

# **REGENERATION OR DEGENERATION? YOUTH MOBILIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF UZBEK POLITICS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This study analyzes the Uzbek government's emphasis on youth mobilization as an alternative to now failing policies of post-communist patronage rule.

### MAIN ARGUMENT

Patronage politics is an ever less viable strategy of political survival for Uzbek President Islam Karimov. The Andijan uprising of May 2005 is an indicator of the current regime's inability to ensure regional elite loyalty through traditional patronage networks. Motivated by this policy failure, the Karimov leadership now seeks to mobilize Uzbek youth as an alternative base for political support.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Although the Karimov leadership faces growing regional unrest, the regime's attempts to mobilize broad youth support have met with some success:

- New, independent, and society-based sources of economic wealth will continue to erode the Uzbek government's efforts to rule through political patronage.
- The future stability of the Karimov regime will be defined by its ability to mobilize youth as a counterbalance to increasingly powerful regionally-based patronage networks.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE ESSAY

Three main sections follow the introduction:

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Finally, a conclusion (p. 11) summarizes the central points of the study.

Uzbekistan differs from many post-communist transitions in that, along with other Central Asian states, post-Soviet politics in Uzbekistan is characterized not by liberalization, but rather by sustained if not increasing authoritarianism. Despite fifteen years of independence, Central Asian states continue to rely on the same strategies of rule as did their Soviet predecessors. As the May 2005 unrest in Uzbekistan illustrates, though, the success of these Soviet-era strategies is not guaranteed. Instability marks authoritarian change in Central Asia just as it challenges democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, while Kazakhstan's Nazarbaev regime, for example, has thus far proven adept in maintaining uncontested power through a mixture of state-led economic growth and patronage politics, Uzbekistan's Karimov regime has become ever more embattled, incapable of maintaining either the loyalty of the political elite or the support of society at large. And just as democratic liberalizers in Ukraine and Georgia called on young activists during periods of struggle, so too has the embattled yet brutally autocratic Karimov government turned to youth mobilization in an attempt to limit growing contestation within Uzbekistan's divided political and economic elite.

In contrast to Kazakhstan, where Nazarbaev has used oil wealth to successfully promote an ideology of state-orchestrated economic growth and to maintain effective control over central and regional political elite, Uzbekistan's comparative lack of economic resources has eroded both Karimov's popularity and his ability to sustain patronage politics. Unable to co-opt elites, the Karimov regime has sought to divide and thereby weaken unruly bureaucrats by pitting regional identity networks and government ministerial groupings against one another. As this study details, however, inter-regional and inter-ministerial competition has had the unintended consequence of solidifying inchoate or only weakly held instrumental identities into coherent networks of political contestation and opposition. Youth politics—the attempt beginning in the late 1990s to mobilize and acculturate new, state-oriented cadres—is the Karimov regime's response to the paradox of patronage politics, and to these increasingly powerful regional and familial networks of political contestation. The ability of youth politics to counter these growing networks of political contestation, this study finds, will shape the tenure and viability of the Karimov regime.

This paper proceeds in three steps. In section one, I provide a brief overview of the Karimov government's attempts to maintain power by balancing the interests of competing regional and familial identity networks. The effectiveness of this policy, I demonstrate, has enabled Karimov to maintain a tenuous hold on the presidency for fifteen years, but is weakening and regional elites are becoming less responsive to central government dictates. No longer able to guarantee his power through divide and rule, Karimov has turned to Uzbekistan's younger generations in the hopes of creating a nationally oriented elite more responsive to central government initiatives than to regionally based identity networks. In section two, I examine three institutions—the *Kamolot* youth group, state-controlled political parties, and the Tashkent Islamic University—in order to illustrate and explore the Karimov government's new emphasis on youth politics. These institutions, first established or, in the case of political parties, significantly overhauled in the late 1990s and early 2000s, have created a cohort of young, loyal elite. What is not immediately clear, however, is how broad this pro-Karimov cohort is among Uzbekistan's younger generations. To address this question I turn to public opinion survey data in section three and assess the effect, if any, age has on perceptions of governance. Ultimately, I do find some evidence that Uzbek youth are more admiring of the Karimov regime than are older generations.

## Patronage Politics: A Failing Policy of Balance of Power

Scholars, both Uzbek and foreign, have devoted considerable attention to the Karimov regime's balance of power strategy of survival. Some analysts describe this balance as one among clans, among broad networks of familial (or perceived familial) relations with each network headed by a single charismatic leader.<sup>1</sup> Others argue that competing regional identities, rather than ones of blood and kin, are what drive Uzbek politics.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the nature of the affiliation, the central government's strategy of divide and rule is the same—Karimov steadily rotates elites into positions of power so as to (1) promote loyalty by distributing the riches of state, and to (2) promote inter-regional or inter-clan competition so as to divert animosity away from Karimov's personalized authoritarianism. Thus, for example, the Samarqand regional elite compete with the Tashkent and Ferghana groupings, or devotees of Rustam Inoyatov, head of Uzbekistan's National Security Service, unite against supporters of Zakir Almatov, Uzbekistan's former Interior Minister, so as to win the center's attention and material largesse.

Analysis of Uzbek political elite biographies indeed does reveal that factions, both familial and regional, do compete for key ministries and offices of power. What is less certain, however, is the long-run sustainability of Karimov's divide and rule strategy of promoting inter-group competition. This strategy for political survival, for example, depends on the state maintaining a near monopoly on economic wealth.<sup>3</sup> As soon as alternative sources of wealth emerge, the effectiveness of centrally-defined patronage networks weakens. Instead, the Karimov regime is left with an ironic paradox: regional and familial identity networks—*networks which the central leadership actively cultivated as part of its balancing strategy*—rapidly turn against the executive once alternative, local sources of wealth become available. The May 2005 Andijan uprising illustrates this dynamic and provides causal hints into why the Karimov government has initiated a new strategy of youth politics so as to break increasingly troublesome regional and familial networks of political contestation.

The Andijan protests, contrary to the Karimov leadership's claims of religious extremism, were a product of the leadership's failed attempts to reassert control over regional appointees and a regional population that had become more responsive to local rather than national level sources of wealth. In May 2004 Karimov dismissed Qobijon Obidov, Andijan's governor, citing the negative effects of regionally-based "personal connections."<sup>4</sup> Karimov's charge of corruption was an oblique reference to the growing influence a local cohort of wealthy Muslim businessmen—a group the Uzbek regime labeled *Akramiya*—held both over Obidov's administration and among Andijan society more broadly. Karimov, however, was not content with simply sacking Obidov. Concerned that an administrative reshuffle alone was insufficient,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Kathleen Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories," *World Politics* 56:2 (2004) and D. Faizullaev, "Uzbekistan-Kyrgyziya: Politiko-Ekonomicheskie Posledstviya Territorial'nikh Problem," *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* (July 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Pauline Jones-Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of inter-group competition and the politics of political survival, see Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Uzbek Television Second Channel, "Uzbek President Slams Andijan Governor over Corruption," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, May 25, 2004 lexis.nexis.com.

Karimov proceeded to jail and eventually convict the wealthy Muslim businessman for religious extremism—an action which precipitated the May 2005 uprising.<sup>5</sup>

One case of failed patronage politics does not conclusively demonstrate that the Uzbek president faces the wholesale collapse of his divide and rule strategy of political survival. Problematically for political analysis, the Karimov regime is authoritarian and thus reluctant to publicize its weaknesses. As such, it is unclear to what extent there are other potential Andijans in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, mass protests throughout Uzbekistan, for example in Ferghana, Quqon, and Karshi in November 2004, suggest that patronage politics likely is failing and that the center is losing control over the regions. Under such conditions of policy failure, we would expect the Karimov government to pursue new strategies of control. It is in this environment of growing disaffection among the traditional, regional, and familial-ordered political elite, I find, that the Karimov government has initiated its new strategy of youth politics.

### **New Institutions of Youth Politics**

At the center of the Karimov regime's new strategy of youth politics are three institutions: the *Kamolot* youth organization, pro-government political parties, and the Tashkent Islamic University. Together, these institutions work to promote a pro-Karimov Uzbek nationalism and to limit the centrifugal pull of regional and familial identities. Importantly though, the effectiveness of these institutions varies. For instance, though *Kamolot's* reach is broad, the extent to which it promotes loyalty to the regime is questionable. The reach of political parties and, even more so, of Tashkent Islamic University, is narrow. Here, however, a better defined system of rewards and penalties for each institution's members does appear more capable of promoting pro-Karimov sentiments. Ultimately, it is the net effect all three institutions have on Uzbek youth which will shape the future durability of the Karimov regime—a question I address through survey analysis in section three of the paper.

#### ***Kamolot***

For any student of Soviet politics, Uzbekistan's *Kamolot* youth organization is immediately familiar. Modeled after the Soviet *Komsomol*, *Kamolot* is both an institution for the Karimov government to exert centralized control, and a means for assimilating new cadres into the state bureaucracy. Problematically, however, whereas the *Komsomol* offered what many Soviet youths found to be a coherent and attractive ideology—Communism—*Kamolot* has yet to capture the imagination and loyalty of its members.

This absence of a sustainable, mobilizing ideology has not deterred *Kamolot's* leadership from claiming an ever growing presence among younger generations in Uzbekistan. *Kamolot's* target age group is fourteen to thirty.<sup>6</sup> There are approximately nine million Uzbek youth between

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<sup>5</sup> For a more extensive treatment of the Andijan events, see McGlinchey, "Autocrats, Islamists, and the Rise of Radicalism in Central Asia," *Current History* (October 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Anvar Karimov, "'Kamolot' Dolzhen Stat' Mostom Mezhd Molodezh'y i Gosudarstvom," *Narodnoe Slovo*, March 16, 2001, p. 1.

these ages.<sup>7</sup> Of these nine million, group leader Botir Ubaydullayev estimates, half are active *Kamolot* members.<sup>8</sup> Despite these vast numbers, though, for many in Uzbekistan, *Kamolot* remains a fiction, an organization with little substance or meaning.

*Kamolot's* most prominent role is that of spectacle. Though registered as a non-governmental organization, it is in actuality one of the most expansive arms of the Uzbek government. The youth group, for example, regularly partners with state ministries to stage concerts and celebrations.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in January 2006, *Kamolot* and the government's Forum on Culture and Art televised the celebration, "Voices of the Future," in which Gulnora Karimova, the president's daughter, along with leading Uzbek celebrities sang patriotic songs and awarded medals to young leaders in the arts, businesses, and sciences.<sup>10</sup> In December 2005, *Kamolot* organized a "mass marathon" from Termez to Tashkent to commemorate the thirteen year anniversary of the Uzbek constitution.<sup>11</sup> And throughout the summer of 2005, local branches of *Kamolot* together with regional government administrations held departure galas for new military recruits and their parents.<sup>12</sup> These spectacles, *Kamolot's* executive secretary Said-Abdulaziz Yusupov candidly notes, are designed to promote "loyalty to the mother land and protect against religious extremism, fundamentalism and separatism."<sup>13</sup> Absent a coherent state ideology, however, orchestrated shows of youth mobilization have yet to translate into a true mobilization movement capable of supporting the increasingly imperiled Uzbek president.

Where *Kamolot* has proven effective is in damage control, in limiting antagonism against the Karimov regime. Immediately following the May 2005 Andijan protests, for example, *Kamolot* organized mass meetings throughout the country so as to "inform [people] about the truth of what happened."<sup>14</sup> To further publicize the Karimov government's interpretation of the Andijan events, *Kamolot* staged a "Patriot's Festival" for thousands of students in Tashkent's central stadium.<sup>15</sup> And in Andijan itself, two months following the town's mass uprising, *Kamolot* sought to assuage tensions and instill allegiance to the center by holding a youth celebration under the slogan "Protect Your Motherland As You Would a Loved One."<sup>16</sup>

Spectacle alone does not constitute a viable social movement. Nevertheless, although *Kamolot* lacks the compelling ideology and, thus, the mobilization capacity of its Soviet predecessor, the

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<sup>7</sup> The US Census Bureau estimates there were approximately seven million Uzbek nationals between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine in 2000. The nine million figure I provide is derived from estimates of the number of fourteen and thirty year olds the US Census Bureau includes in its 10-14 and 30-34 population bins. For more on the US Census figures, see <http://www.census.gov>.

<sup>8</sup> Regnum, Moscow, "Uzbek Youth Movement Leader Says Its Ranks Increasing," (February 2, 2006) *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, lexisnexis.com.

<sup>9</sup> For an extensive discussion of Uzbek spectacle and nation-creation, see Laura Adams, "Cultural Elites in Uzbekistan: Ideological Production and the State," in Pauline Jones-Luong, ed., *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence* (Cornell, 2003), pp. 93-119.

<sup>10</sup> Uzbek Television Second Channel, Yoshlar, "Uzbek President's Daughter Sings in Patriotic Chorus," (January 7, 2006), *BBC Monitoring of International Reports*, lexisnexis.com.

<sup>11</sup> "Marafontsy Napravalis' v Bukharu," *Narodnoe Slovo* (December 1, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Kh. Salimov, "V Gostiyax u Soldat," *Narodnoe Slovo*, August 16, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Yegor Sharai, "Vospityvaya Patriotov, Intellektualov, Biznesmenov," *Narodnoe Slovo* (August 3, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> S. Shukurov, "Proyavlenie Patriotizma i Lubvyi k Otchizne," *Narodnoye Slovo* (July 12, 2005), p. 2.

*Komsomol*, the Uzbek youth organization has managed to increase its size by providing some measure of material incentives to its members. Most notably, *Kamolot* has won young admirers by opening internet cafes and free access points throughout the country.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, though on a narrower scale, *Kamolot* has helped several hundred students and almost two thousand aspiring entrepreneurs secure loans in order to further their education and small businesses.<sup>18</sup> And perhaps most important for young Uzbeks with limited means, the group provides welcome diversion through its sports clubs and summer camps.

*Kamolot* is a comparatively new institution. Though the youth group traces its roots to the mid 1990s, the Karimov regime began investing in it as a vehicle for youth mobilization only in 2001.<sup>19</sup> As such, one could argue that it is too early to assess *Kamolot's* long term potential. Problematically however, a Karimov regime which is confronting growing challenges today cannot survive by waiting for a groundswell of youth mobilization tomorrow. Instead, the Uzbek president has turned to two other institutions—political parties and Tashkent Islamic University—in the hopes of shaping a new, considerably more narrow cadre of young supporters.

### ***Political Parties***

The central challenge confronting the Uzbek government's expansive *Kamolot* initiative is that returns on investment are difficult to capture. Though young students and entrepreneurs may welcome government aid, there is little indication that this aid inspires loyalty to the regime. A study conducted by the Tashkent State University of Economics in 2002, for example, lamented that talented young specialists who had received government aid for advanced studies almost always preferred working in the business world rather than sharing their expertise with younger students:

The best graduates, those whom the government has supported through the “Umid” fund and those with a mastery of foreign languages and Information Communication Technology, rarely return to their home institutions so as to help prepare the next generation of [government] cadres.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike the Nazarbaev regime in Kazakhstan, which can afford to pay bureaucrats and even academics salaries which rival those in industry, there is little financial incentive in Uzbekistan for capable and honest youth to seek careers in government.<sup>21</sup> And although working in industry may serve the broader good of Uzbekistan, it does not serve the immediate cadres needs of the Karimov regime.

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<sup>17</sup> Vladislav Novintskyi, “V Uzbekistane Sozdayetsya Obschestvennaya Obrazovatel'naya Informatsionnaya Set ‘Ziyonet,’” *Narodnoe Slovo* (October 1, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> “Uzbek Youth Movement Leader Says Its Ranks Increasing.”

<sup>19</sup> For more on *Kamolot's* history, see “Molodezh—Dvizhuschaya Sila bez Burokratizma,” *Narodnoe Slovo* (February 23, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> A. Invanova, “Kadry dlya Rynochnoi Ekonomiki,” *Narodnoe Slovo* (November 2, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Kazakh civil service wages were predicted to rise by 32% in 2005 with the target goal of making civil service salaries equal to 75% of the highest salaries of employees working in state owned enterprises. For more information on the Kazakh civil service, see World Bank, “Kazakhstan: Reforming the Public Sector Wage System,” Policy Paper No. 331707-KZ (April 2005).

Institutions which are capable of providing such immediate returns are Karimov's state-run political parties. Devoid of any substantive independent meaning, Uzbekistan's five political parties serve as conduits through which the Karimov regime can identify and promote promising young elites. In contrast to *Kamolot*, where the organization's expansion undermines its institutional capacity, membership in political parties is limited and thus easily rewarded and readily policed. Further, in contrast to government ministry appointments—where actors may exercise real power—political party leaders provide a façade of parliamentary democracy yet hold marginal, if any, authority. In short, state run parties provide an ideal environment for acculturating and showcasing potential new elites before these elites enter the more contested arena of executive branch politics.

Asliddin Rustamov, leader of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (NDPU), is emblematic of this new, pro-Karimov elite. Born in 1962, Rustamov is a generation removed from the 67 year old Karimov and the clique of Soviet-era apparatchiks who continue to monopolize power in Tashkent. Rustamov joined NDPU in 1991, joined the Samarqand regional party leadership as first secretary in 1994 and advanced to national first secretary in 2003.<sup>22</sup> With degrees in literature and economics from Samarqand and Tashkent State Universities, Rustamov has the unusual ability to parse and resolve the Uzbek president's seemingly contradictory demands. Thus, responding to Karimov's January 2005 call for the "normal practice" of opposition politics, Rustamov declared that he and his NDPU colleagues, though they would not "oppose the further advance of market reforms in Uzbekistan.... shall try to see that the laws adopted in parliament do not pass through it smoothly and unanimously."<sup>23</sup> Such political agility has not gone unrewarded. From his modest beginnings as a school teacher in Samarqand, Rustamov has risen to chairman of the board for one of Uzbekistan's leading financial institutions, Turan Bank.<sup>24</sup>

While Rustamov, as leader of the NDPU, is perhaps the most prominent of a new generation of political elite, he is by no means the only or the youngest Uzbek parliamentary deputy auditioning for higher office. Forty-seven percent of Uzbek legislative deputies are between the ages of thirty and forty-five.<sup>25</sup> And of the lower house's 120 members of parliament, none are older than the Uzbek president and only one is Karimov's contemporary. Ostensibly a forum designed to serve the interests of Uzbek society, the parliament is equally an arena where Karimov and his supporters can watch aspiring young cadres compete for the regime's attention. And unlike the much more dispersed and difficult to monitor *Kamolot*, it is here within the parliament that a new, pro-Karimov elite would most likely emerge.

### ***Tashkent Islamic University***

Loyal bureaucrats, while significant, are not the only new cadres the Karimov regime wishes to cultivate. Equally important are loyal religious elites. President Karimov's government, devoid of any coherent ideology, is vulnerable to charismatic leaders who offer a world view based on

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<sup>22</sup> Golos Uzbekistana, "Uzbek Largest Party's Leader Profiled," (December 17, 2004), *BBC Monitoring of International Reports*, lexis.nexis.com.

<sup>23</sup> Delovaya Nedelya (Kazakhstan), "Opposition May Mask Power Transfer," (February 25, 2005), *BBC Monitoring of International Reports*, lexis.nexis.com.

<sup>24</sup> "Narodno-Demokraticeskaya Partiya Uzbekistana," <http://www.elections.uz> .

<sup>25</sup> For a complete listing of deputies elected in December 2004 and January 2005, see *Vestnik Tsentral'noi Izbiratel'noi Komissii Respubliki Uzbekistana*, No. 1-2 (11-12) 2005 (Tashkent), pp. 87-104.

morality rather than favoritism. Uzbekistan's imams, therefore, are of particular concern to the current government. Even if not oppositionists themselves, independent imams and their mosques can offer safe haven to the disaffected and a language of mobilization for those more inclined to protest.

In an effort to limit these threats, the Karimov regime has maintained and, in some areas, expanded Soviet-era methods of religious control. As during the Soviet period, all Uzbek imams are required to pass attestation exams. Ostensibly conducted so as to ensure religious expertise among Muslim leaders, the exams are more often used to weed out free thinking or excessively popular imams.<sup>26</sup> More than simply policing existing imams, however, the Karimov regime has created new institutions designed to ensure that the next generation of religious leaders are as devoted to the central government as they are to Islam.

Most prominent among these institutions is the Tashkent Islamic University (TIU). Founded by presidential decree in 1999, the university differs from Uzbekistan's older—and considerably less well funded—madrassas in that TIU emphasizes instruction in the sciences and the humanities as much as it does in religious studies.<sup>27</sup> The university's pedagogy differs from that of the madrassas as well. Whereas madrassas instruct students in Islam the religion, TIU's approach is consciously secular; that is, students are instructed in the history and philosophy of Islam rather than in the inviolable truth of Islam.<sup>28</sup> Students, in turn, convey this secular, state-defined Islam to broader Uzbek society through weekly television and radio programs. Tashkent Islamic University does produce a handful of imams but the religious leaders TIU is most keen to graduate are secularized agitprops who can instruct Uzbek society in a Karimov-friendly and state-centric Islam. Accordingly, among the courses students pursue at TIU are marketing, management, and the history of Islamist extremism.<sup>29</sup>

As is the case with *Kamolot* and political parties, it is difficult to assess how successful TIU has been in cultivating a new generation of loyal cadres. Because TIU, similar to Uzbekistan's political parties, engages a small proportion of Uzbekistan's younger generations, the Karimov government's capacity to monitor, punish, and reward potential cadres is far greater here than it is with the more expansive *Kamolot* organization. The ability of these cadres to spread their secularized and state-centric approach to Islam to broader Uzbek society, however, is questionable. Though the university has existed for less than seven years, religious Uzbeks already perceive TIU to be a propaganda institution rather than a school of Islamic learning.<sup>30</sup> To what extent Uzbek youth more broadly question's TIU's purpose, as well as the goals of *Kamolot* and state-controlled political parties is what I address in the following analysis of Uzbek public opinion.

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<sup>26</sup> For more on the perpetuation of Soviet methods of religious control, see McGlinchey, "Islamic Leaders in Uzbekistan," *Asia Policy* (Vol.1, No.1, Winter 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Author's interview with Saidakbar Agzamkhodjaev, Dean of the TIU History Department, July 6, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Author's interviews with students at Tashkent Islamic University, August and November 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Author's discussions with Saidakbar Agzamkhodjaev.

<sup>30</sup> Author's interviews with the supporters of imprisoned Karshi imam, Rustam Klichev, August and November 2004. Klichev's supporters noted that the young imam considered enrolling at TIU but, after making a visit, concluded his religious education would be best furthered by serving as a deputy to an established imam in the regions.

## Age and Perceptions of Mobilization and the State: Public Opinion Analysis

Public opinion surveys suggest that, at least in some areas, youth do perceive the Uzbek government more favorably than do older cohorts. A U.S. Department of State survey commissioned in July 2002, for example, demonstrates that Uzbek youth are more likely to perceive the Karimov government as making positive strides in combating corruption than are older Uzbeks. As Table 1 summarizes, 53.5 percent of Uzbeks between the ages of 18 and 24 rate positively government efforts to combat corruption while only 29.2 percent of Uzbeks 64 and older share a similarly positive view.

Table 1: How are state authorities dealing with the problem of corruption?

	1—Very Poorly (%)	2—Rather Poorly (%)	3—Fairly Well (%)	4—Very Well (%)	Do Not Know (%)	Mean Score <sup>b</sup>	N <sup>c</sup>
18-24	16.9	12.4	33.5	20.0	16.2	2.69 (.09)	153
25-34	14.2	17.0	35.6	13.9	18.0	2.61 (.06)	261
35-44	14.8	19.7	32.8	13.8	17.7	2.56 (.06)	247
45-54	21.1	18.9	30.3	9.2	18.9	2.35 (.08)	147
55-64	16.7	18.8	29.2	8.3	25.0	2.40 (.12)	70
65 & Older	21.7	11.3	19.8	9.4	34.0	2.27 (.14)	66

<sup>b</sup>Do not know and no answer responses not used in calculating mean scores. Standard errors are in parentheses.

<sup>c</sup>Sample size used for calculating mean scores.

Further study of the 2002 Department of State survey underscores that public opinion analysis in the Uzbek case demands considerable care. The corruption indicator of public perceptions of governance is unusual in that it is one of only a few indicators that exhibit statistically significant variation by age cohort. More frequent—and Table 2 provides an example of this—are converging perceptions of governance among age cohorts. Thus, while older Uzbeks willingly express disapproval of government attempts to combat corruption, they express markedly similar—and positive—evaluations of President Islam Karimov, as do younger Uzbeks.

Table 2: Do you have confidence in President Islam Karimov?

	1—No Confidence (%)	2—Not Very Much Confidence (%)	3—Fair Amount of Confidence (%)	4—Great Deal of Confidence (%)	Do Not Know (%)	Mean Score <sup>b</sup>	N <sup>c</sup>
18-24	1.1	3.2	9.7	86.0	0	3.81 (.04)	185
25-34	0.9	1.6	11.8	84.8	0.3	3.82 (.03)	320
35-44	0.7	2.0	15.1	81.0	0.7	3.79 (.03)	301
45-54	1.1	3.2	12.4	82.7	0.5	3.78 (.04)	184
55-64	1.0	5.2	22.9	69.8	1.0	3.63 (.07)	95
65 & Older	1.9	3.8	10.4	84.0	0	3.76 (.06)	106

<sup>b</sup>Do not know and no answer responses not used in calculating mean scores. Standard errors are in parentheses.

<sup>c</sup>Sample size used for calculating mean scores.

It is worth noting, however, that in authoritarian settings the negative consequences for criticizing a practice are considerably less than they are for criticizing political elites. As such, we would expect that Uzbeks of all ages would be more willing to openly answer questions of corruption than they would be questions of personalized autocratic rule. In short, although

respondents' evaluations of Islam Karimov are likely distorted by preference falsification, reported perceptions of corruption may indeed be an adequate tool for evaluating varying degrees of satisfaction in governance. Viewed in this light, the corruption indicator is considerably more compelling and suggestive of the possibility that Karimov's attempts at youth mobilization may be neither misguided nor unrealistic.

## Conclusion

Uzbekistan, as do all Central Asian states, offers sobering conclusions for the study of post-communist transitions. Although Uzbekistan and its similarly autocratic neighbors need not mark "the end of the transition paradigm," these non-democracies do suggest we reconsider causalities of political change.<sup>31</sup> Liberalizing transitions did not occur in Central Asia and thus it is understandable that democratization proponents and practitioners are frustrated with what many undoubtedly perceive as the transition paradigm's inability to deliver. Alternative approaches, however, namely those that emphasize institutional continuity, have fared little better. Indeed, much as was the case during the ascendance of another T-paradigm—Totalitarianism—the emphasis by such paradigms on seemingly unshakeable "dominant-power systems" in their explanations of autocratic continuity risks overlooking real political change.<sup>32</sup>

The strength of the transitions literature lies in its ability to identify potential causalities of political change. Where transitions studies can improve, however, is in addressing the multi-directionality of liberal and illiberal political change and, more specifically, in formulating hypotheses for why similar variables in seemingly similar cases can lead to such markedly different outcomes. The varying dynamics of youth mobilization—and social mobilization more broadly—are illustrative of this need. Thus, though the transitions literature provides compelling explanations for liberalizing social movements, scholars have devoted comparatively little attention—with the one possible exception of Islamist movements—to the question of illiberal mobilization.<sup>33</sup>

This comparative inattention is particularly striking given that in many post-communist states political change—albeit autocratic and possibly destabilizing change—is shaped by the ability of opposing domestic elites to rally populations around competing visions and institutions of identity and patronage. The continuing struggle between the Karimov leadership's attempts to mobilize youth broadly and Uzbek regional elites' demonstrated ability to mobilize populations locally is only one example of this dynamic.

At the center of these competing attempts at social mobilization is what, in the introduction of this study, I identified as the inherent paradox of patronage politics—autocratic leaderships' unintended fostering of increasingly powerful regional and familial networks of political

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (2002), pp. 5-21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> The newer literature on transnational activism is particularly helpful in identifying conditions which produce effective liberal social movements. See, for example, Sidney Tarrow's *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge, 2005) and Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Cornell, 1998) underscore causalities of liberalizing mobilization. These studies do not, however, address the question of illiberal activism.

contestation. Placating would-be competitors by distributing state perquisites along regional lines strengthens regional identities and, over time, furthers the capacity of local elites to mobilize populations against the incumbent regime. The outcome in the Uzbek case has been ever more frequent political convulsions matched by equally frequent attempts by the Karimov leadership to mobilize youth as a bulwark against regional patronage networks. From a transitions and human rights perspective, one might welcome an outcome where regional elites, however steeped in patronage politics, depose the autocratic Karimov regime. Importantly though, as the failed revolution in Kyrgyzstan suggests, social mobilization—even ostensibly democratic social mobilization—need not produce democratic change. Waves of patronage politics, though destructive of old regimes, remain effective tools for new autocrats to mobilize political support.