

# **ATTITUDES TOWARD GLOBALIZATION AND THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This paper explores attitudes toward globalization and the use of new technologies by various generations in Uzbekistan and by the Uzbek government.

### MAIN ARGUMENT

Uzbek attitudes toward globalization and the use of new technologies vary according to sociological factors such as age, social background, religious beliefs, education, and interaction with the outer world. In general, while the government's attitude toward the Western model of globalization is negative, focusing more on regional processes that might protect Uzbekistan from regime change, the population overall is in favor of globalization and the wider use of new technologies for faster economic development.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- What may seem to Western observers like isolationism and distancing from globalization processes may not seem so to many Uzbeks because of Uzbekistan's closer relations with Russia, China, and other countries—especially if such ties bear concrete economic dividends for Uzbekistan.
- Uzbekistan's relations with the West may be improved with new leadership as generational change takes place, but they may remain stagnant if Karimov's daughters remain in power and the Russian factor continues to have a strong influence. In the short run, Karimov will guard his independence and may still mistrust the Russians, fearing a regime change according to a Russian scenario.
- The influence of the United States in Uzbekistan is limited, given the expulsion of many U.S. organizations from Uzbekistan, but the United States can still induce Uzbekistan to cooperate on certain issues by using its political, economic, and financial leverage with Russia.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE ESSAY

Three main sections follow the introduction:

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Finally, a conclusion (p. 16) summarizes the central points of the study and their implications.

Following the Andijan events of May 2005, Uzbekistan curtailed globalization processes active in the country, either because of independent initiative from within Uzbekistan or as a reaction to worsened relations with the European Union and the United States. For example, Uzbekistan cut its ties with or limited its involvement in NATO, the European Union, the EBRD, GUUAM, and the OSCE; it forced international NGOs and foreign media organizations such as the Open Society Institute, IREX, Internews, Freedom House, Eurasia Foundation, UNHCR, American Bar Association, IWPR, BBC, Radio Liberty, and Deutsche Welle to limit their activities or leave the country; and, despite a history of diplomatic relations, Uzbekistan limited its interaction with countries that experienced regime changes, such as Georgia and Ukraine. Karimov's regime began to view globalization as a threat to Karimov's power and thus tried to curb any signs of globalization oriented toward or led by the West. Instead, Uzbekistan cultivated ties with members of the CIS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which resulted in an unprecedented level of cooperation between Uzbekistan, Russia, and China.

Following the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and neighboring Kyrgyzstan, the Uzbek government attempted to keep these processes out of Uzbekistan. Despite the absence of revolutionary factors in Uzbekistan—notably the existence of legal opposition and free media, the division of business groups into pro- and anti-government camps, the presence of an opposition faction in the parliament, and the development of opposition groups among former government officials—the Karimov government harshly reacted to movements it interpreted as remotely revolutionary. However, access to new technologies, especially the Internet and cellular communication, prevented the Andijan massacre from being concealed by the regime. Information coming from independent sources about the May 13 events reached an international audience faster than the domestic Uzbek audience. While the regime had more effective methods of curbing independent reports internally, it was unable to keep them from reaching the outside world. Attacking foreign and international media representatives, arresting and harassing independent journalists, strengthening monitoring of the Internet, blocking websites of independent media and opposition groups, and ordering Internet Service Providers to block specific websites are ways that the Uzbek government has battled against technologies that it believes facilitate pro-globalization forces.

At the same time the Karimov regime tried to use new technologies to counter Western-style globalization processes. With help from the Russian government and media organizations, the regime launched a campaign promoting pro-Karimov propaganda and attacking Karimov's local and international critics. A new center called "Politika" (Politics) was established in Tashkent with the help of Russian political technologists. At "Politika," a group of state-controlled journalists-turned-political-scientists replied to every criticism against the Uzbek government's policy that was published by international and independent Uzbek media organizations. They primarily used Russian news websites, English-language versions of Russian news websites, and the "Politika" website, which was established exclusively for this purpose, to distribute defensive and counter-offensive articles through the Internet.

Attitudes toward globalization in Uzbekistan take different forms depending on various sociological factors that also affect Uzbeks' use of new technologies. Such factors include age, migration, social background, education, and the surrounding environment. For example, older people and those in rural areas do not use new technologies, or use them less and have less

affection for globalization than younger generation Uzbeks who have studied overseas and travel frequently. The latter group cannot imagine living without new technologies and most of them believe globalization is a requirement of the times and an engine for development.

The more people migrate, use new technologies, and have access to better education, the less they believe that Karimov is irreplaceable and that Islamists are the only alternative to Karimov. According to state-sponsored propaganda, after all, Karimov's departure from leadership may lead to a civil war or the Islamization of the society.

Globalization is the increased mobility of goods, services, labor, technology and capital throughout the world and proceeds in five dimensions: *economic globalization, cultural globalization, formation of world opinion, democratization, and political globalization*. This paper will describe attitudes towards globalization by various generations in Uzbekistan according to these five dimensions. Attitudes toward the use of new technologies will be reflected along the way since technology is viewed as a means to further globalization. The bloody events of May 13 (known as the *Andijan Massacre*) also will be discussed throughout the paper as these events greatly influenced the evolution of all five dimensions in Uzbekistan.

## **Generations in Uzbekistan**

In Uzbekistan, generations are not only classified into Soviet and post-Independence generations or older and younger generations. Generations are complex, with every decade producing a separate generation characterized by its own peculiarities and preferences.

The generation of people aged 50 and older is characterized by a deeply rooted Soviet upbringing. People of this generation generally have unsuccessfully adjusted to new realities and new ideologies. In contrast, people of the generation currently in the 40-50 year old age bracket are the most entrepreneurial. Members of this particular age cohort were between 25-35 years old when the Soviet Union collapsed, and were able to use new opportunities to their advantage. In Russia, for example, this generation produced oligarchs such as Abramovich, Berezovskiy, and others. It is also this generation that witnessed the short-lived Uzbek democracy of the late 1980's and early 1990's and experienced economic benefits from the government's pre-1996 policies. The generation of Uzbeks aged 25 to 40 is the most flexible and, although people in this group remember the final years of the Soviet period, they have not stuck to its ideology and, hence, are open to new realities and try to adjust to the times. This is also the most educated and moderate group, both religiously and politically.

Another generation comprises those aged 18 to 25 years old. This generation is more influenced by the current Karimov-crafted ideology and has less loyalty to the Soviet past. It is the Latin generation as the people of this generation are more familiar with the Latin script than the Cyrillic alphabet. They have also prioritized the study of the English language over Russian and therefore speak little Russian. At the same time, this generation shares religious devotion with the oldest generation: those of the younger generation grew up with, or were often raised by, the latter and went with them to mosques. They are also still in a formative stage. Less Russian influence and exposure, more religious feelings, and more loyalty to the regime make this group

politically unpredictable. What this group will evolve into in the next 10 to 15 years will depend on the environment of the next decade and whether that period is characterized by the revival and long-term sustainability of Uzbek-Russian relations, the continued growth of corruption, continuing strong influence of the regime's propaganda, and further isolation of the country from the West due to severe travel restrictions.

A fourth Uzbek generation comprises those aged 1 to 18 years old. This is the most loyal group to the current regime because it is an easy and vulnerable target of Karimov's propaganda. The Soviet youth is a good comparison. It was raised on Soviet books, movies, newspapers, traditions, and socialized in a closed society. Karimov is using the same methods of propaganda, although there are differences between the former Soviet Union and modern-day Uzbekistan. Now there is mobile communication and Internet so Uzbekistan is not as closed as was the USSR. There are also more people migrating and bringing information from the outside with them into Uzbekistan. Conversely, there is also much more corruption than there was in the USSR, more prostitution, a higher drug use rate, and a clear division between the poor and the rich, even in schools and kindergartens. This was not the case in the former Soviet Union.

There is one more generation group—the youth elite. Included in this group are President Karimov's daughters Gulnara and Lola Karimova, and the children of high government officials and high-caliber businessmen connected to the government. Although they are not united into a special formal group or an organization, elite youths connect at parties and other gatherings, and some of them are in business together. This group has power aspirations, especially Gulnara Karimova, and it will be youths from this group that the Russian establishment will lobby for future power in Uzbekistan. However, it is also possible that due to the personal ambition of some members of this group, and their connections outside of Uzbekistan (especially in Russia), they may be backed by various Russian government and business groups. Thus, a possible struggle for power among these elite Uzbeks will mostly reflect a struggle among the interests supporting each of them, as each interest group tries to secure certain economic concessions in case their protégé rises to power. As long as these youth elites continue to benefit economically from the current regime, they will continue the practices of the Karimov regime if they follow Karimov into power.

For concrete changes to happen, structural reforms must take place. According to some media reports, a competition between Karimov's two daughters is already becoming visible, with each one trying to maximize her business interests and becoming increasingly involved in public activities. Media reports indicate that Gulnara Karimova (who will reach the constitutional age required to run for the presidency—35—by 2008) is taking Uzbek classes and trying to create a positive image for herself in the country by participating in various charitable and cultural activities and media appearances. In the special New Year issue of her magazine *Bella Terra*, there was a lengthy interview with her accompanied by many photos of her with children, ordinary women, and in front of a mosque with her head covered by a scarf. This indicates that Gulnara is attempting to appeal to every strata of the population. She even admitted to recording a song and featuring in a video clip for that song—which is an appeal to the youth. *Bella Terra*, which usually costs 4 to 5 dollars (in a country where the average monthly salary is 15 to 20 dollars), was reportedly given to shoppers for free at supermarkets on New Year's Eve. If, indeed, both of Karimov's daughters have ambitions to gain power, the decisive factor will be

which one of them can attract more support from influential figures in Uzbekistan and Russia—as these figures are likely to lobby for a candidate who will support their capital, security, and interests. But clearly, Gulnara Karimova, who is older, has international experience, and has established valuable contacts in Russia, has more in her favor than her sister, Lola. Lola Karimova, on the other hand, lacks Gulnara’s damaged local and international reputation, stemming from the scandal associated with Gulnara’s divorce from her husband, Mansur Maqsudi—an ethnic Uzbek businessman from the United States—, Gulnara’s problem with the U.S. court due to her divorce and flight from the United States, and rumors and reports of her forced seizure of businesses in Uzbekistan. The best move for Lola Karimova, should she have any ambitions for power, would be to set her eye on Europe and the United States and forge ties that contrast those of her sister.

Within each generation, there is also a gap stemming from the social background, educational level, frequency of use of new technologies, knowledge of foreign languages, and economic situation of each individual.

## **Attitudes toward Globalization**

### ***Economic globalization***

Economic globalization is the core of the globalization process. This is what drove European countries to form the European Union. Similarly, President Karimov prioritized economic development in Uzbekistan’s bilateral and multilateral relations and with regard to Uzbekistan’s accession to various regional blocs. However, membership in economically oriented organizations and blocs have produced no dividends as there was no political will and vision on the part of the Uzbek leadership to carry on and finish projects begun within those structures.

CIS leaders have acknowledged that hundreds of documents aimed at economic partnership and signed by CIS member-states have not been implemented because the states have had different political agendas and orientations. Karimov also abandoned Uzbekistan’s membership in GUUAM—which it joined in hopes of gaining access to the sea—after the color revolutions and regime changes in Georgia and Ukraine. Various other economic organizations and initiatives within Central Asia also failed because of the long term political rivalry for regional leadership between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan’s leaders, Uzbekistan’s obsession with religious extremism and terrorism, and Uzbekistan’s policy of closing and mining its borders to keep extremists and terrorists out of the country. The introduction of visa regimes further complicated Uzbekistan’s business ties to the region. Economic liberalization and the development of small- and medium-sized businesses in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan have run counter to Uzbekistan’s trend toward strengthening state control over the economy and monopolizing key economic sectors. This contrast has made it impossible for Uzbek private businesses to prosper and expand regionally. Concerns about inflation have also shut companies from neighboring countries out of the Uzbek market.

With the worsening of Uzbekistan’s relations with the West and the United States in the aftermath of the Andijan events, Uzbekistan lost key partners and donors. However, some relationships began to sour before these events. For example, relations with the European Bank

for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) were damaged the year before the Andijan events of 2005 after the bank made future economic pledges contingent on political progress in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan also conceals its real macroeconomic figures from the World Bank and the IMF in order to continue receiving their aid.

At the same time, Karimov has found new partners in Russia and China. Each country has pledged one billion dollars in investments into the Uzbek economy. Uzbekistan has received little in economic terms from the United States and Europe, especially since the country introduced currency restrictions in 1996. Since 1996, scores of American and European companies have left the Uzbek market and failed to return even after the currency restrictions were lifted in 2004.

The Andijan events forced the Uzbek regime to ally itself with Russia and China. This led to the abolishment of the Central Asian Economic Cooperation organization and to its merger with the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Cooperation, once criticized by Karimov. It is still unknown what economic results these developments will bring to Uzbekistan. Investments from Russia and China may never come if both these countries decide to make investments contingent upon Uzbekistan meeting certain political and economic demands.

In Uzbekistan's post-independence history, the leadership has tested various models of economic development—Turkish, Malaysian, Chinese, Korean, and has now adopted a model of its own, which, without certain political reforms, is also doomed to fail. Substantial investments from South Korea and Japan have not induced Uzbekistan to democratic changes, though they did not have such objectives to begin with. Neither of these two Asian countries risked ruination of their relations with Uzbekistan, even after the Andijan massacre, and have continued to render economic and other kinds of assistance to Uzbekistan.

It is a Catch-22 situation. There is a general understanding in Uzbekistan that economic liberalization is an important factor for the country's development, especially because of the increasing impoverishment of the people. Although people of the older generation may still long for the Soviet system, they too understand the impossibility of a return to the past. Differences among the former Soviet republics—political, economic, and cultural—have widened since independence. With the further deterioration of the Uzbek economy and the failure of Karimov's gradual economic transition (which has become mired in large-scale corruption), even the older generation is open to change or a return to the pre-1996 policies. However, such changes may take a long time, perhaps even a regime change, considering the fact that major businesses in Uzbekistan are controlled by the elite and their families and any independent competition may hurt the interests of the elite.

While Uzbeks are generally in favor of economic globalization at a regional level, high tariffs, border closures, visa regimes, bureaucratic attitudes, and a generally condescending attitude among the main nations in the region hinder such cooperation. The post-1996 decline of the once-strong Uzbek economy and, in contrast, the rapid growth of Kazakhstan and Russia's economies due to increasing oil production and global oil prices have created a sense of inferiority among the various generations of Uzbeks and a growing anger with the government's

policies. The flow of Uzbek migrant workers into Russia and Kazakhstan has only compounded this sentiment.

### ***Cultural globalization***

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan and Uzbeks became vulnerable to external influences, including activists of the “Moonies,”<sup>1</sup> Saudi and Pakistani religious missionaries, American blockbuster movies, and Coca-Cola. Once the Soviet ideological framework was gone, Uzbekistan did not have a new ideology to fill the gap. Uzbeks, for long deprived of contact with the external world, were open to anything new. At the time, Uzbeks were open to globalization and did not know its implications. In 1993-1994, the government introduced a new ideology according to which Uzbekistan was to have a great future. The ideology was about praising the history, the famous scholars who lived in what is now Uzbekistan, and scientific and cultural achievements of distant historical periods. A lot of events were held to honor historic scholars and mark their jubilees.

In particular, there were attempts and the desire to strengthen cultural ties with the neighboring Turkic states and Turkey. An attempt to impose Uzbekistan’s historic greatness on neighbors, however, was met with resistance and irritation because it was clear that Uzbekistan was attempting to claim a position of regional leadership. But Uzbeks welcomed such a policy, especially ethnic Uzbeks in neighboring countries who saw this as a chance to improve their situation in their respective countries. It was a period when Karimov was widely credited as someone capable of leading Uzbeks to a great future. But when such an aggressive ideology failed with its neighbors, Uzbekistan’s relations with them cooled and contacts and communication in the region diminished.

Culturally, the collapse of the Soviet Union and post-1996 economic degradation greatly damaged the nation’s self-confidence and spiritual morale, making the problems of prostitution, human trafficking, domestic violence, and suicide common and widespread.

With the advent of the Internet and mobile communication, it became easier for information and different cultures from outside Uzbekistan to penetrate the country. U.S. government educational exchange programs and the Uzbek government’s short-lived overseas scholarship program, *Umid* (Hope), exposed Uzbeks to different cultural environments. Depending on where they had studied abroad, these Uzbeks brought a new culture with them back to Uzbekistan. The flow of tourists, the illegal import of movies and music from different countries (mainly from the United States), and the rise of the Internet all contributed to the establishment of new cultures in Uzbekistan, mostly among young people. These cultures began widening the generational gap between young people, who were most affected by this process, and the older generation, which was raised within the Soviet-Russian-Uzbek culture and was protected from the new cultures by its infrequent use of new technologies and limited travel to other countries.

Cultural globalization would affect Uzbeks more if free and open media functioned in the country. State TV and newspapers now promote a new defensive ideology that preaches that Uzbekistan is a victim of the West’s conspiracy. The ideology also advocates for a governmental

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<sup>1</sup> Followers of the Unification Church that was founded in South Korea. Followers are often referred to as “Moonies” after their leader, Sun Yung Moon.

alliance with Russia and China. Coverage of Western culture and values is limited in the Uzbek media, especially since the Andijan events and the improvement of relations with Russia. The activity of independent electronic media has been curbed and put under the control and jurisdiction of the NAESMI organization (National Association of Electronic Media), which claims that it is independent from the government but in fact was created by the government to take independent TV and radio stations out of their partnership with the American Internews group. This process was influenced by the president's eldest daughter, Gulnara.

However, the majority of Uzbeks are neither for nor against the West or Russia. On the whole, all of the generations believe that there should be a balanced foreign policy and that normal relations should be maintained both with the West and with Russia, if Uzbekistan can preserve its national colors and peculiarities. The religious sectors of society are naturally supportive of closer relations with the Islamic world. Everyone equally understands the need for closer ties with the countries of Central Asia.

### ***Formation of world opinion***

Most Uzbeks who have been overseas, and especially those in the West, are surprised to discover that not everyone in foreign countries knows about the existence of Uzbekistan. And almost every Uzbek tries to educate his or her new friends about the country. Uzbeks take criticism and negative attitudes painfully, but those who stay in a foreign country for a length of time realize that criticism of a regime does not necessarily equate with criticism of the people and the country.

The Uzbek regime, especially after the Andijan massacre, has developed a very negative attitude toward Western-led globalization because globalization usually intensifies interaction among states and the more the Uzbek government interacts with the Western states, the more its domestic problems become an international concern. This is especially true if each new leader of a Western country sees the same autocratic ruler stay in power in Uzbekistan.

Pressure from international human rights organizations force these leaders to raise Uzbek domestic issues at bilateral and multilateral meetings. Therefore, the Uzbek regime has come to prefer globalization processes led by Russia and China, where questions of internal politics are considered each government's own business. The reason Turkmenistan is criticized little in the international arena is because its leader invokes the country's neutral status and almost never travels, especially to large gatherings. One of the reasons why Karimov opposes Western globalization is because he does not want to be embarrassed as a leader because this could undermine his reputation and position among Uzbeks. The May 2004 EBRD annual meeting in Tashkent was a good lesson for him. Live on TV, at the opening of the meeting, President Karimov looked down like a student as he was "lectured" about democracy by an EBRD official. In contrast, in Russia and China following the Andijan events Karimov was treated with respect and supported, as both Vladimir Putin and Hu Jintao welcomed the measures Karimov took against demonstrators in Andijan. Karimov's actions were a message to the opposition in Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Russia that an alternative to the color revolutions exists.

The use of new technologies has been very influential in shaping world opinion, especially since the Andijan events. Independent media and opposition groups, as well as international human

rights organizations, used the Internet to notify Western governments of the massacre in Andijan and other human rights abuses and torture. In contrast, the Uzbek government, as was noted earlier in the paper, is working with Russian experts to use new technologies to counter these allegations through the “Politika” center and a number of Uzbek and Russian web sites. The only difference between these two sides is that the independent organizations use technology to create a certain world opinion and the Uzbek government uses it to counter this movement.

Almost all people in Uzbekistan who lack access to outside information (due to the practice of online censorship and filtering) are—regardless of their age—less aware of the real situation with regard to global opinion on Uzbekistan. They get most of their news from government-run media organizations and pro-government web sites and therefore believe that there was a conspiracy against the Uzbek government in Andijan in May 2005. To them, this seems particularly plausible given the color revolutions in other CIS countries, including neighboring Kyrgyzstan. So these Uzbeks, influenced mainly by official propaganda, approve the government’s measures because they still do not have accurate information about what happened in Andijan. After hearing the government story about the threat of religious extremism and terrorism in Uzbekistan after the February 1999 and spring and summer of 2004 bombings, many Uzbeks found the government’s response in Andijan adequate and believed the official explanation that “those” in the Ferghana Valley are usually more religious and therefore tend to cause trouble.

It should be noted that the younger generation (those aged 18-25) of Uzbeks have less interest in politics and world affairs, including world opinion of the processes in Uzbekistan. These Uzbeks are more concerned with their schooling, their economic well-being, fashion, their surroundings, and possibilities to go overseas. Their use of mobile phones is limited to long, empty conversations and they use the Internet mainly to make new friends in chat rooms, download songs online, and send e-mails. But there are also some younger generation Uzbeks who, because they are more adventurous and have Uzbek friends studying overseas, try to get information from independent sources and therefore have used e-mail and/or SMS text messages to learn what happened in Andijan and about the global reaction to Andijan. People overseas fed those inside the country with information through e-mail and then recipients distributed this information to their friends, colleagues, and relatives.

Members of the over 45 generation, who are less familiar with new technologies and more concerned with their own security and that of their families, were less receptive to information coming from overseas and independent sources, and therefore were inclined to believe the government’s version—that the Andijan events resulted from a conspiracy of the Western countries led by the United States. Since there is a higher percentage of believers and Islamic resurgence among Uzbeks over the age of 45, the U.S. policy in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Muslim world contributed to their acceptance of the government’s conspiracy scenario. The percentage of believers among the youngest generation may be as high as among the oldest generation because older Uzbeks, although formerly atheist and communist, found it imperative to return to Islam during the general resurgence of religion in the country and also to teach the youngest generation about Islam. For some Uzbeks Islam has been a popular trend, and for others it’s been a comfort; for yet others, it has signified the re-discovery of their forefathers’ religion, or become a vehicle to oppose a government viewed as oppressive. Other generations

may not be as religious as the youngest and oldest generations are because these other groups may be preoccupied with economic problems.

Those Uzbeks who were overseas during the Andijan events, mainly in Europe and the United States, had access to various sources of information about the May killings, witnessed the mounting pressure from the United States and the European Union, and read accounts by Western analysts and policymakers. All of this created a negative attitude toward the Karimov government among overseas Uzbeks. They are concerned about the worsening of relations with the United States and Europe and want these governments to take more aggressive steps to change the situation in Uzbekistan. The majority of these people, however, are also against the use of force or any intervention that would put Uzbekistan in the situation of currently occupied Afghanistan and Iraq.

Negative global opinion of the Uzbek government's policies—both political and economic—has made Uzbeks leave the country. They try to settle overseas and bring their families later, expecting no well-paying jobs in Uzbekistan and a worsening political situation. Most of the time, it is these Uzbeks that feed information to people in Uzbekistan via private channels.

### ***Democratization***

The fourth globalization dimension is democratization. Given the Bush doctrine promoting the advancement of democratic values to other countries, globalization plays an important role as a vehicle to advance those values because globalization processes create more communication, accountability, and certain standards among its participants. The interdependency of globalization also allows for a greater degree of influence to be exerted on participating states. Thus, by promoting all dimensions of the globalization processes, the Bush administration hopes to impose its influence on others and induce them to democratic changes.

The U.S.-Uzbek March 2002 Agreement on Strategic Partnership resulted from military globalization following 9/11. The continuation of the partnership was contingent on Uzbekistan making progress with political and economic reforms. However, once the threat from the Taliban regime was defeated and after the color revolutions occurred in other countries of the former USSR, Tashkent realized that it could no longer stick to the agreement without running risk of a regime change. The revolution in Kyrgyzstan was the last drop in Karimov's cup of patience. Seriously concerned with the possibility of regime change, and viewing the May 13 Andijan demonstrations as the first indication of revolution, Karimov did not hesitate to use force.

President Karimov's reaction to the May 13 events in Andijan carries huge political significance for autocratic regimes in the CIS. His measures were welcomed by Belarus and Russia most of all because the leadership in both of these countries has been accused of authoritarianism and could face color revolutions. Karimov's measures were handy for both Russia and Belarus, where state media preaches to the population about negative revolutionary scenarios in order to dismiss the notion that revolutions in the CIS can only be non-violent and beneficial. Presidents Lukashenko of Belarus and Putin of Russia must have thanked Karimov deep in their hearts for helping to get this message across in their countries. This was a warning to opposition groups of the possible consequences should they try to stage a mass uprising before or after presidential elections in 2006 in Belarus and in 2008 in Russia.

The closure of almost all U.S. NGOs and Western media organizations (such as the BBC and Radio Liberty), arrests of opposition leaders (such as those from the Sunshine Coalition) and independent journalists, as well as closed and public show trials of people accused of organizing the uprising in Andijan are the result of a policy constructed under stress and by a regime scared of losing power, particularly in the face of the successful color revolutions executed in Georgia, Ukraine, and neighboring Kyrgyzstan. The Uzbek government and President Karimov publicly “exposed” the true objectives of democracy-promoting organizations.

Democratization, at least during Bush’s tenure, has come to mean regime change, undermining the Constitutional Order, and attempting to “turn the country back from its right course.” The Uzbek media actively promotes these new connotations of democracy and people inside the country, deprived of alternative sources of information, are inclined to believe the official propaganda. This could be due to the political developments in the CIS, press reports from Russia insisting that the United States wants to topple Karimov, or Karimov’s own assessment of the situation. This perception is also bolstered by U.S. military mistakes in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as the scandal at Abu-Ghraib, and the killing of 18 civilians in Pakistan in Northern Waziristan in an air attack while targeting the alleged hide-out of Ayman al-Zawahiri, and other incidents have given the Uzbek state media a good excuse to “expose” the true American meaning of democracy. The same state media organizations kept silent or justified U.S. and NATO military mistakes in Kosovo in 1999, especially the accidental air attack of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, because at the time relations with the United States were good.

Regardless of their age, actively practicing Muslims in Uzbekistan have been most vulnerable to state propaganda. Their opinion of the Western/U.S. model of democratization is in concert with that of Muslims in other Islamic countries. Although Uzbekistan’s Muslims do not take their disagreements and protests into the streets like Muslims in Iran, Pakistan, or Indonesia—because of Karimov’s concerns with Islam and the Uzbek regime’s secular nature—Uzbek Muslims can be a major factor should Karimov decide to use them in public demonstrations to show Uzbekistan’s rejection of the United States and Europe. However, fearing another “Andijan” and the possibility of losing control of the crowd, Karimov will never allow a public protest with religious tones against the U.S. policies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Karimov has used the Islamic factor as a trump-card to assure some states and his own people that early democratization of society can only hurt the society and cause civil unrest, even unrest that could lead to a takeover by Islamist groups that lack peoples’ political consciousness. However, his concerns—or rather his excuse—regarding radical Islam has lost its validity following the defeat of the Taliban and the IMU after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. According to a well-known expert on political Islam, Alexsey Malashenko (of the Carnegie Endowment in Moscow), the Andijan events were a good test of Islamist groups in Uzbekistan. If such groups indeed enjoyed popular support, they would have seized the opportunity to move the uprising further in the Ferghana Valley to Ferghana City, Namangan, and Kokand. Because they did not achieve this, the Andijan events exposed their weakness, according to Malashenko.

In my paper for the London-based *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, I argued that Uzbeks were far removed from radical and political Islam for the following reasons: The majority of people who lived behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War and that now exist under the

authoritarian Uzbek regime, have been deprived of uncensored information. Uzbekistan blocks news coverage of the Middle East by Islamic sources like Al-Jazeera. Muslims of Uzbekistan get very little information about the lives and struggles of Muslims in the Middle East or elsewhere in the world. It is for this reason that political Islam cannot emerge or survive inside the country. Uzbeks are isolated from politically active Muslim countries and are not affected by the developments in those countries.

Another reason for this situation is Uzbekistan's distant geographic location from conflict zones involving Muslims and representatives of other religions (e.g., the Middle East, Kashmir, and Bosnia). There is no common enemy to consolidate against. Although Uzbekistan is geographically very close to places like Afghanistan and Iran, neither of them has been openly involved in conflict with non-Muslim countries since Uzbekistan's independence. Since the pull-out of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989, all the conflicts in Afghanistan have been intrastate and among various Muslim groups. Uzbeks do not identify with a political structure based on Islam as the preferred political model. The Taliban, for example, was the worst example for Uzbeks of what radical Islam can result in. Relatively low standards of living in Islamic states as compared to those in the West are also important factors in Uzbeks' rejection of radicalization. However, social and economic factors that the government refuses to acknowledge are internal factors increasing the potential politicization and radicalization of Islam in Uzbekistan. The impact of these factors should not be overlooked.<sup>2</sup>

Democratization is a debatable issue for representatives of any generation in Uzbekistan for many reasons, including: 1) Some believe that the notion of democracy is vague; 2) Democratization is interpreted as Westernization and Westernization is, especially in light of the European Union's exclusionist policy toward Turkey, equated with Christianization; 3) Official propaganda against this notion has contributed to these debates; 4) Criticism in the United States and Europe of the Bush administration for lacking a vision and a strategy for victory in Iraq and Afghanistan further complicates the situation; and 5) Since Uzbekistan's independence, Uzbeks have mostly valued economic benefits over political ones. If economic growth does not result from the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks will find the Bush Doctrine of democratization less appealing.

Uzbeks' problems understanding the notion of democracy may be related to the fact that Uzbekistan has never been a democracy, but people living in Central Asia have heard of, and longed for, a the type of just society and just rulers they hear about in old tales and poems of great scholars like Navoi. Historians and chroniclers of many rulers in Central Asia always praised these qualities and the rulers themselves wanted to be described as just. So the notion of democracy must be replaced with the notion of a just society or a just leadership for the people in the Muslim world, including Uzbekistan. This is something that the United States should seriously aim for in public diplomacy efforts headed by Under-Secretary of State Karen Hughes.

If in some Islamic and CIS states the notion of democracy has come to mean a regime change or a military invasion, these states will continue to resist this concept. However, no leader and no country can deny the notion of a just society or just rule, as both are considered universal

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<sup>2</sup> Odil Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan: Implications of 9/11 and Policy Recommendations," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* (London), Vol. 25, No. 1, April 2005, <http://www.imma.org.uk>.

concepts throughout the world. Specifically for Uzbekistan, an ideology that promotes a just society and is empowered by local history, historic facts and tales, poems, stories, and aphorisms of great philosophers could successfully replace the interpretation of democratization that causes irritation and a boomerang effect in the country. Perhaps if this notion carries as much meaning as democracy it will be perceived with cynicism by younger generation Uzbeks, however, it should be realized that by ridiculing the idea of a just society these Uzbeks would be ridiculing the great scholars and historic personalities that they all praise and admire.

### ***Political globalization***

For many years it was Karimov's policy not to join unions and associations of states with political or military objectives. For that reason Uzbekistan left the CIS Agreement on Collective Security; was skeptical about groups such as the Eurasian Economic Community led by Russia; did not join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the beginning; and became less active in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) once it felt that there were indications of the ECO's politicization. The Uzbek leader always put economic interests over political or military concerns. However, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Karimov became involved in the international anti-terror coalition, and joined the GUAM and SCO just prior to that. This change was welcomed by people in Uzbekistan because joining each organization was viewed as an opportunity to bring about economic improvements.

Cool relations with Russia began improving with Putin's rise to power because Putin expressed interest in Central Asia, unlike his predecessor Boris Yeltsin. Russia's renewed interest in Central Asia flattered Karimov. Further, Karimov saw an opportunity to use Russia to counter increasing criticism from the West—not only from George W. Bush's new doctrine and ascendancy to power, but also from the increasing political influence and unified voice of the European Union in the international arena.

In the aftermath of the Andijan events, Uzbekistan ended almost all of its activities in global organizations. After hosting the 2004 EBRD annual meeting in Tashkent—which resulted in the suspension of the Bank's engagement with the government and made future credits contingent upon improvements in political reform and human rights—Tashkent for the first time did not send a delegation to the Bank's annual meeting in 2005. In late 2005, NATO's foreign ministerial summit in Brussels, which also included NATO's partner-states, was also conducted without Uzbekistan, despite the fact that the Afghan issue that Uzbekistan was interested in was high on the agenda. Following Uzbekistan's decision to deny further use of the Khanabad airbase to the United States, Uzbekistan also asked some NATO member-states to stop using Uzbekistan's land and airspace for future operations in Afghanistan. Germany, however, was an exception and was allowed to keep its military presence at the Termez airbase because of historically warm relations between the two countries. This relationship was especially strong under ex-Chancellor Schroeder, who never criticized Putin and Karimov. Uzbekistan has also always supported Germany's candidacy for the UN Security Council's permanent membership, and Germany allowed the ailing ex-Minister of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan, Zokirjon Almatov, to undergo medical treatment for cancer in Germany even though the EU had banned the entrance of key Uzbek officials after the Andijan events. Further, Germany's Federal Prosecutor, Kay Nehm, refused to open a criminal case against Almatov for charges of crimes against humanity, which were filed against him by a group of Uzbek torture victims.

When political globalization connected to the West and the United States came to a halt, Uzbekistan began developing these links with Russia, China, and other CIS states that supported Karimov after the Andijan massacre and invited Uzbekistan to join their organizations. As a result, Karimov and other Central Asian leaders decided to merge the Central Asian Cooperation Organization with the Eurasian Economic Community. It is also possible that Karimov will return to the CIS Agreement on Collective Security. Furthermore, since Andijan, the Uzbek leader has distanced himself from leaders of the revolutionary countries and is focusing on political processes led by Russia and China. Uzbekistan may also follow Russia's example and use its gas resources as leverage to control politics in certain countries, and most of all, in Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine.

Although the majority of Uzbeks of all generations evenly support closer relations with Russia, they do not want these relations to occur at the expense of relations with Europe and the United States. People expect real economic benefits from foreign relations and if ties turn out to be based on narrow personal interests supporting only the regime's security, support for relationship is likely to dwindle.

The U.S. State Department recently re-organized and moved Uzbekistan from the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs to the re-organized South and Central Asian Bureau. It is not yet known how this development will change U.S. policy toward Uzbekistan. However, neither the Uzbek government nor the Uzbek people categorize themselves as part of South Asia—either mentally or politically. There has been little interaction with major South Asian countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan because of the instability in Afghanistan and due to the Uzbek government's mistrust of the Iranian and Pakistani regimes for their alleged support of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Religion and the distant past are the only factors connecting Uzbeks to South Asia. Economically, Uzbekistan has not had active bilateral interactions with countries in the region, and has also avoided interaction through the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Economic Cooperation Organization.

### **Policy Recommendations for the United States**

One of the ways to make the notion of democracy more acceptable and understandable in Uzbekistan is to financially support the creation of a number of Internet projects, including a professional news portal in Uzbek, Russian, and English. In addition to delivering news, this portal would educate its Uzbek Internet users about the notion of democracy as based on conditions on the ground, its localization, and simplification. For example, how would democracy work in the context of a local collective farm and how would it help bring economic benefits? The project should also inform its users about the activities of youth organizations in neighboring countries and educate Uzbeks about their civil and constitutional rights. It should provide commentary from qualified lawyers and/or interpretations of the legality of particular governmental actions and policies.

According to official statistics, today there are about one million Internet users in the country. Although the government is trying to block certain web sites, screen e-mails, and ensure that Internet cafes do not let customers access certain web sites, information from the web travels

through word of mouth fast and extensively. The United States should increase its funding for satellite TV and radio broadcasting to Uzbekistan as well as to Uzbek diasporas in neighboring Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan. Funding should be increased for exchange programs and other educational programs for Uzbek students, scholars, and professionals so that they can come to the United States and witness democracy first-hand.

Networks of young Uzbek professionals in the governmental and private sectors as well as organizations aiming to promote democratic values should be supported both financially and technically. Such networks could include young Uzbeks who have studied in the West, but are still not convinced of the benefits of living in a democratic society.

Efforts to build and shape a pro-Western mentality began 10 years ago with the Freedom Support Act but have been reduced significantly in the past one or two years because of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the attendant diversion of resources. U.S. government educational programs, and especially MA programs such as the Edmund Muskie Fellowship, should be significantly bolstered to promote a pro-Western perspective.

The United States should work with ethnic Uzbeks in neighboring countries to use these Uzbeks' influence and presence to influence their respective governments on issues such as de-mining, the unlawful detention of migrant workers or human rights activists and their possible extradition, and ethnic discrimination. The United States should also bear in mind that many Uzbeks, allegedly four to seven million, are outside of Uzbekistan and many of them are working as migrant workers. If the economic and political situation does not change in Uzbekistan, some of these Uzbeks may prefer to stay in the countries that they have migrated to for work. In that case, in a few years the Uzbek diasporas in those countries may become large enough to be used against the corrupt regime.

The United States should help create an online public opinion project that will assist Uzbeks learning how to exert public pressure on the government of Uzbekistan and on other governments cooperating with the regime against the interests of the general public. A special online project should be created to send to leaders and media representatives of other countries requests to raise human rights issues or some other specific issues during meetings with senior Uzbek officials.

## **Conclusion**

This paper tried to explore attitudes toward globalization and the use of new technologies by members of various generations in Uzbekistan and by the Uzbek government, especially after the Andijan events. Analysis focused on five dimensions: *economic globalization, cultural globalization, the formation of world opinion, democratization, and political globalization.*

In summary, the following conclusions can be made about attitudes toward globalization and the use of new technologies in Uzbekistan:

***Economic globalization***—Economically Uzbekistan did not extract substantial gain from its partnership with Europe or the United States. Uzbeks now hope to use their cooperation with Russia and China to receive economic benefits.

***Cultural globalization***—With new foreign policy realities, Russia will have a tremendous cultural impact. There are rumors that the Russian language may again become a second official language and that there may be a shift from the Latin script back to the Cyrillic script. This is an especially realistic scenario if one takes into account Gulnara Karimova's leading role in her new Uzbek-Russia cultural foundation.

***Formation of world opinion***—Uzbeks' knowledge about the formation of world opinion on Uzbekistan will depend on the level of press freedom in Uzbekistan and the development of new technologies in Uzbekistan. These two factors can efficiently counter state propaganda and, with this in mind, the government will do everything to curb the activities of independent and foreign media organizations, strengthen filtering and censoring of the Internet, further weaken some NGOs, and increase its own capacity to spread propaganda with the help of Russian experts and media groups.

***Democratization***—If the government continues to implement repressive measures against its citizens, Uzbeks will be more open to the notion of democracy, viewing it as a way to get rid of the regime. U.S. successes in Iraq and Afghanistan will also contribute to this outlook. To make the notion of democracy more acceptable to Uzbeks, a new information campaign that replaces democracy with the notion of a "Just Society" should be delivered to Uzbeks.

***Political globalization***—Uzbeks will hail any political globalization processes as long as they do not change the Uzbek way of life and are accompanied by economic dividends. However, with allegedly four to seven million Uzbeks currently residing outside of Uzbekistan (mostly as migrant workers), many Uzbeks may already have been influenced by different cultures, political ideas, and lifestyles. Once most of these Uzbeks return to Uzbekistan, the Uzbek nation may face big cultural and political changes.

***The use of new technologies***—There are almost one million Internet users and over one million cellular subscribers in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan will not avoid the development of new technologies despite the fact that its economy, banking system, and businesses have not been connected to the global system. Despite official statistics that claim that almost 95% of government offices have their own websites, these offices are not up-to-date and do not interact with its users. The government is learning from the Chinese and Russian experiences of monitoring and controlling information on the Internet. However, a natural desire for alternative information, the development of effective proxies, and extensive use of e-mail as a means of spreading information can effectively counter the government's measures.

The government's repressive measures and, most of all, continued refusal to allow an international inquiry into the Andijan killings have brought Uzbekistan's relations with the West to an unprecedented low. Considering that these measures have been presented to the Uzbek people as an effort to secure the regime and to prolong its life, rather than to protect the people of Uzbekistan and the sovereignty of Uzbekistan, the conclusion may be drawn that such a policy

will not exist too long. It will make Uzbekistan a pariah state among the world's most civilized and developed countries and this reputation will lead to dissatisfaction and discontent among the Uzbek *intelligentsia*. A sudden improvement in relations with Russia will not be long-term as the latter will try to extract increasing economic, political, and military benefits in view of Uzbekistan's current situation. Such an aggressive approach, as has been seen in previous years, will not bear expected results for Russia, as the Karimov government will be hesitant to be viewed as though it is in Russia's hands. Karimov is proud to have been the first president of Uzbekistan, bringing independence to its people. He will be very careful not to drop the diadem he wears, but sooner or later he will face a dilemma: who to entrust with his power. There are a lot of candidates, from the current prime minister to Karimov's daughter to someone unknown to the general public to someone negotiable with Russia.

Flourishing businesses in Russia and neighboring Kazakhstan and the growth of oligarchs and rich people in those countries create a natural desire for the same among Uzbek people, especially Uzbeks historically have been recognized for entrepreneurship and developing private businesses. Retail traders want more openness. Those in the older generations still longing for a return of the Soviet times, welcome an alliance pact with Russia and have big expectations for this development. However, the January 20 signing of a \$1.5 billion gas deal between Uzbekistan and Russia's Gazprom exhibited the falseness of one of Karimov's five principles that is taught in Uzbek schools and universities—the priority of economics over politics. This deal demonstrated, as Karimov likes to say, “the change in Uzbekistan's national interests.”

Real security concerns from the late 1990s, when the Taliban was in power in neighboring Afghanistan and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was disturbing Tashkent, have been replaced with the regime's security concerns about color revolutions in the CIS and President Bush's special attention to the necessity of democratic change in corrupt countries. These new concerns will probably dominate Uzbek domestic and foreign politics until the end of Karimov's regime.

The Gazprom deal, the merger of the Central Asian Economic Cooperation organizations with EurAsEC, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization activities have demonstrated that a mini-globalization process is active within the CIS. This process is being led by Russia, with active participation of China. This is representative of a trend to revive the Soviet Union in a new format rather than develop processes led by the United States and Europe.

The general attitude of Uzbeks toward such a shift in foreign policy is not critically negative because since the collapse of the USSR there has been some nostalgia for the Russian presence in Uzbekistan. There is no majority in Uzbekistan that is either for or against the West or Russia. Any processes with Uzbekistan's participation, whether global or regional, will be evaluated and critiqued on the basis of the economic gains they bring to the Uzbeks. This, in turn, will influence whether Uzbeks will embrace a new leadership supported by Russia. With Gazprom being used to achieve political ends, there is a probability that one of the company's top managers, Alisher Usmanov (an ethnic Uzbek who is number 366 on Forbes' 2005 list with \$1.8 billion), may soon become politically active in Uzbekistan.

There is also another factor that should not be overlooked—the Chinese factor. Views on closer relations with China are mixed among Uzbeks, regardless of their generation. Some Uzbeks perceive China as an inevitable economic partner; others despise China for its repressive policies toward Uygur Muslims on the well-known pretext of radical Islam; and other Uzbeks do not take notice of China's activity and presence in the region. The general public is not drawn to China's activities because little information is known about China's policy in Central Asia due to a lack of regional information exchange. All people know is that China is a country with over a billion people and a growing economy. China is known mostly for its low-quality goods that are brought into Uzbekistan by local shuttle-traders. There is little cultural interaction and educational exchange. The alien nature of the Chinese culture and language make Uzbeks unwilling to become interested in it.

Since there is no one coherent generation that would change along the same line, it could be that nothing will affect the generational situation in Uzbekistan. Taking into consideration Uzbekistan's feudal past, the old guard will most likely entrust their wealth and security to the *youth elite*. Whoever has the support of the MVD and SNB may have a higher chance of securing the leadership.

The current political “equilibrium” in Uzbekistan is stable, although the political and socio-economic situation is generally unstable. The Andijan events and the related show trials showed people what may be the consequences of opposing the regime. But, the threat to the regime may not come from the people. It may come from within the elite if some of the elite's powerful members feel that they are being outplayed due to various factors—internal power struggles, business conflicts, conflict with Russia's own plans or from outside, and most likely from Putin. Or, Karimov's changing nature and past political grievances may prompt the Putin regime to get rid of Karimov and install someone less independent and more loyal to Russia. The second scenario is more likely if Karimov objects to certain economic deals, disagrees with the deployment of Russian troops in Uzbekistan if need be, and/or avoids joining the CIS Agreement on Collective Security. If the Putin administration tries to exert extra pressure on Uzbekistan within the framework of Russia's suspected neo-Soviet and revivalist policies and tries to put Uzbekistan into a vertical power structure in a new a-la-USSR organization, Karimov may try to resist Russia's influence and this may prompt a regime change according to the Moscow scenario.

Events like Andijan are possible because no serious economic, social, and political reforms are underway. However, it is less likely that the developments will lead to nation-wide unrest because Karimov showed in Andijan how he can contain such situations and that the next time he will not hesitate to use force and show trials. This type of response is due to many factors: 1) it is in Karimov's nature to be cruel; 2) as post-Andijan rumors suggested, Karimov may not use regular troops or the militia against demonstrators because he may have special forces to use in such situations; 3) Russia and China will encourage and pressure Karimov to use force because what happens in Uzbekistan can later be used by China and Russia as a lesson for their own opposition groups; and 4) after Andijan, Karimov saw the impotence of the international community in terms of making him comply with demands for an international independent inquiry into the Andijan killings, and he would not refrain from using force again now that he knows about the absence of European Union and U.S. enforcement mechanisms.

The political “equilibrium” in Uzbekistan will also depend on how the December 2007 elections are planned and whether Karimov wants to prolong his power like he did in 1995 and 2004, or decides to bring Gulnara Karimova or a Russian-sponsored candidate to power. The status quo may not change if Karimov decides to stay in power. If Gulnara Karimova attempts to become the next leader, the elite will resist because it will not tolerate a young female leader due to traditional and historic factors, and also because of some business conflicts she has had with some members of the elite. Karimov needs a strong man to follow him into power—a man who can guarantee his safety and the status quo. If Russia decides to lobby for its candidate, it will do so with consent either from Karimov or from other members of the regime if Karimov objects to the candidate. It is not known who the Russian candidate would be, but the candidate would probably be male, have a Russian education, have worked for several years in the Russian Federation, and have strong political and business ties and proven loyalty to Russian interests.