet phase.⁵¹ However, in the post-independence phase Islam Karimov too faced the heat of clan and regional politics. Several scholars believe that in order to check the dominance of any clan in Uzbek politics President Karimov has been rotating personnel from time to time.⁵² A recent survey conducted by Timur Dadabaev, under the “Asia Barometer project” at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Tokyo found that local identities play a crucial role in the elite mobilization and politicians use it for their upward mobility. The study

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

also felt that absence of competitive parties and also difficulties in registration of political parties, promote informal ties and networks as an alternative channel that many politicians use to strengthen their position. Such regional divisions exist not only at the political level but also at the social level. The study mentions that even the students make friends and associate themselves with circles belonging to their region.⁵³

In the post-Independent phase Karimov rehabilitated historical figures and men of letters who were considered to have contributed significantly in enriching the history and culture of Uzbekistan. The Karimov government made efforts to popularise the writing and teaching of Jadidist Movement and writings of various Jadidist figures in school textbooks. Just after attaining independence President Karimov in his address on 30 December 1991, invoked the name of several *Jadidist* figures like Abdullah *Qadiri* and Abdulruf Firat. Similarly a Department of National Awakening (*Milli Uyganish*) has been established by the Uzbek government to study those historical figures and their writings who have made significant contribution to the development of national cultural heritage.⁵⁴ Another historical figure who has got considerable attention in Karimov's scheme of rehabilitation is Amir Timur. President Karimov while dedicating a monument of Timur in September 1993 explains:

For many years the name of Amir Timur was degraded and blacked out from the pages of our history in order to remove self-awareness from the soul of Uzbek people, in order to destroy the people's sense of national pride and increase its dependence and subordination. But the Uzbeks have not forgotten their ancestors and heroes.... There is no doubt that this image of our ancestors erected in the very heart of our beautiful capital and beloved ancient Tashkent will forever evoke a feeling of immense pride in our people.⁵⁵

Rehabilitating pre-Soviet Uzbek culture and giving it a prominent place in post-Soviet phase was succinctly brought out by President Karimov in his book *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty First Century*, where he strongly emphasized upon Uzbekistan's past glory:

Our goal – as we outlined at the outset of the nineties – is not to lose that have been created with the labour of many generations, to accumulate all the best things and to rearrange that does not meet our national interests and our independence, to enrich the existing structures with new contents. The rich culture of the Uzbek nation, its educational system and its science could not be broken down as the totalitarian heritage. The course we have chosen is to reorient these systems towards a *new* ideological platform based both on the centuries old traditions, customs, culture and language of the Uzbek people, and world civilization achievement as well.⁵⁶

Politics of naming various public places also occupies a central place in Karimov's scheme of rewriting history. For example in Tashkent alone over 500 streets were renamed by replacing the old Soviet names. In Ferghana town of Namangan in the first ten weeks of 1993, over 50 street names were changed.⁵⁷ It may be mentioned here that the problem of naming and renaming public places also occupies a crucial task before the political elite of other four Central Asian republics and is not confined to Uzbekistan alone. The other argument frequently advanced by President Karimov is that Uzbekistan is currently passing through a transitional period both economically and politically and it can face the challenges only through a strong leadership.⁵⁸

CHALLENGES TO THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATISATION

The efforts on part of Islam Karimov to gain legitimisation to his rule, however, put a great strain on the nature of inter-ethnic relations of the republic.⁵⁹ Excessive focus on the past Uzbek culture, literature and literary figures led to marginalisation of national minorities especially Russians who have played a substantial role in boosting Uzbek republics industrial, agricultural and educational level during the Soviet period. Similarly the decline of Uzbek economy in the post-Soviet phase provided impetus to the marginalisation of Russians. They feel politically alienated in the new set-up, being unable to influence the decision making process and to protect their identity.⁶⁰ The political

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

marginalisation of Russians has been aptly reflected in the 1994 parliamentary election. In the 1971 election to the Supreme Soviet in Uzbekistan, Russian residents who constituted at that time 14 per cent of the population, got 19 per cent of the deputies. In the 1994 elections, 86 per cent of the members of the parliament were Uzbeks contrary to 77 per cent in the 1990 parliamentary election.⁶¹

Although, ethno-political consciousness plays a minor role, the growth of religious fundamentalism has also been hindering the democratisation process of the society. The emergence of religious fundamentalist parties like *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU), *Hizbut-Tahrir-al-Islami* (HTI) whose basic objective is to establish an Islamic Caliphate governed by Koranic principles rather than the rule of law has also stymied the growth of a democratic governed state in Uzbekistan. The radicalised Islamic movement in Uzbekistan first manifested itself in December 1991 when some radical Islamic groups under the banner of *Tawber* and *Adolat* took control over the building of the former Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and demanded that the future president of the Uzbekistan should toe their line. The radical Islamist groups also demanded of Islam recognition as state religion, implementation of the *Shariah* in the state and segregation of boys and girls in educational institutions. They also demanded the handing over of the former house of political education to religious groups. Under pressure from religious groups Karimov accepted the petitions and promised to discuss them in the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan. However, the promise, which he gave to the Islamist groups was never implemented in spirit and Karimov basically gave the promise only to neutralise the volatile situation.⁶² Although after independence, the Uzbek President performed Haj pilgrimage and took oath of office by putting his hand on Koran, this failed to appease the radicals whose objective is the establishment of a theocratic state.⁶³ The IMU as a terrorist organisation rose to fame following a series of bomb explosions in Tashkent. The Uzbek government accused the IMU of fomenting trouble in 1999 to overthrow the regime.⁶⁴

Since its inception in 1998, the cadres of this group have increased substantially. It also got support from the then Taliban regime of Afghanistan and the fugitive Islamic leader, Osama bin Laden. The IMU not only carried out its subversive activities in Uzbekistan but spread its influence in neighbouring Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan when its members invaded southern Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000.⁶⁵

The IMU in its document issued in August 1999 called *Jihad* against the Uzbek government. It also issued a call to the Uzbek government; “The Islamic Movement invites the ruling government and Karimov leadership in Tashkent to remove itself from office-unconditionally, before the country enters into a state of war and destruction of the land and the people. The responsibility for this will lie totally on the shoulders of the government for which it shall be punished.”⁶⁶ Although the Uzbek government passed a law in May 1998 to curb the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, thus bringing all religious activities under its control, so far this law has failed to deter the radical forces from carrying out their activities.⁶⁷

Apart from IMU, other Islamic radical organisation which in recent years has been increasing its activities at a faster rate is HTI. In fact the ideology of both the IMU and HTI are same aimed at the establishment of Islamic Caliphate. However, their methodology is quite different. Unlike other Islamic radical groups, the HTI follows a moderate ideology, as compared to the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*. The party allows women to participate in parliament and men are permitted to shake hands with them and look at their photographs showing their uncovered face. Compulsory offering of *Namaz* has been also waived under certain conditions.⁶⁸ The HTI believe that imposition of *Sharia* will resolve all ethnic, social and economic problems of the people.⁶⁹ HTI also rejects the western notion of democracy. In its publication on democracy, titled, *Demokratia- sistema nerveria* (Democracy as faithless system) the Western notion of democracy is condemned and its acceptance is considered a blasphemy.⁷⁰

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

For quite some time particularly in the wake of global campaign against terrorism, these two parties have been maintaining lull fearing massive operation against the Islamic radicals like the Taliban in Afghanistan. However, a surge of radical Islamic activities is evident from the spate of explosions in Uzbekistan in the end of March and April 2004, which reflects the heightened challenge faced by the government in Uzbekistan.⁷¹ One may also to some extent justify the measures taken against these Islamic forces by the government as these radicals in contravention of all norms of democratic principles are indulging in activities which impede the development of modern democratic state. The rise of radical Islamic activities in Uzbekistan is also attributed to the role played by countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan under the Taliban government.⁷² In fact President Karimov in the post-September 11 phase accused Pakistan of giving shelter to Islamic terrorists. Speaking to journalists, President Karimov said that Pakistan was harbouring IMU terrorists who have fled from Afghanistan. He further stated, “The Pakistan authorities have done nothing to detain bandits from Uzbekistan who were trained in Afghanistan and took part in the Al-Qaida terrorist network”. Karimov said that “Tahir Yuldashev, the head of IMU, can only be in Pakistan” and he further added, “Uzbekistan has an extradition agreement with Pakistan, but we have not seen its practical implementation”.⁷³

Apart from Islamic fundamentalism another problem, which hinders the growth of democratisation in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, is the transitional nature of the Uzbek economy. Throughout 1998 and 1999, the economic situation steadily deteriorated due to the decline in world prices for Uzbekistan’s two main exports, cotton and gold, thus depriving the country of export revenue and putting severe demand on country’s liquidity. At the same time there has been severe unemployment problem in the country. In 1999, around, 45,200 were registered as unemployed, although the actual figures were believed to be higher as a result of hidden unemployment in the region.⁷⁴ As the Karimov government realised that political stability of the country depended to a large extent upon the economic prosperity of the country,

his government has been trying to create a conducive atmosphere for bringing foreign direct investment to the country. Besides the government also tried to revive domestic industries.⁷⁵ The Manila based Asia Development Bank in its report of 2003 has succinctly brought out the economic growth of Uzbekistan. According to its report, the growth of GDP, as per official estimates, slowed down to 4.2% in 2002 from 4.5% in 2001 and was below the official 5.0% target. At the same time the report points to continuing disparities among the regions of Uzbekistan. While the per capita income in Tashkent was the highest at \$40 per month (at the official exchange rate) and it was lowest in Samarkand at just \$10 per month.

An analysis of the political development of Uzbekistan since attainment of independence, shows that the problem faced in Uzbekistan closely resembles to the problem faced by many newly independent countries of Asia and Africa after the attainment of their independence in the aftermath of the Second World War and also in late fifties and sixties of last century. In fact, many post-communist countries of East Europe and Caucasus that became independent after the disintegration of the Soviet Union are also facing similar problems. The major task before Uzbekistan's leadership is how to "consolidate" the democratic process as Linz and Stepan points out.⁷⁶ The "creeping expansion" of Islamic radicalist forces with the objective of establishing Islamist Caliphate in Uzbekistan as well as the transitional problems like economic crisis, unstable social situation also to some extent impedes the growth of democratisation process of Uzbekistan. However, one should not be pessimistic in this regard, because 14 years is too short a period to evaluate the democratic process of a state like Uzbekistan, where the concept of democracy is quite new and also as many scholars say "democracy is rooted in culture". In fact an appraisal of democratisation process of many Latin American countries as well as South East and East Asian countries shows similar experience as is experienced in Uzbekistan.

REFERENCES

1. For a detailed discussion on this aspect see Devendra Kaushik, "The Central Asian Republics: The Balance Sheet of a Decade of Ozodi", *Eurasian Studies*, Summer, 2001.
2. William Fierman, "Political Development in Uzbekistan?", in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavages and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp.378-379; *Summary of World Broadcast* (hereafter SWB)/1173/B/10, 10 September 1991; for the role of 'Erk' and Birlik in Uzbekistan see William Fierman, "The Communist Party, 'Erk' and the Changing Uzbek Political Environment", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.10, no.3 1991.
3. *Ibid*; SWB/SU/1267/B/9, 1 January 1992.
4. Shoheen Ayubi, "Uzbekistan's Long Road to Democracy and Political Stability", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.XVIII, no.3, Spring, 1995, p.3
5. *Foreign Broadcasting Information Service* (hereafter FBIS)-USR-94-110, 11 October 1994, pp. 86-87.
6. SWB/SU/2167/G/3, 1 December 1994.
7. FBIS/SOV-95-019, 30 January 1995,p.62.
8. See for details, *Uzbek Constitution* at <http://www.umid.uz/Main/Uzbekistan/Constitution/constitution.html>
9. SWB/SU/2239/G/4, 28 February 1995.
10. Fierman, n.2, p. 392
11. *Ibid.*, p. 400.
12. According to G O Donnel, a delegative model of democracy is one which is "Grounded on the premises that he or she who wins a presidential election is enabled to govern the country as he sees fit, and to the extent that existing power relations allow, for the term to which he has been elected. The President is the embodiment of the nation and the main custodian of national interests, which it is incumbent upon him to define. What he does in government does not need to bear any resemblance to what he said or promised during the election process, and he has been authorized to govern as he sees fit. The President present himself or herself above party politics. The presidential responsibility to other organs of government generally believed as unnecessary impediment to the authority that

the President has been delegated to exercise.”See for details in G. O’Donnel, “Delegative Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol.5, no.1, 1994, pp.55-69.

13. SWB/SU/3620/G/3. 23 August 1999.
14. *Ibid*, G/4.
15. *Ibid*.
16. “Uzbekistan”, *Europa Year Book*, 42nd edn., 2001, p.3982.
17. SWB/SU/3717/G/2/3, 14 December 1999.
18. SWB/SU/3645/G/3, 14 October 1999.
19. Kaushik, n.1, p. 9
20. SWB/SU/3734/G/1, 11 January 2000.
21. “United States- Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework”, 12 March 2002 in its Para –1, article 1.1 and 1.2, outlines, “Uzbekistan reaffirmed its commitment to further intensify the democratic transformation of its society politically and economic and spiritual areas , taking into account the obligation deriving from international treaties and the requirement of national obligation.... [the treaty also set] priority areas such as building a strong and open civil society and secular state based on the rule of law , developing political culture and activism, establishing a genuine multi-party system and independence of media, strengthening non-governmental structures and improving the judicial system... improve the legislative process , develop a law –based government system, further reform the judicial system and enhance the legal culture.” See <http://www.fas.org/terrorism/at/docs/2002/us-uzbek-partnership.html>
22. <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/hypermail/2000202/0005.shtml>
23. <http://top100.rambler.ru/top100/http://top100.ru/top100/>
24. Galima Bukarbaeva, “Uzbekistan: Karimov seeks Extended Term”, RCA No.100, 25 January 2002 at www.iwpr.org
25. Address by President Islam Karimov at the 8th session of the *Oliy Majlis* at <http://jaho.mfa.uz/English/140402-1.htm>
26. See for details about the utilities of second chamber in C.F.Strong, *Modern Political Constitution*, London, Sidgwick and Jackson Limited, 1972; Granville Austin, *Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, New Delhi, OUP, 1986.

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

27. See http://www.press-service.uz/eng/pressa_eng/pressa_eng76.htm
28. See at <http://www.ln.mid.ru>
29. *Ibid.*
30. K. Warikoo, Professor at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University who went to Uzbekistan as an election observer shared this view with the author.
31. Bakhodyr Ergashev, "Civil Forums in Central Asia", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No.3 (27), 2004, pp.8-9
32. Brian Grodsky, "Direct Pressure for Human Rights in Uzbekistan: Understanding the US Bargaining Position", *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 23, nos.3-4, December 2004, p.338.
33. "Freedom House Policy on Uzbekistan", 9 July 2004, www.freedomhouse.org.
34. See *The Uzbek Constitution*, n.8.
35. See <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/hypermail/200304/0034.shtml>
36. Roger D. Kangas, "Uzbekistan: Amir Timur Revisited", in Sally N. Cummings,(ed.), *Power and Change in Central Asia*, London/ New York, Routledge, 2001, p.135.
37. Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia,: Power, perception and Facts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.123.
38. Gregory Gleason, "Uzbekistan", *Nation in Transit Report*, 2004, p.5 at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nitransit/2004/Uzbekistan2004.pdf>
39. *Ibid.*
40. <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/hypermail/2000202/0043.shtml>.
41. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in a Changing Society*, New Heaven CT, Yale University Press, 1968, pp.1-92 and 192-263.
42. Adrian Leftwich, "Two Cheers for Democracy?", *The Political Quarterly*, 67, 1996, pp 334-339, cited in Hans Peter Schmitz, "Domestic and Transitional Perspective on Democratization", *International Studies Review*, 6, 2004, p.413.
43. R.R. Sharma, "Political System and Democratic Discourse in Central Asia: A View from Outside", *Dialogue*, vol.6, no.2, 2005, p.126.

Nalin Kumar Mohapatra

44. See for details S.Frederic Starr, "Making Eurasia Stable", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no.1, January/February 1996.
45. Sally N.Cummings "Introduction", *Power and Change in Central Asia*, in Sally N.Cummings (ed.), *Power and Change in Central Asia*, London/New York, Routledge, 2001, p.15.
46. Gregory Gleason, *Central Asian States Discover Independence*, Boulder Colorado, Westview Press, 1997, pp.33-34.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Gleason, n.38.
49. Ajay Patnaik, *Nations, States and Minorities in Central Asia*, New Delhi, Anamika Publisher, 2003, p.69.
50. Nancy Lubin, *Central Asians Take Stocks: Reform, Corruption and Identity*, United States Institute for Peace, Washington, Peace Work no.2, February 1995, pp.3-4.
51. See for details on clan and regional politics in Uzbekistan, David Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan", in Yaccov Roi (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, London, Frank Cass, 1995; Donald S. Carlisle, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretarial (1938-83)", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.5, no.3/4, 1986, Donald S.Carlisle, "Uzbekistan and Uzbeks", *Problem of Communism*, September-October 1991.
52. David Lewis, "Uzbekistan: Authoritarianism and Conflict" in Monique Mekenkamp, Paul Van Tongeren and HansVan de Veen (eds.), *Searching for Peace in Central and South Asia*, Boulder/London, Lyne Riener, 2002, p.195.
53. Timur Dadabaev, "Post-Soviet Realities of Society in Uzbekistan", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.23, no.2, June 2004, pp.148-149.
54. Kenneth Peterson, "History in the Remaking: Jadidist Thought in post-Soviet Uzbekistan", *Central Asia Monitor*, No.4, 1996,p.29.
55. Stephan Hegarty, "The Rehabilitation of Timur: Reconstructing National History in Contemporary Uzbekistan", *Central Asia Monitor*, No.1, 1995, p.29.
56. Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty First Century*, Tashkent, 1997, p.157.
57. William Fierman, "Language Law in Uzbekistan", in Yaccov Roi (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, London, Frank Cass, 1995, p.211.

DEMOCRATISATION & POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN

58. See for instance, Karimov, n.56.
59. See for details on consociationalism, Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Society: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977.
60. Patnaik, n.49, p.105.
61. Vladimir Mesamed, "Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Uzbekistan", *Central Asian Monitor*, No.6, 1996, p.24.
62. Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Independent Uzbekistan: A Muslim Community in Development", in Michael Bourdeaux (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Russia and New State of Eurasia*, London, M. E. Sharpe, 1995, p. 297.
63. Devendra Kaushik, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Central Asia," *Himalayan and Central Asian studies*, vol.4, no.3-4, July-December 2000, pp.3-23.
64. Gregory Feifer, "Uzbekistan's eternal realities, A Report from Tashkent" *World Policy Journal*, spring 2002, p.83.
65. Albert Bogalanov, "Does Central Asia have fertile soil for religious Extremism?" *The Times of Central Asia*, 22 August 2002, p.4.
66. Ahmed Rashid, *The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2002, pp.247-249.
67. Kaushik, n.63.
68. Bakhtiyar Babadzhannov, "Radicalisation of Islam in Uzbekistan: A study of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami", *Contemporary Central Asia*, (New Delhi), vol.4, nos.1 and 2, 2000, p.13.
69. Rashid, n.66, p.121.
70. Kamoliddin Rabbimov, "Hizb Ut-Tahrir—Leader of the Islamist Anti-Democratic Campaign", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*", No.3 (27), 2004, p.17.
71. Stepan Balakin "Uzbekistan: Bombing aimed at Destabilisation of the Country", *Times of Central Asia*, 1 April 2004, p.5.
72. See for details, Rashid, n.66.
73. "Terrorists trained by Iran traced from Uzbekistan", *The Times of Central Asia*, 11 April 2002, p.4.
74. Neil Melvin, "The Economy", *Europa Year Book on CIS and East European Countries*, 2001, London, Europa Publication, pp.493-494.
75. N.I. Petrov, "Political Stability in the Conditions of the Command-

Administrative Regime” in Alexei Vassiliev (ed.), *Central Asia: Political and Economic Challenges in the post-Soviet Era*, London, Saqi Book, 2001, p.95.

76. By “consolidation of democracy” as Linz and Stepan says “when no social and political group seriously make any attempt to overthrow the democratic regimes or makes any attempt to overthrow the existing government even in the face of serious political and economic crisis and general people believe that any change in government can be done through constitutional procedure and political conflict within the state can be solved only through established norms”. They have also outlined three prerequisites necessary for consolidation of democracy. Juan A.Linz and Alferd Stepan, “Towards Consolidated Democracies”, *Journal of Democracy*, vol.7, no.2, 1996, p.15.

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN UZBEKISTAN

K. Warikoo

Enjoying a unique geopolitical situation at the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan has through its past history played a key role in the dissemination of Islamic thought and culture in Asia. The ancient oasis cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, Urgench, Shehr-e-Sabz, Khiva, Andijan etc. - all in Uzbekistan, have remained important centers of religious, cultural and socio-economic significance throughout Central Asia. Bukhara and Samarkand have been particularly known as the great centers of Islamic theological studies. A number of illustrious sufis and scholars like Imam Bukhari, Al Termizi, Bahauddin Nakshband, Al Khorezmi, Ibn Sena, Ulugh Beg, who belonged to this region, made lasting contributions to the national culture and history of Uzbekistan. As such, Uzbekistan never remained isolated from the Islamic stream. It was through the Soviet national delimitation of 1924 that Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic was carved out of the historically known and distinctly Uzbek strongholds in Central Asia thus consolidating the Uzbeks within the territory where they formed the majority. Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan became the seat of Central Asian Muslim Directorate during the Soviet period. The pre-Soviet towns of Bukhara, Kokand, Khiva, Samarkand etc. continued to be the historical and cultural landmarks in Soviet Central Asia. This only helped in strengthening the process of Uzbek national consciousness. During more than seventy years of Soviet Communist domination, the Uzbeks adjusted themselves with the Soviet linguistic, cultural and religious policies without diluting or shifting their religious allegiance. Young Uzbek Muslims would join the Communist Party and yet remain firm believers and practice their religion privately.

In Uzbekistan, the agenda of nationalism has been rooted in its history and tradition. Even during the Soviet period, several Uzbek writers discussed the pre-Soviet themes, events and personalities in

their writings. One Prof. Ghulam Karimov discussed the use of historical themes in the Soviet Uzbek literature during the 1970s, in one of his articles published in a respected Uzbek literary journal *Sharq Yulduzi* (March 1979). Novels such as *The Treasure of Ulughbek* by Abil Yaqubov and *Ferghana Before the Dawn* by Mirzakalam (in two volumes) were published in 1970s. Some Uzbek writers and intellectuals made out the case for using Uzbek or even Chaghatay language to portray the history of Uzbekistan in their historical writings including fiction, prose or poetry. Uzbek writers believed that the Uzbeks had been able to preserve their history, national culture, identity and religious heritage inspite of the official Soviet policy of “drawing together of the nationalities” in the Soviet Union. For instance one Uzbek writer, H. Polatov stressed the need “for a deep study of the history of the Uzbek people and the notable great works of our ancestors in every field of life.”¹ In 1980s Uzbek language publications began to publish works of such Uzbek writers as Cholpan and Fitrat, who were the victims of Stalinist purges. Notwithstanding the Soviet policy of fostering internationalism, the Uzbeks remained committed to their traditions and culture retaining their local identity. They practiced their religion, though in private and continued to rever their historical figures, places and shrines.

Powerful Uzbek leaders like Faizullah Khojaev and Akmal Ikramov played a key role in enhancing the political influence of Uzbekistan during the early years of Soviet rule in Central Asia. The policy of indigenisation of cadres persued by Uzbek leaders like Khojaev, Nurudin Mukhitdinov and Sharaf Rashidov provided the local Uzbeks greater opportunities for employment, education and access to other avenues of growth. Thus a new and powerful class of highly educated and well trained Uzbek professionals was created, which contributed to the overall economic development and modernisation in Uzbekistan under the Soviets. However, this class remained ambivalent in its approach towards religion and local customs while retaining their religious identity and national consciousness and without giving expression to their separate ethno-political identity during the Soviet period.

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN UZBEKISTAN

As a result of the Soviet policies of development, large cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, Andijan etc. developed as modern industrial centers, more particularly due to their proximity to the surrounding cotton belt. Both Uzbek men and women acquired higher and technical education which enabled them to secure employment in industry and other services. Mechanisation was introduced in agriculture. Uzbeks acquired mastery over the Russian language, it being the language of communication and scientific and technical literature. Despite faster growth in agriculture and industry and the resultant urbanization, there was little deviation among the Uzbek families from their social and cultural practices particularly in the rural areas. The practice of having large and joint families continued, with the exception of some elite and urban intelligentsia, which had smaller families. There were few divorces and very few inter-ethnic marriages, notwithstanding the Soviet slogan of “internationalism”. In spite of the collective farming practiced during the Soviet period, private farming which employed sizeable labour force, continued in the rural areas of Uzbekistan. This factor not only sustained and promoted the practice of large joint families, but also resulted in lesser outmigration from rural to urban areas. Ratio of rural outmigration to urban areas was found to be less in Central Asia than in the European parts of the former USSR. Some surveys for the period 1978-80 and 1979-81 in Uzbekistan have pointed to “relatively higher standard of living in the rural areas as compared to the cities, which was due to higher income from private plots, lower costs of living, more housing space, suitable conditions for raising large families etc.”² Uzbekistan moved forward from an agrarian society through industrial, educational, scientific and technological development to become a modern society. Yet the Uzbeks clung to their traditions and cultural practices.

Gorbachev’s policy of *perestroika* and *glasnost* ushered in a new era of press freedom, political democratization and decentralization of decision making process in Uzbekistan. This gave the people of Uzbekistan a new confidence to assert their national and religious identity and to openly air their grievances and feelings that had remained

suppressed for long due to press censorship and party-cum-bureaucratic control. It was as early as on 29 May 1991 that the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov attacked the Soviet cultural policy in Uzbekistan. He alleged, “everything was banned. Religion was persecuted, mosques were closed down, everything that was deeply national was suppressed, mocked and discredited.”³ He claimed to draw his strength from his identification with the local people and their aspirations. He stressed the need to respect national and religious feelings. Informal activist groups began to be established seeking restoration of their religious, cultural and political rights. Campaigns for end to cotton monoculture and for declaring Uzbek as the State language in Uzbekistan were also started. On 3 December 1988, around 600 students of Tashkent State University held an unofficial Uzbek language festival on the University campus. The meeting demanded that Uzbek be proclaimed as the state language of the Uzbek SSR. Birthday of the Central Asian poet, Alisher Navay on 9 February was celebrated as the “Mother Tongue Day” in Uzbekistan.

Demographic dynamism and political assertion by the Uzbeks— they being the titular nationality in independent Uzbekistan, and the simultaneous decrease in the ratio of Slavic population due to outmigration, has altered the power equation in favour of the Uzbeks in Uzbekistan. However, the Uzbek leadership has been alive to the need for harmonization of inter-ethnic relations, which is considered necessary for consolidating the independent statehood in the post-Soviet Uzbekistan, and also for building positive relations in the region, particularly with Russia. According to President Islam Karimov, “the national diversity in Uzbekistan in close combination with the growth of national self-consciousness and spiritual revival of the Uzbek people serves as a mighty impulse for renovation of the society, its democratization, creating favourable conditions for the Republic’s integration into the world community.”⁴

Besides inter-ethnic conflict, corruption, crime, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, terrorism and religious extremism are seen to be the new challenges to national security in Uzbekistan. President Islam

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN UZBEKISTAN

Karimov while cautioning the people of his country to be watchful against these threats, exhorts them to invoke their “inner immunity and high morality”, which can be imbibed through moral education in family, school, *mahalla*, mass media, the clergy etc.⁵ Even though, concerted efforts have been made to build up the nationhood in the post-Soviet Uzbekistan on the basis of its ethno-cultural and national identity, self-identification on the basis of region or clan persists. Quite conscious of these negative phenomena, Islam Karimov described “regionalism and clans as the signs of a narrow, ethno-regional type of mentality.”⁶ Karimov wants the people of Uzbekistan to determine their national self-identification “first as the citizen of Uzbekistan, only after that as the inhabitant of Khorezm, Samarkand or the Ferghana valley.”⁷ Karimov further warns that “a hypertrophied local patriotism and its aggressive advancement impede the nation’s consolidation, inevitably lead to internal separatism and cultural isolation, originate a series of other threats to stability and security of the state and the society.”⁸

Soon after its independence, a new wave of ethno-national and religious resurgence swept the region. In fact the government of Uzbekistan led by Islam Karimov took a conscientious decision to preserve and revive the spiritual and cultural legacy in Uzbekistan, in order to develop its national self-consciousness. In the words of Karimov, “historical memory, restoration of an objective and truthful history of the nation, native territory, territory of the state is given an extremely important place in the revival and growth of national self-consciousness and also the national pride.”⁹ Local writers, artists and academicians started openly idealizing the past through their works of history, art and culture, with official approval. The process of renaming places, squares and institutions on national names was initiated with full speed and duly completed. At the same time restoration of old and neglected monuments and tombs has been undertaken. Lenin Square was renamed as *Ozodi* (Independence) Square, Engels Street renamed as Abdullah Kadirov Street after the famous Uzbek poet who was killed in 1937 during Stalin’s excesses. New facelift has been imparted to the exterior of cities and towns highlighting national characteristics.

K. Warikoo

Most of the monotonous concrete buildings and blocks of structures that were built during the Soviet period have either been demolished and rebuilt or renovated by introducing a new touch of traditional Uzbek/Central Asian architecture. New buildings, market complexes, shops and houses have come up in cities and towns of Uzbekistan, presenting a distinct Uzbek style.

Former Museum of Lenin has not only been renamed as the Museum of History, but various panels/sections have been reconstructed to reflect Uzbekistan's independent nationhood. This museum provides a panoramic view of Uzbekistan's history covering the entire span from the period of Alexander, Kushanas, Sassanids, Arabs, Chengiz Khan, Shebani Khan, Mangits, Tsars, Soviet and independence. In the Gallery of Art, new works of art by famous Uzbek artists have been exhibited. Gur-i-Amir mausoleum in Samarkand has been fully restored. Inside the mausoleum and mosque premises, local crafts centers run by local craftsmen are exhibiting and selling their crafts. This again reflects a combination of tradition and modernity, peculiar to Uzbekistan where we find a mosque functioning both as a religious place, as a center of tourist attraction and also as a place to promote and sell local crafts and wares.

A new beautiful domed marble building of Amir Timur Museum has been constructed in Tashkent in record time under the directives of President Islam Karimov. The octagonal symbol, so popular in Uzbekistan and some other parts of Central Asia as well as India, has been used in the main hall and other places, which reflects a continuity of sublime thought and local characteristics even in the most modern buildings. It is worthwhile to reproduce the following quote of President Islam Karimov, which has been showcased in this Museum to serve as a reminder to the people of Uzbekistan about the importance of preserving and reviving their heritage, culture and traditions: "Independence gave the Uzbek people a possibility to revalue its historical heritage, to revive the feeling of national self-respect, its culture and traditions, faiths, language and spirituality. Independence became a new pulse in the development of the Uzbek national

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN UZBEKISTAN

mentality, strengthening the feelings of patriotism and love to motherland.”

Uzbekistan is determined to restore its spiritual, cultural and historical heritage and traditions as part of its efforts to build its national identity. Babur and Amir Timur are the new Uzbek national heroes. Sufficient coverage of local religious and cultural festivals and places is given in the local media including television. Several international festivals on Amir Timur, 2500th anniversary celebrations of Bukhara and Khiva (17-20 October 1997) were held with great pomp and show in Uzbekistan. The song and dance sequences presented by over 800 young Uzbek artists on this occasion touched upon themes related to Uzbekistan’s history and culture including the old caravan trade with India and also some popular Hindi songs. Different troupes of young Uzbek artists dressed in colourful Uzbek attires presented their best. Illuminations, laser lights and fire works were quite impressive. The youthful vigour and enthusiasm displayed by the Uzbek artists was matched by the equally responsive audience including the Uzbek ruling class, officialdom and commoners. There was energy and dynamism not only about relishing but also about preserving and promoting Uzbekistan’s political independence and the desire to achieve economic, cultural and intellectual independence. That the song and dance festival was held in the huge courtyard of the Masjid Kalan and the historic Mir Arab Madrasa in Bukhara under the shadow of Kalan Minar, reflects both traditional and modernist secular approach of the Uzbek society towards Islam. The practice of having song and dance sequences or celebrating a national festival in the mosque premises would have evoked outcry from Muslims anywhere else whether in West Asia or South Asia. But, on the contrary, both the Bukharan and Uzbek citizens and officialdom rejoiced over this festival. This author was witness to the enthusiasm and happiness expressed on this occasion. In his address, while inaugurating the celebrations at Bukhara on 19 October 1997, President Islam Karimov described Bukhara as the ‘Dome of Islam’. At the same time he traced the origin of Uzbek statehood of 2500 years ago covering the old dynasties of Khorezm

K. Warikoo

Shahs (seventh to first centuries B.C.), Khushanas (first to fourth centuries A.D), Samanids, Karakhanids, Trmurids, Shaibanids, Ashtarkhanids and Mangits. During this celebration, the contribution of Imam Bukhari, Al Termizi, Bahauddin Naqshband, Khwaja Ahmad Yassavi, Al Khorezmi, Al Beruni, Ibn Sena, Amir Timur, Ulugh Beg and other luminaries to national culture and history of Uzbekistan was positively brought forth.

The Uzbek society particularly the old and middle age groups are attaching great importance to the local history, tradition and culture, thus representing moderate Islam in Uzbekistan. As against this the new generation of Uzbeks is influenced by two divergent trends - one of the modern secular and western education imparted in public schools, colleges, universities and technical institutes, and the other of medievalist and conservative Islamic education provided in Muslim mosques and *madrasas*. Young Uzbeks who are being trained in these Muslim institutions would in turn create chains of fresh Muslim students thereby ensuring the churning out of conservative sections in the new generations of Uzbek society. This explains why the Uzbek President has set up the Islamic State University at Tashkent, and has encouraged exchange of views with Islamic institutions in Bukhara and Samarkand, so that the Uzbek society is not exposed to undesirable influences of the fundamentalist and extremist Wahabi Islam through various *madrasas* and underground outfits. Karimov regards the “process of revival of national traditions of Islam and its culture”¹⁰ in Uzbekistan as an antidote to the extremist and politicized Islam imported from ‘outside’. Islam Karimov has dilated upon the “deceptive attraction”¹¹ of Islamist fundamentalist Wahabi ideology to a section of Muslims in Central Asia ascribing the same to its popular ideas of justice, rejection of luxury, greed and corruption. He has, in unambiguous terms rejected the ideas of ‘politicisation of Islam’ and ‘Islamisation of politics’, drawing a clear distinction between the cultural and spiritual value of Islam and its misuse for securing and exercising political power. Karimov views Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to Uzbekistan as it would disrupt peace and stability, civil and inter-ethnic harmony, and

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN UZBEKISTAN

also discredit democracy, secular polity, multi-ethnic and multi-religious state of independent Uzbekistan. Conscious of this threat, Islam Karimov accorded priority to the revival of indigenous historical and spiritual heritage, in order to pre-empt the promoters and practitioners of political Islam in Uzbekistan. In doing so, Karimov has included pre-Islamic culture as part of the cultural wealth of Central Asia. He has acknowledged that soil, air, water and the fire (the Sun) continue to be revered in Central Asia now, as was done in the time of Zoroastrianism and Buddhism.¹²

There is recognition, both at the official and grassroots levels, of the importance of Islam and its traditions for introducing the elements of religiosity, morality and ethical values among the Uzbeks who remained subjected for about seventy years to the Soviet atheistic education and radically different socio-cultural values. Religious literature is being published and old mosques and shrines have been restored and new ones constructed in an effort to revive the indigenous spiritual heritage. However, the local perception and practice of Islam is liberal as against the more conservative and fanatic precepts and practices prevalent in West Asia and South Asia. That after his re-election as the President of independent Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov took his oath both on the constitution of Uzbekistan and Quran, is yet another evidence of tradition and modernity going together in Uzbekistan.

Though modern mass media particularly the satellite television and foreign TV programmes do affect the psyche of the people particularly the young, respect for elders and family ties remain important in day to day life. *Chaikhana* (tea-house) is still a popular institution in Uzbekistan. Traditional *mahalla* system which survived the Soviet rule, has been institutionalized and accorded due place as an important social self-governing agency in the post-independent Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan continues to have high population growth rate, the young age group constituting nearly half of the population. That the Uzbek youth are highly educated, skilled and professional work force, bubbling with dynamism and enthusiasm, augurs well for the overall socio-economic

development of Uzbekistan. During the past fourteen years of its independence, Uzbekistan has moved along a path of gradual development of democracy, socially oriented market economy, the nation-building process by keeping the indigenous ethno-national culture and traditions as the core of the independent state of Uzbekistan. Whereas we find both traditionalism and modernity co-existing in Uzbekistan, the state and society is seeking to invoke traditional ethical and spiritual legacy to contain the ill effects of modernization.

REFERENCES

1. *Soviet Uzbekistani*, 4 January 1984.
2. Cited in Ajay Patnaik, *Central Asia Between Modernity and Tradition* (Delhi: Konark, 1996), p.48.
3. *Summary of World Broadcasts SU/1088*, 3 June 1991.
4. Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of Twenty First Century*. Tashkent, 1997, p.61.
5. *Ibid.*, p.80.
6. *Ibid.*, p.84
7. *Ibid.*, p.88
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p.119.
10. *Ibid.*, p.123.
11. *Ibid.*, p.36.
12. *Ibid.*, p.124.

UZBEKISTAN: ENTERING A NEW PHASE OF MARKET ECONOMY

R.G. Gidadhubli

Uzbekistan's economic growth performance in 2004 was quite impressive. As stated by the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov, the country achieved steady economic growth, strengthened the macroeconomic and financial stability, achieved positive growth in the foreign trade sector. So far as major economic indicators are concerned the situation was as follows – GDP growth in 2004 was about 7.7 per cent over the level of 2003; industrial output increased by 9.4 per cent; output of consumer goods recorded a rise of 13.4 per cent and that of non-food products by 18.6 per cent. Agricultural sector also performed well with 10.1 per cent growth in output. Grain output was about 4.8 million tons, which means that the country will not only be able to meet domestic demand for grain but may also be able to export some quantity. Production of fruits and potatoes increased by 15 to 20 per cent and that of eggs over 22 per cent. Meat output made only a modest increase of about 7 per cent. It is reported that the output of raw cotton which is called 'white gold' exceeded 3.5 million tons. This was a record level of harvest, which will help the country to earn much needed foreign exchange.

Economic growth in the economy has been substantially contributed by flow of investments, which increased by over 5 per cent constituting more than 20 per cent of GDP. Similarly, on the fiscal front the country experienced inflation rate of 3.7 per cent. This was the lowest level of inflation achieved for the first time over the years of reforms. Equally important is that the national currency *Sum* is fairly stable and has become convertible on current account. Another indicator of growth is the real per capita income, which has recorded a fairly high level increase of 15 per cent in 2004 over that of the previous year. So far as foreign trade sector is concerned, the country

has not only recorded a very high annual growth of 30 per cent, but there was also a major qualitative change in the structure of exports. The share of manufactured goods in the country's total export increased by over 52 per cent, which was possible as a result of substantial growth in the manufacturing sector. More importantly, the country achieved a positive trade balance thus making a net gain of over one billion dollars in 2004.

The leadership of the country has reason to be happy about this fairly good economic performance. What is equally important is the fact that this growth performance has been in sharp contrast to the relatively low growth rates that the Uzbek economy experienced a few years back. In fact there was virtual stagnation in the economy. For instance, according to Uzbek official sources, during the period 1998 to 2003 annual growth rates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) were in the range of 4 to 5 per cent. Industrial production increased by about 6 to 8 per cent per year. Agricultural output often suffered due to draught conditions. Moreover, the country had been experiencing high level of inflation which was in the range of 20 to 30 per cent per annum. In this context it is also important to note that according to the Asian Development Bank reports, Uzbekistan recorded the lowest GDP growth rates among the Central Asian countries during the period 2000 to 2003. While Uzbekistan achieved 4 to 5 per cent annual growth, Kazakhstan achieved GDP growth rates ranging between 6 and 13 per cent. Tajikistan, which had suffered low growth rates in the 1990s, also achieved 5 to 10 per cent growth rates during this period. Turkmenistan continued to maintain remarkably high growth rates ranging between 11 to 20 per cent per annum. Hence this relative low growth performance might have been a matter of concern for the Uzbek leadership. The concern was all the more legitimate since Uzbekistan's economy suffered the least negative growth (-1.7 per cent per annum) during the period of 1990-1997 when all the Central Asian countries suffered negative GDP growth rates ranging between -6 to -10 per cent per annum.

In view of this several questions arise. What are the factors that have contributed for this pattern of economic performance? Considering the fact that it is almost one and half decade after the country has become independent, it may be pertinent to enquire as to what are the problems and constraints that the country has been facing in its economic development? What has been impact of the policy of the state on the performance of the economy?

SHIFT IN ECONOMIC POLICY

The policy of the Uzbekistan government has been a major factor in the country' economic development. Relative low growth rates in the economy during the period 1998 to 2003 were due to a variety of reasons. Firstly, the economic growth depends upon the production of a few commodities such as oil, natural gas, precious minerals such as gold, cotton among agricultural goods and so on. Some of these products are also major hard currency earners for the country. Drought conditions prevailing in 2001 and 2002 brought down the output of raw cotton. Moreover, fluctuations in the world commodity markets have affected the economy of the country. Secondly, very often policies of reform were not fully implemented in practice due to bureaucratic approaches. Thirdly, and most importantly it appears that the state as a regulator of economy, which was envisaged in the Uzbek model of development was not providing enough dynamism for sustained growth.

Hence it appears that realizing relative decline and stagnation in economic growth in 1998 and 2002, the government undertook several policy measures to speed up development. The government initiated the policy of economic liberalization as a part of reforms. Under this policy state control over the economy was to be reduced, administrative apparatus was to be curtailed, private sector was to be given wider opportunities in the management of economy and so on. In this sense this was a major shift in the policy of the state with regard to economy. Besides these internal factors, external pressures also contributed to this change in the state policy. For instance, according to some press reports, in the spring of 2001 the International Monetary Fund decided

to pull out of Uzbekistan since the Uzbekistan government refused to implement market reforms mandated by the IMF. This was perhaps a serious decision for the IMF with regard to Uzbekistan, which had joined this premier international financial institution in September 1992 soon after independence. Be that as it may, the Uzbek leadership insisted that the country was committed to gradual reform process to market economy and the government announced a series of measures being initiated in this regard. In February 2002 the government announced a 'New Reform Plan' to bring about macro-economic and structural changes. According to reports as per the statement of Rustam Azimov, the Minister of Macroeconomics and Statistics, this plan was prepared in collaboration and consultation with the IMF authorities covering matters relating to all sectors of the economy. In fact, there is consistency in this policy of economic reform, which has been subsequently reiterated by the Uzbek government. For instance, as reported by Uzreport in 2003 the government of Uzbekistan outlined the priorities of economic development of the country for 2003 and targets for 2004. The main economic priorities according to the official statement were- liberalization, deepening reforms, reducing the tax burden on economic entities, creating conditions for stimulating foreign investment, development of small business and strengthening privatization and development of securities market.

An important policy decision was made by Islam Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan highlighting the qualitative shift in the economic policy when he addressed the Joint session of Parliament on 28 January 2005. Many specifics of economic policy were contained in the 'concept of democratization and renewal of the society along with the main objectives of reforming and modernizing the country in 2005 and beyond'. This is a comprehensive policy document, which covers all aspects of society and economy. To some extent the address of the President reiterates policies being initiated in the Reform Plan. Moreover, there are specific directives in the document to various administrative bodies and there are also critical observations about the prevailing shortcomings in the policies and performance of the economy.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

The Uzbek government adopted the policy of Administrative Reforms to reduce the role of the state in the economy. According to the Deputy Prime Minister, this was the most radical reduction since the start of administrative reforms undertaken since 1999. He noted that the strength of the administrative personnel was being reduced by 7 to 8 per cent a year. He also noted that 13 ministries, 11 state committees, 9 agencies, 3 committees, 7 centers and 7 inspections would remain in the structure of state management bodies. The extent to which administrative machinery has been cut down is evident from the fact that in the first years of independence there were about 60 ministries in the country. The Deputy Prime Minister stated, "The main aim of administrative reforms in Uzbekistan was to speed up economic reforms to maintain sustainable economic growth, increase incomes and living standards of the population". Moreover, the country would save about \$ 40.5 million every year on government expenditure through these reforms.

BOOST TO PRIVATIZATION

The process of privatization has been taking place for more than a decade as a part of transition to market economy. But this policy measure got a boost in the Reform Plan and the role of the private sector has increased in the economy. For instance, as a result of measures undertaken to boost private sector expansion, a total of 1,451 state enterprises, objects and share packages and shares were sold during the first half of 2004. This was 1.6 times more than that in the corresponding period of 2003. In the reporting period, income from privatization made up 56.2 billion *Sum*, which is 1.7 times more than in 2003. Privatization revenue increased by about 40 per cent in 2004 and amounted to 78.5 billion *Sum*. According to some analysts, Uzbekistan privatized 1,830 enterprises in 2004, which was 30 per cent more than in 2003. Equally important was the fact that as per reports, foreign investors bought share packages in 75 enterprises in 2004 including Coca Cola, Muzimpex, Uzkabel, Navoi Khlebprodukt etc.

This was in contrast to the situation prevailing till 2002 when the process of privatization was very slow. The World Bank was also not satisfied with the slow privatization process in Uzbekistan as stated in its report of 2002. It appears that the magnitude of the sale of share packages in large enterprises to private investors was not high. Moreover, the fact remained that these enterprises were still controlled mainly by the state. Thus with the implementation of the policy of Reform Plan, a major change has taken place with regard to approach to private sector in Uzbekistan. As per official reports, privatization program for 2003 to 2005 included the sale of state holdings in 3,728 enterprises including 2,409 companies to be sold entirely.

Many of the large companies, which are in the private sector have also shown improvement in their performance. This has been possible by the support extended by the government. For instance, UzDaewoo Auto plant produced about 70,000 cars in 2004 as compared to 41,000 in 2003. In 2005 this plant is expected to produce 110,000 cars of various brands such as Nexia, Matiz, Tico etc. Moreover, about half of cars produced by this plant are being exported to various countries including Russia. According to Russian customers Nexia and Matiz provide good price/quality ratio, which is an evidence of the competitiveness of these brands in international market in terms of quality and price.

An important policy decision has been taken by the leadership of the country to give high priority for private entrepreneurship. In his address on 28 January 2005, Islam Karimov has directed the government to curb interference of state bodies in private business and provide all guarantees for private entrepreneurship and expand their access to resources and markets. These decisions will go a long way in giving real boost to the private sector in Uzbekistan in the years to come.

ENHANCED INVESTMENT IN THE ECONOMY

Investment plays an important role in economic development. While the leadership of Uzbekistan has paid attention to this issue, the country has not been able to attract and sustain the required level of

NEW PHASE OF MARKET ECONOMY IN UZBEKISTAN

investment into the economy for various reasons. Since the domestic resources were often inadequate, investment from abroad has to play an important part for economic development. The country has received financial support from various international agencies during the last one and half decades. In specific projects as in gold mining, automobile manufacturing, energy sector etc. foreign direct investment from companies in UK, USA has also been significant. However, the share of foreign investment in Uzbekistan in total investment has been less as compared to that in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic. For instance, during the period 1992-1996, Uzbekistan received about \$ 190 million as net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which was just about 5 per cent of total FDI received by all the five Central Asian States. In per capita terms, the position of Uzbekistan was even worse as it received just \$ 8 per capita as against \$ 180 received by Kazakhstan. It shows the low level of foreign capital in the Uzbek economy in the past. In this context the views of the president of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Lemierre seem relevant. He observed in 2002 that investment climate in Uzbekistan was affected because the 'legal and regulatory climate was not very conducive for business activities'. It was even pointed out that several shops were closed in Tashkent and other cities for arbitrary reasons. It appears that having realized these shortcomings, the government proposed to take appropriate measures to improve business environment in order to attract more domestic and foreign investment in the economy. The government seems to have succeeded to a great extent, which was evident from the fact that the Investment Programme of Uzbekistan for 2004 envisaged implementation of 107 projects for a total of \$4.2 billion. The Agency for Foreign Economic Relations, Economics Ministry, State Property Committee, Agency for Foreign Investments and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with interested ministries and departments were looking for potential investors to implement these projects. In particular the fuel-and-energy sector was expected to receive the major share of investments in 2004 amounting to \$1.6 billion. The largest investments of about \$850 million was to be

directed into exploration and mining of hydrocarbons at Yujniy Kemachi and Shakarbulak blocks through Uzbekneftgas. It is important to note that the share of foreign direct investment in the projects funded by foreign capital is expected to increase while the share of credit received by the government may go down.

During the last few years Russia has been playing an active role in the Uzbek economy. In 2004 Uzbekistan had prepared plans to implement jointly with Russian companies 37 investment projects for a total of \$2.099 billion. The two countries also agreed on a list of projects for joint implementation. The majority of investments - more than \$2 billion - were expected to go to the oil and gas complex. For instance, Gazprom planned to invest \$1 billion to develop gas condensate fields in Ustyurt region and \$15 million to extend the life of the Shakhpakhty field under production sharing agreement terms. Lukoil also planned to take active part in energy sector of Uzbekistan. During the last few years China has been taking an active interest in the Uzbek economy. Hence as reported by Interfax in August 2004, the government of Uzbekistan has adopted a resolution on developing cooperation with China that envisions raising \$955 million in Chinese credits in the period 2004-2007 for several investment projects. In particular, \$344.7 million of Chinese funds would be used in 25 investment projects in various economic and social sectors. Many West European countries and the USA have made investment in various sectors of the Uzbek economy including gold mining, power generation, engineering, consumer goods etc. India has also provided credits to Uzbekistan, which has helped in setting up joint ventures in a few branches of the economy including pharmaceuticals, consumer goods etc.

EMPHASIS ON SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

In the Uzbek model of development, small and medium units are given importance in addition to large industrial enterprises. Thus in 1999 as per official sources, small and medium units accounted for 29.1 per cent of GDP. Their share in different sectors was as follows – 10.5 per

NEW PHASE OF MARKET ECONOMY IN UZBEKISTAN

cent of industrial output; 68 per cent of agricultural production; 36 per cent in construction activities; 46 per cent of retail trade and 40 per cent in the services sector. On the one hand it is stated that small and medium units are growing well and rapidly over the last some years. But at times their performance has not been satisfactory. According to some analysts, in the first half of 1999 about 25 per cent of small and medium units did not operate in the country as a whole. In some important regions the situation was even worse. For instance, in the Tashkent region 29 per cent of small and medium units were reported to be idle and in Navoi oblast 34 per cent of such units were not operating. This was a matter of concern for the authorities. It was observed that the main problem the small and medium units faced was the lack of liquidity to carry out their business and many of them seemed to face difficulties in getting bank credits. Moreover, there was a major problem of inter-enterprise arrears, which was affecting their overall performance.

Efforts have been made during the last few years to solve the problems facing the SMEs. Hence in the 2002 report of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) it was stated that the Uzbek government had simplified SMEs access to cash at bank accounts. However, 27 per cent respondents in IFC survey pointed out that banks' bureaucracy was the main problem affecting banking operations. Considering the importance of the SMEs in Uzbek economy, in 2003 the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) provided loan of \$ 3 million to Hamkor Bank, which was the most active in providing credits to micro and small enterprises. The EBRD and Japan set up the Japan-Uzbekistan Small Business Programme, which is again an evidence of support to SMEs in Uzbekistan. These efforts are expected to increase the share of SMEs in the economy.

RISE IN FOREIGN TRADE

As the country has adopted a policy of boosting economic relations with foreign countries, there has been significant increase in the foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan. Thus according to official

statistics, the foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan rose from \$5.7 billion in 2002 to \$6.68 billion in 2003. The growth made up 17.3 per cent as compared to 2002. The trade balance comprised \$760 million. The country's exports increased from \$2.98 billion in 2002 to \$ 3.73 billion, which was a 24.6 per cent increase against 2002. Imports also rose from \$2.71 billion to US\$2.96 billion (9.3 per cent). In 2004 the country recorded significant rise in exports which shot up by 34 per cent thus indicating qualitative shift in the foreign trade sector.

Among the western countries, USA is a major trading partner of Uzbekistan notwithstanding the fact that political relations between the two have witnessed ups and downs during the last one and a half decade. Uzbekistan's active support to USA in its policy towards Afghanistan in 2002 brought both the countries closer more than ever. Both the countries signed the Declaration of Strategic Partnership in 2002 and USA has agreed to provide technical assistance for the economic development of Uzbekistan. The importance of relations with the USA was emphasized by the Uzbek President Islam Karimov who stated that good relations with the United States were vital to building a democratic society in the country and carrying out economic reforms. Hence during the last few years there has been a sharp increase in trade relations with the USA. In the three quarters of 2004, commodity turnover between US and Uzbekistan totalled about US \$ 354 million, which was 45 per cent more than in the same period of 2003. The US administration supported the initiative of the Uzbek government to set up the free trade regime between the two countries and to give a start to the implementation of the mechanism of regional agreement on development of trade and investment relations.

Uzbekistan's economic relations with Russia have also enhanced during the last few years. Russia has been a major trading partner of Uzbekistan. Besides promoting bilateral trade, both Russia and Uzbekistan have undertaken several joint ventures. The list also includes projects in machine-building, metallurgy, mining and extracting, the power technology industry and processing of meat, dairy and agricultural products, among other avenues. There are plans to

NEW PHASE OF MARKET ECONOMY IN UZBEKISTAN

set up a joint venture for repair and maintenance work on MI-8 and MI-24 helicopters at the Chirchik aviation repair plant together with the Kazan and Rostov helicopter plants. These are in addition to Russia's involvement in the energy sector of Uzbekistan. As stated by its President, Uzbekistan attaches great importance to develop and strengthen co-operation with several major countries including the USA, Russia, China, EU countries, South Korea, India and so on.

CONCLUSION

In lieu of conclusion it may be stated that Uzbekistan has entered a new phase of transition to a market economy. Major shifts have taken place in the economic policies, which have contributed significantly for rise in growth rates. While the Uzbek model of development evolved in the initial phase of economic transition served its purpose of avoiding economic crisis, but it appears that there has been a realization that it could not help in ensuring and sustaining dynamism in the economy. Hence policy shifts have been initiated partly due to domestic compulsions and partly due to external pressures. During the last few years measures have been taken to reduce the role of the state in the management of the economy, step-up investment, reduce tax burden, make currency convertible on current account, encourage SMEs which have brought about structural changes and qualitative improvement in the economy. The address of Islam Karimov, the President of Uzbekistan to the Joint session of the Parliament on 28 January 2005 is a comprehensive document as it contains policy guidelines for the country. It also highlights both the achievements as well as the shortcomings prevailing in various spheres of the society including the economy. It is, therefore, imperative that policies and guidelines announced from time to time will not become mere declarations but get implemented in full measure to take the country to new heights in the years to come.

REFERENCES

1. Islam Karimov, *On the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century*, Tashkent, 1997.
2. Economic Intelligence Unit, UK, *Country Report: Uzbekistan (1995 to 2000)*.
3. Bess Brown, "Central Asia: The First Year of the Unexpected Statehood", *RFE/RI Report*, vol 2, no.1, 1993.
4. R.G. Gidadhubli, "Economic Transition in Uzbekistan" *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 1994.
5. Andrew Apostdon, "The Mistke of the Uzbek Economic Model", *Central Asia Monitor*, no.2, 1998.
6. A. Bedrintsev, "Uzbekistan in International Relations" *World Economy and International Relations* (in Russian) Moscow, no.2, 1999.
7. Vladimir Kolesnikov "Uzbekistan Model of Develoment", *Russia and the Islamic World* (in Russian), no.1 (115), Moscow, 2002.
8. Gulshan Sachdeva, "Understanding Central Asian Economic Models", In Nirmala Joshi (ed.), *Central Asia the Great Game Replayed An Indian Perspective*, New Delhi, New Century Publications, 2003.
9. Islam Karimov "Speech at the first Joint Session of both Houses of Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tashkent", 28 January 2005. Brought out by the Embassy of Uzbekistan in India, New Delhi.

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Meena Singh Roy

The rich inheritance of civilization and historical ties between India and Uzbekistan remain relevant even today, regardless of huge political and economic changes that have taken place through the centuries. The emerging ties between India and Uzbekistan need to be examined in the context of new challenges, common interests, common concerns and the economic opportunities and complementarities which exist between these two states. There are significant common interests on which India and Uzbekistan, can build a partnership for peace and development. This study seeks to examine the emerging ties between India and Uzbekistan and to explore the possibility of future cooperation for peace and development in the region.

The paper argues that the initiatives taken by India to cement its ties with Uzbekistan clearly indicate an upward swing. It is important to note that in recent years India's policy towards Central Asian Republics (CARs) has been much more coherent and focused. Uzbekistan has emerged as an important partner of India particularly in security arena, in this region. Though economic ties between the two countries still remain the unsatisfactory part of an otherwise fruitful relation, but potential for greater economic engagement remains strong.

Given the excellent underpinning that India and Uzbekistan possess in terms of the historical and cultural affinities, opportunities for future cooperation are immense. Present study has been divided into four parts. Part one deals with India's objectives in regional context and importance of Uzbekistan ; part two gives an account of the existing political, military and economic ties; part three examines the challenges faced by India in this region and part four explores the potential for future cooperation and recommendations to forge closer and mutually

beneficial ties between India and Uzbekistan in the light of India's overall policy towards the Central Asian Republics.

PART-I

INDIA'S OBJECTIVES IN REGIONAL CONTEXT

To understand the Indo-Uzbek relations it is important to examine India's objectives in Central Asian region. India's basic approach towards Central Asia has been underlined time and again by its leaders and policy makers. Jawahar Lal Nehru considered Central Asia to be of great significance for India. He had special interest in the region. He welcomed the former Soviet Central Asian delegations at the first Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947 and also visited Tashkent, Samarkand, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan during his official visit to the former Soviet Union in June 1955.¹ Thereafter throughout the Soviet period India's relations with Central Asia were determined within the framework of Indo-Soviet relations. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and emergence of independent five Central Asian Republics, these relations were re-established based on the new realities and changed geopolitical situation.

After 1991, India's policy has been to develop and establish dynamic and multifaceted bilateral ties with each Republic. In this respect former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1993 and to Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1995 are significant ones which gave impetus to the Indo-Central Asian relations.² During his visit to Turkmenistan in September 1995 Rao stated, "We are an independent partner with no selfish motives. We only desire honest and open friendship to promote stability and cooperation without causing harm to any third country."³ In February 2003, the then External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha during his visit to Almaty reaffirmed that in reaching out to Central Asia, India is not competing with any of the international players that are engaging the strategically important region. Focusing on India's Central Asia policy he said, "We are not in Central Asia to replace anyone. We see Central Asia as part

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

of India's extended neighbourhood and our presence there is to promote a mutually inclusive relationship."⁴ Then in June 2004, while confirming on behalf of the new government, the visiting Foreign Secretary, Shashank, said that India was interested in developing closer economic ties with Central Asia as part of its plan for establishing an Asian Economic Community. He emphasised that the India-ASEAN summit-level dialogue, talks on free trade zones among SAARC countries and with the Gulf Cooperation Council, are building blocks for forming an Asian Economic Community that can be extended to include Central Asia as well.⁵

Based on the above policy approach, India's objectives in Central Asia are mainly:

- Promoting stability and peace in this region;
- Working against the spread of terrorist network;
- Ensuring its energy security;
- Desiring Central Asia to be part of an expanded trade network;
- Increasing trade and economic relations with this region;
- Working for the greater regional cooperation;
- Controlling drugs and small arms trafficking in the region.

What then are India's strategic interests in Central Asia?⁶ This question needs to be addressed in the backdrop of security dynamics of Central Asia underscored by competing interests of US, Russia and China. According to experts, the US unilateralist approach is fueling great power rivalry in Central Asia. Russian perception which is shared by the Chinese is that through NATO, the Americans would like in the future to gradually take control of the entire economic and military structure in the majority of CIS countries, induced by economic aid, programmes such as Friendship for Peace and growing military presence. Russia has already started reasserting itself in Central Asia⁷. In the past two years, Russia's relations with all five Republics have been strengthened. Russia has signed number of agreements in economic, energy and security arena. Russian border guards will stay

in Tajikistan until the end of 2006. Tajikistan has also agreed to grant permanent status to a Russian military base in the country.⁸ Kazakhstan has pursued a “multi-vectored” policy that attempts to balance the interests of Russia, the United States and China. But recent developments suggest it is starting to tilt in Moscow’s direction. Same is the case with Uzbekistan. Despite being the ally of US, Uzbekistan is consolidating its ties with Russia.⁹ Kyrgystan has provided a military base to Russia and is trying to consolidate its ties with Russia.

On the other hand, observers note a sense of urgency in Beijing’s growing interest in Central Asia.¹⁰ The region may hold the key to the Chinese leadership’s ability to maintain the country’s dynamic economic growth pace. The expanding US strategic presence in Central Asia over the past two years and its growing energy demand has dramatically raised the stakes for Beijing. China imports nearly half the oil it uses, most of it from the unstable Middle East. With demand growing and domestic production unable to meet its needs, China now sees Central Asia as a vital energy source.¹¹ In last one year China has been aggressively promoting its interests through Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and through forging economic, political and military links with this region.

Understanding of Indian security interests needs to be focused against the above backdrop. Though all the five Republics are of immense significance to India, yet Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan stand out to be of security interest for India’s Afghanistan-Pakistan policy. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan need to be viewed while looking at India’s China policy.

Having discussed India’s security interests, the question of its economic interests needs to be factored. The value of Central Asia as a transit route for the continent can not be denied. Central Asia has been the meeting point for traders, travellers and mercantile communities from India, Iran, China and Europe¹². As mentioned earlier, trade and economic relations between India and Central Asian Republics are stay the most unsatisfactory aspect of an otherwise what

can be a potentially beneficial relationship. The ground situation portrays a very low level of trade, limited number of joint ventures and no worthwhile investment in Central Asia by Indian business and industry as compared to its investment in other regions. Nevertheless, potential for comparative economic advantages for the two regions is vast. India can provide range of goods and services to the Central Asian market. Both have economic complementarity in terms of resources, manpower and markets.

An important area for India in Central Asia is oil and gas sector. This region is thought to contain key global reserves. The main oil and gas deposits are in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Whereas Kyrgystan and Tajikistan have enormous hydel resources.¹³ According to estimate given by Central Asian sources about their reserves, the confirmed oil deposits are between 15 to 13 billion barrels, which is 2.7% of all the confirmed deposits in the world. Confirmed deposits of Natural gas in Central Asia, are around 270 to 360 trillion cubic feet, which constitutes around 7% of world deposits. There is also a view that the actual reserves of oil in Central Asia are in the range of 60 to 140 billion barrels.¹⁴

The current estimate is that the Caspian region holds 6,000-12,000 Mtoe, (4-7% of global reserve). It may also hold 5,000-9,000 Mtoe gas (5-8% of global reserve). Though compared to the Middle East, where around 65% of global reserves are to be found, Caspian reserves are marginal. Yet in the years to come this region is likely to be an important source of oil and gas for the world.¹⁵ Another estimate given in *Oil and Gas Journal* states that by 2020 the Caspian oil production would reach 3,972 barrels per day (bpd), whereas its gas production will reach 28,885 million of cubic feet per day. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) has stated in its forecast that Caspian oil production will reach 6 million bpd by 2020.

The importance of Central Asian energy reserves need to be viewed in the backdrop of India's increasing energy demands. India is the sixth largest energy consumer in the world, with coal accounting for

Meena Singh Roy

52%, oil 40% and gas 7%. Indian Planning Commission Chairman told the Indo-Asian News Service, the country will need to increase its energy consumption by roughly 5 percent each year.¹⁶ India's oil import dependence is expected to grow from a current level of 22% to about 42 % by 2010-2011. Share of gas demand is projected to increase from 7% (1996 to 1997) to 15% by year 2011-12. This may go up to 20% by 2024-25 provided gas is made available both from import and domestic sources. India's crude imports account for 72% of domestic consumption.¹⁷ To sustain its economic growth, India will need vast amount of energy. In this context, Central Asia can be the future source of energy for India.

Despite these vast energy reserves in Central Asia, accessing its oil and gas remains a major challenge for India. However, the possibility of cooperation in this sector exist. The current geopolitical situation which is unfolding to control the energy resources of the region, leaves no doubt that Caspian energy resources are going to play an increasingly important role in the world energy supply over the next two decade.

HOW IMPORTANT IS UZBEKISTAN?

Uzbekistan's strategic location and its energy resources make it an important Central Asian state. It is the only Republic, which has its borders with all the Central Asian states and with Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is of great strategic significance to India. Today the geographical parameters of South Asia have expanded to include Central Asia. Therefore, the new "great game", which is unfolding in the region, is likely to bring in high-stakes power politics in Central Asia with its spillover effect to South Asia as well. Uzbekistan's evolving relationship with US, Russia and China on the one hand and its ties with Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and India, will determine its role at regional level. These changing equations among major powers (both regional and extra-regional powers) are likely to impinge upon the future policy developments in the region.

On the other hand the spasm of violence in Uzbekistan has set off alarms in the policy-making establishment in Moscow, New Delhi and

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

Washington. This enlarging crescent of terrorist violence¹⁸ obviously has serious security implications and is of concern to India. The question that concerns India is that any external influence in Central Asia will have serious implications, direct or indirect for the countries of the region. The problem of religious extremism in Uzbekistan is serious and of great security concern to India. These developments will have serious implications for the security situation in the State of Jammu and Kashmir of India. Obviously for India, though Kashmir is situated on the periphery, it cannot be walled off from the political developments which take place in the adjoining Central Asian region. Any advance by Islamic extremist groups in the Central Asian Republics could invigorate the same elements that have been active in Kashmir. India and Uzbekistan both face the menace of religious extremism and thus have common concern which needs to be addressed jointly. India would like to see stable and peaceful Uzbekistan free of extremist forces.

Uzbekistan's importance also emanates from its deposits of energy resources and other minerals. Uzbekistan is the 4th largest cotton producer and 2nd largest cotton-fibre exporter in the world. The total annual cotton fibre production is 1.5 million tons. In Uzbekistan, textile industry has enormous export potential and is focused on the establishment of new facilities for advanced, high value added cotton processing. It is also one of the world's biggest producers of many types of vegetables and fruits, which are unique. It has significant potential in aircraft construction, maintenance and servicing of aircrafts, helicopters and engines.¹⁹

Uzbekistan is rich in energy resources as well. The Republic is rich in oil and gas: 190 energy fuel fields have been discovered; 94 of them contain gas and gas condensate and 96 are oil and gas, oil and gas-condensate and oil fields. Forty seven percent of them are functioning; 35 percent are ready for functioning ; on the rest work is going on. Uzbekistan is third among the East European and CIS countries so far as prospected natural gas reserves are concerned ; it has the fourth largest deposits of liquid hydrocarbons. Its assessed gas reserves are

Meena Singh Roy

2 to 5 trillion cu m ; oil, 5.3 billion ; gas condensate, 480 million tonnes. Today the Republic produces about 58 billion cu m of gas a year .Uzbekistan is fifth in the world in uranium production. It also has gold, which is found in Fergana valley. Copper is extracted in the Almalyk region, as also iron minerals, zinc, lead, tungsten, molybdenum and uranium.²⁰ It holds leading position in stone processing among the CIS countries. Overall reserves of facing stones exceed 85 million cu m. It also has large granite and marble deposits. The coal reserves in Uzbekistan are 20 billion tonnes.²¹

PART-II

INDO-UZBEK RELATIONS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

India's relations with Uzbekistan are deeply rooted in history. These relations have gathered momentum and substance since Uzbekistan's independence. India's association with Uzbekistan goes back a long way. Close bonds of history have always linked the two nations²².

Indo-Uzbek relations go back to 1,500 BC when the Indo-Aryans migrated from Bactria²³ into northern India through the passes in the Hindukush mountains. Indo-Uzbek cultural and trade relations flourished in ancient times all along the old Silk Route. Indian travelers and traders established colonies in Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, Miran, Kuchi, Qara-shahr and Tufan²⁴.

Buddhism travelled through Silk Route to this region and became the cultural-religious link between India and Central Asia. Buddhist stupas at Dalvarzintepa near Bukhara in Uzbekistan mark an early foray of infusion of Buddhism into Bactria.²⁵ In Samarkand (Afrasiab) Buddhist paintings have been found.²⁶ The city of Bukhara, came into being in fifth century BC, was named (after *vihara* meaning monastery in Sanskrit) after an altar dedicated to Buddha which was located there.²⁷

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

The discovery of Sanskrit inscriptions in Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts at Termez in Uzbekistan by the Russian and the Central Asian archeologists indicate old links between these two countries.²⁸ The writings of Russian and other scholars reveal influence of Indian culture in folklore, geographical names, moral ethical code and other spheres of everyday life and rituals in Central Asia.

Two way trade and cultural exchange continued between India and Central Asia during and after Mughal rule as well. The writings of Alexander Burnes, the British agent, indicate that the turbans of Punjabi white cloth were used by “ the whole of the natives of Bokhara and Toorkistan” during 1930s.²⁹

In addition to culture, religion, trade, technology, medicine, astronomy and mathematics were also an area of cooperation between India and Central Asia. The writings of Muzaffar Khairullayev of Uzbekistan throw light on Abu Rayhan Beruni’s (Al-Beruni) keen interest in Indian mathematics, geography and astronomy. Muzaffar Khairullayev has described India as “ a valuable literary text for studying the development of cultural inter-relations among the people of Central Asia and India during the medieval period” and also “ there is no other such work dedicated to any other country, people, religion either within the realm of Islam or elsewhere that can be compared with Beruni’s India”.³⁰ Abu Mansur Muwaffiq and Avicenna had all appreciation for Indian medical science and also wrote treaties for medicine.³¹

In the nineteenth century Indian freedom fighters used Central Asia to further the cause of independence and get India out of the British yoke³². In the post-1857 period, many defeated British Indian army rebels and deserters took refuge in Bukhara and Kokand.³³ In 1920, the Tashkent military school was established to train Indians in the use of modern weaponry so that they could incite an armed rebellion in the North-West frontiers of India.

M.N. Roy, Abni Mukherji, and others set up Indian Communist party in Tashkent in 1920 with a view to propagate communism among

Meena Singh Roy

Indians. However, soon this school was closed due to the change in Bolshevik policies and the inmates were asked to join the newly established university named University for the Toilers of East in Moscow. Though from mid 1920s the Soviet decided not to allow the Indians to use Central Asian territories as a base for their operations against the British rule, Moscow's support to the Indian freedom fighters continued. After 1920, Indians travelled to the former USSR via Iran and Baku and bypassed Soviet Central Asia.³⁴ During 1680-1702, there was large exodus of Central Asians to India. A group of 274 poets from Bukhara, Samarkand, Nasaf, Badakhshan and other places migrated to India.³⁵

Political Ties and Security Partnership

There is a high level of activity in the political cooperation between India and Uzbekistan³⁶. Both India and Uzbekistan have similar approaches towards major international and regional issues. Terrorism seems to be the major area of cooperation between the two countries. Both feel that 'fight against terrorism has to be global & comprehensive-a total elimination of terrorism everywhere'. Both believe that-'the global fight against terrorism must address those who instigate, assist or acquiesce as much as those who perpetuate terrorism.' Both India and Uzbekistan have set up a joint working group on terrorism. Both countries share the view that problem of drug-trafficking and threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are to be addressed jointly. With respect to the regional organization, India supports the efforts made by Uzbekistan.

Similarly on the issue of India's membership in SCO foreign minister of Uzbekistan said, "We welcome the interest of India towards SCO. It is upto India and all countries together to find the optimal format of cooperation. I think that the future will show the most suitable and convenient form and format of such cooperation".³⁷

Soon after independence, India established diplomatic ties with Uzbekistan. This cooperation started with the exchange of visits at the high political level from both sides. During 1991-93 President of

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

Uzbekistan visited India to establish political and diplomatic relations, which was reciprocated by India sending high-level political visits. There have also been several visits by India's Ministers for External Affairs, Defence, Commerce, Petroleum and Gas and Science and Technology ministers. In addition to these high level visits various delegations of senior officials, parliamentarians, businessmen and academicians from both sides have been interacting to further the mutual cooperation.³⁸

The spate of bilateral agreements signed between India and Uzbekistan signifies the growing importance of Uzbekistan on New Delhi's radar. New Delhi is making a serious bid to forge a new equation with Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has emerged as India's key potential ally in the region, and Uzbekistan too looks upon India as a natural partner in combating terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking. India cannot ignore the importance of Uzbekistan, as it is the fulcrum around which the security of resource-rich Central Asia revolves. For India the relationship with Uzbekistan is also a matter of historical continuity.

Several visits of President Islam Karimov to India seem to offer vistas of friendship and cooperation between India and Uzbekistan in various spheres ranging from agriculture to information technology. But the corner stone of this partnership seems to be security. India-Uzbekistan relations have been aimed to underpin a common political understanding to counter common threats to their security. The desire to establish stronger relationship in security arena between India and Uzbekistan has been expressed by Uzbek scholars, policy makers and officials in number of fora and during the bilateral dialogues held both in India and Uzbekistan. "We consider India to be serious in its attitude towards Uzbekistan's place in the new multi-polar world and the region".³⁹ These views expressed by former director of ISRS clearly highlight the Uzbek perspective of India's policy in the region. During the bilateral dialogue between India and Uzbekistan, it was mentioned that Uzbekistan was eager to cooperate with India in the sphere of regional security.

There are common security concerns for both India and Uzbekistan. The instability in post-conflict Afghanistan, threat of religious extremism, drugs and arms trafficking are the issues of concern for both the countries. Though the situation in Afghanistan is slowly improving, yet it requires sustained regional and international efforts to restore peace and stability there. India and Uzbekistan have been working together to establish the partnership in security arena. In this context, the foreign minister of Uzbekistan expressed his view during the 3rd India-Central Asia conference in November 2003, where he stated that “the issue of security and integration in Central Asia have been strongly supported and initiated by Uzbekistan’s reliable and tested partners, like India. The continued discussion on these issues has great importance not only for Central Asian states but for India as well, since it represents an important step in developing cooperation and ensuring security in the region”.⁴⁰

Both the countries have signed numerous agreements over the period of past thirteen years to fine-tune their relations. In 2001 during President Islam Karimov’s visit to India, an extradition treaty and a legal assistance pact on criminal matters was signed between the two countries. A ‘mutual assistance’ agreement between the two customs authorities was also finalised. Indo-Uzbek ties were further cemented during the visit of Uzbek Foreign Minister Sodyq Safoev in January 2003 and then in October 2004. During this visit a memorandum of understanding on the India-Uzbek Centre for Information Technology (IT) was signed by the External Affairs Minister of India and the visiting Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan. Government of India is to provide Rs 300 million to Government of Uzbekistan to promote IT through setting the IT Centre. The help from the Indian government would be in the shape of a package which includes technical experts, software, networking equipment, training and so on. It was discussed that India should have direct trade with Uzbekistan rather than through third countries.⁴¹ Safoev also proposed to launch a “Mughal” tour between India and Uzbekistan which would cover cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, Delhi and Agra and thus build upon the cultural and historical

commonalities between the two countries. He also expressed desire to triple the frequency of flights of Uzbek Air from the present seven a week from Amritsar to Tashkent, besides doubling the existing four flights from Delhi to Tashkent.⁴² Interest in Indian companies investing in producing bicycles and scooters in Uzbekistan was also expressed. The visiting Minister stated that the demand of these two vehicles was high, whereas production was zero. The minister also proposed to liberalise the visa regimes between the two countries to facilitate trade and tourism.⁴³

Economic Cooperation

In case of Uzbekistan these ties are significant but not satisfactory. In this respect President Islam Karimov is of the opinion that India and Uzbekistan need to go beyond just 'embraces and pleasant words' and instead develop an economic relationship that will outlast embraces. He said that, "in 1999, our bilateral trade was just \$ 39 million. This is much too small." He called for joint ventures in banking, insurance, cotton processing and for limited barter trade between the two countries. He also sought a clearinghouse bank to be set up in Uzbekistan. To further promote the trade between the two countries President Karimov has assured Indian investors, during his several visits, that the problems ranging from getting visas to clearances from the Uzbek bureaucracy would be considered sympathetically.

In May 2000, during President Karimov's visit to India a joint declaration on Principles of Relations and eight other agreements were signed. Collaboration in areas such as aviation technology, automobile ancillaries, cotton processing, solar energy, the use of laser technology in medicine and computer technology were proposed.⁴⁴ In fact the contractual legal basis of the bilateral relations has been formed. More than 40 bilateral inter-governmental and inter-institutional documents were signed between the two countries. Also basic agreements regulating external economic relations between the economic operators of two countries were signed. The agreement signed between India and Uzbekistan in May 1999, on promotion and mutual protection of

Meena Singh Roy

investments, creates legal basis for development of mutual investment process.⁴⁵ According to the agreement signed between the two countries on trade and economic cooperation in May 1993, the two countries enjoy the Most Favoured Nation Treatment. The trade figures between the two countries have been fluctuating over the years, with the peak in 1999-2002 (see Table 1). The two way trade between India and Uzbekistan in 2003 was \$ 108.6 million and in the first eight months of 2004 was around \$ 81.5 million.⁴⁶ Although the present level of trade between two countries is nowhere near the real potential, yet there are opportunities of deeper and meaningful economic cooperation. The major items of export and import between the two countries are shown in Table-2.

TABLE-1
Trade between India and Uzbekistan 1996-2002

(in Rs. Lakhs)

Period	Export to India	Import from India	Total
April 1996-March 1997	923.94	2888.32	3812.26
April 1997-March 1998	1158.45	6538.31	7696.76
April 1998- March 1999	791.20	5285.77	6076.97
April 1999- March 2000	5535.93	4445.95	9981.88
April 2000-September 2001	3900.20	1625.35	5525.37
April 2002-September 2002	3807.99	1028.80	4836.79

Source: *Foreign Trade Statistics of India: Principal Commodities and Countries, 1996-2002*, Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Kolkata.

TABLE-2
Indo-Uzbek Export and Import

Uzbek Exports to India	Uzbek Imports from India
Aircraft	Services
Products of metallurgy	Pharmaceuticals
Services	Machinery and equipment
Agricultural products	Organic chemistry products
Silk and cotton	Optical equipment and devices
Chemical industry products	Textiles

Source: Presentation by Uzbek Foreign Minister Sodik S. Safojev at an interactive session organized by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on 30 October 2004.

Database of Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations specifies 73 enterprises with involvement of the investors from India, 48 of them being joint ventures and 25 enterprises with 100 percent Indian capital.⁴⁷ According to Uzbek Foreign Minister, Sadik Safojev there are currently 38 large enterprises that have been established with the direct participation of Indian companies and capital, 21 of them being joint ventures and 17 being enterprises with 100 per cent of Indian capital.⁴⁸

To further develop economic and trade links between the two countries, Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan during his visit in October 2004 called for collaboration between India and Uzbekistan the re-construction of Afghanistan.

India has taken several steps towards strengthening the economic cooperation with Central Asian Republics in general and Uzbekistan in particular. India declared 2003 as “Focus CIS Year” under which economic activities were the high point. In the past two years number of exhibitions were held in different Central Asian states including Uzbekistan.

The 73-member Indian delegation, led by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry EVKS Elangovan, visited Uzbekistan in January 2005 as part of “Focus :CIS” programme. During this visit the 5th Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Uzbekistan was held. The JCM is expected to boost trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. India and Uzbekistan signed agreements for joint ventures in the fields of tourism, higher education and apparels as part of measures to increase bilateral economic cooperation. The possibility of building an International Transport Corridor between India and CIS countries to facilitate smooth movement of goods and services was also discussed during this meeting. An agreement with the EXIM Bank of India for expanding the scope of financial cooperation was also signed.⁴⁹

India’s economic policy towards this region was highlighted during External Affairs Minister’s visit to Tajikistan in January 2003. He stated that, “We wish to bring out the best, so that trade between Central Asia and India increases manifold. Not just in one direction, but in both directions”⁵⁰ To facilitate the connectivity with this region, Government of India has taken several steps. Now India has air connectivity with all the five Republics. India is also trying to open new sea and road route through Iran and Afghanistan. India is building 200 kms of road in Afghanistan linking Zaranj and Delaram, which will be ready by 2005. This, will reduce the distance from India to Central Asia by 1,500 kms.⁵¹ This road from Afghanistan can further be extended to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The Government of India also gave the credit line worth 10 million US \$ to Uzbekistan in 1993, 1994 and in November 2000.⁵² In September 2001, Minister of State for External Affairs, Omar Abdullah handed over a consignment of anti-tuberculosis medicines and syringes. A cheque for US \$100,000 was also handed over to the Uzbek Government as India’s contribution towards drought relief in that country.⁵³ India has established Joint Commissions with Central Asian Republics (CARs) and regular meetings of these commissions have facilitated the systematic functioning of economic cooperation.

Under India's International Technical and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) programme several training slots continue to be offered to Central Asian Republics every year. Besides, several scholarships under the aegis of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) are given to the CARs. India has also been offering every possible help in the field of science and technology to CARs. India has been engaged in setting up Institutes of Excellence in IT education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Currently India is providing 1000 man-months of training to senior Central Asian professionals every year.

Military Ties

Though India's military ties with CARs gained momentum only after 2001, the process of cooperation in this sector had been initiated much earlier. India has been helping CARs in building their defence capabilities. The main features of the recent military to military cooperation are:

- Intelligence sharing,
- Providing training and assistance,
- Military and technical cooperation, servicing and upgrading military hardware,
- Joint military exercises,
- Manufacturing transport aircraft with Uzbekistan (Il-78 air-to-air refuellers.)

Initiative in the direction of military to military cooperation was taken during former Prime Minister Rao's visit to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1993 and to Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in September 1995. From June 2002 to March 2003 number of visits by Indian Defence Minister to this region further enhanced military to military cooperation with these republics.⁵⁴

In this context, Uzbekistan has emerged as one of the important partners of India. There exists military and technical cooperation between India and Uzbekistan. When President Islam Karimov visited India in 2000, he proposed to sell Uzbek aircraft to India both for civil

and military purposes.⁵⁵ Later an agreement on providing the Indian Air Force with six Uzbek-made IL-78 air-to-air refueller aircraft was signed. Four of these aircrafts have already been handed over to India. There is also an agreement between Uzbekistan and India on repairing Indian transport aircraft in Tashkent. During Indian Defence Minister's visit to Tashkent in February 2003, military to military technical cooperation between India and Uzbekistan was strengthened.⁵⁶

PART-III

CHALLENGES

One of the pre-requisites to strengthen India's future relations with Uzbekistan and other CARs is to look into the problem areas and challenges faced by India in the region. During the past few years, India has been trying hard to address these problem areas so as to increase cooperation with this strategically important region.

Indian manufacturing and investment companies are very apprehensive about entering the new, unfamiliar markets of Central Asia. This is due to rather daunting conditions prevalent in this region. One of the main impediments is the non-availability of hard currency and lack of conversion facility. Insufficient infrastructure facilities, information gap and language barrier, corruption, lack of adequate business/commerce chambers and visa problems are some of the problem areas which hamper India's trade and economic cooperation with this region. The communication links are also problematic.⁵⁷ There is a lack of satisfactory surface routes, which hamper expanding trade with Central Asian countries. As mentioned earlier, air connectivity has improved and land and sea routes through Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan are being worked out.

One of the main problem of Uzbekistan is that it is the only country in the world which is double land locked. Not only Uzbekistan does not have access to sea ports, but all its neighbours also do not have access to the sea ports. Therefore, overcoming these obstacles is not only the main priority for Uzbekistan but also for India. During the

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

recent visit of Uzbek Foreign Minister to India in November 2004, the issue of trans-Afghan transport corridor and its extension to India was discussed. This would build the new bridge between India via Afghanistan to CARs. With this corridor coming up Tashkent will have direct linkage to Mumbai via Afghanistan. “Hopefully our initiative to create the corridor would be materialised soon and will break our dependence on the existing communication systems by connecting Uzbekistan and large Central Asian market with India,” Safoev hoped. The proposed corridors from Uzbekistan and Mazar-e-Sharif will connect Herat, Dogarun, Delaram or Milak in Afghanistan to Iranian ports and further on to Ahmedabad and Mumbai in India. He added that there were ample opportunities for the Indian entrepreneurs in the field of oil exploration, automobiles and textiles.⁵⁸

The challenge of terrorism and political stability in Central Asia is what concerns India the most. Today Central Asia poses completely new set of challenges to India. The emergence of new strategic equations and security realignments, the Central Asian responses to this situation and implications for the region are what India has to take into consideration.

India is an important but not a key player, hence its security interests have to take into account the Central Asian internal dynamics as well. India’s concern is linked to the question of Jammu and Kashmir and Central Asian stand on this. Though India and Central Asia share the common concern on the question of religious extremism and terrorism but it is important to note that the components of JKLF and other elements fighting for Kashmir cause do have presence in Central Asia. Kashmir solidarity days are marked with sufficient media coverage.⁵⁹

PART-IV

WAY AHEAD: PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION

Before we proceed to discuss the future prospects and options for India in CARs, it is important to address three significant questions: What is India seeking in Central Asia? What are the regional complexities in and around Central Asia impinging upon India's security? and what is it that Central Asian states require from India? It would be meaningless to talk about the prospects and options without finding answers to these questions. The first two questions have already been discussed in detail in previous sections.

As far as Central Asian perspective is concerned, they consider India as a friendly partner in the region. None of the Central Asian states have any apprehensions or suspicions about India's changing profile in the region. They see India as a country with technology and experiences which are more suited than the western ones. While terrorism remains the major issue of cooperation between the two, CARs are looking for Indian involvement in IT sector in a major way and sharing India's experience in setting up various industrial units related to agriculture and defence, providing training to the Central Asians in financial and banking sectors, and helping build the economy of these states through scientific and technological cooperation. It has also been expressed by Central Asians that India could be an organic driver in establishing the system of cooperation among these states.⁶⁰ Central Asians view India as a beacon of hope and a route to progress in what they perceive as their "southern arc of instability" involving Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁶¹ Therefore, India needs to evolve its own perspective, understanding and policy options in the context of aforementioned points. To further India's interests and build a strong and meaningful relations with CARs in general and Uzbekistan in particular, following points need consideration:

- India needs to create strong economic political and security linkages to safeguard its interests. A two-pronged approach needs to be adopted:

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

Firstly, India needs to become economically relevant to CARs. It can collaborate with Iran and Afghanistan to extend its connectivity with CARs thus improving its trade with the region. It also needs to support the regional economic initiative to make this region a part of expanded trade network in the entire Southern Asian region.

Secondly, relevance of Central Asia lies in India's long-term Russia policy and its strategic construct. It is possible for India to collaborate with Russia to secure its interests including the pipeline from this region. It is equally important to work with the US which is a major player and has a significant role to play in the region.⁶² India's security imperatives demand a cooperative mechanism and constructive engagement with the like-minded powers in the region. Such a mechanism can work at different levels depending on India's short term and long-term interests.

- Related to the above point is the issue of US presence and implications for the region. American engagement and presence in Central Asia should be seen not only as part of US effort to smash terrorism in and around Afghanistan, but also as its intention to establish a lasting multi-dimensional foreign policy goal in Central Asia and Caucasus. For United States, Central Asia is just not the five Republics but also Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The US involvement in the region tracks closely how it defines the region and the nature and the scope of challenges posed there for US National Security Policy and its emerging strategic interests in the post-2001 scenario.
- India should ensure that this region does not enter into any hostile combination against India. China and Pakistan have already opened new routes linking China and Pakistan with CARs. These new developments would have implications for India in this region.
- NATO's presence and its implications for the region require careful scrutiny.⁶³ Increasing Chinese engagement with the CARs and its changing equations with NATO and US demand

that India should take proper note of these developments, as these developments are likely to shape the future trend of events in Central Asia which would have implications for India. Therefore, India needs to work towards some kind of engagement with NATO to secure its strategic gains.⁶⁴

- Since India's Central Asia policy cannot be de-linked with its policy on Afghanistan, it is particularly important that India should maintain strong ties with ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks. India's security imperatives demand that it should build a meaningful leverage to deal with the problem of religious extremism and terrorism by supporting CARs particularly Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan with counter-terrorism training both in India and by opening such facility as counter-insurgency schools in these countries.⁶⁵
- Similarly India can support modernizing programmes both organizationally and in terms of defence sales. An Indian military mission will go a long way in addressing India's core security concerns. Attempt should also be made to conduct bilateral exercises on both traditional and non-traditional threats. Some Indian experts have suggested that border management is one area where India can share its expertise with CARs. Training in high-altitude mountain warfare is another area where India could contribute the most.⁶⁶
- India has to strive hard to increase its exports to CARs in order to maximize mutual benefits through bilateral trade cooperation. It needs to raise economic cooperation and trade to a new level. Partnership and complementary co-operation should form the main pillars of India's economic policy.
- India's main emphasis should be on manufacturing and industrial activities. Prospects in infrastructure building and construction activities have long-term possibilities. This sector is key to the Central Asian market. Commercial farming is another important area where India can cooperate.
- Direct relations between existing or newly formed financial institutions and banking agencies should be encouraged.

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

- Greater participation by India and CARs in each other's international trade fairs should be promoted.
- Attempts should be made to expand and deepen existing exchanges and cooperation in culture, education and sports. Opening of independent centres on Central Asian studies in Indian universities should be encouraged.
- India should increase its existing public health and ecological assistance to CARs. This would bring India closer to the people of this region.
- Uzbekistan offers opportunities in medicine and pharmaceutical industry to Indian businessmen. Uzbekistan is keen to advance cooperation with partners from India to develop its own export-oriented pharmaceutical industry. India's investment in this sector would undoubtedly bring considerable benefits for both countries.
- Information Technology is another important area of cooperation. Uzbekistan is deeply interested in introducing new data processing techniques into electronic management, banking and financial sectors.
- Uzbekistan is keen to learn and study India's experience and expertise in the privatization of investment into large enterprises and banks with the direct participation in this process of Indian experts.
- Tourism is another important area of cooperation. Both countries possess first class world-famous historical sights as well as developed international transport communication systems.

In addition to above there is immense scope for India's involvement in democratisation process, civil society and media.

Democratisation

- Indian experience of conducting elections and various procedures can be shared with these Republics. Regular exchange of parliamentarians could be a good step in this

Meena Singh Roy

direction. Though this process has started, but it needs to be regulated.

- Different institutional linkages between India and CARs could be one way of getting involved in CARs. There is a Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Bureau of Legislative study in India. There can be exchange programs between such institutions from both sides.
- Linkages between political parties in India and CARs can also be explored.
- Joint seminars between Indian Parliament and their counterpart in CARs can be conducted. Experience of various Parliamentary Committees can also be shared.
- Literature related to the functioning of Indian Parliament and Assembly can be exchanged.

Civil Society

- At the civil society level Indian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can play an important role in these Republics.
- Existing India Chair in these Republics should be utilised to promote better understanding of Indo-Central Asian relations. Such experts can work towards creating strong linkages at the civil society level. They can function like educational and cultural ambassadors.

Media

- Dissemination of information is essential for better understanding between the nations. Therefore, India should initiate measures to introduce and highlight the significance of CARs in Indian electronic and print media.
- India can also get involved in several other ways. There is lot of scope in electronic media. There is strong demand of Indian serials and films. These can be dubbed in Russian and made available to the Central Asian audience.

- Our news agencies like PTI and UNI should get involved in CARs. Such an attempt will not only bring the people of two regions together through information exchange but will also facilitate in countering any anti-India propaganda by its adversary.
- In radio section, there used to be joint programs in Hindi and Urdu during former Soviet times. Such joint programs could be restarted.

CONCLUSION

In the new geopolitical paradigm, the possibility of clash of major power interests in Central Asia cannot be ruled out. The 'new great game' is on and in the immediate future one can anticipate certain amount of shadow boxing between the great powers to keep CARs on their side. But how this new situation will unfold is yet to be seen. Though India is unable to insulate Central Asia from such power politics, its overriding security concerns demand its long-term engagement with the region to reclaim its geopolitical rights and responsibilities. This region is indeed India's 'immediate and strategic neighborhood' which can become 'a Silk Road of prosperity' in future once again. It has been very rightly pointed out by Subir Raha, Chairman ONGC, "I think we have neglected Central Asia for too long. We now have serious plans to reach out to partners in the region".⁶⁸⁶⁸ Narendra Taneja, "The Fire Down Below", Outlook, New Delhi,, October 23,2001.

The stable, independent and democratic Central Asian Republics are in India's interest. Central Asia with its geo-strategic location provides India a security belt of friendly and cooperative states. Unlike past, India is now entering this region with pragmatic and focused policy. It is in a process of implementing new economic and strategic initiatives.

Despite existing commonalities and friendly ties, the challenge which lies before India and CARs is how to promote these common interests for mutual benefit, mutual assistance to ensure peaceful stable

Meena Singh Roy

and cooperative framework in the region. So far India's trade and economic relations with Central Asia have been rather unsatisfactory. Therefore, it is important that Indian businessmen should change their approach and look at this region more as an area of opportunity than of huge profits. The need is to approach this resource rich region keeping in view the long-term interests rather than short-term profits.

The recent initiatives taken by Government of India are not only adding a new dimension to the existing Indo-Uzbek ties but also providing a diverse and long-term perspective to India's relations with the region. India looks at Uzbekistan as long term partner in the growth of economically stable and politically peaceful Asia. Similarly Uzbekistan views India as its most reliable and proven friend. Therefore, in future India and Uzbekistan should move together in partnership against the backdrop of their shared concerns, common problems and in the context of very obvious economic and trade opportunities that exist.

It is evident that both India and Uzbekistan are actively fostering a bilateral relationship with an aim of building a mutually beneficial relationship. New equations are now in the process of being redefined in the light of changing geopolitical order between the countries. Given the potential of cooperation, based on our past linkages and present realities, one is likely to witness increasing partnership in security, political and economic spheres between India and Uzbekistan.

Both the countries have been able to craft initiatives to deal with the challenges faced by them. Such cooperation, both regional and bilateral would in itself pave the way for greater partnership between the two countries in promoting peace and development in the region.

REFERENCES

1. Giles Boqueret, "Evolution of India's perception on Central Asia in the twentieth century", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.19(5), August 1996, p.748.
2. *MEA Annual Reports*, 1993-1996.
3. *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 26 September 1995.
4. *The Hindu*, 2 February 2003.
5. Vladimir Radyuhin, "India Reaffirms Resolve to Advance Strategic Ties with Russia", *The Hindu*, 26 June 2004.
6. Meena Singh Roy, "India's Interests in Central Asia" *Strategic Analyses*, vol.24 (12), March 2001.
7. See Meena Singh Roy, "Russia Central Asia Relations: Changing Contours", *World Focus* (Delhi), 2004.
8. Vladimir Radyuhin, "Tajikistan: Russia Scores over US", *The Hindu*, 26 June 2004.
9. Meena Singh Roy, "Central Asian Republics: The US Factor", Paper Presented at IDSA weekly Fellow seminar, 20 December 2003.
10. For details see Sun Zuangzhi, "New and Old Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Sino-Central Asian relations", *The Review of International Affairs*, vol.3(4), Summer 2004, pp.600-612; Michael Dillon, "China and the newly independent Central Asian republics", in Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang-China's Muslim Far Northwest*, London, Routledge Curzon, 2004, pp.142-155.
11. China's Ministry of Finance estimated that by 2010, the country's annual energy needs will require country to import 130 million tons of oil per year, up from the 60 million tons it imported in 2002. International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that by 2020, China is projected to become the second largest consumer of oil in the world, next only to the US.
12. "Perspective for Central Asia-India Relations: Common Ties of History", *The Times of Central Asia*, 27 January 2000. The Islamic geographer Yaqut noted in the twelfth century that "a prosperous merchant of Merve had one warehouse on the Volga river and another in Gujrat, India and he owned his prosperity to his role as a middle man in an exist of trade". Central Asia was a meeting point for traders and travellers, where mercantile communities lived in perfect harmony.
13. In Tajikistan, each sq.km. of the territory has up to 2 million kw hours of hydel resources and this is very high figure. The average for the CIS countries is just 150 to 200 kw hour per sq. km.

Meena Singh Roy

14. Alim Jone, "The Energy Security Challenges and Resource: Transport Corridores" Paper Presented in Seminar in New Delhi on 11-12 September 2000.
15. "The Geo-Politics of Caspian Oil" *Janes Intelligence Review*, vol.12, no.7, July 2000. Narendra Taneja, "The Fire Down Below", *Outlook* (New Delhi), October 2001. The Caspian reserves would be around 65-80 billion barrels, while proven Oil Reserves 25 to 30 billion barrels. It is important to note that the production cost of the oil in Gulf is still the cheapest when compared with the other regions.

Caspian Basin	US \$ 5 per barrel
Gulf	US \$ 1 per barrel
North Sea	US \$ 13 per barrel
Siberia	US \$ 6 per barrel
16. See http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav120303_pr.shtml
17. *Report of the Group on India Hydrocarbon Vision-2025*.
18. The recent bomb blasts in Uzbekistan are indicative of increasing violence and terrorist activities despite the US war against terrorism.
19. Presentation by Uzbek Foreign Minister Sodik S. Safoyev at an interactive session organized by Confederation on Indian Industry (CII) on 30 October 2004.
20. Ray Guseynov, "Russian Energy Companies in Central Asia" *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. No.5 (29), 2004 p.66 ; Giampaolo R. Capisani, *The Handbook of Central Asia: A Comprehensive Survey of the New Republics*, London, IB Tauris & Co., 2000, pp.110-119; Boris Rumer and Stanislav Zhukov, eds., *Central Asia : The Challenges of Independence*, New York, ME Sharpe, 1998, pp.208, 209.
21. Uzbek Foreign Minister's Presentation at CII, 2004
22. See P. Stobdan, "India-Turkmenistan Relations in Prespective", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.xix (9), December 1996; Devender Kaushik, "India and Central Asia: Past and Present Realities and Future Hope", *Contemporary Central Asia* , New Delhi, vol.1 (1), pp.63-71; Amiya Chandra, "Turkmen-India Cooperation for peace and Development", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.xix (9), December 1996.
23. The region of Bactria lay between the Hindukush mountain and the Oxus river which today include modern Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.
24. Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, London, Penguin Books Ltd, vol.I, 1996, pp.29, 93, 107, as cited in Suryakant Nijanand Bal, *Central Asia:*

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

- A Strategy for India's Look North policy*, New Delhi, Lancer publishers, 2004, pp.4-5; Historical linkages between India and Central Asia have been discussed in great length in Mansura Haidar, "India and Central Asia : Linkages and Interactions", in Nirmala Joshi, ed., *Central Asia- The Great Game Replayed: An Indian Perspective*, Delhi, New Century Publications, 2003, pp.257-294.
25. Haidarn, n.24, pp.265.
 26. N.N. Vohra, ed., *Culture, Society and Politics in Central Asia and India*, Delhi, Shipra publications, 1999, p.7.
 27. Capisani, n.20, p.92.
 28. B.B. Kumar, "Central Asia: The Indian links", *Dialogue*, vol.3(4), p.178.
 29. *Ibid.*, pp.176-77.
 30. Vohra, n.26, pp.26, 28.
 31. Haidar, n.24, p.265.
 32. Surendra Gopal," Indian in Soviet central Asia in preindependence days", *Dialogue* (Delhi), vol.3 (4), April-June 2002, p.163.
 33. Devendra Kaushik, *Central Asia in Modern Times*, Moscow, Progress publishers, 1970, p.103.
 34. *Ibid.*, Roy, Dutttagupta and Vasudevan, eds., *Indo-Russian Relations: 1917-1947*, part-I, 1917-1928. Calcutta, 1999, pp.354-359, doc no. 135: also see Boquerat, n.1, pp.743-754.
 35. Ahror Mukhtarov, *Tarikh-i-Khaliqi Tajik*, vol.II, Moscow, 1964, pp.8-12 as mentioned in Haidar, n.24, p.261.
 36. For Details See Meena Singh Roy, "Redefining India-Central Asia Relations" *World Focus*, vol.23(6), June 2002, pp.21-24.
 37. See http://english.pravada.ru/printed.html?news_id=14520
 38. For the details of visits see S.D. Muni, "India and Central Asia: Towards a Co-operative Future" in Joshi, n.24, pp.109-110, 133-141 also see Meena Singh Roy, n.36.
 39. Adhamdjon Yunuov, Yakov Umansky, D. Zainutdinova, "National Interests and Pragmatism in the Foreign policy of Uzbekistan", P. Stobdan ed., *Building a Common Future, Indian and Uzbek Perspectives on Security and Economic Issues*, Delhi, IDSA & Knowledge World, 1999, pp.33-34.
 40. Speech Delivered by Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan during the 3rd India-Central Asia Regional Conference at Tashkent, 6-8 November 2003.

Meena Singh Roy

41. See <http://www.casefen.org/news.php?nid=535&cid=9>
42. http://www.financialexpress.com/fe_full_story.php?content_id=72970
43. *Ibid.*
44. *MEA Report*, Government of India, 2000-2001, p.35.
45. “Economic Relations and Trade between Uzbekistan and India”, *Uzbekistan: 10 Years of Independence*, July 2001, Embassy of Uzbekistan, New Delhi, p.8.
46. Presentation by Uzbek Foreign Minister Sodik S. Safoyev at an interactive session organized by Confederation on Indian Industry (CII) on 30 October 2004.
47. “Economic Relations and Trade between Uzbekistan and India”, n.45, p.9.
48. Uzbek Foreign Minister’s Presentation at CII, 2004.
49. See <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/holnus/001200501111729.htm>
50. EAM’s Address at the Tajik National State University, 29 January 2003 at <http://www.meadev.nic.in/speeches/eam-tajikuniv.htm>
51. Keynote Address by Yashwant Sinha, Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of India at 3rd India-Central Asia Regional Conference, Tashkent, 6 November 2003.
52. “Economic Relations and Trade between Uzbekistan and India”, n.45, p.9.
53. *MEA Report*, Government of India, 2001-2002, p.35.
54. *Asia-Plus*, Dushanbe (in Russian), 19 September 2002, BBC Monitoring Global Newslines, Central Asia Political File, 1 March 2003,
55. *MEA Report*, Government of India, 2000-2001, p.35.
56. Uzbek Radio first programme, Tashkent (in Uzbek), 1 March 2003, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines: Central Asia Political File*, 2 March 2003.
57. For details see Haji Umarov, “Tajik-Indian Economic Relations: Difficulties, problems and obstacles”, in Mahavir Singh, ed., *India and Tajikistan Revitalising a Traditional Relationship*, New Delhi, Anamika publishers & Distributors, 2003.
58. http://www.financialexpress.com/fe_full_story.php?content_id=72970
59. P. Stobdan, “Central Asia and India’s Security”, Paper presented at IDSA Weekly Fellow Seminar, 30 August 2003.

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN: EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

60. Views based on discussion during the Conference on “3rd India Central Asia Regional Conference”, 6-8 November 2003, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. And in interaction with the scholars, officials and other experts in Tashkent.
61. P. Stobdan and K. Santhanam, “Central Asia is Central to India”, *Indian Express* (Delhi), 28 November 2003.
62. For details see Meena Singh Roy, “Central Asian Republics: The US Factor”, Paper Presented at IDSA Weekly Fellow Seminar, 20 December 2003.
63. NATO forces are in Asia for the first time and are likely to continue and expand its presence which in turn is likely to have serious implications. Todd Pitman, “NATO to Command peace force in Kabul”, *Associate Press*, 10 August 2003.
64. Stobdan, n.59.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. Narendra Taneja, “The Fire Down Below”, *Outlook* (New Delhi), 23 October 2001.

CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN UZBEKISTAN

Ramakant Dwivedi

INTRODUCTION

With its 26 million people, Uzbekistan accounts for over 40 per cent of the region's population and has by far the most powerful standing army in the region.¹ It is central to Central Asia. Therefore, the success of extremists, here, would have a serious consequences for Central Asian security. Since independence, Uzbekistan has been facing a number of security problems arising from the actions of the religious extremist groups and parties opposed to the government. These parties and groups are:

- *Islamic Resurgence Party (IRP);*
- *Adolat (Justice);*
- *Islam Lashkarlori (Warriors of Islam);*
- *Tovba (Repentance);*
- *Imonchilar (Believers) or Akromiylar, or Khalifatchilar (Caliphate Supporters);*
- *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU),*
- *Hizb-Ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation);*
- *Islamic Movement of Turkestan (Central Asia);*

These are opposed to the liberal traditions of Sufism² which has been the hallmark of Central Asian civilisation. Main demands of these Islamist parties are:

- Return to the basic principles and commandments of Islam, purification of Islam of all later heresies and 'distractions';
- A political system based on *Hakimiya* and Caliphate;
- Organisation of legal system within the framework of *Shari'a*, with administration of justice taking the priority over legislative and executive power.

CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN UZBEKISTAN

During the Soviet era Islam was suppressed and policies were framed with a view to undermine the hold of religion on people's mind.³ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was an Islamic resurgence in Uzbekistan and political Islam began to assume an important factor in Uzbek social and political life. Before turning to history of the emergence of the religious extremists groups, organisations, movement and parties, a brief analysis of the roots and causes of religious extremism is necessary.

Some Central Asian analysts believe that political deprivation and corruption lead to frustration and discontent thus giving birth to religious extremism.⁴ Some scholars emphasise the importance of socio-economic conditions as the cause of extremism. They assume that unemployment, poverty, monetary inflation and under-development are the causes behind the emergence of religious extremism. But these approaches fail to explain why extremism is on the rise in some countries but not others where economic conditions are equally bad.

Others believe that some schools of thought and movements within Islam are uncompromising and strict towards non-believers as well as of Muslims who supposedly violate "authentic norms" of Islam. *Wahhabism* is one such movement which refuses to accept the Central Asian cultural and traditional practices.⁵ John Esposito argues that religious extremists ignore classical Islamic criteria for a just *Jihad*.⁶ Many Islamic scholars have also criticised "global *jihadis*" in Kashmir, Tashkent, Chechnya and elsewhere for violating basic Islamic principles. Islam does not justify suicide attacks rather it prohibits the same. One passage from the *Hadith* of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), "Whoever kills himself in any way will be tormented in that way in hell" and "Whoever kills himself in any way in this world will be tormented with it on the day of the resurrection".⁷ Psychological and behavioral motivations are the key elements behind the suicide attacks. Meanwhile behavioral approaches view religious extremism as a particular type of behaviour based on intolerance and exclusion. To analyse the emergence of the religious extremists groups, movements, parties and organisations we need to apply a combination of these approaches in order to reach an objective explanation.

**EMERGENCE OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN
UZBEKISTAN**

History of religious extremism in Uzbekistan can be traced back to 1950s. Muhammad Hindustani Rustamov or Haji Domla (teacher) was one of the most influential unofficial spiritual leaders in Central Asia. Born in Kokand in Ferghana Valley in about 1892, he studied there and then in Bukhara, Afghanistan and at Deoband⁸ *Madrassa* in India. He returned to Uzbekistan in 1929 and thereafter he was arrested and spent 15 years in Siberia.⁹ He moved to Dushanbe in 1947 where he worked at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan. He died in Dushanbe in 1989. His students secretly taught Islam. In the 1970s, some of his followers¹⁰ joined the *Wahabi* movement.¹¹ Their recorded speeches are still in circulation among *Wahabis* and are being used to recruit new members. Furthermore, recently women are being attracted to the activity of the *Wahabi* groups that in general is directed toward the expansion of the social base of this school in the region. The adherents of *Wahabism* in Central Asia strive to establish contacts with their associates abroad, using various means to leave the country for training or pilgrimage. To train their adherents the supporters of *Wahabism* also use the illegal way of sending young people, citizens of the Central Asian states, to the religious educational institutions in Islamic countries. The channel of commercial tourism into the countries of the Middle East, Turkey, India and Pakistan was actively used for this purpose. That made it possible to attract new adherents by giving them the initial capital for starting the commercial activity.

The Islamic Revival Party (IRP)

The Islamic Revival Party (IRP) of the USSR, which had been established on June 9, 1990, in Astrakhan in the Russian Federation, became active in Uzbekistan. However the Uzbek branch of the IRP could not function for much time and was banned soon by the government. The party members and supporters continued their work clandestinely.¹² Imam at the Ata Wali Khan Tura mosque in Namangan

CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN UZBEKISTAN

and follower of Rahmatulla Qori, Abd al-Ahad, along with his supporters called for the rule of *Sharia* law. They claimed that this would solve all the social-economic problems and would end despotism, inequality and criminal order.¹³ Supporters of the banned IRP created the *Adolat* (Justice) Party in 1991. Two underground groups *Islam Lashkarlori*¹⁴ (Warriors of Islam), and *Tovba*¹⁵ (Repentance) were also established in 1991 in the provinces of Namangan, Andijon and Fergana with the purpose of establishing an Islamic State.¹⁶ *Adolat* staged demonstrations in Namangan calling for the establishment of an Islamic State. An important incident occurred in December 1991 in Namangan city in Ferghana Valley, when the members and supporters of the *Adolat* party had taken over the headquarters of the then Communist Party of Uzbekistan. The Namangan city Mayor did not give them permission to build a new mosque at their desired place. This prompted the *Adolat* party cadre to capture the Communist Party headquarters.¹⁷ *Imonchilar* (Believers) or *Akromiylar*, or *Khalifatchilar* (Caliphate Supporters), in one or other way, were also helping the 'cause' of Caliphate. Akrom Yuldashev is considered to be the founder of this group.¹⁸ Activities of these groups and parties mark the beginning of religious extremism in post Soviet Uzbekistan. Karimov government was watching these developments in Fergana valley with caution.

By this time Tohir Yuldashev Abduhalilovich¹⁹ emerged as the 'strong' leader in Fergana valley by this time and religious extremists believed that they could start war to overthrow Islam Abduganievich Karimov's government in Tashkent. Alarmed by this, Uzbek government took strict action against these groups in the following years. By 1995, the government was able to control their activities. Government effectively implemented the Article. 31 and Article. 61 of the Uzbek Constitution.²⁰

It is important to remember that so far all the extremist groups have emerged in the Fergana Valley which accounts for ten million people of Uzbekistan. Historically the roots of Islam have been strong here whereas the other areas such as Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva

which had been traditional learning centres of Islamic and Sufi orders were untouched by this extremism. Another aspect which requires attention here is the relationship between the trans-national drug trafficking lobbies and the religious extremist parties. Members and supporters of these extremists groups were involved in transporting drugs from Afghanistan to Central Asia and further. This nexus is continuing today and the area of operation and volume of trade has increased. According to the United Nations estimates, Afghanistan is the world's largest source of opium. The drug money accounted for \$ 2.3 billion in 2003- half the nation's economy. Opium production is expected to be even higher now.²¹

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was created by Tohir Yuldashev in 1996 soon after realizing that the United Tajik Opposition would sign a peace accord with Tajik government.²² He and his field commander Jumaboy Ahmadjonovich Khojiyev also known as Juma Namangani and Tojiboy were instrumental in expanding and strengthening the base of the IMU. Juma Namangani, a native of Namangan province joined the Soviet military service in 1987. He served for limited time in Afghanistan during the Soviet military presence there. From 1989 onwards he took up the study of Islam and received spiritual education from the well known Abdulvali Mirzoyev. From 1991 he became an active supporter of *Wahabism* in order to establish an Islamic State in Uzbekistan

The stated aims of the IMU are to overthrow Karimov Government of Uzbekistan and establishment of an Islamic State. Since its beginning IMU has been involved in transporting drugs from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan which goes further to Russia and Eastern Europe. Thus drugs business has been playing an important role in the sustenance of the IMU. Juma Namangani, who underwent special military training under the guidance of Arab and Pakistani instructors in Afghanistan, commanded an armed formation. He took active part along with United Tajik Opposition²³ (UTO) forces against

CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN UZBEKISTAN

the Tajik government troops. He was instrumental in training the Uzbek militias to carry out sabotage and terrorist activities. It has been reported that he was killed in Afghanistan while fighting for the Taliban. He was the military leader of the IMU. Since then Tohir Yuldashev has taken both the ideological and military command of this Movement. It is said that IMU has been responsible in carrying out killings of senior police officials in Namangan in December 1997.

This has prompted the Uzbek government to pass “Laws about Religious Practices” in *Oliy Majlis* (parliament) in May 1998 which put certain restrictions on the illegal religious mosques and *Madrasas* which were used by the IMU in carrying out their attacks in Namangan. IMU leadership was held responsible along with the leader of the *Erk* (Freedom) Party Muhammed Solih for a series of bomb blasts in Tashkent on February 16, 1999 which left sixteen people dead and more than hundred wounded. Uzbek President Islam Karimov survived this attack. This further intensified government’s resolve to deal firmly with the religious extremists. However Uzbek government has been criticized for using this incident to marginalize genuine democratic opponents. A British expert believes that although the IMU was blamed for the Tashkent bombings in 1999, “the evidence has never been conclusive.”²⁴ This author was present in Tashkent when the blasts took place and the possibility of IMU’s involvement along with some trans-national terrorists in these blasts is very high. An important outcome of this trial was that the leader of the *Erk* party was also found guilty of organising the blasts and was convicted along with the IMU leaders. In August 1999, IMU attempted an incursion into Uzbekistan. The objective of this incursion was to destabilize the situation in Uzbekistan and to create an Islamic state in the Fergana Valley.²⁵ Second incursion took place in August 2000. These IMU fighters were trained at Tavildara region in Tajikistan. This caused tensions between Dushanbe, Tashkent and Bishkek. In July 2001, the IMU fighters attacked government forces in southern Uzbekistan. With the Tashkent bomb blasts in February 1999 followed by incursions into Kyrgyzstan in the same year and again into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2000,

and in July 2001, the issue of maintaining stability and security in the Central Asia has assumed priority.

The Islamic party of Turkestan also known as the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU) until the middle of 2003, was put by the State Department of the USA on the list of the 34 most dangerous international terrorist organizations. The objective of this organization is to overthrow the constitutional system and to create the Islamic state.²⁶ In Central Asia, and beyond its borders *Islamic Party of Turkestan* (IPT) conducts its activities mainly with the financial support of international Islamic movements and donations of well-off representatives of Uzbek diaspora in other Islamic countries. Besides, IPT periodically receives monetary assistance from Pakistan and some other foreign countries. IPT comprises of some Islamic groups of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Chechnya and Xinjiang Uighur autonomous region of China. After the death of Juma Namangani, the post of the leader of IPT was taken up by Tohir Yuldashev. The leaders of IPT collaborate with a number of international and regional Islamic terrorist organizations and movements, in the first place, with *Al-Qaeda*, *Taliban*, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir* and *Ikhwan-al-Muslamin*. Some analysts believe IPT was backing the acts of terror in Uzbekistan in March 2004.²⁷

After the civil-war broke out in Tajikistan, Tohir Yuldashev started travelling to Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey where he established contacts with the Islamic parties and government agencies. Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) provided funds and shelter to him and his supporters during 1995-98 in Peshawar- "the center not only of Pakistani and Afghan Islamic activism but also of pan-Islamic jihadi groups."²⁸ Pakistan's *Jamiat-i-Ulema Islami* (JUI) extended full support to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Funds were raised by the JUI to cover the cost of *Madrasas* education for the young Uzbek students.²⁹

This clearly suggests that support to religious extremism has become an integral part of Pakistan's strategy in South and Central

CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN UZBEKISTAN

Asia. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia's financial and ideological support to the Uzbek religious extremists continued during 1990s. After the September 11 incident under the international pressure Saudi government took some measures to control this assistance. However financial and ideological assistance is still continuing to IMU and IMT through the large Uzbek Diaspora settled in that country. Thus Pakistani and Saudi linkages have been important factors in promoting religious extremism in Uzbekistan.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT)

This Party was formed in 1953 in Bayt-ul-Muqadas in Jerusalem by Sheikh Taqiyuddin Nabhani. A transnational and potentially far more powerful Islamist organisation, it appeared in 1990s in Central Asia. Though it is said that it had its roots in the region earlier also.³⁰ It soon became popular with a number of followers in West Asia, North Africa and South East Asia. But it was banned in a number of countries and its followers were arrested.³¹ At present the head office of the Party is said to be based in London. The financial sources of the Party are not known but it publishes books, small booklets and pamphlets to spread its ideology. It has got its web site also. HT works on two levels. Firstly with the Muslim community, explaining the duty to work for the *Khilafah* (Caliphate) State, living by Islam in today's world without losing one's identity. *Secondly* within the wider community, by presenting Islam as a political and intellectual system.³² HT is banned in Uzbekistan and it works clandestinely. It is estimated that around 7,000 to 8,000 members of this party are in prison in the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.³³ This estimate looks a little exaggerated. HT leaflets reportedly were found in Tashkent in 1992-93. But today, it has become very active all over Central Asia and especially in Uzbekistan. It has been very critical of Uzbek government.³⁴ This organization has been pursuing the objective of "restoring the Islamic way of life and to propagate the call (da'vat) to Islam in the world."³⁵ *Hizb-Ut-Tahrir* is the most known and active religious political structure in the region

today. Its underground groups began to form in the region since 1992.

The influence of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* in Central Asia is spread over in Osh, Dzhalsalabad, Batken regions of Kyrgyzstan; Turkestan and Almaty regions of Kazakhstan; in Sogd region of Tajikistan and Tashkent region of Uzbekistan. Since early 1990 till February 1999, the Party's strategy was directed at religious propaganda activities aimed at recruiting new members. Small cells (*Halqa*) of 4 to 5 people were formed to carry out the activities of the party in various parts of Uzbekistan. Tashkent bombing of February 16, 1999 marks a new stage in the activities of party members when they started to act more open to disseminate the extremist leaflets in crowded places. The new form of information propaganda also included the distribution of the audio cassettes among the people. Books such as *Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic State, Caliphate*, are being used as the manuals by party members and workers.

After the events of September 11, 2001, which caused temporary weakening of contacts between the extremist and the terrorist organizations, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* aligned with *Al-Qaeda, Taliban*, and the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU), proving their position with the fact that they fight for the creation of World Caliphate.

Both the IMU and the HT share a common goal of overthrowing the present day secular government of Uzbekistan. Recently a splinter group of the HT known as *Zamots* is reported to have organized attacks in Tashkent in Uzbekistan during March 28 –April 1, 2004 in which more than 46 people were killed and tens of others were wounded. The suicide bombers carried out attacks in Tashkent which were followed by clashes between the Uzbek security forces and terrorists who are believed to be members of the *Zamots*.³⁶ The suicide bomb attacks in front of US and Israeli embassies in Tashkent on July 30, 2004 in which seven people were killed and several others were wounded are also reported to be the handiwork of this organisation.³⁷ However HT has denied its involvement in these

CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN UZBEKISTAN

attacks.³⁸ *Islamic Jihad*³⁹ and *IMU* have claimed responsibility for the attacks.⁴⁰ Suicide attacks of March, April and July 2004 in Uzbekistan show that the religious extremist organisations in Uzbekistan are determined to escalate security threats in Central Asia. The common objective of all the named religious extremist groups, schools and organizations is the creation of a theocratic state in Central Asia. This objective corresponds to the interests of some Islamic countries, where Islam is being used as a weapon to influence the political processes in Central Asia.

Above mentioned religious extremist and terrorist organizations in the region have similar tasks and characteristics, which can be summarized as followings:

- To overthrow the constitutional system and establish an Islamic Caliphate;
- Politicisation of Islam;
- To establish stable communication channels with foreign Islamic centers and organizations with similar political purposes;
- To mobilise funds for such Islamic parties;
- To ensure participation in the State bodies for undermining the political stability and discredit the secular form of government.

Internal factors contributing to the activities of extremist religious organizations in the region are summarized as follows:

- Socio-economic problems especially in the rural areas of the Central Asian Republics (CARs);
- Lack of awareness about the ongoing social, religious and political programmes of the government;
- Lack of sufficient interaction and coordination between the Muslim Boards (*Muftiyat*) of the Central Asian Republics;
- Inadequate coordination and cooperation between the law-enforcement agencies of the Central Asian countries at the regional level to ensure effective monitoring and control of illegal and banned religious extremist and terrorist organizations.

**INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION
AGAINST RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM**

a) *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)*

Cooperation within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) among the member countries against religious extremism and international terrorism is an important step. In the last SCO summit meeting held in Tashkent on June 17, 2004, all the member countries, i.e., Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan expressed their determination to eliminate religious extremism. By opening the Anti-Terrorism Centre in Tashkent the process has been institutionalised. This would help in preserving regional security and stability. Tashkent summit has completed the organizational formation of SCO, which is evolving as an influential tool for resolution of the vital problems of regional security.

b) *Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)*

Though Uzbekistan is not a member of the *Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)*, cooperation between other Central Asian countries within the framework of the Treaty is a positive step in containing the religious extremist forces in the region. Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have been taking part in joint military exercises along with Russia.

c) *The Strategic Partnership Agreement*

The Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation signed on July 17, 2004 is another major development which would have a serious impact on the geopolitical situation in this region. This signifies change in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. This is also evidence of cooperation between Russia and Uzbekistan in fighting together against the de-stabilising forces such as extremism in Central Asia

d) *The Impact of September 2001*

Uzbek government has cooperated with the US in its fight against Taliban and Al-Qaeda. It has provided Khanabad airport near Karshi to the US air force to conduct air raids against the Taliban targets. IMU fighters fought along with the Taliban against the US forces in Afghanistan. However, there were also reports that the IMU fighters had escaped from the bombing and returned to Central Asia.⁴¹ During Pakistan's military operation in Wazirabad in July 2004, has indicated the presence of Uzbek fighters in that area, was noticed. It was reported that Tohir Yuldashev was wounded in this operation. Today, US faces a tough choice in Uzbekistan. The March 2002 US-Uzbek Strategic Cooperation Framework includes the American promise to "regard with grave concern any external threat" to Uzbek security and sovereignty.⁴²

The destruction of the international terrorist bases in Afghanistan has reduced the threats from the religious extremists to Uzbekistan and the region. This augurs well for security and stability in Central Asia. But prolonged stay of the American forces in Central Asia is neither good for Central Asian Republics nor for India, Russia and China. Longer US presence here might trigger the "Great Game". In such a case the possibility of Central Asian countries becoming an object in this "Great Game" is very high. The best guarantees for the security and stability in the region are the countries themselves.⁴³ From Indian security perspective the important issue is whether American presence in Central Asia is confined to the elimination of religious extremists' network or it is going to be permanent. US military presence in the vicinity of India creates a strategic problem. US air bases in Khanabad near Karshi in Uzbekistan and Ganci near Manas Airport in Kyrgyzstan could be used to monitor the industrial and military installations deep inside Russia, China and parts of India.

American occupation of Iraq seems to have given new impetus to religious extremism in Central Asia. On the one hand US and NATO actions in Afghanistan have helped to weaken the IMU and other religious extremist groups, but on the other hand American occupation

of Iraq has led to more violent attacks in Uzbekistan. The recent suicide bomb attacks in Tashkent are clear indications of the involvement of trans-national terrorist and religious extremist organisations. Another important aspect of these attacks is that women suicide bombers were involved in the attacks for the first time in Central Asia.

Notwithstanding the firm resolve of the international community against terrorism, the problem of religious (Islamic) extremism and terrorism remains rather critical. This stands confirmed by the terrorist acts, which took place during March 28 to April 1 and July 30, 2004 in Tashkent city Uzbekistan killing over 50 people and injuring many others.

CONCLUSION

The unresolved conflict in Afghanistan, transnational character of such threats as drug trafficking and religious extremism have further complicated the issue. Role of external powers will remain an important factor in sustaining the phenomenon of religious extremism. Drug trafficking and organised crime give boost to extremism and this in turn creates favourable conditions for terrorism. The presence of Islamic extremists in Uzbekistan has serious implications for the security concerns of Central Asian countries, India and Russia. Though Islam in Uzbekistan is not a threat to the security and stability in the Central Asian region, Islamisation of politics in Uzbekistan on the line of *IMU* and *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* constitutes a serious threat to the region and this has strategic implications for India as well. Religious extremism poses a serious threat to the nation states in the Central Asian region. A comprehensive and coordinated plan of action is required on the part of all Central Asian countries to counter this menace. *Al-Qaeda* is regaining its strength. Taliban resurgence is a serious matter. *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* remains a threat to Central Asia. *Hizb-e-Islami*, *Jamaat-e-Islami* and Taliban linkages are a matter of serious concern. Central Asian countries need to develop a unified approach to face the emerging challenges. Restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan is an extremely important factor to combat religious extremism in Central Asia.

REFERENCES

1. Interview with the former Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Prof. Abdusamat Khaydarov, New Delhi, 13 July 2004.
2. Sufism or *Tasawwuf*, as it is called in Arabic, is generally understood by scholars and Sufis to be the inner, mystical, or psycho-spiritual dimension of Islam. However some schools of thought don't agree with this definition such as Wahhabi.
3. Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*, London, Croom Helm LTD, 1967, pp. 42-45.
4. Interview with Prof Shirin Akiner, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 9 November 2003.
5. Interview with M. Sharafuddin, former Chairman of the Religious Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 10 January 2001.
6. John L Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.157.
7. Interview with Prof. A.W. Azhar Dehlawi, New Delhi, August 16, 2004; Also see Bernard Lewis, *Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, New York, The Modern Library, 2003, pp.153-154.
8. Deobandi Movement developed as a reaction to British action against Muslims and the influence of sir Sayed Ahmed Khan, who advocated the reform and modernization of Islam. Named after the town of Deoband, where it originates, the movement was built around Islamic School (Darul Uloom).
9. Oliver Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, London, I B Tauris Publishers, 2000. p.154
10. Rahmatullah Qari Allama (Fergana), Abdulvali Qari Mirzoyev (Fergana), Ishaq Qori, Ismail Domla, Ibrahimjan Khukandi, Hikmatullah Qori (in Dushanbe), Muhammad Ali Marginani, Ubaydullah Makhsum (in Namangan), Abd al-Latif Andijoni, Muhammad Sodiq Qori (Mufti of Muslim Board of Uzbekistan 1989-93). See Ashirbek Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious Theological School in Central Asia," in Lena Johnson and Murad Esenov, eds., *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*, Swedish Institute of International affairs, Sweden, Conference Paper 24. 1999. p.109
11. This movement was started by Muhammed ibn Abdul Wahab in the eighteenth century in Saudi Arabia. This is a puritanical sect. The chief feature of this sect is the call for a return to the 'pure' faith

and practice of the seventh century as was practiced by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his followers in Medina.

12. Interview with Dr Bakhtiyor Abidov, Al-Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 10 January 2001.
13. Interview with the Dean, Department of History, Namangan State University, Namangan, Uzbekistan, 28 October 1999.
14. Islam Lashkarlori was active till 1992. Uzbek government's action against the members of this group forced the leader and members of this group and *Adolat* party leader, Tohir Yuldashev Abduhalilovich to leave the country in 1992. Most of the members went to Tajikistan and joined the Civil War on the side of the UTO. On December 9 1991, there was an encounter between Tohir Yuldashev and the Uzbek President Islam Abduganievich Karimov in Namangan where Yuldashev demanded Karimov's resignation and asked him to declare Uzbekistan an Islamic State. Also see <http://www.uzreport.com>
15. This party was formed by Tohir Yuldashev and Juma A Khojiyev together with the declared goal of Islamisation of Uzbekistan.
16. See Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, London, Yale University Press, 2002, p.139
17. Interview with Prof. Satimov Gafurojon, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 12 October 2000.
18. Shirin Akiner, "The Politicisation of Islam in Post Soviet Central Asia", *Religion, State and Society*, London, vol.31, no.2, 2003, p.119.
19. Born in 1967 in Namangan province of Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan. He was leader of *Adolat* Party. He was a talented speaker and organiser. Uzbek government named him as one of the conspirators behind the attempted assassination of Uzbekistan's President Karimov in February 1999. In May 1999, He obtained the Taliban permission to establish a military training camp for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan which he was leading in northern Afghanistan. After Taliban defeat and reported death of his field commander Jumaboy Ahmadjonovich Khojiyev in Afghanistan during US operations against Taliban, he has moved into the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He is reported to have been injured in the Pakistani military operation in Wazirabad areas in July 2004.
20. Constitution of Uzbekistan was adopted on the December 8, 1992 in Tashkent at the eleventh session of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Article 31 of the Constitution states: "Freedom

CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN UZBEKISTAN

of conscience is guaranteed to all. Everyone has the right to profess any religion or none. The compulsory imposition of religious views is not permissible. It is prohibited to establish secret societies and associations.” Article 61 states religious organisations and associations are separate from the State and are equal before the law. The State does not interfere in the activities of religious associations.

21. “Opium Trade Threatens Afghan Stability Again”, *Washington Post*, 12 August 2004.
22. Sulton Khamadov, “Mezhdunarodniy Kontekst-Afghanski Factor, in Religiozniy Extremizm v Centranoi Azii: Problemy I Perspektivy”, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 2002. pp.130-150.
23. A coalition of Tajik Islamists and democratic forces who fought civil-war against the Tajik government forces during 1992-97. Tens of thousands people were killed in this war which culminated in June 1997 under a peace accord between both the parties. Since then UTO is sharing power with the government.
24. Tamara Makarenko, “The Changing Dynamics of Central Asia Terrorism,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, February 2002. 1-2, and article file at http://www.cornellcaspien.com/briefs/020201_CA-Terrorism.html
25. *Interfax*: 24 August 1999, 1618 h (Kyrgyzstan/terrorism/militants).
26. Prof. Abdusamat Khaydarov, n.1.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Rashid, n.16. p.140.
29. *Ibid.*, p.141.
30. The founder was a prominent Palestinian, a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Cairo and a member of Muslim Brotherhood. The leadership of this party was passed on to Abdul Qadir Zallum.
31. It was banned in Russian Federation in 2003 and in Germany on 15 January 2003.
32. As told to Mahan Abedin for the James Foundation by the HT Executive Committee member Jalaluddin, www.jamestown.org, 12 August 2004.
33. *Ibid.*
34. For HT’s views about Uzbek government see www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org
35. See <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org>
36. See <http://www.uzreport.com>, 6 August 2004.

37. *Ibid.*, 12 August 2004.
38. Mohan Abedin, n.32.
39. This is a known militant Sunni terrorist “brand” in use in Egypt, which was spawned by the Muslim Brotherhood movement. In 1990s this movement was led by Ayman Al-Zawahiri merged with Bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda.
40. Ariel Cohen, “Terror in Tashkent”, *The Washington Times*, 5 August 2004. Also see the commentary at <http://washingtontimes.com/commentary/20040804-084143-1443r.htm>
41. For detail see <http://www.uzreport.com>
42. US State Department, United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework”, see at <http://www.state.gov/>
43. Farkhod Tolipov, “Regional Security in Central Asia in the Context of the Fight Against Terrorism”, in K Santhanam and Ramakant Dwivedi, Ed. *India and Central Asia: Advancing the Common Interest*, New Delhi, Anamaya Publishers, 2004, pp.26-32.

**SPEECH OF DR. ISLAM KARIMOV,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN,
AT THE FIRST JOINT SESSION OF BOTH HOUSES OF THE
PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN TASHKENT
(28 JANUARY 2005)**



Islam Karimov
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The elections to the first bicameral Parliament, without any exaggeration, took a special, remarkable place in the modern history of Uzbekistan. The elections, held completely in line with the Constitution, electoral legislation of the country and international norms and regulations, in transparent and tolerant environment, vividly manifested a successful advancement of Uzbekistan on the way of building democracy and a civic society. Summarizing results of the elections in Uzbekistan, it is worth to underscore the following:

First, the elections have proved to be a valuable experience for us and helped to develop and realize genuine democratic principles, norms and mechanisms of the election campaign.

Second, our unique, in many respects, system of elections to the bicameral parliament and the very process of holding the elections gave a powerful impulse to a drastic revival and increase of activity,

Himalayan and Central Asian Studies Vol.9 Nos.1-2, Jan.-June 2005 141

DOCUMENT

and I would say, of responsibility of political parties and public organizations acting in the country. The very fact that virtually all political parties that participated in the elections have gained enough seats in the Legislative Chamber of the Parliament for forming, in accordance with the Law, their own fractions demonstrates that they have gotten sufficient recognition of the electorate. I think that it is worth to draw your attention to the fact that 12 out of 54 independent candidates nominated by citizen initiative groups were elected to the Legislative Chamber.

Third, in the course of elections our voters demonstrated political and civic maturity, an ability to build up their life and their future on the basis of widely recognized democratic values.

Fourth, today we have all grounds to state, and the elections unconditionally proved it, that gradual, steady advancement of our country on the way of democratic renewal and construction of free society with all its fundamental values is an objective and natural process, which could not be stopped by any means. It is the fact, which must be taken into account.

Finally, the elections completely differed from all previous ones not only by the openness and uncompromising struggle, but first of all, by awareness and thoughtful attitude of the absolute majority of the population to the elections that as a significant political event in the life of our country, may influence the nature and content of reforms that are being conducted in all spheres of our society, and thus, affect destiny of every single voter.

Distinguished representatives of the people!

Today, addressing to the first joint session of the Legislative Chamber and Senate, I would like to briefly set forth the utterly important concept of democratization and renewal of the society along with the main objectives of reforming and modernizing the country in 2005 and beyond. Our main long-term and strategic objective remains unchanged – unfalteringly, steadily and consistently lead our country on the chosen path of building up the democracy and forming civic society,

deepening economic reforms and buttressing democratic values in the minds of the people.

Speaking of development strategy of our country, I would like to specifically emphasize that the so-called “regulated economy” or “manageable democracy” models are absolutely unacceptable for us.

Yes, we will continue to stick to a principle of gradual transformation to a most important building-block of the Uzbek model of reforming and modernizing the state and the society.

However, this aspect, which has justified itself for the years of our independent development, has nothing in common with the above-mentioned models.

We have also heard a lot of statements that nations living in or region has allegedly not matured yet, not “ripen up” yet for democracy, and they need to think about poverty reduction first, and only then the conditions for promoting democracy, political and economic reforms will emerge.

Those statements and approaches stemmed from the lack of knowledge of history, distrust in creative capacity of people, and, I would say, misunderstanding of objective global processes that dynamically change the modern world.

Today many, if not all, of us fully understand that there is a bright future only in the countries which are eager to march in step with time and meet strict terms and conditions of the turbulent world.

The strengthening of independence, democratization and society renewal shall remain our primary and most important objectives and purposes.

And only upon laying out this foundation we can and must tackle with poverty reduction and development issues.

I wish to witness, if this invariable truth, as they say, will penetrate flesh and blood of everyone who lives on our soil.

Speaking of reforming and renewing our life, we should pay

DOCUMENT

attention to the following priority objectives and directions.

I. The most important goal in the state building is to strengthen the role and influence of the legislative branch of power – the Parliament, to attain well-considered and more consistent balance of powers between legislative, executive and judicial branches.

By this I mean transfer of some of the President's authorities to the upper chamber of the Parliament – the Senate, and to the Government, to form a professional, constantly working lower Legislative Chamber and to expand its powers and rights.

Second. To enhance the role and, at the same time, responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Government at large.

Third. To undertake specific legislative measures to enhance sovereignty and independence of the judicial branch of power.

To simplify, each branch – legislative, executive and judicial – must meet necessary requirements, i.e. be completely aware of their tasks, feel responsibility, and independently execute their functions.

The creation of a new bicameral parliament set forth the following aims:

First. To shape the system of checks and balances needed for effective exercising by the Parliament of its authorities, and adopting well-considered and justified resolutions.

Second. To increase significantly the quality of the legislative work of the Parliament, taking into consideration that the Legislative Chamber will work constantly and professionally.

Third. To reach the balance between the interests of provinces and state at large, because the Senate consisting mostly of the representatives of locals Kengashs will represent the interests of the provinces and execute representative functions.

Fourth. To broaden the scale of participation of the population in public and political life of the country.

This purpose should be put forward in election of the Senate out of the members of local Councils.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to reaffirm that our long-term task in reforming and renewal of statehood and society is to implement the vital aspect our model of modernization – “transition from strong state to strong civic society”.

What we mean by that ?

We need to systematize adopted and develop new laws aimed at decentralization of power and transfer some responsibilities from the center to the local authorities, and strengthen the role and rights of self-governance institutions – makhallas, their committees and others.

Second. To increase drastically the role and influence of political parties and civic institutions on political decision-making process.

Therefore, every party regardless of its platform and orientation should increase its authority among the population, gain political experience and maturity, and, most importantly, financial independence, find its place in the society and rely on its constant constituency.

I would like to emphasize the significance that we attach to the rise of authority and influence of NGOs, which express the interests of various public and social layers of population and serve as fundamental institutions that build up civic society in the country.

It is hard to overestimate the role of these organizations in inculcating of democratic values in the minds of the citizens, in increasing their political and civic activities, expanding and boosting democratic transformations in the country.

In my view, there is no doubt that our Members of Parliament, political parties and NGOs upon making stronger their positions in the society will serve as main tool of public control over the state and its authorities.

Yet, availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to highlight some issues pertaining to the process of forming of NGOs.

DOCUMENT

It needs to be pointed out that sometimes so-called “NGOs” and “non-commercial” organizations that are being created and funded by foreign sponsorship deal with issues which stand far beyond the limits of their own charters and programs, and pursue someone’s specific interests.

I think it is redundant to say that such projects, which contradict our legislation will have no future in Uzbekistan.

I would like to emphasize that we stand against any revolutions and fundamentalism of any type in reforming and modernizing of our country.

At all times, the revolution usually was a tool and weapon of violence, bloodshed and feckless elimination of everything created by previous generations.

And fundamentalism, whatever it is – religious or communist, can not perceive and completely rejects everything that does not concur with its ideology and views on life, and sticks with the principle: “whoever is not with us, is against us”.

We are deeply convinced that democracy and various types of so-called “open society models” are impossible to export, as impossible to import from outside or thrust upon the universal project of state building. It is clear that such universal, i.e. commonly acceptable for all, a model do not exists at all.

Speaking briefly, we stand for a evolutionary, consistent nature of reforms and transformations, which should be closely linked with the process of transforming the public relations and way of life, strengthening democratic values in people’s consciousness.

II. We attach great importance to reforming and further liberalizing the third branch of power – the judicial and legal system.

Over the past years a radically new concept has been practically implemented to make the judicial and legal system an essential component of building the lawful state. Specialization of courts on

criminal, civil and economic matters has been carried out. Institutes for appellate and cassation jurisdiction have been introduced by the Law, the term of investigation and detaining people in custody has been substantially shortened, fixed terms of case proceedings have been set.

The efficient and democratic legal mechanism of selecting and approving court personnel has been created. The Department for Execution of Court Verdicts vested with sufficient powers is in operation, while courts themselves are released from duties uncharacteristic for them.

Necessary changes have been introduced into legislative acts that seriously restrict the access of the Offices of Public Prosecutor to legal proceedings. Today the principle of competitiveness, i.e. the equality of rights between the prosecutor and the defense counsel is practically secured in court proceedings.

Cardinal measures have been taken to liberalize the country's criminal law.

The classification of crimes have been thoroughly reviewed and altered with significant extension of *corpus delicti* falling under the category of less grave crimes that do not represent a danger to the public. As a result, in the last two and a half years only around five thousand people who committed offences of not great danger to the public did not lose their freedom and paid off material damage worth 11 billion UZS.

Alterations introduced into the Criminal and Procedural Code made it possible to essentially improve sentence serving conditions at penitentiaries, extend articles providing for early release and significantly mitigate terms and conditions of keeping in prisons.

As a result, the ratio of persons serving sentences at settlement-colonies grew from 7% in 1990 to 21% out of all convicts.

Today the number of inmates per 100 thousand people in Uzbekistan is 158, whereas this figure, for instance, in the US – 715, in Russia – 584, in Ukraine – 416, in Kazakhstan – 386, in Kyrgyzstan

DOCUMENT

– 390, and in Estonia - 339.

Introducing into legislation the Institute of Conciliation as a form of administering justice was an important positive factor in strengthening lawfulness.

Employing this institute, which reflects the mentality of our people, made it possible to relieve from criminal punishment over 26 thousand people during the past period.

Noting all the work done to reform the judicial and legal system, we can not leave unnoticed serious unresolved problems in this sphere. And first of all, for securing true independence and freedom of judges.

Court is the highest place of administering justice, and to enhance its role is a natural step in formation of the lawful state. In this respect, transferring part of the authority of the Office of Public Prosecutor to courts is quite logical demand of the time. First of all, this pertains the issues related to restriction of constitutional rights and freedoms of man, his personal immunity.

There is need to review some provisions of our criminal and legal legislation in terms of reinforcing the judicial control over the process of preliminary investigation and pre-trial proceedings.

I think that in Uzbekistan, as in any democratic state, there is need to transfer to courts the authority of issuing the warrant, taking into custody as well as applying other measures of judicial compulsion.

However, this process requires serious and thorough elaboration of organizational-legal issues and necessary preparation from the judicial system itself as well as from other related law enforcement bodies and Office of Public Prosecutor.

Another issue that we need to address in the sphere of liberalizing the judicial and legal system is exclusion of death penalty from the category of punishments.

It is not about a moratorium on death penalty, as practiced in some countries when the convict waits for years the execution of this

sentence. We mean its total abolition.

We have been moving towards solving this task since the first days of our independent development. During more than a decade the number of *corpus delicti*, for which death penalty would be passed, was curtailed from 33 to 2. These are terrorism and premeditated murder under an aggravating circumstances.

At the same time, our legislation bans to administer a capital punishment with regard to women, juvenile delinquents and persons aged over 60.

Here we can draw a single conclusion – these issues are pressing and need to be addressed. But that takes, in our view, at least two-three years.

First of all, it is necessary to carry out a wide-range explanatory work among the population, the majority of whom today stand against its abolition, and second, we should erect appropriate penitentiaries for those whose death penalty will be commuted to a lifelong or long-term sentences.

I would like to dwell on the issues of enhancing the responsibility of cadres of judicial and law enforcement bodies.

We have to repeat over and over that respect for authority as a whole and people's believe in justice depends without exaggeration on how honestly do they perform their professional and civil duties and responsibilities. Without any doubt, the extent and efficiency of fight against corruption in the country rests decisively on how this problem is addressed within the system of law enforcement, prosecutor and judicial bodies.

And besides. We, and first of those people who stand on the guard of Law, should fully shake off the old legacy of the Soviet era and reconsider our attitude towards entrepreneurship, business and the private sector. It is a great pity that we ourselves adopt good laws and ourselves infringe them.

DOCUMENT

It is a high time to reject once and for all a deliberately preconceived and accusatory approach to their activity, and on the contrary, to secure their interests, do not allow infringement of their legal rights and create for them such a legal ground, systems of privileges and guarantees so that they could freely and purposefully work for the benefit of their families and the country's economy.

III. Implementation of specific and consistent measures aimed at ensuring democratic standards in the development of the mass media is an essential condition for deepening democratic transformations and civil liberties in Uzbekistan. That includes further liberalization of the activity of the press, TV and radio, ensuring of their independence and freedom as an indispensable component of the process of deepening reforms in our country.

People expect from the media not only objective, unbiased information about events taking place in the country and abroad but also, above all, critical assessment of the activity of authorities and governing bodies, open professional analysis of flaws, vital pressing problems in our life and anything that impedes the country's movement along the path of reform and renovation.

We have to admit that to this day we hardly shake off the legacy and stereotypes of our past with its ideology, administrative control and censorship.

So far, journalists tend to stick with strong self-censorship, expectation of orders from the above.

At the same time, we have to say that there is the growing understanding among our public that without ensuring information freedom, without transforming the media into a stage where people may freely express their thoughts and ideas, stands and attitudes towards the ongoing events it is impossible to speak about deepening democracy and political activity of the population, of its real participation in the country's political and public life.

Of great importance in implementing these tasks:

First. It is necessary to ensure, above all, the mass media's economic freedom, which should become a source of its independent existence and development.

We see the development of market relations, competition in the information field as a guarantee of the freedom of the press.

In this regard, there is need to establish an Independent Public Foundation for Media Support.

Implementation of this project would help the process of forming the integral system of the state and private media comprising self-sufficient and economically well-off electronic, print and other media.

The creation of the Foundation does not mean that the media will exist at the expense of the means of the Foundation only. Of course, there should be own sources of financing at the expense of their own activity.

The financial base of the Foundation should derive from sponsors, both domestic and foreign, state structures as well as private businesses.

Essential directions for spending the means of the Foundation should be not only development of the private electronic and print media, modernization and strengthening their material and technical base, but also training, retraining and enhancing the professional skills of journalists and technical personnel. This includes organizing training courses at leading educational institutions and centers of TV and radio journalism in the country and abroad.

Second, today the issue of gradual forming the public television channel on the basis of State TV takes on a special significance.

There is need to adopt and carry out complex measures on developing the market of TV and radio industry, creating conditions for the work of commercial and regional private TV and radio stations, creative competition of ideas and programs in this sphere.

It is necessary to accelerate the introduction of modern information

DOCUMENT

digital technologies. Thus far the material and technical basis and professional level of personnel of regional channels and TV stations remains weak.

I guess there is no need to point out that in the century of information, communication and computer technologies when Internet is from day to day entering deeper into all spheres of our life, when fight for hearts and minds of people takes on a decisive significance – all these objectives today become priority and vital for our society.

IV. Next important issue I want to dwell upon is our foreign policy priorities.

Now it can be said without exaggeration that during a historically short period after gaining Independence our country secured its appropriate place in the world community.

At the same time, we are aware that Uzbekistan's growing image in the world is manifested above all in:

- the international community's acknowledgment of the positive transformations taking place in the country as a result of implementation of democratic and market reforms;
- this is the outcome of implementation of our state's well-known initiatives aimed at stabilizing and strengthening security in the region;
- finally, this is the result of the well thought-out and thoroughly balanced foreign policy of our country at the international arena.

And today, formulating our foreign policy priorities for 2005 and following years, in view of the complex and difficult situation arising in the world and our region, we should proceed from vital national interests and ensuring the security of our country.

In fact, these priorities should determine our foreign policy objectives and initiatives for the medium-term and long-term prospects.

Today, from this rostrum, I would like to underscore that the main objective, essence and content of our foreign policy is an interests of

Uzbekistan and interests of Uzbekistan alone.

Uzbekistan is ready to actively cooperate with all countries that share our national interests. At the same time, we remain open for a dialog with those countries that have different views on certain principal issues of international life.

We strongly oppose any attempts to apply an ideological approach to international relations.

The priority of maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia and turning this region into a stable security zone is of paramount importance for our foreign policy.

We attach great importance to the development of integration process and market transformations, formation of a common market in Central Asia.

Such market only, which is not split into inner national boundaries, would be capable to attract the waves of foreign investments, ensure the consistent growth and prosperity of the countries in the region.

Whilst soberly and realistically assessing the current situation in our region, we have to admit that alongside the ongoing processes of stabilization and recovery in Afghanistan, there is still a strategic ambiguity in the region. The region sees how the geo-strategic interests of the largest world powers and our neighboring countries concentrate here and at times – collide. There are still threats of international terrorism, drugs aggression, and other transnational menaces to the regional security.

At the moment, the international community and states in the region are gravely concerned by the growth in production and amount of drugs in Afghanistan. However, it is necessary to fight against it not only through creation of the so-called “security belt” around the territory of drugs production, and not only by way of serving the punitive and administrative measures. This problem may and needs to be addressed firstly through the profound structural reforms of the Afghan economy,

DOCUMENT

allowing people to do the peaceful and creative jobs.

Only the active participation of the adjacent countries can ensure the effective counter activities against these threats, as well as tackling of other issues with regard to secure and stable development of the region. Henceforth, the process of arriving at understanding and creation of practical mechanism is of utmost important in addressing the regional objectives of economic, water and energy, transport communications, and ecological character, which affect the vital interests of the locally residing peoples.

Our country has always been led by the principle, which was nourished on the span of many centuries: “If neighbor is in peace, so are you”. We shall abide by this principle in the days to come.

Our cooperation in the SCO, CACO, CIS, and other organizations is a highly important prerequisite along ensuring security, peace, stability, and stable development in the region.

In addressing the foreign policy issues, Uzbekistan attaches a great importance to extending cooperation within the UN framework.

Uzbekistan is interested in expanding the UN role in ensuring the regional and global security, and tackling other outstanding problems of the contemporary world.

At the same time, the emergence of new tendencies and situations, as well as threats to the international security in the world arena, in our opinion, requires for the urgent reforms and reconsideration of the UN structure, and firstly, of its leading body – the Security Council. Nevertheless, whatever the need to modernize and reforming the UN may arise, we think, that at the moment there is just no alternative to this organization.

We are interested in extending cooperation with the most important institutions in the European continent, such as the OSCE, European Union, and NATO in a matter of furthering our democratic and market reforms, ensuring security and stability in the country and region as a whole.

The overriding foreign policy priority in the days to come shall remain the cooperation with the largest and respected international financial bodies and organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, and other financial and economic institutions. It is difficult to overestimate the role and place of these organizations in the ongoing changes and economic reforms that are now under way in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan attaches great importance to the development and strengthening cooperation with the most powerful states in the world.

These are the USA and Russia, Japan and China, Germany and France, and other countries of the European Union.

We retain the close relations with Republic of Korea, India, and many countries of the South and Southeastern Asia, Middle and Arabian East.

Nowadays, the initial ground, which unites all countries of the world is the fight against international terrorism, extremism, and radicalism. Uzbekistan unequivocally supports the course of international community to lead the relentless fight against this evil, this plague of the 21st century.

At the same time, we have underscored on many occasions the necessity to fight not merely the manifestations of terrorism, those, who take hostage, blow up and annihilate the innocents. The life itself demonstrates that it is necessary to fight, above all, the primary sources of such evil, those numerous radical and extremist centers, which politicize Islam, nourish the ideology of hatred and terror, and against those who poison and brainwash the minds, at first place, of the youth, as if creating the production line of future terrorists, and attempting to realize the delirious ideas, such as the establishment of a Muslim Caliphate.

In this regard, from this rostrum, I want to again underscore that we strongly condemn any dangerous shifts and attempts to relate international terrorism with our traditional religion of Islam.

DOCUMENT

Such hasty and provocative acts serve as weaponry, firstly, to vehement extremist movements and organizations, such as *Al-Qaeda*, or *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*.

There is an ongoing fight within Islam. In this regard, it is necessary to mobilize all assets and assist the enlightened and tolerant Islam to withstand for itself the militant fanatic forces, which attempt to overrule in Islam.

We believe that there is no and cannot be any “transit” country, neither for drugs, aggression, nor for international terrorism, nor religious extremism, nor separatism. I am positive that any attempt to play the games in the hope to stay aside from the fight against these threats is a grave delusion. The tactics, which is predicated upon the principle of “don’t bother me, and neither would I”, now becomes more and more dangerous, and above all, for that kind of countries themselves.

We strongly believe that Central Asia must become a zone, not only free of nuclear, but also of any other weapons of mass destruction, in particular, the biological and chemical. This is more urgent, given the fact that the international terrorism wishes to get hold of such weapons. I am confident, vis-à-vis conditions now prevalent in our region, each state must abide by the commitment on unconditional observance of the WMD non-proliferation regime, improve the security of sites, where the materials intended for “double purposes” are preserved.

Moreover, the attempts by some leaders can not be allowed, who are led by doubtful, illusive economic interests to turn the entire regions into a world dump of nuclear waste and toxic substances. Such attempts, if realized, may mean the disastrous consequences for the ecological system of the region, health of the people, now residing in this land, as well as of future generations.

Our region is practically from all sides surrounded by the states in hold of the nuclear weapons. The Central Asia is vulnerable to a nuclear threat. Therefore indeed, the work that started back in 1998

on framing the legal foundations of nuclear free zone in Central Asia with ensuing necessary agreements in the field taking effect, must become one of the most important foreign policy objectives of the states in our region.

These are the basic principles of Uzbekistan's foreign policy for 2005 and the years after.

V. Prior to dwelling upon the most important priorities in the economic sphere let me briefly lay out the main outcomes of economic development in 2004.

Last year was not an easy ride for us, but the results achieved in 2004 allow us be happy about them.

First of all, we have achieved the steady economic growth, strengthened the macroeconomic and financial stability, and extended the balance of economy and its specific branches.

For the first time over the years of reforms, the GDP growth has made up 7,7%. All spheres of economy are seeing the dynamic and consistent development – the industrial production grew by 9,4%, production of consumer products by 13,4%, and, in particular, of non-food products by 18,6% .

Second, as a result of stern fiscal policy, for the first time over the years of reforms, we have achieved the lowest level of inflation of 3,7%, which surely had an effect upon the growth of population real income, which in 2004 rose by 15%.

Third, the amount of production of agricultural goods grew by 10,1%. We have yielded a good harvest of grain-crops – nearly 4,8 million tons of grain. For the first time over the last years, the record level of raw cotton harvest was secured, which totaled for more than 3,5 million tons.

The mechanism of agricultural production is now going through profound changes with farming practice taking all the more leading positions, as the most prospective and effective form of economic

DOCUMENT

activity in the countryside. At the moment, there are 85,500 farming entities in the country. They are now therefore becoming the main producers of the most important agricultural products.

Fourth, we have achieved a lot in the export of goods. The amount of exports rose by 30%. At the same time, its structure is qualitatively changing. The share of manufactured products in the export grew by 52%. By and large, we have gained a positive balance in the foreign trade by more than USD 1 billion.

Fifth, 2004 saw the sizeable increase in scale and share of small business and private sector in the country's economy. The number of enterprises operating in small business over the year rose by 14%. As a result of extending the private business practices, the last year also saw the creation of more than 425,000 new jobs, which was by 14% more, than in the previous year. The share of small business in GDP grew and in 2004 it made up 35,6%.

These were made possible thanks to major efforts along securing the guarantees of freedom of entrepreneurship, introducing the simplified methods of state registration, single rules of certification of products and services, as well as expanding access of small business owners for the loans.

Sixth, the flow of investments into the country's economy rose as well. Last year, investments grew by 5,2% and made up more than 20% of GDP. At the same time, the share of centralized sources went down, whereupon sharply rose the non-centralized sources of investments, above all, the personal enterprise funds, which constitutes more than 43% of all investments. The increase in flow of direct investments into our economy, especially in spheres such as oil, gas, and textile industries, is another peculiar feature in this regard.

We have continued the gradual structural transformation of the economy. By employing both our own and attracted funds, the country built large-scale industrial, communication, infrastructure, and other sites.

The development of transport communications is worth of special note. A significant breakthrough in this matter has been attained. We have built the modern combined automobile and railroad bridge over the Amudarya River with its length of 681 meters. The construction of the new railroad along the route Tashguzar – Baysun – Kumkurgan has taken an expedited pace, while last year the trains have already started running along the newly built 57 km long railroad route of Tashguzar – Dekhkanabad. The electric trains also began running along the route of Tashkent – Samarkand and Tashkent – Angren. At the moment, the roads of Uzbekistan on many parameters are in line with modern requirements and meet international standards.

Seventh, the gradual administrative reforms, aimed at curbing the presence of state in economy, now render its positive effects. We have reviewed the functions of state administrative bodies, significantly cut down some branches of power and their functions, pertaining to the old administrative and command system, and above all, those with assigning functions. The clear division saw the powers between the state bodies and those of economic administering.

Alongside administrative reforms, about 20 state agencies were reorganized with termination of more than 40,000 positions, which means that the number of administrative personnel went down by 22%.

Also, we have terminated the inherited centralized system of distribution of material resources based on quotas, limits, and vouchers. The activity of commodity exchanges went through profound changes.

The lion's share of commodities, including highly liquid assets, such as cotton fiber, lint, petrol, and diesel fuel, mineral fertilizers, vegetable oil, and flour are now sold through commodity exchanges.

The International Monetary Fund mission, which stayed in Uzbekistan with a visit last December, highly assessed the trend of our economic reforms in 2004. In particular, mission has underscored in its memorandum that 2004 had come for Uzbekistan as a breakthrough in the process of economic transformations.

DOCUMENT

The mission paid a special attention to the higher economic results, successful execution of budget, acceleration of economic reforms, particularly, in the sphere of massive privatization, termination of inefficient and low profit agricultural entities, and development of farms instead, as well as administrative reforms.

The IMF mission declared that it fully supported the macroeconomic program of the Government of Uzbekistan, and structural reforms set for realization in 2005.

We are deeply pleased that on the outcomes of 2004, the Index of Economic Freedom by “Heritage” Foundation and “Wall Street Journal” and published in famous “Washington Times” newspaper, Uzbekistan found itself among the ten countries of the world, which achieved significant progress.

Briefly on the most important priorities in realizing economic reforms in 2005

The main priority remains the same, which is to extend the market reforms and further liberalize the economy.

The goals and objectives we set before ourselves as to modernize the country and ensure the decent way of life for the people, and dynamically changing trends, as well as demands and tough forms of competition on the regional and world markets call for the necessity to further extend the economic reforms.

Yet, there are many unresolved problems as to fully break away from stereotypes of the old administrative and distribution system, further curb the presence of state in economy, ensure practical guarantees for the freedom of entrepreneurship, put away barriers for the stable development of economy and businesses, and creating the solid market infrastructure.

A lot has been done to this end, however yet much work lies ahead in the nearest time.

I would like to briefly concentrate on one of them.

At present, the necessary conditions are in place now in the country for the gradual growth of wages and population incomes.

The accelerated pace of modernizing the production, creation of modern production capacities now allow for pouring the consumer market with a quality competition-proof products.

The low paces of inflation, the gripped money mass, and the convertibility and stable rate of the national currency – sum, further promote the tackling of the given objective.

In its turn, the growth of population income shall serve as stimulus for the rise of purchasing power in people, expansion of production amount, and stable economic growth in the country.

Certainly, in order not to allow the growth of population income to lead to spur in prices, that is to inflation, we need to take a number of measures and create mechanisms of withdrawal of money, and most importantly, redirect the money mass, firstly, the cash – to a bank circulation.

At the same time, it is necessary to secure the rise of amount and expansion of services to the population, especially, in the countryside.

The promotion of construction of housing and establishment of effective real estate market, which meets the market economy standards, where it could be possible to channel the financial flows to, is important.

The commercial banks need to work hard to reinforce the interest of the population in accumulating their funds in saving deposits, especially, in long-term deposits.

The second priority is to ensure the higher pace of development of private sector, rise of its share in the country's economy.

Thank to measures taken by the Government over the past years, the macroeconomic and business environment, where the private businesses operate, now has much improved. Both local and foreign experts recognize this fact. However though, it is yet early to maintain

DOCUMENT

that all of problems are addressed.

The following are the most important objectives in this field:

First, to keep curbing the interference of state bodies in private business practice. It is a high time, as it is practiced in industrialized countries of the world, to introduce the exclusive system of application by courts of financial and administrative sanctions on the results of the audit, which might radically affect the activity of enterprises (the application of big fines, temporary or full closure of enterprise operations, and ban on use of banking account, and other).

Second, this is the time to review the entire system of sanctions, applied to economic entities, vis-à-vis taking down their scales for the unintentional and minor violations, and possibly, cancel the application of sanctions when the business people voluntarily clear off the damage.

In this regard, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy, and Ministry of Finance jointly with interested parties in a short period of time shall propose the measures, aimed at securing such guarantees for the private entrepreneurship.

Third, it is highly important to continue the ongoing work to expand the access of private entrepreneurs to the resource and other markets, ensure the expansion of the product list and amount of goods sold at exchanges and auction trades, whilst not allowing the return to the system of centralized distribution.

Fourth, the development of private business practice certainly needs the financial support, additional tax privileges, and preferences. Such support can be rendered through modern banking system, by way of allotting loans under preferential interest rates for the producer enterprises. We need to expand the practice of allotting the small loans, including with the help on the part of international financial institutions, such as International Financial Corporation, World Bank, and Asian Bank.

The third important priority is the need to deepen and expand the works on developing the small business and farming practice.

There is an objective to take the share of small business in GDP by 2007 up to no less than 45 percent.

In this regard, the Ministry of Economy, State Committee for Property, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice alongside the Chamber of Trade and Industry, and other interested parties, shall introduce the package of government resolutions on additional guarantees, privileges, and preferences for the small business, which includes:

1. To make available the additional privileges and preferences in the system of taxing, ensure the stability of tax legislature, transparent and simple method of imposing and paying taxes.
2. To cut down and simplify the number of approval procedures to engage in some type of activity, gradually introduce the system of registration of small businesses based on their applications.
3. To promote establishment of new small enterprises, small private workshops at homes, known to have engaged in working upon the product orders of small accessories from larger enterprises.
4. To establish the supplier structures, which ensure the logistical service and sale of products from small enterprises, or citizens, engaged in hire labor, especially, in the countryside.

Time and again I would like to underscore the importance of development of farms in agricultural sector of our country.

The experience of past few years has unambiguously proved the higher profitability and validity of farms in comparison with Shirkats (agricultural entities).

It is necessary to take under tight control the implementation of recently adopted Program of reorganization of unprofitable or low productive agricultural entities into farms, which envisages reorganization of 1100 agricultural entities during 2005-2007, including 406 in 2005.

DOCUMENT

It is very important to make the land allocation and farmers selection procedure transparent, just and competitive as well as to hold it on the tender basis only. It should be provided that all the facts of kinship, regionalism and bribery in this process to be strictly eliminated.

The process of formation of market infrastructure aimed at servicing and providing the farmers with necessary material and technical resources and agricultural machinery should be accelerated. The introduction of farmers into a system of credits on preferential rates, under the collateral of future crops should be ensured.

Most importantly - the strict discipline of unconditional fulfillment of contractual obligations by all parties should be ensured.

The fourth priority task is deepening the reforms in banking and financial systems.

It is about increasing the responsibility of banking and financial entities in carrying out the strict monetary-credit policy, preserving the stability of inflation level, maintaining the stability of national currency and its exchange rates.

It is about adoption of tangible measures on capitalization of banks, increasing their founding capital and current assets, and attracting their resources for investment, in the first place, to real economy.

There should be adopted definite and exhaustible measures to draw the significant financial means that are currently out of the system back into the banking circulation.

The experience of commercial and private banks in developed countries in the field of servicing the clients should be well studied and thoroughly analyzed. We should seek after increasing the trust of population and other organization in the banks. This objective requires revision of many statues and legal provisions, above all, increasing the responsibility and service culture of bank employees.

The next priority is a serious attention that should be paid to the reforms in the field of housing and utility services.

The lack of devices to take stock of rendered utility services, especially heating, cold and hot water is still remaining a sore spot, which is leading to even more losses, unjustified rise of tariffs, overdue debts of population.

As a matter of fact, we should acknowledge that there is still not established a valid mechanism and effective functioning structure of running the utility networks, their capital refurbishment and modernization, and as a whole, rendering utility and general service to the population.

The management of the tenement-housing funds is absolutely unsatisfactory. The activity of property owner fellowships is left to random people, who have very vague and remote relation to the practice of running the housing business and the maintenance of houses.

As a matter of fact, the market mechanisms on running and maintaining the housing and utility services are not established. All these facts are causing serious resentments of population, which - as a rule - are being solved on an emergency and ad hoc basis.

Full responsibility over these issues rests with the Government, regional and city hokimiyats (municipalities) as well as the municipality of the city of Tashkent. We have to start dealing with many issues from scratch.

In the shortest possible span of time we should elaborate a comprehensive Program on reforming housing and utility services and take extensive measures on its implementation.

Further improvement of taxation policy is a priority of principal importance

It should be noted that all the previously mentioned priorities are closely connected with, moreover, inconceivable without improvement in our taxation policy. The Tax Code, which was drawn up and adopted in 1997, does not meet the current requirements, nor corresponds with new tasks and priorities of economical reforms.

DOCUMENT

Only for the last two years we have made more than hundred changes and amendments to the Tax code and tax legislation.

It is extremely important to draw up principles and approaches of taxation, which have been proved by practice, to use the advanced experience of other countries.

We should achieve the level, when the tax system would not have a fiscal character only. We should reach the level when it, above all, would have a stimulating character, prompting every taxpayer, whether physical or judicial entity, not to evade paying taxes, not to divert the profits into the “shadow”, on the contrary, to strive for developing the production and increasing his own profits.

The life itself demands the taxes to bear a clear and addressed character. Taxpayer should have a clear imagination for what, why, and how much tax he should pay. In this respect, the main burden should lie on taxes on resources, which would stimulate the effective and careful exploitation of natural and mineral resources, raw materials, land, water and other resources.

The entire system of organization of tax agencies needs total revision. Ensuring the full flow of taxes to the budget in a timely manner is not the only task of tax agencies, what is especially important is that they also should constantly work with taxpayers, helping and training them to prevent the violations of the Tax Code.

In this regards, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, State Tax Committee, Ministry of justice along with Trade and Industry Chamber should critically analyze the current tax legislation, and on the basis of that analysis prepare and submit new edition of the Tax code, which would envisage further simplification of legislation, unification of taxes, decrease of the tax burden, improvement and liberalization of tax administration.

These are the most important directions and priorities, implementation of which could provide for our gradual advancement along the path of reformation and modernization of the country.

**CENTRAL ASIA, THE GREAT GAME REPLAYED:
AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Edited by Nirmala Joshi

New Century Publications, Delhi, 2003, 294pp., Price Rs.670/-.

The “Great Game” is the culmination of the aspirations of the major powers to gain supremacy over the Central Asia region, be it the Great Game of the 18th century in which Russia and Britain had engaged each other or the Great Game of the present era in which not only the US has been an active player, but also other powers like Russia with China, Iran, Turkey, India and Pakistan are playing their part creating a peculiar geo political and geo strategic situation here. This book is a brilliant affirmation of the Great Game episode in the region from an Indian perspective and its implications for India.

The introductory part comprehensively deals with the world scenario since the beginning of the “War against Terror” and its significance and ramifications for Central Asia. End of Cold War followed by disintegration of Soviet Union witnessed a very peculiar situation and suddenly Central Asia became the hub of many activities and its energy resources (oil, gas and hydrocarbon) became the cynosure of all eyes. It is argued that the US and her allies with NATO at its vanguard made an untiring effort to have a foothold in the region to reduce the influence of Russia, which had a geographical, historical, cultural and moreover, an emotional link with the Central Asian states.

The first chapter traces Russia’s historical ties with Central Asia and maintains that in this region, Russia will continue to be a major force to reckon with despite all odds. He narrates Russia’s relations with Central Asia is based on geopolitical, cultural and historical dynamics. Though there is clamour among the western academics that Russia will loose its sights in Central Asia, the author has an abiding conviction that Russia, being a natural and compulsive player in the region, will reassert its position in its traditional “underbelly” and will remain a major power in the Eurasian region by virtue of its historical links and superior

BOOK REVIEW

military strength, but it needs a “holistic Eurasian strategy”. He concludes that “a strong Russia will act as a magnet force in the process of reintegration of the Eurasia the region which only gets submerged, but never completely vanishes.”

The next chapter starts with the author’s assertion that the importance of US in the region stems from its permanent military presence in Afghanistan and bases in Central Asian region. He argues that US has developed important stakes even in the periphery of the region which will demand continued American influence and possibly a physical presence in future. US interest in the region hinges on the strategic concerns apart from energy resources, weapons of mass destruction and campaign against terrorism and above all, to prevent Russia and China from becoming a potential threat to its supremacy. Citing the cooperative approach used by US in this sensitive region, the author warns that opposition to US legitimacy in the region may lead to a “zero sum scenario”. 9/11 may be a sordid saga in the American history, but according to the author, it provided a catalyst for new robust engagement policy in Central Asia involving security promotion, political stability, economic reorientation, annihilation of terrorist infrastructure and WMDs. If US fails, the author warns, to demonstrate unprecedented imagination, sensitivity, commitment and resourcefulness, anti-Americanism in the form of resistance from Islamic extremist groups, authoritarian rulers of many of these republics and China will be echoed in the region.

In the third chapter, the author puts a question mark on stability in Central Asia and argues how the internal processes in the Central Asian states vitiated by religious revivalism and its offshoots like Islamic extremism, radicalism, aggressive nationalism, separatism and terrorism but also by economic deprivation and lack of political reforms would pose an insuperable challenge to peace, progress and prosperity of the region. Inter-ethnic issues, absence of well defined and demarcated border leading to smouldering border hostility and separatism (Uighurs in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) have further aggravated the situation. She also examines how impact of Wahabism and the repressive

BOOK REVIEW

religious policy of Soviet era attributed to religious revivalism in the region to which advocacy of radical Islam by Islamic groups like IMU, HT and Taliban provided the necessary intellectual and ideological impulse. This was further intensified due to full cooperation of Central Asian countries to American led coalition forces in Afghanistan. Unless urgent remedial measures are taken to achieve economic prosperity and to inculcate a new attitude of nurturing democratic institutions with a right balance between modernity and tradition, the author apprehends, the situation will further worsen.

Two chapters, the fourth and the concluding one, are devoted to India and Central Asia relations. Both the authors have given a brief historical account of the cross cultural connection between the two regions since the days of Buddhism and during the Mughal era. S. D. Muni sees the situation in Central Asia as a source of both challenges and opportunities for India. He is of the opinion that regional security and strategic order in Central Asia jeopardized by internal subversion besides religious extremism and terrorism and the presence of powerful extra regional forces including the US having long term socio-economic, political and strategic implications may cause ethnic and cultural conflicts in India. Mansura Haider, on the other, highlights the cultural affinity between Indians and Central Asians propped up by the similarities of geographical features, climatic continuity and common and contiguous borders. She talks about exchange of ideas (art, literature, architecture, music and philosophy), men and commodities. She verifies the spiritual bonds between the two regions through the noble gospels of Buddhism and Sufism. After the birth of Central Asian states, the engagement between the two regions and sharing of common concerns through bilateral and multilateral cooperation have defined India's role in Central Asia, which in future would depend on the outcome of the war against terror, adjustment to the competitive environment in Central Asia and display of cultural and historical links and economic management and a pragmatic diplomacy. Both the authors suggest that India needs to nurture its historical links and cultural bonds with the region so that its contemporary concerns and future aspirations could be addressed.

BOOK REVIEW

Sujit Dutta starts with “short to medium term impact” of the US presence in the region and the “long term effect” of US-China ties on Central Asia. China’s growing interests in the region, says the author, are to provide security against powerful predators and creating new opportunities of trade, energy and security ties. However, he argues that due to diverse interests of the neighbouring states, Central Asia is unlikely to be dominated by a single power. China’s growing security interest in the region is due to the rise of Uighur nationalism, militancy and separatism in Xinjiang province bordering three of these republics. He believes that China’s capability to control Xinjiang will have significant strategic implications for India, Russia and US. China fears US military presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan may hamper its bid to have regional security through SCO. He argues more active Chinese role in Central Asia can be possible only if Russia withdraws from the region or if its concerns for security of energy supply from the gulf intensify. China, the author foresees, would like to shape its vital interests in Central Asia’s security and economic architecture to suffice to its own geopolitical and economic interests and would also play a militarily and politically assertive role in short term and in long term, the most influential power in Central Asia by virtue of its economic, political, strategic and military ties.

In the chapter “Politics of Energy Resources of Central Asia”, R.G. Gidadhbuli analyzed how energy resources have assumed political significance because of their peculiar geographical location, how uneven distribution of energy resources in the Caspian region has resulted in simmering differences and conflicting claims over ownership of energy resources and how attempts made to evaluate the potentialities of the vast energy resources in the Central Asia region are being frustrated by the “pipeline politics” of major powers. US and Russia are not only making serious efforts to enhance their political influence but also go for cooperation to evolve a global energy policy, which the author feels, will lead to a qualitative change in the political scenario and energy situation in the region.

BOOK REVIEW

In the chapter, “understanding Central Asian Economic models”, author Gulshan Sachdeva provides an overview of the economic reform experiences of these republics since their independence and the economic transformation. He describes the internal sector as well as external sector reforms and summarizes distinct development strategies adopted by individual countries. Despite complex legacies of central planning, Soviet disintegration, distorted economic structures and ethnic problems, region had made some progress, even reasonable economic growth since 2000. With increasing international attention in this region, the author opines, the need of the hour is to ward off the economic challenges both at international and regional level.

This work is well documented and has thoroughly researched papers with references quoted from various Indian and international sources. This would definitely cater to the needs of the students, researchers and academicians working on issues related to Central Asia.

K. Warikoo

**COMPLETED 12 YEARS OF
CONTINUOUS OPERATION**

Convenient Connections from Tashkent-London, Birmingham, New York, Paris, Frankfurt, Tel Aviv, Rome, Athens, Istanbul and all CIS Countries. Uzbekistan Airways is the largest airline in the CIS, with modern aircrafts such as A310, B767, B757, RJ 85 aircraft.

For details Contact:

Delhi: Flat No. GF-3, Prakash
Deep Building, 7 Tolstoy Marg,
New Delhi-110001.

Tel.: 91-11-23358687-88,

Fax: 91-11-23357939

Amritsar: Room No. 106,
Hotel Ritz Plaza, 45 The Mall.

Tel.: 91-183-2562836,

Fax: 91-183-2566819

GSA: Uzind Corporation,
UGF, Kanchanjunga Building,
Barakhambha Road,
New Delhi-110001

Tel: 91-11-23318012, 23324042

Fax: 91-11-23329561

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES is a quarterly Journal published by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, which is a non-governmental, non-profit research, cultural and development facilitative organisation. The Journal is devoted to the study of various issues pertaining to the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, connected with its environment, resources, history, art and culture, language and literature, demography, social structures, communication, tourism, regional development, governance, human rights, geopolitics etc.

While the principal concern of the Journal will be on its focal area, i.e., from Afghanistan to Myanmar including the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, China, Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Himalayan States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttaranchal and North East states; papers with a broad sweep addressing environmental, social, cultural, economic, geopolitical and human rights issues are also welcomed.

The objective is to make a scientific appraisal of the issues confronting the Himalayan and adjoining region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, and to make specific policy oriented studies and need based recommendations as the means to promote the human, educational and economic advancement of the peoples of the region besides preserving and enriching their ethno-cultural, literary and historical heritage. Promotion of human rights, social justice, peace, harmony and national integration are the other key areas in which the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation has been active.

**CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PUBLICATION AND ANY ENQUIRIES
SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO :**

Prof. K. WARIKOO

Editor and Secretary General

Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation

B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave

New Delhi - 110029 (India)

Tel. : 0091-11-26162763, 0091-11-51651969

Fax : 0091-11-26106643

E-mail: kwarikoo@himalayanresearch.org

Books for review should be sent to the same address.

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers R.No. 67256/97

***HRCF* PUBLICATIONS**

AFGHANISTAN FACTOR IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIAN POLITICS

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1994. 73pp.)

SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN THE HIMALAYAS

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1995. 316pp.)

CENTRAL ASIA : EMERGING NEW ORDER

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1995. 352pp.)

JAMMU, KASHMIR AND LADAKH : LINGUISTIC PREDICAMENT

Edited by P. N. Pushp and K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1996. 224pp.)

ARTISAN OF THE PARADISE: A STUDY OF

ART AND ARTISANS OF KASHMIR

By D.N. Dhar (New Delhi, 1999. 230pp.)

GUJJARS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Edited by K. Warikoo (Bhopal, 2001. 317pp.)

BAMIYAN: CHALLENGE TO WORLD HERITAGE

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2002. xviii, 313pp. 61plates)

THE AFGHANISTAN CRISIS : ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2002. xxvi, 523pp.)

MONGOLIA-INDIA RELATIONS

By O. Nyamdavaa (New Delhi, 2003. 228pp.)

CHILD LABOUR REHABILITATION IN INDIA

Edited by Dr. B. Zutshi and Dr. M. Dutta (New Delhi, 2003. 257pp.)



HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION

Post Box-10541, Jawaharlal Nehru University Post Office, New Delhi-110067 (India)

Central Office : B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029 (India)

Tele: 0091-11-26162763, 0091-11-51651969, Fax: 0091-11-26106643

E-mail: info@himalayanresearch.org Website: www.himalayanresearch.org