

# **A Question of Priorities:**

*US foreign policy towards Uzbekistan 1995-2005*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“Today, America speaks anew to the peoples of the world. All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.”* – President George Bush, second inaugural address, January 2005.

*“Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he’s our son of a bitch”* – President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the authoritarian (but anti-communist) president of Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza Garcia.

As the last US military personnel left the Karshi-Khanabad airbase in the Central Asian country of Uzbekistan on 21 November 2005, policymakers in Washington must have been shaking their heads in dismay. After four years as a staunch and strategically important ally in the war on terror, President Islam Karimov had given the US military an eviction notice, halted all cooperation on counterterrorism, and had begun closing down US-funded nongovernmental organizations operating in the country. The base eviction marked the low point in relations between the two countries, and Washington now has difficulties in advancing any of its policy objectives. These goals had included ensuring the continued use of the airbase at Karshi-Khanabad as a logistics center for US operations in Afghanistan, counterterrorism, non-proliferation, improving the human rights record of the Karimov regime, and fostering democratic change in Uzbekistan in the interest of long-term peace and stability. It was an ambitious agenda and diverse almost to the point of being counterproductive, especially in an area of the world depicted by many analysts as a huge geopolitical chess board. What caused US policy to become so ineffectual across the entire spectrum of its political goals?

### Understanding US foreign policy

Since its creation the United States has represented liberty, freedom and democratic ideals. The philosophical foundations of the country rest on these principles and are embedded in the political and legal framework set forth by the US Constitution. The US is seen by its citizens and leaders to have something unique – a system of government based on the protection of individual rights such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Dobson and March 2001). This idea of the American experience as something special represents an idealized self-image the US collectively holds, where the country feels a responsibility toward the rest of the world (Melby 1995). These rights were cast in universal terms and therefore applied not only to US citizens, but to the rest of humanity as well. The self-

imposed burden of the US, therefore, was to spread this form of “political morality” (Dobson and March 2001: 2). Some political leaders questioned the wisdom of taking on such a missionary role and actively championing the cause of democracy overseas, including John Quincy Adams who said in 1821: “Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will be America’s heart, her benedictions, and her prayers. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy” (quoted in Kissinger 2001:238). Almost a century later, in contrast, President Woodrow Wilson’s firm belief in US exceptionalism laid the foundation for an increased US role in international affairs.

Disagreements over US policy take other forms than the engagement/isolation dichotomy illustrated by Adams and Wilson. Svein Melby (2004) identified four main intellectual lines of conflict consistently running through US foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> First, disagreement stems from a belief by some policymakers that working through international institutions (and a willingness to be bound by them) will always best accomplish foreign policy goals, versus those who see cooperation with those institutions as valuable only when it furthers the interests of the US. Another divergence among policymakers occurs over the use of military and economic tools (hard power) to secure US interests, versus using diplomatic means (soft power). A third disagreement results when those committed to preserving the status quo (i.e. the current political and security arrangement) clash with others intent on changing the international system. Finally, a long-running conflict exists between those striving to remain consistent to the idealistic principles of freedom and democracy (despite some costs to US interests) versus those who see the need to act pragmatically in the unforgiving world of international politics (in order to protect those same interests), as illustrated by the quotations at the beginning of this section.

This final conflict, pitting idealism against pragmatism, suggests a foreign policy compromise whereby a balance is reached between the demands of international *realpolitik* and the normative standards upon which the US was founded. Henry Kissinger wrote in a recent work: “The ultimate dilemma of the statesman is to strike a balance between values and interests and, occasionally, between peace and justice. The dichotomy postulated by many between morality and interest, between idealism and realism, is one of the standard clichés of the ongoing debate over international affairs. No such stark choice is, in fact, available” (Kissinger 2001:286). This thesis seeks to explore how the United States formulates a foreign policy that fuses together the normative goals of a country firmly convinced of its

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to these four conflict areas, Melby (2004) fills out his typology by identifying three main perspectives held by US policymakers: institutionalists (desiring to work through international institutions), realists (desiring pragmatic and *realpolitik* action), and expansionists (focused on spreading American political ideals).

role as the defender of freedom with the pragmatism of a superpower seeking to protect its national interests around the globe. A closer look at US policy decisions regarding a country that presents both challenges and opportunities over a wide range of US interests should help to better understand the dichotomous nature of Washington's policymakers. Uzbekistan is well-suited for just this purpose.

### **Uzbekistan as a litmus test for US policy choices**

Since the five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan became independent, the United States has conducted a multilayered foreign policy towards these countries both collectively and through bilateral arrangements. From the late 1990s onwards, the US nurtured a closer relationship with Uzbekistan for strategic reasons relating to counterterrorism. With the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the conflict in Afghanistan which followed, the importance of the region to US military planners reached new levels as Uzbekistan became a crucial ally in the war on terror. Almost immediately, the Karshi-Khanabad airbase was established in southern Uzbekistan which served as a logistics hub for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Located in the heart of Central Asia, the republic of Uzbekistan drifted steadily towards authoritarianism since its independence from the collapsing Soviet Union in 1991. President Islam Karimov has led the country since rising to the position of First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party just prior to independence, and has consolidated his power through the office of the presidency since that time. Most international observers agree that the Karimov regime does not respect universally-recognized human rights, does not conduct free and fair elections, suppresses free speech, press and assembly by Uzbek citizens, arrests and convicts individuals on political or religious grounds, engages in systematic torture of prisoners, and cannot in any way be regarded as an example of good governance. The US therefore needed to balance its security needs, which depended on the cooperation of the repressive government in Tashkent, with the normative elements so clearly expressed in the speeches by US political leaders. The main question this thesis seeks to answer, therefore, is this:

*How did the United States balance strategic interests, human rights concerns, and democracy promotion in its foreign policy toward Uzbekistan from 1995-2005?*

The advantage of using a country such as Uzbekistan as a sort of litmus test for US policy is precisely due to the consistently poor record of President Karimov's government. It serves as a constant factor

amidst a dynamic security environment that presented an array of fluctuating interests for the US. In the early 1990s, the US saw few if any pressing national interests in the country, but by the end of the decade it saw clear strategic advantages in cultivating Uzbekistan's cooperation on counterterrorism operations. After 11 September 2001 and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, close relations with Uzbekistan provided even greater tactical benefits. US policymakers needed the support and cooperation of the Karimov regime to realize these strategic interests, presenting a potential conflict with other more normative policy goals. How did the incorporation of the normative components of US foreign policy change in relation to the dynamic security environment? Was there change due to a shift in administrations from Presidents Clinton to Bush? How did the sudden emergence of Uzbekistan as a vital ally in the war on terror after September 2001 affect the composition of US policy? These are a few of the questions which should be answered by a focused review of US foreign policy towards Uzbekistan during this period.

### **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis begins with a chapter reviewing the theoretical landscape, and places the research question firmly in the midst of the current international relations theoretical debate – namely the competing perspectives of realism and liberalism. From these two theoretical standpoints, a series of hypotheses are drawn which offer some possible explanations of how US foreign policy was formulated and executed. Each of the next four chapters focuses on a period of US-Uzbek relations, detailing the discussion, formation, and execution of US policy during four crucial junctures in the relationship – times when Washington was forced to make tough choices regarding its interests and how to prioritize them. The empirical data in each chapter is followed by an analysis linking the data back to the question of balancing as well as the theoretical assumptions made earlier. A final concluding chapter sums up the findings, answers the research question and offers some tentative lessons which can be drawn from US actions in Uzbekistan.



## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives**

In order to structure the empirical analysis, some type of theoretical framework is necessary. The two major traditional conceptualizations of international relations chosen for this thesis represent an ongoing academic debate – realism versus liberalism. By their very nature, such theories are oversimplifications and by themselves cannot hope to represent the complex nature of world politics. Rather, each offers a guideline and a set of principles on which assumptions can be based and empirical studies structured. Rather than testing the validity of one particular theoretical perspective over another, the role of theory in this thesis will be simply to frame the debate and provide some insight into the actions of various foreign policy actors. These two theories were chosen primarily because of their relevance to the research question, the anticipated explanatory power offered by the two perspectives, and the active debate surrounding their usefulness in explaining the post-Cold War world. In this chapter, each theory will be presented along with the theory-generated hypotheses to be tested against the empirical data.

### **2.1 Theoretical perspectives: classical realism**

The classical realist perspective represents one way to approach the empirical data. The publication of *Politics among Nations* in 1948 established Hans Morgenthau as one of the main founders of the realist school and of the systematic study of international relations as a whole. Various branches of realism have developed over the years, presenting conceptual and definitional challenges and leading to confusion over exactly which set of presumptions are meant by the term ‘realism’. In this thesis, Morgenthau’s brand of classical realism makes up the principle component of my conceptual framework. Those concepts which most realists consider common ground are then used to support this perspective. The neorealist perspective will be briefly addressed after this discussion.

#### **Basic tenants of classical realism**

*States are rational, unitary actors.* States are the principle actors in the international system according to realists. This basic assumption precludes any real impact from such actors as international organizations, transnational corporations, or non-governmental organizations. Realists might acknowledge their existence, but deny that these actors have much effect on the dynamics of the system. The state is a unitary actor which speaks with one voice in its foreign policy; disagreements at the domestic level are sorted out so that only one policy is presented to the world (Rosenau and Durfee 1995). Realists also assume states to be rational actors. State policy results from a decision-making process where all possible actions and outcomes are considered and the best course of action – that is, the action most likely to provide maximum benefit – is chosen. Rationality entails having preferences

and acting in such a manner as to maximize those preferences or goals. Policy-makers can therefore rank and prioritize the goals of the state. Security will always rank highest, but less important concerns may be addressed once the highest ranked preferences are satisfied (*ibid*).

*Human nature is malevolent and the system is characterized by anarchy.* With the state as the primary actor, realists point to an innate desire to dominate within humans which characterizes how these states act. Classical realists saw human nature as basically malevolent and having a desire to dominate. This assumption leads realists to a Hobbesian view of the world, one typified by anarchy where states seek to survive through self-help. The lack of any global authority to maintain order leads states to secure their own survival. E.H. Carr wrote “Realism tends to emphasize the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to these forces and these tendencies” (quoted in Mearsheimer 2002).

*Interests are defined as power.* In this anarchical system full of states which – due to human nature – are power hungry, the means of survival is power. Morgenthau claims that “statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power” (Morgenthau 1968:5). This concept is central to the realist perspective. International politics, according to Morgenthau, is a struggle for power. Regardless of the goals defined by statesmen, power is the means by which they are ultimately achieved. His concept of power is a broad one, and “its content and the manner of its use are determined by the political and cultural environment” (Morgenthau 1968:9). A broad concept of power leads to an equally opaque concept of interest. Although interests are defined as power, “the kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated” (Morgenthau 1968:8) The survival of the state is paramount, however.

Morgenthau’s “interest defined as power” phrase has been interpreted two ways. First, interest and power can be defined in military and material terms, resulting in the characterization of international politics as a struggle for material power (Williams 2004). Scholars such as John Mearsheimer support this reading of Morgenthau. In terms of material factors, the power of a state is comprised of such things as population, territory, natural resources, economic and military capabilities, political stability and diplomatic competence (Morgenthau 1968, Waltz 1979). A second interpretation of Morgenthau reasons that if power is necessary to pursue the state’s interests then power itself becomes a (universal) goal of states (*ibid*). With an innate drive to pursue power exclusively, states motivations and intentions are therefore more predictable.

*A balance of power arises.* Realists see the prospects for order and peace arising through a balance of power between the most powerful states, a situation which affects how states behave. Classical realists see human nature and the state's struggle for survival in an anarchical system as explaining and limiting their behavior. States seek power naturally and wars are a natural aspect and continuation of statecraft. This idea was most famously stated by Carl von Clausewitz, who noted that "war is a mere continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz 1982:119). When the powers of the strongest states are in balance, peace and stability can result. A balance of power can arise naturally, but does not necessarily dictate how states will act. In this view, states have some flexibility in how they go about seeking power and responding to other states in the system.

The neorealist perspective, first articulated by Kenneth Waltz in his *Theory of International Politics* (1979), emphasizes the structure and relative power gains of the international system in order to explain state behavior. Sometimes referred to as structural realism due to this focus, neorealism understands global politics in a context of power-balancing between states. Waltz observes that in Morgenthau's theory "one finds much said about foreign policy and little about international politics" (Waltz 1995:77). The neorealist perspective looks more at the system level instead of at the state level.

In classical realism, the balance of power system can arise naturally, but then constrains the actions of the state. In Waltz's neorealist view, this power balancing is a certainty; states seek to preserve their power by attempting to maintain the status quo (the current balance of power). A state's attempts to increase its power will otherwise be met by balancing actions by other states. This leads to the 'security dilemma', another central concept in realist thought first formulated by John Hertz (1950). A state's acquisition of more power leads to concern in other states, which then add to their power base and create a vicious cycle. Mearsheimer's offensive realism views states as seeking power in the belief that maximizing their power means maximizing their security, and according to this perspective each state aspires to hegemonic status (Mearsheimer 2002).

In both neorealist perspectives, then, the structure of the system determines state behavior and competition for power. It can be argued that this precludes any real 'choice' by policy-makers, who are seen by neorealists as simply trying to guide state actions according to the current balance of power system. Classical realists also see a balance of power system forming, but understand states' motivations to be primarily self-interested, and therefore less concerned with the systemic level. This thesis, most interested in foreign policy and decisions made by policy-makers at the state level, therefore finds the assumptions of classical realism a more useful analytical tool.

*Morality in realist paradigm is problematic.* All realists agree that morality plays little part in international politics. Morgenthau maintains that a state's actions should be measured by the consequences of its policies rather than by universal moral principles. Individuals may sacrifice themselves for moral principle, but states – responsible for their citizen's welfare – cannot afford to, and must always act in a prudent manner guided by the moral principle of national survival (Morgenthau 1968). A related point for Morgenthau is that no state is morally superior to another. Each state should judge the others by the same standards and pursue policies that “respect the interests of other nations, while protecting and promoting those of our own” (*ibid*:11). In this view, “all states are basically little black boxes that behave in the same way” and there is no way to “discriminate between morally virtuous states and malign states in the international system.” (Mearsheimer 2002)

Any discussion of human rights, democracy promotion or other normative ideals is problematic within the realist paradigm. Mearsheimer explained once in an interview that, with its preoccupation of power and national interest, there is “not much place for human rights and values in the realist story” (Kiesler 2002). Security interests take precedence over all other interests, where a state's security interests can be assumed to be anything related to those material and non-material factors which comprise a state's power. In a book examining the increased relevance of norms and value-based interests in international politics, Janne Haaland Matlary (2002:96) admits that “clearly much, if not most, political activity is instrumental: values are promoted because it looks good”.

Therefore, if the actions of the United States in Uzbekistan were to follow the tenants of classical realism, there may be rhetorical evidence of human rights and democracy concerns in US foreign policy, but little concrete action behind it. The actions and direction of US foreign policy would be guided solely on furthering the country's security interests. This leads to the first hypothesis to be tested:

*H1: Human rights and democracy issues have no substantive influence on US foreign policy and are present only for symbolic and instrumental purposes.*

### **Realism and Human Rights**

These same realists also acknowledge the existence of normative ideals even if they are trumped by security issues. Henry Kissinger warned against becoming preoccupied with stability, where “an excessively pragmatic policy will be empty of vision and humanity” (Kissinger 1974:259).

Nevertheless, he goes on to note that policy-makers must make compromises and focus on that which is possible to accomplish, and pragmatism must be the order of the day (*ibid*). Morgenthau's brand of realism leaves much open to interpretation, especially in arriving at firm conceptualizations of power and therefore national interest. Foreign policy goals "can run the whole gamut of objectives any nation has ever pursued or might possibly pursue" (Morgenthau 1968:9). His insistence that foreign policy goals are broadly defined and dependent on present circumstances leaves an opening for non-security interests to be incorporated into foreign policy goals if it furthers the security of the state. According to Mearsheimer, non-security interests may be incorporated into a state's foreign policy if they do not conflict with the state's primary goals of power and security (Mearsheimer 2001:46).

This reflects the rationality aspect of realism. Rationality is by definition transitive in nature, meaning that states rank their preferences and formulate policies based on those rankings. While security issues are always given the highest priority, are there matters of national interest lower down on the list which might be tended to if the state's security is assured? This broader concept of national interest leads to the second hypothesis, which incorporates the previous discussion of classical realism while allowing for the inclusion of non-security interests when appropriate:

*H2: Human rights and democracy promotion are present in US foreign policy, but are subordinated when in conflict with the United States' strategic interests.*

### **Words versus deeds in US foreign policy**

As some analysts have pointed out, the rhetoric emanating from the White House and the State Department can hardly be described as the language of *realpolitik*, such that realists would use. After the terrorist attacks of September 2001, President George W. Bush characterized the fight against terrorism as "the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom" (Bush 2001). The National Security Strategy of the United States (2002) lists "political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity" as the recipe "to help make the world not just safer but better". In his second inaugural address, Bush proclaimed: "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world" (Bush 2005). How can such language be explained?

Proponents of realism maintain that the United States presents itself in an idealistic manner while acting in accordance to realist principles. With its overwhelming focus on power and national security,

however, realism has always been unpopular with the United States public, which has been raised on the idea of an American moral mission. Founded on principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, Americans view these moral elements as universal and perceive the mission of the US to be the propagation of these principles, as discussed in the previous chapter (Dobson and Marsh 2001). US foreign policy is therefore usually framed in idealistic and moral terms, while, according to Mearsheimer, “the elites who make national security policy speak mostly the language of power not that of principle, and the United States acts in the international system according to the dictates of realist logic. In essence, a discernable gap separates public rhetoric from the actual conduct of American foreign policy” (Mearsheimer 2002). Morgenthau makes a similar point, observing that “politicians have an ineradicable tendency to deceive themselves about what they are doing by referring to their policies not in terms of power but in terms of either ethical and legal principles or biological necessities” (Morgenthau 1968:84).

The other alternative, of course, is that the United States does in fact include normative, idealistic elements in its foreign policy. Colin Dueck (2004) suggests that during the election campaign candidate Bush distanced himself from the seemingly idealistic and multilateral approach of the Clinton years, while as president Bush has gradually reincorporated idealistic elements into his foreign policy. An analysis of statements made by leading members of the Bush Administration reached a similar conclusion, that the US has “trumpeted” its “commitment to freedom, human rights and good relations among the major powers” since 9/11 (Mazarr 2003:519). Consistently recognizing the importance of (and actively promoting) human rights and democratic principles alongside security issues runs counter to the tenants of realist thought, which therefore offers little explanation for such observations. The soaring language of the Bush Administration points toward the academic archrival of realist thought – liberalism.

## **2.2 Theoretical Perspectives: Liberalism**

Rooted in the eighteenth century Enlightenment writings of Charles Montesquieu and Immanuel Kant, liberal thought reflects an optimism regarding the individual and human nature where rational, educated people are able to join together to create a civil society (Mingst 2004). Historically, liberal theory has contained a strong idealistic element of progress. This was most clearly seen in the almost utopian optimism after World War One exemplified by US President Woodrow Wilson. Since then, some liberals have moved away from this Wilsonian idealism and incorporated more elements of realism in their theories, blurring the lines between the two perspectives. Robert Keohane’s theory of neoliberal institutionalism arguably falls into this category (Keohane 1989).

The main elements of liberalist thought presented here follow those laid out in a 1997 article by Andrew Moravcsik, where he attempted to reformulate liberalism into a more workable theoretical approach. Just as realist thought has evolved and branched into various subsets, liberalism also cannot be considered one unified theory. After a summary of those theoretical assumptions agreed upon by all liberals, some of the main strands of liberalist thought will be mentioned before presenting the one most analytically useful for this thesis.

### **Basic tenants of Liberalism**

*The main actors are rational individuals who seek to cooperate.* Liberal theorists agree that the main analytical focus is the individual. As rational beings with many common interests, individuals recognize that cooperation is mutually advantageous. Thus, collective action leads to progress which is beneficial for all. In marked contrast to the gloomy pessimism of the realist paradigm, liberals tend to take a more optimistic view of human nature, where “human reason can triumph over human fear and the lust for power” (Jackson and Sørensen 2003:107). Progress, defined in either economic or social terms, is a central concept in liberal thought and always centers on individual happiness (*ibid*). Despite an overwhelming focus on the individual actor, “liberals view states as the most important collective actors in our present era, but they are seen as *pluralistic actors* who whose interests and policies are determined by bargaining among groups and elections” (Zacher and Matthew 1995:118, original emphasis).

*States are seen as securing individual freedoms through representative institutions, thereby reflecting the interests of its citizens.* According to Doyle (1983:206), “liberalism has been identified with an essential principle – the importance of the freedom of the individual”. These freedoms can only be guaranteed through a system of representative government, because “in those areas of social action where public authority is needed, public legislation has to reflect the will of the citizens making laws for their own community” (*ibid*:207). The representative form of government, according to liberals, enforces the rule of law which secures the rights of its citizens. A representative government also means that the state’s interests are a reflection of those held by individuals and groups in the society. Traditionally, liberals promote this normative view of the state, where its institutions are responsive to and protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens (i.e. democratic).

Moravcsik (1997) offers another version of the same concept: representation must be seen over a spectrum since some groups or individuals are able to influence state policies more than others, even in

democracies. Democratic states represent a broad range of individual interests while authoritarian governments favor only a few groups or, in the case of dictatorship perhaps even just one individual. For Moravcsik, the extent of institutional representativeness in a state affects how it behaves in the international system: “Between theoretical extremes of tyranny and democracy, many representative institutions and practices exist, each of which privileges particular demands; hence the nature of state institutions, alongside societal interests themselves, is a key determinant of what states do internationally” (*ibid*:518).

*International relations are characterized by a system of interdependent states, and each state is constrained by the preferences of the other states in the system.* Liberal theorists seem to agree that there is an element of interconnectedness in the international system. Liberals are uncomfortable with the simple description of the international system as anarchical (Zacher and Matthews 1995). This can explain why states engage in cooperative behaviors, for example, or the absence of conflict between states. Again, Moravcsik expands and develops the basic liberal concept of interdependence by focusing on state preferences. Each state in the system must take into account the preferences of other states in pursuing their own foreign policy goals, and this policy interdependence is represented by a set of costs and benefits for each actor (Moravcsik 1997). Power and power politics are about “resolve or determination – the *willingness* of governments to mobilize and expend social resources for foreign policy purposes” (Moravcsik 1997:524, original emphasis). This conceptualization allows for a broader range of interactions between states which can include diplomacy, bargaining, and cooperation as well as conflict and war.

### **Strands of Liberalism**

Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen (2003) have developed a typology of liberalist thought that includes four strands, while Mark Zacher and Richard Matthews (1995) distinguish between six distinct strands. Presented here are those four which both sets of authors have in common. The first of these strands is *sociological liberalism*, which emphasizes relations not only between national governments, but between individuals, groups and societies as well – a focus which led some to refer to liberalism as ‘pluralism’. These relationships are more conducive to cooperation due to the overlapping interests present in society and lead to a more peaceful world (Jackson and Sørensen 2003). Themes which sociological liberals have taken up include political integration and transnational relations; the scholar most identified with this is Karl Deutsch, who focused on the influence of communications flows and cultural patterns in IR (Zacher and Matthews 1995).



*Interdependence liberalism* suggests that modernization creates more complex transnational relations (economic, political and social), leading to interdependence between states and a more peaceful world. This ‘complex interdependence’ means “economic development and foreign trade are more adequate and less costly means of achieving prominence and prosperity” than military force (Jackson and Sørensen 2003:112). Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye’s book *Power and Interdependence* (1977) is a central work. Zacher and Matthew (1995) divide this type of liberalism further into commercial liberalism (where economic exchanges lead to interdependence) and military liberalism (where military technology has become so deadly and costly that peace becomes advantageous to all).

*Institutional liberals* see the role of institutions and international organizations as a way to constrain powerful states and promote interstate cooperation. The information obtained through institutional frameworks, as well as the predictability offered by them, provides states with incentives to cooperate and thereby alleviating the problems presented by anarchy in the system (*ibid*). This perspective seems to have a place in both realism and liberalism. Neoliberal institutionalism, which is most associated with Robert Keohane, can be seen as an extension of neorealism. States are assumed to be the primary actors, they are rational, and pursue self interest – all assumptions of neorealism. Only institutional theory sees the possibility for international cooperation through institutions as a way of reducing transaction costs and providing some predictability and stability to the system. As Keohane and Lisa Martin (1999:2) admit, “for better or worse, institutional theory is a half-sibling of neorealism”. Another associated branch of institutional liberalism, also with roots in both realism and liberalism, is the English School. This perspective maintains that a common set of rules and institutions connect the international society of states, though even this school contains a split which deals with the motivations of states in adhering to these rule and institutions (Zacher and Matthew 1995).

*Republican liberalism* in its most basic form promotes the idea that states with a democratic form of government do not fight each other. Therefore, the spread of democracy equals the spread of peace in the international system. Immanuel Kant’s 1795 work *Perpetual Peace* first set forth the concept of a democratic peace. Kant suggested a three stage process: states would adopt a republican form of government, establish a federation of free states which would ensure the rights of peoples and nations, and finally institute a system of “universal hospitality” which promotes commerce and thus interdependence (Kant 2003:8-15).

This relates directly back to Moravcsik’s earlier point about state preferences being comprised of the interests of individuals and groups in society. Democracies are less apt to high cost/high risk behaviors

“because influence is placed in the hands of those who must expend blood and treasure and the leaders they choose” (Moravcsik 1997:531). In Zacher and Matthew’s (1995) survey of republican liberalist works, similar themes appear: political parties in a democracy tend to take moderate, risk-averse positions in order to gain wider appeal, and diverse interests groups have difficulty uniting in support of war. In addition, the transparent nature of democracy reduces the chances of wars being started due to misconceptions or poor information about state intentions (Zacher and Matthew 1995). In this perspective, trade is a better and more reliable method of acquiring wealth than war.

There is therefore an undeniable normative element in republican liberalism that sees the trend toward democratization as a trend toward world peace and cooperation, and republican liberals “see it as their responsibility to promote democracy worldwide, for in doing so they are promoting peace” (Jackson and Sørensen 2003:121). This sense of mission fits neatly into the earlier discussion of the United States’ moral mission and statements by President Bush. Republican liberalism most closely resembles the type of language often used by US politicians and diplomats. Therefore, the third and final hypothesis incorporates the basic elements of liberalism and the specific standpoint of republican liberalism:

*H3: The United States always prioritizes human rights and democracy promotion in its foreign policy, viewing these issues as an integral part of its moral mission while simultaneously enhancing its own security.*

### **2.3 Operationalizations: actors, foreign policy, prioritization, security, human rights**

#### *US foreign policy and the actors involved*

A study of US foreign policy must first address the question of what exactly makes up the foreign policy of the United States and its principle actors. The three branches of the US federal government are the legislative (Congress, which makes the laws), the executive (the president, who enforces the laws), and the judicial (the courts, which interprets the laws). According to the US Constitution, the president is designated the chief diplomat and therefore given the power to make diplomatic appointments, negotiate treaties and set policy through speeches (Dobson and Marsh 2001). The US Congress, on the other hand, has tended to act in an oversight capacity. The legislature allows the president a great deal of leeway in conducting the country’s foreign policy, and exercises its power mostly through control of the purse strings – all spending bills must be approved by Congress. The Congress (more specifically the US Senate) also must confirm diplomatic appointments and ratify

treaties, acting as another limitation to presidential power (*ibid*). The judiciary plays little role in the formation and implementation of foreign policy.

The executive branch has become increasingly powerful within the past decades, due to a professed need to respond quickly to rapidly developing events around the world and the inherent inability of a legislature to act quickly and decisively.<sup>2</sup> A popular president with congressional support can act in almost any way he sees fit, while a White House which faces a combative Congress may be limited by which foreign policy initiatives the legislature is willing to fund. While the president is responsible for most US foreign policy decisions, therefore, it is dependent on the Congress to fund them. Apart from possible disagreements between the president and Congress on foreign policy issues, the president and his Cabinet and staff do not necessarily constitute a united front on foreign policy either. There are repeated instances of disagreement or outright quarrels between cabinet secretaries and diplomats on the direction of US foreign policy. This does not necessarily endorse a more liberalist interpretation, which emphasizes interest groups and debate as the main process by which foreign policy is formed. The realist position, as was stated earlier, simply assumes that this process has been completed before presenting a unified policy to the world. The domestic processes behind policy formation are, according to realists, irrelevant compared to the final product – the policies themselves.

Therefore, the foreign policy of the United States can be said to consist of the actions of the president and his Cabinet, including policy speeches and written statements, diplomatic negotiations, foreign operations budget proposals which require congressional approval, and other executive actions not requiring congressional consent. The US Congress contributes to and influences foreign policy primarily through foreign appropriations legislation and oversight authority in the form of hearings, treaty ratification, congressional fact-finding investigations, and official visits.

### *Prioritizing interests in foreign policy*

For this thesis, the expenditure of foreign assistance dollars and the use of political capital are the two primary indicators of whether an issue is made a US foreign policy priority. The first indicator is a straightforward observation of how much of the United States budget was devoted to programs which address and/or promote a particular issue. The second indicator is less quantifiable, and deals with what the US was willing to sacrifice in order to pursue a particular issue – what did it cost the US

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<sup>2</sup> Some historians have warned of the dangers of the executive branch wielding so much power. See for example Schlesinger (1974). To give just one example, only Congress has the power to declare war, but recent conflicts have been conducted without a formal declaration and thereby transferring more power to the executive branch.

politically? Did the US take actions which displeased allies, led to diplomatic crises, or forced the US to compromise or negotiate on other issues because of the prioritization? Both indicators deal with cost. Pursuing US interests when they are cost-free is painless and requires little prioritization, while continuing to pursue the same interests at some cost reveals their importance. Connecting the above discussion of foreign policy actions to that of prioritization, this thesis will examine the concrete actions of the United States and look for prioritization of the issues of human rights, democracy and security using the indicators of US dollars spent and political capital expended.

Neither are perfect measures of prioritization and preference in foreign policy. The director of one nongovernmental organization in Uzbekistan acknowledged that oftentimes the phrase ‘less is more’ applies to democracy assistance (interview Tashkent, March 2006). An overabundance of cash can attract the participation of those more interested in economic gain than democratic reform, while low levels of funding ensure participants’ sincerity and commitment to democratic ideals. Military assistance is equally complex and US-implemented training programs often contain training on human rights principles.<sup>3</sup> The ease of measuring the availability and expenditure of political capital also varies considerably. In many instances, a conscious choice not to press a country on matters of interest to the US (in other words, a failure to spend political capital) is easier to spot than its use in private diplomacy where the effects (the possible gain or loss to US interests) are difficult to identify and attribute to one specific act. Therefore, while both funding levels and use of political capital (or lack of it) are employed as measures of US priorities in this thesis, quite simply because they are the best indicators publicly available, these types of measurements should not be considered by any means absolute.

### *Pursuing security interests*

How security interests are defined depends on the theoretical perspective being applied. As mentioned earlier, classical realists are preoccupied with military capability and other factors which make up their power base. Any threat to these sources of power, or threats to the sovereignty of the state, can constitute a security concern and can be prioritized by the US. The end of the Cold War, however, has led some scholars to question the usefulness of a purely military/materialistic approach to security issues. Non-traditional threats in the form of terrorism, crime, uncontrolled immigration, environmental disasters, and economic crises are increasingly viewed as security issues (Baldwin

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<sup>3</sup> Some analysts argue, as Kurt Meppen (2006) does, that military training by Western countries can be useful in spreading democratic ideals and respect for human rights, while others, including Carothers (1999) point to abuses by military units led by US-trained commanders in Turkey, Indonesia, and throughout Central America as counterexamples.

1995). This type of security concern – and the dynamic nature of security in general – is more easily incorporated into the liberalist perspective.

According to liberals, national interests are determined by the interests of individuals and groups within the society. In this perspective a state's representative institutions (and therefore its interests) are “constantly subject to capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction by coalitions of social actors” (Moravcsik 1997:518). Therefore, “in a democracy, the national interest is simply what citizens, after proper deliberation, say it is (...) It is broader than vital security interests” (Nye 2002:139). So while classical realism addresses security issues in purely materialistic terms of capabilities, liberalism sees a dynamic process where security issues are fluid and dependent on which actors are most effective in influencing foreign policy. This is not to say that liberals would not agree with realists on what constitutes a security threat at any given time, only that the security concerns of realists are fixed: survival of the state and protection of the state's national interests. The liberal view of security interests most likely includes this as well, but interprets the state's national interests more broadly.

#### *Promoting human rights*

Although the United States has long professed an interest in promoting human rights and democracy, the appearance of these issues in a concrete way in American foreign policy is more recent. While the post-war Marshall Plan (1948-51) infused Europe with development dollars from the United States (with the intention of rebuilding the continent as a bulwark against the Soviets), US development aid was not institutionalized until the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act which established the US Agency for International Development (USAID website). This institutionalizing process continued under Presidents Carter, Reagan and Clinton (Carothers 2004). The existence of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in the US executive branch, along with legal requirements concerning human rights and foreign aid, ensure that normative issues are a well-established component of US policy. That the United States funds efforts in other sovereign states with the goal of promoting internal changes to their system of government should not be simply taken for granted. It is a significant international development that alters the substance of foreign policy.

Attention to human rights has become increasingly prevalent in foreign policy. As Janne Haaland Matlary noted, “with the democratization of foreign policy and transparency of business life, there has arisen a great interest in *human rights*. The *legitimation* and *justification* of foreign policy which are offered are increasingly those of human rights” (Matlary 2002:5, original emphasis). States which do

not protect the human rights of its citizens (human security) – states which are authoritarian in nature or failed states – are considered less legitimate by the international community (Matlary 2002). The standard of Westphalian non-intervention, where the sanctity of the sovereign state is paramount, has shifted. Therefore, it is becoming more accepted that the West intervenes in these states to promote human rights, not through the hard power tool of military force, rather “the tools that are used in foreign policy are the other ones: diplomacy, cooperation, criticism in bilateral and multilateral contexts, etc. These tools are called here ‘soft’ power tools” (Matlary 2002:31). The United States not only uses the rhetoric of human rights to justify policies, it actively promotes them through diplomatic efforts. This trend has resulted in a multifaceted foreign policy which incorporates normative goals alongside more traditional national interests, and therefore an increasing pressure to balance them.

If one maintains that a normative issue such as human rights is prioritized over other foreign policy goals, how might it be expressed in concrete policy choices? What type of actions can one expect to see in the empirical data? A thorough analysis of this can be found in a collection of case studies published in 2004 entitled *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy* (Debra Liang-Fenton, editor). In the concluding chapter, aptly titled “What Works?”, Liang-Fenton lists nine tools used by US policymakers: private and public diplomacy, country reports by the US State Department, congressional actions, cultural and scholarly exchanges, sanctions and incentives, democracy building, symbolic actions, and use of the media (Liang-Fenton 2004:436). Activity on these fronts can constitute an active human rights agenda and would be the type of policy choices seen in US foreign policy towards Uzbekistan if such issues are prioritized.

### *Promoting democracy*

Just as human rights are a relatively recent addition to US foreign policy, so too is the methodical pursuit of building and strengthening democracies outside the US. The promotion of democratic ideals and institutions as a component of US foreign policy, set in motion in the 1960s under President Kennedy as a way to combat communism, gradually became institutionalized over the following decades (Carothers 1999). The three categories of what Thomas Carothers refers to as the US “democracy template” are elections, institutions, and civil society (Carothers 1999:66). Programs within these categories may include electoral aid, legislative assistance, nongovernmental organization (NGO) development and media support (*ibid*). In a country like Uzbekistan, an authoritarian state with few functioning democratic institutions, programs to strengthen civil society are emphasized with the goal of laying a foundation for the development of a democratic society in the future.

The main conduit of democracy aid from the US government is through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), an independent agency within the federal government. As mentioned earlier, other departments also have a democracy component in their programs, including the Defense Department. The majority of democracy promotion aid, however, is represented in the yearly USAID budgets, which will be used to determine the levels of aid for these programs. The complex process of valuating the effectiveness of democracy building strategies falls outside the focus of this thesis, and it will be assumed that US policymakers believed USAID programs represented a reasonably good approach. Apart from USAID funding levels, commitment to democracy promotion will be measured by observing the amount of diplomatic pressure placed on the Uzbek government to institute reforms and criticisms leveled at the regime when such steps are not taken.

#### **2.4 Choice of empirical limitations and level of analysis**

This thesis is a case study of United States foreign policy towards Uzbekistan during the period 1995-2005. Due to the authoritarian nature of the regime and US strategic interests in the country, this relationship provides a perfect 'test case' for US foreign policy with regard to balancing interests. The year 1995 marks the beginning of a more active US role in Uzbekistan, including the first year some military aid was granted, Uzbekistan's initial participation in NATO-led military exercises, and the visit to Tashkent by Defense Secretary William Perry. The thesis includes the ending date of 2005 in order to capture recent developments, especially the Karshi-Khanabad base eviction, which may be useful in shedding light on US policy choices. With the theoretical framework in place, the terms operationalized, and the hypotheses ready to be tested, a thorough examination of the empirical data will be undertaken. The time period 1995-2005 will be divided into four segments. Each period deals with an important juncture in US-Uzbek relations, where policy decisions were made which reveal how the issues of human rights, democratization, and security were prioritized.

The main level of analysis looks at interaction on the state level rather than on a systemic or individual one, an appropriate approach for a study of a state's foreign policy. However, Uzbekistan is an authoritarian state and the will of President Karimov is nearly synonymous with the policies of the Uzbek government. By the same token, the personalized nature and power given to the US executive branch – one where the president is given substantial freedom to conduct US policy as he sees fit – also makes US foreign policy individualistic. Therefore, while the state remains the main level of analysis, the analytical structure of the thesis will be flexible enough to incorporate the individual level of analysis as well.

## **2.5 Research design: Choice of method, validity and reliability concerns**

In qualitative research such as this, the correct research design choices contribute to a successful study with valid, reliable results. Three types of validity are significant to this study: construct, internal, and external validity (Yin 2003). Construct validity, which involves the correct operationalization of the variables, is a concern in this study when working with the concepts of *human rights*, *democracy promotion*, *security interests*, and the idea of ‘*prioritizing*’. Although one advantage of qualitative research lies in its flexibility with regard to proceeding without completely firm definitions and quantifiable variables, a clear working terminology allows the empirical data to be measured as accurately as possible. The present study is particularly well-suited to identify and measure changes in policy due to anticipated changes in the political situation over the time period studied.

The internal validity of a study depends on the strength of the causal relationships upon which the study’s logic depends (Yin 2003). Although the project at hand does not focus primarily on any causal connections, the general framework of the study rests on a series of inferences which may be vulnerable to internal validity problems. Assumptions are derived from the theoretical perspectives of realism and liberalism as to the origins of foreign policy, the choices available to policymakers, and the subsequent effect of those choices on the historical record. By closely following the theoretical assumptions of realism and liberalism during the analysis, this consistency should allay any issues of internal validity.

External validity, defined by Robert Yin (2003) as whether a study can be generalized beyond the case study in question, addresses another weakness of this design. Since the study focuses on just a single case, US-Uzbek relations from 1995-2005, broad generalizations about American foreign policy may be less appropriate. However, this case may be considered a ‘test case’ to determine if and how the United States balanced the interests of human rights, democracy, and security in its foreign policy. By focusing in detail on this specific case, generalization might be made as to how the US would react in other instances where such balancing was necessary. In addition, the use of theory strengthens the project. Consistency with either classical realism or republican liberalism allows comparison with other studies of US foreign policy using these perspectives and achieving similar results.

A final test of the study’s strength lies in its reliability, which relates to any errors and biases in the research. The objective here, according to Yin (2003) is that other researchers are able to conduct the exact same study and arrive at the same results. Thorough documentation throughout the thesis-writing process should minimize reliability problems.



## **2.6 A note on source material**

An attempt will be made to rely on primary source material whenever possible. Sources on American policy are found within State Department documents and press releases, executive orders, presidential determinations, speeches, press releases and press conferences from the Clinton and Bush administration. Congressional hearings are especially useful in demonstrating the debate surrounding a particular policy and the interaction between the administrations and Congress. Concrete actions (as discussed in previous sections) taken by the principle actors will be documented by independent media sources based in a variety of countries such as the BBC, the Washington Post, the International Herald Tribune and the Asia Times. Online resources include [Centralasianews.net](http://Centralasianews.net) and [Eurasianet.org](http://Eurasianet.org), for example, which provide up-to-date information along with analysis. Non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Crisis Group provide useful information and independent verification of situations and events which government sources are less forthcoming in providing.

Lastly, two weeks of field research in Tashkent, Uzbekistan added perspective to the thesis and allow for a more detailed picture of the events examined. Interviews were conducted with a range of subjects, including key US embassy personnel (the US ambassador, the assistant defense attaché, and the USAID coordinator), the directors of a number of US-funded non-governmental organizations, and Uzbek opposition leaders. Assurances of anonymity allowed the subjects to speak much more openly and share their perspectives, often leading to insights which ultimately strengthened the analysis. These interviews provided a more nuanced and personal picture of the themes studied here and perhaps revealed aspects of US policy in Uzbekistan that documentation alone cannot.

## **Chapter 3: Background on Uzbekistan 1991-95**

### **3.1 Independence and domestic politics**

When the Supreme Soviet granted Uzbekistan its independence in August 1991, President Islam Karimov had already firmly secured his grip on political power. Appointed First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in 1989 and elected president of Uzbekistan by the parliament the following year, Karimov coordinated the smooth transfer of authoritarian control from Moscow to Tashkent (Akbarzadeh 2005). With the Communist Party banned after the failed 1991 coup attempt in Moscow, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan was simply renamed the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), and the old bureaucracy continued to exist as before in the new republic (Bohr 1998).

Any political party that represented a significant challenge to Karimov's rule was quickly discredited and banned. The first opposition party, Birlik ("Unity"), arose just prior to independence and focused on Uzbek nationalism and multiparty democracy. Disagreements over political tactics within Birlik led to the creation of a new party, Erk ("Freedom") headed by the poet Salay Madaminov. Better known by the pseudonym Muhammad Salih, he ran against Karimov in the 1991 presidential elections and garnered just over twelve percent of the vote in an election many observers regarded as neither free nor fair (ICG 2001b, Akbarzadeh 2005). Increased government pressure and harassment directed at both parties culminated with the arrest of Muhammad Salih in April 1993. After being released due to international pressure, Salih went into exile and eventually settled in Norway. As the International Crisis Group grimly observed: "By the middle of 1993, all opposition political groups have been banned and their leaders were in exile or prison" (ICG 200b1:6)<sup>4</sup>. In their place, a slew of political parties emerged which gave an appearance of multiparty democracy. Adolat ("Justice"), Miliy Tiklanish ("National Renaissance"), and Fidokorlar ("Self-sacrificers") adopted basically identical platforms and openly pledged their loyalty to Karimov (Bohr 1998).

The political power structures existing in Uzbekistan, which heavily favored the presidency in its distribution of power, became formalized with the 1992 constitution. The document allowed Karimov to appoint (and dismiss) ministers, cabinet officials, parliament, judges and regional governmental officials.<sup>5</sup> Although many of these powers are contingent on the acquiescence of the Uzbek parliament

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<sup>4</sup> Both Birlik and Erk have formed their own human rights organization in Uzbekistan: the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) and the Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (IHRSU), respectively (ICG 2001b).

<sup>5</sup> The Uzbek constitution is available online at <[www.umid.uz/Main/Uzbekistan/Constitution/constitution.html](http://www.umid.uz/Main/Uzbekistan/Constitution/constitution.html)>

(called the Oliy Majlis), it has rarely, if ever, challenged the authority of the president. Karimov's control even extends to the local administrative levels, which in turn influences the Oliy Majlis.

### 3.2 Islam

Close to 90 percent of Uzbekistan's population is Sunni Muslim (ICG 2001b). The Soviet authorities had actively repressed the religion, closing down mosques, banning ceremonies, and forbidding women to wear veils or children to read the Koran (Rashid 2002).<sup>6</sup> In the 1960s, however, Moscow tried a new approach – establishing a government-sanctioned version of Islam with state-approved religious schools (madrassahs) and leaders (mullahs) which ran state-approved mosques. An “unofficial” Islam still existed in tandem with the official version, and underground madrassahs and mosques existed throughout the country. This system of government-sanctioned Islam continued after Uzbekistan's independence, but the people remained mistrustful of it and the real popular support lay with the underground version. Outward expressions of religious faith were restricted to official Islam, and any political expression of the religion was banned. According to Ahmed Rashid (2002), this allowed Islamic radicals to more easily gain followers in Uzbekistan and the rest of Central Asia.

The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), founded in Astrakhan, Russia in 1990 and with headquarters in Moscow, originally sought to unify Muslims throughout the Soviet Union (Roy 2002). Its platform emphasized preaching and conversion while denouncing ‘official’ clergy, demanding Islamic schools, and supporting the implementation of Islamic social justice (*ibid*). The IRP of Uzbekistan harbored strong nationalistic tendencies in addition to the social justice platform promoted by the IRP (Akbarzadeh 2005). The Karimov regime responded immediately by banning all political parties which were religiously inspired. The IRP, which had attracted a following in the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan, gradually lost its momentum after operating illegally for a time. The 1992 disappearance of its founder, Abdullah Utaev, was believed to be the work of the Uzbek secret police (Rashid 2002). With the main opposition parties Erk and Birlik (both of which had Islamic components in their political platforms) banned along with the IRP of Uzbekistan, the stage was now set for more radical Islamic movements.

One such group, Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Liberation Party), is an international movement seeking to establish an Islamic state across Central Asia and eventually the entire Muslim world (Akbarzadeh 2005, Rashid 2002). The movement does not advocate violence and as Rashid reports,

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<sup>6</sup> This section relies on Rashid (2002).

Hizb ut-Tahrir “believes in winning over mass support, believing that one day these supporters will rise up in peaceful demonstrations and overthrow the regimes of Central Asia” (Rashid 2002:117). It is a secretive group with a closed organizational structure, so that gauging its exact size and influence are difficult. The organization uses leaflets to communicate and promote its message – possession of such leaflets has led to imprisonment by the Uzbek authorities.

### 3.3 Economics

Uzbekistan has great potential as an economic engine for the region, but other factors work against the country’s economic success. Due to the Soviet legacy of a cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan, it is one of the largest cotton exporters in the world. Pursuing this type of agriculture in Uzbekistan’s arid climate requires massive irrigation – water which once flowed into the Aral Sea. As a result, the water level in the lake has dropped dramatically and left previously coastal fishing villages tens of kilometers from the water’s edge. The dry alkaline soil is picked up by the wind, creating choking clouds of salty dust and huge environmental concerns. Along with sizable natural resources including natural gas, gold deposits and ferrous metals, the Uzbek economy has the advantage of location; many trade routes pass through Uzbek territory and make it an important economic actor in the region. Regardless, there are few economic winners as much of the profit-generating industries are state-owned and corruption is rampant (ICG 2001b). A large shadow economy sucks revenue away from other enterprises trying to remain ‘legitimate’. As one banker told an ICG interviewer, the black market “enriched a very limited group of people and [is] ruining the businesses of many promising entrepreneurs who struggle to survive this unfair economic battle” (ICG 2001b:22).

Corruption is a part of everyday life in Uzbekistan prevalent in all types of social situations. Bribes are expected by public servants to expedite services, university admissions, and grades are even dependent on payments to university officials (Freedom House 1998). A patronage system encourages corruption and limits the employment opportunities of those without a family member or friend in a position of influence. This ‘institutionalization’ of corruption helps the regime maintain control. Almost anyone is vulnerable to anti-corruption laws which are applied in a highly selective manner in order to punish those disloyal to the regime or industrious enough to start up a business which competes directly with those owned by the oligarchy (Interviews Tashkent February/March 2006). The oligarchy, consisting of powerful politicians along with their families and supporters, controls almost all means of production in Uzbekistan. Very few economic activities apart from small-scale bazaar trading are open to average Uzbek citizens and larger enterprises, from cotton production to mining, are controlled by the small group of elites (*ibid*).

### **3.4 Human rights**

The human rights situation is deplorable. Through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as the US State Department annual country reports, a constant barrage of abuses has been chronicled. The government enjoys complete control over the country's media outlets by way of direct censorship through such legislation as the 1991 prohibition against "offending the honor or dignity of the president" (State Department Country Report 1994). Indirect and unofficial censorship methods are also widely employed, as illustrated by the many well-documented cases of journalist intimidation, arrest, torture, and imprisonment resulting from criticism of the government (State Department Country Report 1994, HRW 1994).

Police use questionable methods during arrest procedures and often plant evidence. Political opposition figures are particularly prone to such treatment. As the 1993 Human Rights Watch Report documents: "On May 5, the co-chairman of the Birlik Popular Movement, Shukhrat Ismatullaev, was beaten on the street by unidentified assailants and spent six weeks in the intensive care unit in Tashkent suffering from head injuries. That attack mirrored almost exactly the attack on his counterpart in Birlik, co-chairman Abdurakhim Pulatov, in June of 1992. On October 4, Samad Murad was beaten in Karshi within days of his election as Erk's general secretary" (HRW 1993).

Torture by Uzbek authorities is widespread and frequent, and these methods are used to elicit confessions which are then admissible in court. Trials are neither open nor fair. The State Department estimated in 1994 that up to 40 political prisoners were being held for purported "antigovernment activities [such as] distributing newspapers of the opposition Erk party" (State Department Country Report 1994). While both Human Rights Watch and the State Department saw slight improvements in 1995, the overall situation in Uzbekistan remained grim after four years of independence. President Karimov employed harsh measures in order to solidify his control and continued these practices to ensure his hold on power.

### **3.5 Regional issues**

Between 1924 and 1936, Central Asia was divided into five Soviet Socialist Republics in a fashion many describe as "arbitrary inventions of Soviet planners" (Megoran 2004:733). It was never intended for these republics to be independent and utilities, irrigation, and transportation networks pay little attention to current national boundaries. This has resulted in continuous and complex conflicts in the region over borders and natural resources (*ibid*). For example, Uzbekistan depends on water flowing down from Kyrgyz sources for their cotton crops while Kyrgyzstan relies on gas imports from

Uzbekistan. A frustrated Uzbek government, tired of non-payment for the gas shipments, regularly halts these shipments in the winter, causing Kyrgyzstan to increase the flow of water through their hydroelectric plants to make up the difference. Less water is then available in Kyrgyz reservoirs for Uzbek crops in the spring and summer, causing tensions between these countries (Bohr 2004).

The civil war in neighboring Tajikistan raged from 1992-1997, and Uzbekistan joined Russia in supporting the Tajik government, made up of former communists, against a coalition of pro-democracy groups and the IRP in Tajikistan (Rashid 2002). The Taliban in Afghanistan were also perceived as a threat to Uzbekistan, due to a sizeable Uzbek enclave in Afghanistan, the aggressive nature of the Taliban regime, and reported comments by some Taliban leaders hinting at ambitions of gaining control over the ancient Muslim cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan (*ibid*). These issues combined to create a rather unstable political atmosphere in Central Asia during this period. That was the situation facing the United States in 1995 as the US government debated foreign policy issues relating to Uzbekistan.

## Chapter 4: Growing United States interest in Central Asia 1995-97

### 4.1 Making Eurasia stable

The Clinton administration in its first term (1993-96) appeared to show little public interest in Uzbekistan or in Central Asia as a whole. American policies addressed collectively the states of the former Soviet Union in broad economic and humanitarian aid packages aimed at stabilizing the new republics and securing loose Soviet nuclear weaponry. The main conduit of this aid was the Freedom Support Act, proposed by President George H.W. Bush in 1992 and approved by Congress the same year, which authorized substantial American foreign aid to Russia and the other former Soviet republics (Tarnoff 2002). This approach addressed American concerns of regional instability and nuclear proliferation while at the same time increasing American influence in a part of the world which had previously been firmly within the Soviet sphere. One clear exception to this broad regional approach was a 1995 visit to Tashkent by Secretary of Defense William Perry, where he singled out Uzbekistan as “an island of stability in Central Asia” (quoted in Starr 1996:92).

Some influential writers and academics also began to advocate a bilateral approach to the region. A 1996 article in the journal *Foreign Affairs* by S. Frederick Starr set a spotlight on Central Asia and Uzbekistan in particular. Starr saw three possible outcomes for the region: a return of Moscow’s influence, a lapse into the sort of chaos seen in Tajikistan and Afghanistan at that time, or attainment of a strategic equilibrium through the “emergence of an anchor state or states” (Starr 1996:81). After discounting the other four states in the region as unlikely candidates (Kazakhstan’s closeness to Russia, Kyrgyzstan’s poor resources and ethnic tensions, Tajikistan’s internal strife, Turkmenistan’s small population and large expanses of desert terrain), Starr outlined the advantages of developing Uzbekistan into the role of an anchor state.

Although the country had some liabilities, including an over-reliance on cotton exports and Soviet-designed borders with its neighbors which led to conflicts, Uzbekistan’s geographic and demographic size placed it at the top of the list of candidates. The country’s geographic location in the heart of Central Asia was an advantage, and while “it borders all the region’s other states, it alone has no common border with any major power” (Starr 1996:83). Starr acknowledged the human rights abuses of the Karimov regime, but maintained that the Uzbek government was “acting in accordance with an overall strategy of change” which involved securing Uzbekistan’s political stability before introducing democratic reforms and free market development (*ibid*:86). The overriding theme of the article advocated increasing US support for Uzbekistan, with an expectation of greater regional stability and

the hope that engagement would help the country along on the path to political, economic, and social reforms.

The argument that Central Asian stability depended on a strong and US-supported Uzbekistan was to have a significant impact on the thinking of US policymakers. The following year, a book by former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostategic Imperatives*, advocated a similar strategy (Brzezinski 1997). Scholars like Starr and Brzezinski supported an increase in American support for Uzbekistan and tended to accept or overlook the authoritarian nature of the Uzbek government and its record of human rights abuses, believing that the regime would eventually institute reforms, but at its own pace.<sup>7</sup> Both academics were associated with the newly formed School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, headed up by Paul Wolfowitz, a former diplomat during the Reagan years and Under Secretary of Defense for policy under President George H.W. Bush.

#### **4.2 The 1996 Karimov visit**

President Karimov's 1996 meeting with President Clinton, what the White House referred to as a 'working visit', came after a multi-year charm offensive by the Uzbek leader to attract US support. Uzbekistan took the American position consistently at the United Nations in the years leading up to the 1996 visit, voiced support for Israel in order to show solidarity with the US, backed a US trade embargo on Iran, joined the NATO-organized Partnership for Peace program, and participated in military exercises alongside US troops in 1995 (Akbarzadeh 2005). Since gaining independence from the dissolving Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan had consistently sought to distance itself from Moscow. At the same time, the Karimov regime saw for itself a greater role in Central Asia as a regional hegemon (Bohr 2004). Another patron than Russia was required in order to achieve this status and the United States was the logical choice.

The lack of enthusiasm displayed by the Clinton administration in its dealings with Uzbekistan was attributable in large part to the dismal human rights record of the Karimov regime. Human Rights Watch observed in 1995 that "the US continued to be the only country known to have kept human rights high on its bilateral agenda with Uzbekistan. The Clinton administration actively monitored human rights conditions, issued demarches and conducted interventions even as it welcomed the

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<sup>7</sup> Karimov claimed this to be the case in several public statements, pointing to Uzbekistan's short history as an independent country compared with two centuries of democracy experience in the United States. He assured the international community that Uzbekistan was on the path of reform. (see for example Akbarzadeh 2005).



government's increased willingness to address human rights concerns." (HRW 1995) During a US trip in 1995, Karimov met with Vice President Al Gore, but was denied a meeting with President Clinton due to the Uzbek government's abuses.

A year later, Clinton initially refused to meet the Uzbek leader even after the details of the US visit had been arranged, in order to distance the administration from Karimov and show continued disapproval for the human rights abuses of the Uzbek government (HRW 1996, Akbarzadeh 2005, Olcott 1998). Clinton apparently agreed to a brief meeting only after an announcement by the Uzbek government in early June that some 80 political prisoners would be granted presidential pardons (in fact, the release of only five prisoners could be confirmed) (*RFE/RL* 26 August 1996, HRW 1996). A short statement released by the White House reported that the "two presidents addressed key political, economic, and security issues of mutual interest, including progress in political and economic reform" (White House 25 June 1996). After his White House visit, Karimov made his first visit to the Pentagon where he met with Secretary of Defense William Perry. The Defense Department memo noted that the visit exemplified "the growing significance of the US-Uzbek bilateral and multilateral security partnership" (Department of Defense 1996). Karimov then spent several weeks in the US, meeting with American business leaders and securing new contracts which increased substantially American foreign investment in Uzbekistan (HRW 1996).

The following year, US-Uzbek trade rose from \$50 million to \$420 million with large investments by US mining companies (Rashid 2002). Foreign direct investment reached an all-time high of \$167 million in 1997 (Freedom House 2001). The US Export-Import Bank, an agency under the executive branch, provided loan guarantees of \$55 million in 1995, \$80 million in 1996, with levels jumping to \$301 million in 1997 (US State Department NIS reports 1997-1998). Direct US foreign assistance to Uzbekistan nearly doubled from \$11 million in 1995 to \$21 million in 1996, before returning to \$16.9 million in 1997, the bulk of which funded economic and social programs and included on average \$1.7 million for citizen participation programs and NGO support (USAID 1995-97).<sup>8</sup>

Military assistance in the form of International Military Education and Training (IMET) began in 1995 and remained low (under \$1 million). Along with several other former-Soviet countries, Uzbekistan first became eligible for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) under NATO's Partnership for Peace

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<sup>8</sup> The US provides foreign assistance, arranges credit guarantees from the US Export-Import Bank, and ships privately donated humanitarian aid. The figures cited in the text always refer to US assistance excluding the humanitarian aid and ExIm loans. For a table of US assistance totals by year see Appendix B.

program in 1997 (US State Department NIS report 1998). Foreign Military Financing refers to congressionally-appropriated grants given to foreign governments to finance the purchase of American-made weapons, services and training, and in 1997 Uzbekistan received \$1 million in FMF aid (FAS website, Garcia and Stohl 2003).

#### **4.3 Interest in Central Asia increases**

There were other signs of a heightened interest in Central Asia as well. First Lady Hillary Clinton traveled through the region in 1997, visiting Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. She used her time in Uzbekistan to visit nongovernmental organizations and delivered a speech on the importance of democracy and free markets (US Embassy website). Uzbekistan participated in annual (since 1995) NATO training exercises in conjunction with the Central Asia Battalion (CENTRAZBAT), a joint military unit comprised of forces from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan (Akbarzadeh 2005). For the 1997 exercise, the United States airlifted 500 troops from Fort Bragg, North Carolina nonstop and parachuted 19 hours later into the exercise zone located in Kazakhstan – the longest airborne operation in history (Kleveman 2003, *US News & World Report* 29 September 1997). General John Sheehan, commanding officer and the first to jump, told journalists upon landing: “The message is that there is no nation on the face of the earth that we cannot get to” (*US News & World Report* 29 September 1997).

Undersecretary of State Strobe Talbott gave a key speech at the newly-established School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in July 1997. Talbott warned against a return to a ‘Great Game’ scenario, saying such a conflict was “very much of the zero-sum variety. What we want to help bring about is just the opposite: We want to see all responsible players in the Caucasus and Central Asia be winners” (Talbott 1997). Talbott stressed that regional integration would provide lasting stability to Central Asia, while a traditional power-balancing situation might lead to more conflict. America’s support for the region aimed to bring about democracy, free market economies, regional cooperation, and integration with the international community (*ibid*).

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee conducted hearings on American foreign policy in Central Asia in July 1997. The Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, Stuart Eizenstat, testified for the administration and stated that “[I]n recognition of the growing strategic importance of the area to the United States, the Clinton administration, earlier this year, made a policy decision to further enhance our already considerable engagement with the eight states of the Caucasus and Central Asian region.” (Eizenstat 1997). Eizenstat listed five US interests in the region: economic and political reform in the

Central Asian countries, their integration into regional and international institutions, “rapid” development of Caspian energy resources with “robust US commercial participation”, conflict resolution in the region, and strong sovereign states to ward off Russian and Iranian influence (*ibid*).

Discussions concerning Iran and Russia led Senator Diane Feinstein to ask whether the administration saw “a kind of race to secure influence and control in this region of the world” (Feinstein 1997). Eizenstat replied that Central Asia was “clearly an area where a whole host of countries are trying to gain influence”, and that the US should create “the political and economic infrastructure so that our companies get the fair opportunity to compete for the enormous energy resources” while also striving “politically to assure the independence of these countries” from Iran and Russia (Eizenstat 1997).

Another witness that day, Lt. General William Odom of the Washington-based think tank The Hudson Institute, characterized Uzbekistan as the “heavyweight” in Central Asia and as having “very great strategic significance” (Odom 1997). These types of statements, combined with viewpoints similar to the Starr article which supported the development of Uzbekistan as an ‘anchor state’, may have led policymakers to begin to assume that an increased US presence in Central Asia was best achieved through an increased engagement with Uzbekistan. This reasoning had yet to be heard from the administration, however, whose focus continued to be at the regional level. The United States’ relationship with Uzbekistan remained lukewarm.

For its part, the Karimov regime seemed to be making small steps toward progress in 1996, partly to improve its image prior to the US visit. The US State Department annual report on human rights practices in Uzbekistan noted that the government took “several steps toward creating a less authoritarian society”, but acknowledged that “serious problems remain” (State Department Country Report 1997). The organization Human Rights Watch praised the United States in its annual report, calling it the “major source of pressure on the Uzbek government” to improve its record (HRW 1998). Human rights monitoring improved with the government permitting some non-governmental organizations to open offices in the country, including Human Rights Watch/Helsinki and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (State Department Country Report 1997). The NGO Freedom House improved Uzbekistan’s ‘civil liberties’ rating from a seven (the worst) to a score of six, though the country’s ‘political freedom’ continued to receive a seven rating (Freedom House 1998). Many of the improvements were cosmetic in nature and probably intended for international consumption rather than signifying real changes in the country. It appeared that Karimov clearly understood the

international community's expectations of reform, and realized that such promises were necessary to give even if he had no intention of keeping them.

#### **4.4 Analysis**

Karimov's visit to the White House in 1996 had little practical value in terms of signed agreements or promises by the United States to increase its support of the Uzbek regime: the value of the meeting was purely symbolic in nature. The appearance of the two presidents together gave the Uzbek leader an unstated nod of approval and sent the message that this relationship was important to the United States. That Clinton was so hesitant to grant a meeting while Karimov was so eager to obtain one illustrates the powerful symbolism involved; the substance of the meeting was relatively inconsequential. Although the Clinton administration might not have been prepared to back one of the Central Asian nations at the expense of the others, it is clear there was a heightened awareness of the region in the United States. Influential scholars began to advocate increased US support for Uzbekistan, a country seen as the key to Central Asia.

The contrasting positions of the White House and the Pentagon with regard to Uzbekistan were reflected in Karimov's 1996 visit. Clinton's reluctant meeting with the Uzbek president was followed by a carefully worded press release. Over at the Pentagon, Secretary Perry had praised Uzbekistan in his 1995 Tashkent visit and pointed out the increased importance of US-Uzbek cooperation during Karimov's 1996 Pentagon visit. Diverging approaches in US policymaking circles were to become even more apparent in the coming years as the US-Uzbek relationship evolved. Two distinct approaches became clear during this first phase of closer US-Uzbek relations. The realist approach focused on regional stability, access to energy resources, and balance of power issues grounded in a zero-sum game attitude towards geopolitics in Central Asia. The liberalist approach tended to focus on political and economic reform within each country, in the belief that more open and pluralistic governments in the region would ultimately lead to greater regional stability and stronger independent republics able to resist the influence of Moscow or Beijing.

Focused solely on American power and security, a realist foreign policy towards the region would be an exercise in determining exactly how the situation threatened or presented opportunities for the US. A determination that neither threats nor opportunities existed would result in American inaction, while investments of money and political capital would show prioritization. At this point it seemed that the United States had yet to see any urgent national interest in Uzbekistan requiring an extra investment of

money or political capital in the country, though this was beginning to change. US policy goals during this period were broadly focused on regional stability, commercial interests, and non-proliferation efforts. An even distribution of foreign assistance allocated to the Central Asian states reflected these priorities, where Uzbekistan was simply one of eight countries in the Central Asia/Caucasus region receiving US support.

The force projection demonstration inherent in the 1997 training exercises sent a clear message to Moscow that the US was able to operate militarily in the geographically distant region of Central Asia, an act of geopolitical gamesmanship firmly rooted in realist theory. A small yet revealing action taken by the US at this time was the granting of FMF assistance to Uzbekistan in 1997. Although all US aid is subject to human rights conditions, security aid is given extra attention in US legislation. With the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) non-proliferation funds and other military assistance, the State Department must certify that international human rights standards are not being violated. Non-certification means that the funds cannot be distributed to the country in violation unless the president waives the restrictions due to national security interests (22 U.S.C. sec. 2304 (1998)).<sup>9</sup> Although Uzbekistan was just one of several newly independent states (NIS) to receive this type of military aid, it points toward an acceptance of the Karimov regime's abuses. These actions are consistent with realist thought and reflect the influence of that perspective on US policy.

At the same time, the Clinton administration clearly attempted to keep the Karimov regime at arm's length due to nature of the regime, a policy decision supported by a liberalist approach. A foreign policy based on republican liberalism appears to be straightforward – the promotion of democracy and human rights – even if the implementation of such policies are more problematic. This theoretical standpoint reflects a belief that through the spread of democratic institutions and pluralistic societies, peace and prosperity will result. Clinton's 1994 State of the Union Address made this point clearly: "Democracies don't attack each other. They make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy. That is why we have supported, you and I, the democratic reformers in Russia and in the other states of the former Soviet bloc" (Clinton 1994).

The Clinton administration listed democracy promotion as one of its core national security objectives, after diplomacy backed by military force and securing economic prosperity (National Security Strategy

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<sup>9</sup> This section of US law can be viewed online at (for example):  
<<http://www.washingtonwatchdog.org/documents/usc/ttl22/ch32/subchII/ptI/sec2304.html>>

1997). Talbott's 1997 speech was consistent with this, in that regional stability, cooperation, and diplomacy would lead to solutions (namely energy exports) which would benefit all actors involved. The National Security Strategy struck a similar note, peace and security through democracy and economic development. The message combined normative ideals with instrumental logic: "This commitment to see freedom and respect for human rights take hold is not only just, but pragmatic, for strengthened democratic institutions benefit the US and the world" (National Security Strategy 1997). President Clinton made democracy promotion a central part of his foreign policy, though it was "democracy American style, linking free markets to the political freedoms characteristic of the American form of government" (Mertus 2004:40). As in the other new independent states (NIS), American interests in Uzbekistan would be the promotion of democracy and economic development – and these interests were reflected in US policy. The difficulty lay in deciding exactly *how* the promotion of these ideals was best accomplished in Uzbekistan: through limited engagement and criticism or through a more active relationship with Tashkent.

Although the rhetoric of the Clinton administration is clearly liberal in tone, the concrete actions taken by the administration are mixed. At this point, there appeared to be no pressing security concerns with which the US might need to balance other more normative interests. Elements of realism were present in US foreign policy at this time, but its main features adhered closely the tenants of liberalism.

## Chapter 5: An increased focus on militant Islam 1998-2000

### 5.1 Terrorist attacks and Islamic violence

In August 1998, simultaneous bomb attacks struck the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing 258 people and wounding over 5000 others. The US authorities believed al Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden had planned and carried out the attacks. Intelligence sources located bin Laden's mountain hideout in Afghanistan and President Clinton ordered military strikes to attempt to destroy it and bin Laden's terrorist network. In addition, the president authorized the CIA to conduct covert operations intended to "disrupt and pre-empt bin Laden's operations" (*Washington Post* 14 October 2001). As a result, a partnership of "significant" intelligence and military cooperation began between Washington and Tashkent around this time (*ibid*). The increased US focus on radical Islam meshed perfectly with the rising concern of the Karimov regime.

The Karimov regime felt increasingly threatened by radical Islamic groups during this period. The civil war in neighboring Tajikistan had recently ended in a power-sharing arrangement between former communist leaders and a coalition made up of democratic and Islamic groups. The fundamentalist government across the border in Afghanistan represented yet another Islamic threat to the Uzbek government for which Karimov hoped to find external support in combating. With the main domestic opposition parties Erk and Birlik banned, the stage was set for more radical movements infiltrating from outside the country, including Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

Hizb ut-Tahrir, as mentioned earlier, purports to advocate a non-violent strategy for revolution, but there is reason to doubt this commitment to the peaceful establishment of a caliphate (Meppen 2006). The IMU was founded by Tahir Yuldeshev and Juma Namangani, with Yuldashev as its political leader and Namangani as its military commander.<sup>10</sup> Yuldashev had begun encouraging inhabitants of the Ferghana Valley town of Namangan to follow Islamic teachings more strictly and steadily gained a following of disillusioned Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) members including Namangani, who had fought in the Afghan conflict with the Soviet army (Rashid 2002).

In December 1997, four Uzbek policemen were killed in Namangan by individuals the government claimed were radical Wahhabi Muslims, while local Muslim leaders claimed they were ordinary criminals (CSCE 1998). According to a report by the International Crisis Group, "police detained

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<sup>10</sup> Juma Namangani's real name was Jumaboi Ahmadzhanovich Khojaev, but incorporated the name of his hometown of Namangan as a pseudonym.

hundreds of people because they wore religious clothes, had beards or prayed in a manner that identified them as members of ‘suspicious’ groups”, and according to one witness “the authorities had a list of those thought to be ‘too religious’ and a new wider campaign of arrests began.” (ICG 2001b:18)<sup>11</sup>. A group of Muslims arrested in Andijon in connection with the killings admitted receiving training from Namangani and the IMU (Rashid 2002). In an infamous speech before parliament a few months later in May 1998, President Karimov expressed this view of radical Muslims: “These people should be shot in the head. If necessary, I’ll shoot them myself” (*Washington Post* 27 September 1998). This began a widespread campaign of arrests by the Karimov regime targeting Muslims. Thousands were arbitrarily arrested. There were reports that the authorities threatened to rape defendants’ family members unless they cooperated and fathers were imprisoned and punished due to charges against their sons (HRW 1999).

Six car bombs detonated in Tashkent in February 1999 in an apparent assassination attempt on Karimov which left 13 dead and injured 120 others, according to government sources (*Washington Post* 17 February 1999). The government blamed both the Erk Party and Islamic militants of the attack, and several thousand people were subsequently arrested (Rashid 2002). Eventually, Erk founder Muhammad Salih was accused of planning the attack in cooperation with the IMU and was convicted in absentia (without substantial evidence) to a fifteen year prison term (ICG 2001b). In August 1999, a group of IMU militants under Namangani entered a Kyrgyz section of the Ferghana Valley from their mountain base in Tajikistan, taking hostages and attracting international attention (Rashid 2002). The Kyrgyz army went into action against the IMU and fighting continued into October 1999. The IMU returned to the Ferghana Valley in the summer of 2000, with several hundred well-armed guerrillas attacking Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces in numerous locations over the next few months (*ibid*). These attacks, along with the other acts of violence ascribed to Islamic extremists, put the Karimov regime on the defensive. Tashkent felt under press from radical Islam during this period and looked toward the US for assistance.

## 5.2 US response to radical Islam in Central Asia

After the embassy attacks, the United States was suddenly willing to listen to Uzbek concerns about Islamic terrorists. In the official statement announcing the retaliatory missile attacks, Clinton reflected on the magnitude of a concerted national counterterrorism effort, saying, “This will be a long, ongoing

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<sup>11</sup> The government referred to the perpetrators as ‘Wahhabis’, a more fundamentalist version of Sunni Islam promoted by the government of Saudi Arabia. According to Rashid (2002:46), “By 1997, the government was labelling as Wahhabis even ordinary Muslims who practiced Islam in unofficial mosques or engaged in private prayer or study”.



struggle between freedom and fanaticism; between the rule of law and terrorism. We must be prepared to do all that we can for as long as we must” (Clinton 1998). Central Asia appeared to be the next flashpoint for radical Islam and US policymakers refocused their attention on the region and on Uzbekistan.

Discussions in the United States Congress dealt with a range of issues including energy extraction, Islam, and regional stability. Democracy and political reform were touched on broadly and with little mention of human rights concerns. A February 1998 House hearing entitled “US interests in Central Asia” gave the most attention to energy extraction and the strategic nature of oil and gas resources in the region. Congressman Howard Berman characterized US interests as “simply to ensure its progressive political and economic development and to prevent it from being under the thumb of any outside power, be it Iran or Russia” (Berman 1998). Similarly, Robert Gee, Assistant Secretary for Policy with the US Department of Energy stated “We have strategic interests in supporting the independence, sovereignty, and prosperity of the Newly Independent States of the Caspian Basin,” and that the US also had an interest in “maximizing commercial opportunities for US firms and for US and other foreign investment in the region’s energy development (...) Rapid development of the region’s energy resources and trade linkages are critical to the independence, prosperity, democracy, and stability of all of the countries of that region” (Gee 1998).

Another Senate hearing on Caspian energy held just prior to the 1998 embassy bombings addressed militant groups in Central Asia. Academic Dr. Martha Brill Olcott, a regular witness on Capitol Hill, testified to the destabilizing nature of militant Islam, saying “If Islamic groups should take power in Uzbekistan or even if a secular regime should opt for visible religious coloration, there is sure to be impact in all three of these neighboring states” (Olcott 1998). She went on to observe that “Uzbekistan’s government has created the most pervasive and effective security force in the region and is clearly able to deal summarily with small pockets of resistance, but is unlikely to be able to deal effectively with mass resistance” (*ibid*). In remarks published in the Congressional Record, Congressman Christopher Smith recognized the strategic and commercial interests of the US in pursuing relations with Uzbekistan, but expressed concern over the Karimov regime’s poor human rights record and urged the US and Karimov to work towards reform (Smith 1998).

A 1999 Senate hearing entitled “Extremist Movements and their threat to the United States” also discussed militant Islam in Central Asia. The State Department’s Coordinator for Counterterrorism,

Michael A. Sheehan, pointed out the links between the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, and militant Islamic groups in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries. In combating extremist groups, Sheehan noted that the “central element of our counterterrorism efforts remains a combination of political will and diplomatic action. We can combat terrorism only if we persuade other governments to work with us. Intelligence sharing, law enforcement cooperation and armed force are important. But they must be integrated into an overall political/diplomatic strategy” (Sheehan 1999).

US and Uzbek negotiators signed several security-related agreements in May 1999, one on counterterrorism and the second establishing a closer working relationship between the Pentagon and Uzbekistan’s Defense Ministry (*RFE/RL* 26 May 1999). The Congressional hearings in 1998 and 1999 resulted in two pieces of legislation relevant to Uzbekistan: the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999 and the Security Assistance Act of 1999. The Silk Road Act authorized no new funding, but more clearly defined how existing funding should be directed and listed economic assistance, border control, infrastructure development and democracy promotion as its major goals (Silk Road Act 1999). The Security Assistance Act authorized the transfer of excess Defense Department articles to a number of countries, including Uzbekistan (*ibid*).

US assistance rose from \$26 million in 1998 to \$46 million in 1999, before falling to \$37 million in 2000. Increases in IMET funding and FMF aid for arms purchases doubled to a combined \$2.2 million in 1999, and funding for law enforcement training reached \$2 million (Garcia and Stohl 2003, US State Department NIS reports 1999-2000). Although the US cleanup of the biological weapons site at Nukus made up \$6 million of the \$10 million in security aid, these amounts are substantial increases to the previous years (US State Department NIS report 2000). Border security assistance through the Export Control and Related Border Security program (EXBS) began in Uzbekistan in 2000, with nearly \$2 million in aid (State Department NIS report 2001). USAID money earmarked for ‘citizen participation’ (programs designed to increase public awareness of political developments in order to lay the foundation for democratic participation as well as increasing the number of NGOs in the country) had jumped to US\$5 million in 1998, but was then reduced to \$3.28 million for 1999 and cut again the following year to \$2 million (USAID 1998-2000). In addition to direct US assistance, \$61 million worth of unspecified “US Defense Department excess and privately donated humanitarian commodities” were provided to the Uzbek government from 1998-2000 (US State Department NIS reports 1998-2000). US Export-Import Bank loan guarantees for Uzbekistan increased to \$379 million

in 1998, dropped the following year to \$256 million, and fell to only \$30 million in 2000 (US State Department NIS reports 1999-2000).

Human Rights Watch proclaimed 1998 a “disastrous year for human rights in Uzbekistan”, while in 1999 “human rights protections in Uzbekistan deteriorated rapidly and dramatically” (HRW 1999). The State Department’s 1998 Uzbekistan country report was muted by comparison, reporting “The Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit serious abuses in several areas” (State Department Country Report 1999). The US State Department admitted that “the government’s poor human rights record worsened” in 1999 (State Department Country Report 2000).

### **5.3 Continued insurgency and elevated US cooperation**

In the spring of 2000, US Secretary of State Madeline Albright offered some tough criticism of Uzbekistan’s human rights situation in a speech at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent. She warned that “indiscriminate government censorship and repression can cause moderate and peaceful opponents of a regime to resort to violence” and cautioned against religious persecution (Albright 2000). After wielding its stick, the administration offered Uzbekistan the carrot: \$3 million would be made available to Uzbekistan for border security as well as counterterrorism and counter-narcotics training and equipment (Rashid 2002, State Department NIS report 2001). The catalyst for this aid was an incident on the Kazakh-Uzbek border a month earlier when Uzbek border guards intercepted a truck hauling scrap metal reportedly containing radioactive material (*ibid*). The Uzbeks claimed they found lead pipes containing highly radioactive material while Kazakh tests showed low levels of radiation, consistent with their explanation that the scrap metal originated from a uranium mine (CNS 2003). Regardless of the true facts, the incident sparked a renewed interest in non-proliferation activities in the region and in Uzbekistan.

During the IMU incursion in the spring of 2000, the guerrillas took foreign tourists hostage as a fundraising venture in order to extract ransom payments. In August, a group of IMU guerrillas in Kyrgyzstan came across four young American climbers and took them hostage. Although the climbers later managed to escape (the details of which are in dispute), this minor event contributed to the United States declaring the IMU a known terrorist group (Rashid 2002, Child 2000). According to Rashid (2002), some US diplomats had argued that attempts should be made to press Karimov for human rights assurances before such a declaration was made, but the CIA and FBI were eager to share

intelligence with Uzbekistan (which they were legally prevented from doing until the IMU was officially a terrorist group). This was especially tempting as Western intelligence services reported that Namangani and the IMU were receiving substantial funding from bin Laden (*ibid*).

Karimov easily won the 2000 presidential election with 92 percent of the vote (CSCE 2000). His opponent, Professor Abdulhafiz Jalalov, had previously held the position of secretary in Karimov's PDPU party, and admitted after the election that he had actually voted for Karimov himself in the interest of "stability, peace, our nation's independence, [and] the development of Uzbekistan" (CSCE 2000:8). When asked why he had run, Jalalov replied "So that democracy would win" (*ibid*).<sup>12</sup> After the election, Karimov's term was extended to 2007 (Akbarzadeh 2005). International observers declared the elections neither free nor fair, and the US did not offer election-related assistance for the 2000 contest due to Uzbekistan's "lack of commitment to electoral reform or to genuinely competitive elections" (US State Department NIS report 2001:122).

By the end of the year, the United States and Uzbekistan had established a solid partnership to combat Osama bin Laden's terrorist network and the IMU. Programs to enhance Uzbekistan's business environment and economic development featured prominently in the US aid package for 2000, and US support for Uzbekistan's military and law enforcement agencies continued to rise. One researcher calculated that US Export-Import Bank credit guarantees to Uzbekistan from 1995-2000 totaled \$980 million (Shields 2000).<sup>13</sup>

The State Department, using the exact same phrasing as the previous year's report, characterized the human rights situation in Uzbekistan as a poor situation which was becoming worse (State Department Country Report 2001). In a September 2000 hearing on **the State Department's Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (a report required by 1998 legislation of the same name)** Human Rights Watch researcher Acacia Shields testified:

Since late 1997, Uzbek police and security forces have arrested thousands of pious Muslims. These arrests are illegal and discriminatory; they target people who belong to unregistered Islamic groups who practice outside state controlled mosques or who possess Islamic literature not generated by the government. Police routinely torture and threaten

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<sup>12</sup> According to one observer, this event has a simple explanation. It seems that Jalilov, who had been asked by Karimov to stand as a candidate, soon began to take his candidacy seriously, holding speeches and developing his vision of Uzbekistan's future. Seeming like a real alternative to Karimov was not a wise career move and Jalalov realized he had gone too far just before the elections. The vote for Karimov and the public acknowledgement of it was designed to reverse this mistake (Interview, Tashkent March 2006).

<sup>13</sup> This figure was confirmed by interviews conducted in Tashkent in February/March 2006.

detainees, deny them access to medical treatment and legal counsel and often hold them incommunicado in basement cells for up to 6 months (...) This year's IRF report recognizes neither the anti-religious nature of this repression nor the human rights crisis it has produced. It argues that victims are engaged in activity that is primarily political and therefore that Uzbekistan cannot be said to be violating the victim's religious freedom. Only sophistry has allowed the administration to avoid classifying Uzbekistan as a country of particular concern for its gross violations of religious freedom (Shields 2000).<sup>14</sup>

Robert A. Seiple, the US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, responded to her charges by pointing out that "diplomacy has had some major successes" in Uzbekistan, that the Karimov regime was justified in being paranoid about Islamic extremists after the 1999 Tashkent bombings, and that this was a human rights issue rather than one of religious freedom (Seiple 2000).

Continued concerns over stability in Central Asia led some to support strengthening the US- Uzbek relationship in order to better control Uzbekistan. Far from being an 'island of stability', Tashkent's recent dealings with its neighbors had been turbulent. Over the previous three years, Uzbekistan had erected fences and mined territory claimed by neighboring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and repeatedly withheld gas shipments to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (ICG 2001a, Megoran 2004). The bombing of Kyrgyz villages by Uzbek planes in response to IMU attacks, as well as a tough line towards Tajikistan (where IMU bases were located) made these relationships particularly tense (ICG 2001a). Testifying before an April 2000 House Joint hearing, Dr. Martha Brill Olcott urged Congress to continue to invest in the US-Uzbek relationship, saying "I think engagement with Uzbekistan is really critical because they create a security risk for the whole region." (Olcott 2000).

#### **5.4 Analysis**

The 1998 embassy bombings heightened America's awareness of militant Islam and the threat it posed to US interests. The investigation into the source of the attacks pointed to Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan, so the geographic convenience of neighboring Uzbekistan was undeniable. As US Counterterrorism Coordinator Michael Sheenan testified, the US needed other governments to collaborate in fighting extremists hostile to American interests. Karimov had been conducting his own domestic campaign against what he perceived to be radical Islam, and saw in the United States a natural ally. The Uzbek government was more than receptive to the idea of American assistance. Cooperation between the two countries clearly increased after 1998, although the extent of cooperation and its details remain unclear. Regardless, the region was viewed as a potential source of new Islamic

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<sup>14</sup> Listing Uzbekistan as a 'country of particular concern' would make it ineligible for certain types of assistance.

radicalism and the mountainous regions of Central Asia provided perfect safe havens for terrorist groups.

At the same time, this period saw a marked increase in internal pressures to pursue Caspian energy resources. Although lacking the substantial reserves of the two Central Asia countries bordering the Caspian, namely Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan's substantial mineral resources made it of interest to American commercial interests. Stability in the region was crucial for American business interests to succeed in Central Asia, and Uzbekistan again became part of the equation as a potential stabilizing force.

Along with ongoing efforts to combat nuclear non-proliferation in the former Soviet states, energy and Islam defined US policy in the region. In contrast to the previous period in 1996-97, clear strategic interests were recognized by the United States. The human rights situation in Uzbekistan continued to deteriorate, especially after the Namangan killings and the 1999 Tashkent bombings. The State Department country reports continued to chronicle this steady increase in government abuse along with NGOs like Human Rights Watch. The policy dilemma was now clear in Uzbekistan: security interests or normative human rights concerns?

Based on the concrete actions made by the US government in relation to Uzbekistan, it appears that security concerns began to dictate American foreign policy. Three trends in US policy are worth noting. First, the amount of assistance provided by the United States to Uzbekistan more than doubled from the previous period of 1995-97. The amounts earmarked for economic and security programs constituted a growing portion of the aid – security assistance increased tenfold from 1998 to 1999 – while citizenship programs and democracy promotion funding steadily decreased after 1998. The trend was clear: less aid for civil society programs while increases in funding for items which more directly benefited the oligarchy. Second, the aid increases occurred during a period of escalating abuses by the Uzbek government, a trend clearly seen by NGOs as well as the US State Department. Third, the political maneuvering for improvements in Uzbekistan's human rights record, of the sort displayed by President Clinton during Karimov's 1996 visit, were not seen in this period. No apparent efforts were made to gain any type of concessions or promises of reform from the Karimov regime. The granting of FMF aid to Uzbekistan lends support to this interpretation, aid which doubled from 1997 to 2000 (Garcia and Stohl 2003). Rather than Karimov desiring American approval and support, it now

appeared that the US hoped for Uzbek cooperation in their hunt for Osama bin Laden. Tashkent's political leverage had increased.

After this second period, realist trends are more visible in US foreign policy. Although normative concerns were voiced by the administration through the State Department and by members of Congress, the actions taken by the US government reveal a trend toward increased cooperation and support for the Uzbek regime after an increased awareness and reevaluation of Uzbekistan's strategic importance. Increases in US funding coincided with escalating abuses by the Karimov regime and occurred without any repercussions or conditions being imposed on the aid packages. The US pursued its perceived national interests without any concrete attempts to pressure President Karimov to institute reforms, a pattern consistent with classical realism.

Strands of liberalism were present in US policy in a more indirect manner during this period. Although aid was increasing to Uzbekistan, a substantial amount of that aid was designed to improve conditions in the country over the long run. Many of the programs funded by the US were designed and intended to create a stable environment for investment and economic liberalization, factors which liberals believe further political liberalization. While mostly benefiting the Uzbek oligarchy in control of the country's major commercial interests, economic growth ostensibly provided some benefit to an Uzbek population suffering under economic hardship as well. Stability and economic growth are important building blocks of a democratic society, and an argument could be made that a foundation was being laid for future improvements. There were limits to the options available to the United States with regard to promoting internal change in Uzbekistan and perhaps a strategy of engagement was preferred to one of isolation. In the struggle to maintain a balance between perceived strategic interests and normative concerns, the US had swung more towards a realist approach favoring security interests while still maintaining some normative components in its policy.

## Chapter 6: After the 9/11 Attacks in the United States 2001-02

### 6.1 The September 2001 terrorist attacks and the US base at Karshi-Khanabad

On the eve of the 2001 attacks, the US-Uzbek relationship continued to drift towards increased security cooperation. When, on 11 September 2001, two hijacked commercial airlines struck the World Trade Centre in New York, another plowed into the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed into the Pennsylvania countryside apparently before reaching its target, the newly-elected Bush administration shifted into high gear on counterterrorism. Afghanistan and its neighbors suddenly became the front lines in the US-led war on terror. Addressing a joint session of Congress just nine days after the attacks, President Bush informed the American people that Osama bin Laden and the terrorist network al Qaeda were responsible, specifically mentioning the IMU as one of bin Laden's allies (Bush 2001). The US pursued bin Laden and al Qaeda with the invasion of Afghanistan in early October 2001. The American military required support facilities for these operations, and Uzbekistan – a country strategically located on Afghanistan's northern border – became a crucial ally in the war on terror.

Long before the September 2001 attacks, the US military had commissioned a study conducted by the RAND Corporation to examine potential causes of conflict in Central Asia and analyze possible alternatives for military operations in the region. Made publicly available in 2003, *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus* contained comprehensive data on a wide range of topics, including the availability of air bases suitable to American military needs. According to the study, Uzbekistan had the best infrastructure and lines of communication to support “major airlift operations”, and therefore “US military planners began to pursue access to former Soviet military airfields in Uzbekistan” (O'Malley 2003:264-65). Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan all border Afghanistan, a necessary logistical factor to support US operations there.<sup>15</sup>

Tajikistan was used as a logistics hub to transport personnel and supplies into Afghanistan, but the “operational environment (...) complicates any deployments and compounds force protection concerns” (O'Malley 2003:267). The list of problems with any substantial military basing in Tajikistan was long: unrest remaining from the 1992-97 civil war, Tajikistan's dependence on around 16,000 Russian troops as border guards, lack of central government control over Tajik territory, and heavy narcotics trafficking in collusion with local authorities (*ibid*). American forces and their allies (French and Italian) made use of Tajik facilities near the Afghan border, but the situation was less than ideal.

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<sup>15</sup> Turkmenistan pursues a policy of non-alignment and had limited security cooperation with the US, though it did authorize overflight of its territory (O'Malley 2003)



Therefore, the Uzbek base at Karshi-Khanabad was the US military's first and best choice for a longer-term military facility.

In an event brimming with both strategic and symbolic significance, US military aircraft landed at an airbase outside Tashkent in late September 2001, along with several hundred personnel (*Washington Post* 21 September 2001, Akbarzadeh 2005). President Karimov had officially offered the use of three Uzbek airfields and opened his country's airspace for US-led attacks on the Taliban in Afghanistan. The US quickly established an air base at Karshi-Kanabad (also known as K2) in southern Uzbekistan, manned with US Air Force personnel and elements of the US Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (*Jamestown Monitor* 19 March 2002). An established American military presence in Russia's Near Abroad demonstrated how much the geopolitical landscape had shifted in just a decade. The US base at K2 was crucial to the Afghanistan campaign and demonstrated American willingness to involve itself in Central Asia more deeply than just foreign aid and diplomatic partnerships.<sup>16</sup>

As to the necessity of the Central Asian bases to the Afghan war, "it cannot be overemphasized that these countries provided crucial staging bases on the perimeter of Afghanistan that allowed the United States to more effectively and efficiently move assets into the combat zone" (O'Malley 2003:269). The K2 base, by virtue of its consistently good flying weather, easy availability of fuel, and access to Afghanistan, became a "critical refueling and logistics nexus" for the United States (Meppen 2006:17).<sup>17</sup> The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA – a statement of understanding drafted when US troops are stationed in a foreign country) between the US and Uzbekistan was quickly signed on 7 October 2001.

The terms of the SOFA "were vague enough to allow the US to begin moving immediately and to deal with the details later" (Meppen 2006:16). The Bush administration was unwilling to conduct aerial bombing raids over northern Afghanistan without a search and rescue base close by to support the missions, and negotiations with Tashkent took on an urgent tone as nearly the entire campaign depended upon this detail (Woodward 2003). The air war commenced over Afghanistan just one hour after the SOFA was in place, highlighting K2's importance to Operation Enduring Freedom (State Department Fact Sheet 27 November 2002).

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<sup>16</sup> A second base at the civilian airport in Manas, Krygyzstan also played a significant role in the Afghan campaign and increased the US presence in the region.

<sup>17</sup> This was also confirmed by interviews in Tashkent, February/March 2006

## 6.2 Strategic Partnership

After successful negotiations by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, President Karimov traveled to Washington in March 2002 for the signing of a more comprehensive accord between the two countries, the Strategic Partnership Agreement. This document outlined a framework for cooperation on a range of issues including economic reforms, democratization, humanitarian assistance, and military cooperation. It began by recognizing “the importance of competent implementation of democratic and market reforms in Uzbekistan as a necessary condition for ensuring political, social, and economic stability, sustainable development, prosperity and national security” (Strategic Partnership Agreement 2002). In effect, the US agreed to remain closely involved in Uzbekistan’s security and assist in modernizing the Uzbek armed forces, while the Karimov regime promised to cooperate in US counterterrorism efforts and pursue a series of political reforms.<sup>18</sup> Absent from the agreement was any mention of payment for basing rights or promises of remuneration for cooperation, an issue which would resurface in the following months.

During Karimov’s White House visit, President Bush expressed his appreciation for Uzbekistan’s cooperation with US-led Afghanistan operations and pressed the Uzbek president on human rights issues, according to a White House spokesman (*Washington Post* 13 March 2002). In Congressional testimony the previous day, Secretary of State Colin Powell had characterized Uzbekistan as a “solid coalition partner”, while insisting that human rights issues were still a point of discussion between the two countries (*ibid*). Earlier in the year, US Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones remarked that Washington sensed a new commitment by the Karimov regime to improving human rights in his country (*RFE/RL* 31 January 2002). The limited political opposition remaining in Uzbekistan also had reason to be hopeful after hearing promises of democratic reform from the Uzbek authorities as well as the liberal rhetoric from Washington. Increased US engagement in the country could bring about real change in Tashkent and according to one opposition leader Uzbeks were both “excited and apprehensive” after 2001 (Interviews Tashkent, February/March 2006).

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<sup>18</sup> This was clearly how the State Department interpreted the Strategic Partnership Agreement. In November 2002 Assistant Secretary of State Lorne Craner declared: “We are grateful for the support that Uzbekistan has provided in the war on terror. But the United States will not sacrifice its long-term commitment to protect human rights for short-term political expediency (...) The Uzbek government has (...) made a commitment to improve human rights, but we see mixed results on the ground, and there is obviously still a long way to go” (Craner 2002b).

*Balancing military aid and human rights: Congressional hearings*

Another Congressional hearing in 2002, this time before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee entitled “Balancing Military Assistance and Support for Human Rights in Central Asia”, directly addressed the themes discussed in this thesis. The panel of witnesses had an interesting composition: three of the five witnesses providing testimony were members of the Bush administration; the fourth was a former US ambassador to Kazakhstan and now the senior vice president of a military subcontractor, and academic Dr. Martha Brill Olcott rounded out the list.

Committee chairman Senator Robert Torricelli began by noting that “rooting out terrorism and promoting democracy and human rights are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they are probably mutually reinforcing”, explaining that undemocratic regimes marginalize and radicalize their populations, leading to terrorism and instability (Torricelli 2002). Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, testified to some of the reform successes in Uzbekistan, including arranging for better International Red Cross access to prisons, the registration of one human rights NGO, and the invitation extended by the Uzbek government to the United Nations human rights rapporteur on torture. Craner agreed with Senator Torricelli that military assistance and human rights “need not be a question of balance and competing interests, but can, as we’re attempting, be an issue of mutually reinforcing goals” (Craner 2002a). Assistant Secretary of Defense J.D. Crouch concurred:

All of the Central Asian countries have told us that OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom) directly addresses their security concerns, namely terrorism and religious extremism (...) narco-traffickers (...) and the transnational threat of weapons of mass destruction. And I think because our action is in a security interest, this provides us more leverage, frankly, on the human rights side than we would have if we were in a position where they were simply doing us a favor (...) Our interests are complementary (Crouch 2002).

Lynn Pascoe, Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia, then commented that “I listened to both of you gentlemen’s [Craner and Crouch] opening statements very carefully and it occurred to me how closely we agree on this question” (Pascoe 2002). Pascoe saw “no conflict whatsoever” between American military cooperation with Central Asian countries and human rights concerns in those countries (*ibid*). Assistant Secretary Craner pointed out that the US had now mostly eliminated the terrorist threat in Central Asia, a rationale given by the countries in the region for having closed political systems (Craner 2002a).<sup>19</sup> Former Ambassador William Courtney provided a comprehensive strategy for the region: increasing security assistance, maintaining a US military presence, focusing

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<sup>19</sup> After a small action in July 2001 against a television tower in Kyrgyzstan, the IMU threat seemed to dissipate as many of the IMU fighters had reportedly gone to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban against American forces (Weitz 2004).

more attention on human rights and democracy, remembering that “US security cooperation boosts government legitimacy, which offers a source of leverage for promoting human rights and democracy”, working with allies in Europe to effect change in the region, and promoting long-term change by focusing on youth programs (Courtney 2002). All four witnesses connected to the Bush administration agreed that no balance needed to be struck between military assistance and support for human rights, as they were complementary interests.

Dr. Olcott testified last and warned that “unless the US finds some more effective means of leveraging these states, there could be some highly undesirable and even violent (and at least unscheduled) regime changes throughout the region (Olcott 2002). She warned that American human rights policy and democracy promotion strategies were “unlikely to lead to any major change in the nature of our partner regimes in Central Asia” because undemocratic regimes were “deeply rooted throughout the region” (*ibid*). Seemingly contradicting herself in the very next breath, Olcott then argued that the US should not abandon its human rights policy, but should instead devote even more funding to these programs, and that the US was “moving in the right direction” (*ibid*). Dr. Olcott’s testimony provided some pessimism to an otherwise optimistic hearing in which the witnesses from the administration reaffirmed their belief that the US was proceeding appropriately and correctly in its foreign policy. Even Olcott, despite her pessimism, had few criticisms of US policy.

### **6.3 US involvement in Uzbekistan increases dramatically**

US government assistance to Uzbekistan increased dramatically from \$58 million in 2001 to \$221 million in 2002, which included supplemental funding of \$128 million in addition to the \$95 million budgeted (US State Department Eurasia report 2003) These funds provided \$36 million in FMF money, \$18 million for border security, and almost \$80 million in Defense Department excess and privately donated humanitarian commodities (*ibid*). The security assistance provided funds for non-proliferation activities in Uzbekistan (the Nunn Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program) including clean-up of Soviet biological weapons laboratories, as well as funding for the purchase of military equipment and assistance directed at increasing Uzbek border security. The \$4 million earmarked for democracy programs in Uzbekistan was increased by the emergency supplemental to \$8 million for 2002. With the aid package also came an additional \$70 million in credit guarantees from the US Export-Import Bank (US State Department Eurasia report 2003).

The funding increases for USAID-implemented civil society programs in Uzbekistan further exacerbated a growing tension within the country over NGO activity. With the growing US involvement in economic and social development programs came an increased awareness and activism among the Uzbeks involved in or targeted by the NGOs. Encouraged to create their own local NGOs which could deal with the problems of ordinary Uzbek citizens, these budding NGO leaders became increasingly vocal about conditions in the country. This reflected badly upon the government, which in turn became increasingly suspicious of the NGO community (Interviews Tashkent, February/March 2006).

A darker aspect of the United States' relationship with Uzbekistan developed after the September 2001 terrorist attacks when President Bush signed a still-classified directive giving the Central Intelligence Agency "expansive" authority to transport suspected terrorists to foreign countries for interrogation (*New York Times* 6 March 2005). This practice – known as rendition – was also used prior to 2001, but became widespread after Bush granted the CIA extended authority (*ibid*). In *The New Yorker* magazine, a story on rendition included this passage on Uzbekistan:

Craig Murray, the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, told me that "the US accepts quite a lot of intelligence from the Uzbeks" that has been extracted from suspects who have been tortured. This information was, he said, "largely rubbish." He said he knew of "at least three" instances where the US had rendered suspected militants from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan. Although Murray does not know the fate of the three men, he said, "They almost certainly would have been tortured." In Uzbekistan, he said, "partial boiling of a hand or an arm is quite common." He also knew of two cases in which prisoners had been boiled to death. In 2002, Murray, concerned that America was complicit with such a regime, asked his deputy to discuss the problem with the CIA's station chief in Tashkent. He said that the station chief did not dispute that intelligence was being obtained under torture. But the CIA did not consider this a problem. "There was no reason to think they were perturbed," Murray told me (Mayer 2005).

The CIA denied that any such meeting took place (*ABC News* 7 March 2005). According to several sources, the US rendered "dozens of suspects" to the Uzbek authorities (*International Herald Tribune* 7 April 2005, Cooley 2005). Such allegations are even more disconcerting considering the 2002 United Nations report by Theo von Boven, the UN human rights rapporteur on torture. In his report, van Boven characterized torture in the country's prisons and detention facilities as "systematic" (*RFE/RL* 9 December 2002). The NGO Human Rights Watch reported that Uzbekistan continued its human rights abuses on a "massive scale" in 2002, the Karimov regime "systematically violating the rights to freedom of religion, expression, association, and assembly. There was no independent judiciary, and torture was widespread" (HRW 2003). The US State Department annual country report

agreed that Tashkent's human rights record was "very poor, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses" (State Department country report 2003).

#### **6.4 Analysis**

The period after the September 2001 terrorist attacks tested the United States' foreign policy priorities with regard to security, democracy, and human rights. A sudden increase of activity and cooperation ensued between the US and several Central Asia countries. Although the US perceived an increasing security interest in Uzbekistan prior to 2001, the war in Afghanistan raised that interest to an entirely new level with the need for basing rights and logistical support for the Afghan campaign. There was no doubt that the US greatly desired cooperation from the Karimov regime after 2001, and that Uzbekistan's assistance to the US was of great value to military operations in Afghanistan.

In addition, the Karimov regime exhibited a clear failure to improve its human rights record despite US statements which routinely mentioned progress in this area – concessions by the Uzbek government in 2002 included the release of some 800 political prisoners, granting access to the UN rapporteur on torture, and allowing an Uzbek human rights organization register as an official NGO (Pascoe 2002, Craner 2002a). These moves were discounted by Human Rights Watch as gestures without any real substance (HRW 2003). Just one example of such superficial reform measures was Tashkent's May 2002 announcement that it had officially ended Uzbekistan's policy of state censorship. The announcement came with a warning to the editors of the country's six official newspapers that they would now be responsible for the content of their newspapers, a threat which simply reinforced most editors habit of self-censoring. Journalists brave enough to publish pieces critical of the government over the next few years faced arrests and convictions on charges ranging from disseminating antigovernment propaganda to homosexuality. Despite its official demise, censorship was alive and well in Uzbekistan (*CACI Analyst News* 13 May 2002, 17 September 2002, 20 March 2003, 9 December 2003).

Increased US-Uzbek cooperation occurring alongside a continued lack of reform brought the foreign policy balancing act between human rights and security interests clearly into focus. Three general observations can be made about US policy during this period. First, funding for security-related programs increased substantially in 2002, as did military training and border security programs for the Uzbek government. The levels of security aid rose much more dramatically than those funds provided

for social programs and democracy promotion, which were given small increases. In a simplistic comparison of funding levels, security concerns were the clear winner.<sup>20</sup>

Second, the actions and statements by the Bush administration revealed its intent to pursue security interests, democracy promotion, and human rights policies simultaneously. These were, as was mentioned by US officials several times in testimony, mutually reinforcing goals. For some policymakers, stability and security were seen as necessary preconditions for political and economic liberalization. Karimov had justified his regime's tight control by pointing to Islamic extremists and terrorists who sought to destabilize the country. Operation Enduring Freedom severely weakened the IMU through targeting of its bases in Afghanistan during which IMU leader Juma Namangani was reportedly killed (Nichol 2005b). As Secretary Craner pointed out, the reduction of this threat presented an opportunity for real reform. Perhaps these seemingly divergent policy goals could be pursued concurrently through retraining of military and law enforcement agencies, economic development aid, and civil society programs. In short: a policy of positive engagement on both security and political reform.

Third, the reports of a CIA rendition program in Uzbekistan demonstrated more than American cooperation with the Karimov regime, it showed complicity. Although the US has yet to confirm the specific reports concerning Uzbekistan, it has acknowledged that such a program exists. If terrorist suspects were indeed transferred to the Uzbek authorities for interrogation knowing those suspects would be tortured, there would be little doubt as to the administration's political priorities. Rendering prisoners to the Karimov regime while highlighting normative ideals in its political rhetoric would leave the US government's statements on democracy and human rights with little credibility.

The policy choices made by the United States after September 2001 leaned strongly toward a realist approach. Realism predicts a foreign policy based on the continued survival of the state and a therefore a prioritization of purely national interests. The terrorist attacks of 2001 shocked the US on a level comparable to the 1941 surprise attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor. The US, forced to defend itself against an asymmetrical threat, sought allies from a number of countries which did not share its democratic and normative ideals, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, and Uzbekistan. The perceived need for self-defense easily outweighed any political objections to cooperation with these

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<sup>20</sup> Extra-budgetary funding during this period makes definitive computations of total assistance to Uzbekistan problematic, but the funding provided was no lower than those amounts listed in the previous section.

states. The attention given by the United States to democratic reforms, genuine or not, made the policy decisions easier for both domestic and foreign audiences to accept.

According to a realist interpretation, monies provided for social programs and economic aid were meant to stabilize Uzbekistan so that it could be a reliable partner for the United States, while political reform was less of a priority and explains why little public pressure was placed on the Karimov regime. Comments by President Bush, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Powell routinely praised Uzbekistan's cooperation in the war on terror. Questions on human rights were met with the simple acknowledgement that these concerns were part of the dialogue between the two countries. Criticism came in the form of the State Department's annual country reports, which had consistently reported the abuses of the Karimov regime for several years with only very limited high level acknowledgement by US officials of their content.

Some elements of a liberal approach were also present in US policy. The rhetoric from the Bush administration was fully liberal in its content, espousing freedom and democracy. The US won some minor concessions from the Karimov regime in 2002, resulting directly from American pressures on the Uzbek government.<sup>21</sup> A strategy of engagement in order to promote reform from within continued to be a rationale for US policy, similar to the previous period. Funding for democracy promotion saw large increases though it continued to be a fraction of the security budget. Other social programs and economic development assistance received a boost in funding as well. The inclusion of political reforms in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement alongside promises of security cooperation strengthened the liberalist position.

It became clear during this period that the US attempted to pursue all three interests – security, human rights, and democracy promotion – concurrently. Those in the administration favoring a liberalist approach were satisfied with the increases in democracy promotion aid and promises of political reform in the Strategic Partnership Agreement. The realists in the administration were satisfied as well, viewing the establishment of an American military presence in Uzbekistan as vital to the Afghan campaign, as well as an important step toward countering Russian or Chinese attempts to gain influence in Central Asia. The Congressional hearings on balancing military interests and human rights concerns showed contentment with US policy from all sides.

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<sup>21</sup>The US was greatly encouraged by this progress and interpreted these actions by Karimov as a positive development (Interviews, Tashkent March 2006).



## Chapter 7: The Relationship Deteriorates 2003-05

### 7.1 The ‘color revolutions’ and NGOs

After almost two years of what some described as a ‘honeymoon period’ between the US and Uzbekistan, during which Uzbek cooperation in the war on terror was rewarded with a minimal amount of criticism on human rights and democracy issues, the relationship slowly began to fray. In mid-2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell attested to Uzbekistan’s substantial and continued progress toward improving its human rights record, but noted that the Karimov regime’s record “remained very poor and it continued to commit serious abuses” (HRW 2004). The State Department’s annual report listed some improvements: no credible reports of any deaths in Uzbek custody, increased cooperation with human rights workers, few human rights advocates arrested and no journalists arrested in 2003 (State Department Country Report 2003). Human Rights Watch reported that while “Uzbekistan has made some attempts to convince the international community that it is improving its human rights record (...) the situation remains grave” (HRW 2004).

When protesters stormed the Georgian parliament building in November 2003 and deposed President Eduard Shevardnadze in the Rose Revolution, reports of US-funded NGO involvement in the revolution led President Karimov to take a harder line against the international NGOs operating in Uzbekistan. The regime implemented new procedures almost immediately. All grants from international NGOs to local organizations were halted pending an administrative review. Organizations wishing to fund projects in the country were forced to switch their accounts to one of two banks, both controlled by the regime, where a panel would decide whether individual grants would be awarded. The government organ responsible for liaising with the international NGOs switched from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Justice, a more heavy-handed agency (*CACI Analyst* 22 January 2004). The new regulations were contradictory and made compliance almost impossible. Inspections of NGO records and operating procedures increased, as did petty harassment.<sup>22</sup>

Ukraine followed suit the following year with an Orange Revolution in November 2004. Massive protests erupted after a rigged presidential contest, ultimately leading to the invalidation of the electoral results. Reports of NGO involvement again surfaced in the media. In the British newspaper *The Guardian*, a news analysis reported on US complicity in fostering ‘democratic’ revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, along with a failed attempt in Belarus (*The Guardian* 26 November 2004). The US reportedly spent over \$40 million on campaign advertising to defeat Milosevic at the ballot

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<sup>22</sup> This section based in large part on interviews conducted with NGO leaders in Tashkent, February/March 2006.

box and around \$14 million on the Ukraine regime change (Carothers 2004, *Guardian* 26 November 2004).

The phenomena struck a third time in March 2005 in neighboring Kyrgyzstan, with a disorganized and accidental Tulip Revolution that sent President Askar Akayev into exile in Moscow. The US had spent heavily on pro-democracy programs there; Kyrgyzstan's population is a fifth of Uzbekistan's and received more in democracy promotion funding than its larger neighbor (State Department Fact Sheet Kyrgyzstan 2005). US grants allowed for the creation of television talk shows and opposition debates, while US-funded equipment broadcasted these programs to places outside Bishkek such as southern Kyrgyzstan, where the protests began (*New York Times* 30 March 2005). In Bishkek, the unrest was fueled by pictures depicting the nearly completed Akayev family villa published in an opposition newspaper, the printing of which was made possible by the US-funded NGO Freedom House (*ibid*). After the government cut the electricity to the building housing the printing presses, the US embassy delivered two generators so that the last batch of opposition papers could be printed (*ibid*).

Although the 'color revolution' in Kyrgyzstan resulted from a host of complex factors, the media support provided by NGOs and the US State Department helped to fan the flames of protest which resulted in Akayev fleeing the country. Freedom House project manager Mike Stone's triumphant announcement to the world: "Mission accomplished" was widely interpreted as referring to the regime change, although Stone claimed he was talking about printing the newspapers and that "The intention was to assist media development. It wasn't to create a revolution" (*Telegraph* 2 March 2005). The opposition newspaper editor, Alexander Kim, acknowledged the role of US and NGO activities in Kyrgyzstan, saying "The result is that the society became politicized, they were informed (...) The role of the NGOs and independent media were crucial factors in the revolution" (*New York Times* 30 March 2005). Those NGOs which reportedly played a role in the revolutions – the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, Freedom House, the Open Society Institute – were all organizations active in Uzbekistan as well. In the months following the Kyrgyzstan revolution, the Karimov regime began closing US-funded NGOs.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The linkage between the 'color revolutions' and the crackdown on NGOs in Uzbekistan was confirmed repeatedly through interviews conducted in Tashkent in February/March 2006.

## 7.2 The US increases pressure for reforms and cuts aid

The State Department suddenly became increasingly critical of Tashkent and US foreign policy began placing greater emphasis on human rights and democratic reform. In December 2003, the State Department for the first time decertified Uzbekistan with respect to non-proliferation CTR funding, but President Bush waived the human rights restrictions and funding was ultimately unaffected (Bush 2003).<sup>24</sup> The State Department reiterated in January that Uzbekistan had failed to meet international human rights standards (*Washington Post* 14 July 2004). Hinting towards a shift in Uzbekistan's foreign policy, President Karimov and President Vladimir Putin of Russia signed a strategic partnership agreement in June 2004 (*RFE/RL* 17 June 2004). David Lewis, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, said the move reflected a breakdown in US-Uzbek relations due to human rights concerns in Washington and therefore the uncertainty of future US aid to the Uzbek government (*ibid*).

A Congressional hearing in June 2004 dealt specifically with US policy toward Uzbekistan. Officials from the Bush administration, including Secretaries Pascoe and Craner, testified before the committee and reiterated their positions that human rights and democracy promotion were being pursued alongside American security interests. The House Middle East and Central Asia Subcommittee chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen acknowledged Uzbekistan's cooperation with American efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq (the Karimov regime was one of the first to publicly support the US invasion), but insisted that the US "must press for greater political and economic reforms within Uzbekistan" (Ros-Lehtinen 2004). She observed that Congress had become increasingly frustrated with Uzbekistan's lack of reform and inserted provisions into the Foreign Appropriations Bill for 2004 which limited funding for the Karimov regime if it did not demonstrate progress toward reforms measures promised in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement. The Congresswoman maintained these commitments had not been met and that funding would be cut on 1 July 2004 if no progress could be shown (*ibid*).

One month later, on 13 July, the Bush administration announced an \$18 million cut in military and economic aid to Uzbekistan due to the State Department's determination that the Karimov regime had failed to institute reforms in areas outlined by the Strategic Partnership Agreement (*Washington Post*

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<sup>24</sup> In December 2004, the State Department again failed to certify Uzbekistan as eligible for CTR funding (US State Department's 'Supporting Human Rights' document 2005). President Bush once again waived the human rights requirement, citing national security interests, and Uzbekistan received the funding (Bush 2004).

14 July 2004). Unlike previous legislation, the 2004 stipulations from Congress did not come with a clause allowing the president to waive the restrictions based on national security concerns, a situation lamented as “unfortunate” by the State Department, which had hoped for “a more nuanced approach to encourage compliance” (Pascoe 2004). Due to some funds being redirected and other monies reinstated only about \$7 million in aid was actually withheld, with IMET and FMF programs the most affected (Nichol 2005a).

According to the State Department press release, “Uzbekistan has made some encouraging progress over the past year with respect to human rights. We are, however, disappointed by lack of progress on democratic reform and restrictions put on US assistance partners on the ground” (Boucher 2004). The reference to restrictions on American-funded NGOs may explain the administration’s move to decertify while simultaneously pointing to ‘encouraging progress’ by the Karimov regime. The US had earlier threatened sanctions against Uzbekistan due to the new restrictions on NGOs which violated a 1994 bilateral agreement between the two countries concerning such groups (*CACI Analyst* 22 January 2004). The 2004 decertification seemed to be a direct response to the NGO restrictions.

Tashkent was the scene of several bombings in March 2004, killing 19 people and wounding over 20 in what the Karimov regime claimed were attacks by Hizb ut-Tahrir and the IMU (*RFE/RL* 29 March 2004). Three days of unrest followed and the death toll climbed to 50 while Uzbek authorities conducted operations aimed at eliminating alleged terrorists (*Washington Post* 31 July 2004). As the trial of those suspected of involvement in the March violence commenced four months later in July 2004, three more bombings struck Tashkent – this time aimed at the American and Israeli embassies along with the offices of the Uzbek chief prosecutor (*ibid*). Human rights organizations warned of an impending crackdown by the regime. When hundreds of suspects were arrested rather than the thousands detained after the 1999 bombings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe remarked on the improvement in Congressional hearings, praising the government’s measured response (Pascoe 2004).

### **7.3 Disagreements over Karshi-Khanabad**

By late 2003, the Uzbek government had become increasingly dissatisfied with the basing arrangement at Karshi-Khanabad. It was standing US policy to differentiate between the use of civilian airports (where landing fees were paid) and military airstrips (where they were not). The US therefore paid landing rights fees for use of the civilian base in Kyrgyzstan, while it did not pay for the use of the

military base at K2. Tashkent apparently felt slighted by this arrangement and President Karimov, hoping to sidestep the more critical State Department, sent a personal letter directly to President Bush in early 2003 requesting more economic aid (Meppen 2006). Despite a negative response from Bush, who pointed to a need for real reforms in Uzbekistan, Tashkent resolutely continued to push for a new arrangement offering up at least six drafts of an agreement on the long-term use of Karshi-Khanabad from late 2003 to early 2005; all were rejected by the administration without comment (*ibid*).<sup>25</sup>

As a way to improve its negotiating position and increase the pressure on the US, Tashkent implemented restrictions on cargo flights into K2, claiming the runway was being damaged by the heavy aircraft – a claim refuted by US engineers (Meppen 2006). In response, the US proceeded to study how the runway might be improved and eventually arranged funding to rebuild the airstrip. The Defense Department had been provided with substantial supplemental funding by Congress in 2003 and 2004 for miscellaneous expenses related to the war on terror, and \$10.7 million of this was paid to Uzbekistan in 2003 for “expenses Tashkent initially incurred in moving its forces off of Karshi-Khanabad Air Base to other locations, and for continued services in providing security for the installation” (Meppen 2006:32). Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld began looking into how the Defense Department itself might use this type of funding to ‘reimburse’ the Uzbek government for use of K2 and negotiations continued over long-term US access to the base (Meppen 2006). In August, Richard Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – the Pentagon’s top military official – traveled to Central Asia. During his Uzbekistan visit, Myers criticized the aid cuts due to State Department decertification as “shortsighted” and not “productive” (Nichol 2005a). He then announced that the Pentagon would add \$21 million in non-proliferation funds and the transfer of fourteen patrol boats worth nearly \$3 million (*Eurasianet* 13 August 2004).

After funding spiked in 2002, US assistance the following year was reduced: total assistance amounted to \$93 million, with \$5.2 million for democracy/civil society, \$37 million in security assistance, and credit guarantees from the US Export-Import Bank worth \$96 million (US State Department Eurasia Report 2003, Meppen 2006). For 2004, Uzbekistan received just over \$85 million in US assistance, including \$39 million in security and law enforcement aid, \$19 million for democratic reform programs (US State Department Eurasia report 2005). The US provided Uzbekistan with humanitarian aid from 2003-05 in excess of \$78 million (*ibid*). With the Strategic Partnership decertification in

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<sup>25</sup> Tensions between the US and Uzbekistan over the payment of landing fees surfaced repeatedly in interviews conducted in Tashkent in February/March 2006.

place, FMF and IMEF funding for 2004 was withheld. Total US assistance to Uzbekistan for 2005 amounted to \$101 million, including \$9 million in democracy promotion/civil society programs and \$86.3 million in security aid. The security aid total includes the \$23 million paid by the Defense Department for K2 as well as \$24 million actually withheld due to decertification (Meppen 2006, State Department Fact Sheet 2005). One estimate placed the total assistance to Uzbekistan for security and border control since September 2001 at over \$500 million (Marten 2005).

#### **7.4 Tragedy in Andijon**

The violence in the Ferghana Valley town of Andijon on 13 May 2005 stemmed from the trial of 23 successful local businessmen who stood accused of “extremism, fundamentalism, and separatism” and belonging to a radical Islamic group called the Akromiya (ODIHR 2005). The trial, begun three months earlier in February, had led to daily protests outside the courthouse by family members of those accused and others sympathetic to their plight. On the night of 12 May, as the verdicts in the trial were delayed for some reason, armed men took over the local police station and attacked the prison. They freed the 23 accused along with a substantial number of other prisoners, some of whom reportedly had IMU connections, and made their way to the local government building where they took several hostages (*Washington Post* 18 May 2005, ICG 2005, Akiner 2005).

Later that morning the crowd gathered in Babur Square grew to several thousand as others heard of the large meeting in progress, and the protesters who occupied the government building on the square demanded to negotiate with the authorities (HRW 2005, *Eurasianet* 13 May 2005). Several telephone communications between protest leaders and the Interior Minister Zakir Almatov occurred, and Almatov reportedly offered the protesters safe passage to Kyrgyzstan (ODIHR 2005, HRW 2005). President Karimov flew to Andijon in order to personally direct operations to regain control over the government buildings (Nichol 2005c, Meppen 2006, Akiner 2005).

Throughout the day, armored vehicles drove past the square periodically, shooting into the crowd and killing and wounding a substantial number of people (HRW 2005, ODIHR 2005).<sup>26</sup> People remained

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<sup>26</sup> The official Uzbek government version and the Akiner report published by the CACI Institute at Johns Hopkins University place more emphasis on the role of foreign insurgents who carried out the prison break and engaged in gun battles with security forces. The killing of civilians occurred mostly during the crossfire where the insurgents were equally, if not more, responsible for the civilian deaths (Akiner 2005). It is important to note that a definitive account of what actually transpired does not exist. Reports by OSCE, UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, and the International Crisis Group all acknowledge that a violent prison break was followed by an even more violent attack by government forces on a peaceful gathering in the square. Only Akiner’s report corroborates the government’s version.

in the square believing that they would be safer as a group and due to rumors that President Karimov was on his way to address the crowd; a helicopter appeared overhead which lent credibility to the rumor (*ibid*). That evening, according to witnesses, armored personnel carriers arrived with government troops and began shooting intensely into the crowd while other soldiers stormed the government building (ICG 2005, HRW 2005). The crowd then began to flee down the only street not presently occupied by government soldiers, and were attacked by snipers as they moved away from the square (ODIHR 2005). Government sources reported (and the Akiner report supports this figure) a total of 187 people killed while all other reports maintain that 400-750 were killed (Akiner 2005, *RFE/RL* 13 July 2005, HRW 2005, ODIHR 2005). Hundreds of residents fled the violence and around 500 of them eventually ended up in refugee camps in neighboring Kyrgyzstan (ICG 2005).

While the European Union immediately blamed the Karimov regime for the violence, the initial US response to these events was muted as State department spokesman Richard Boucher called on the government and the protesters to exercise restraint, but also voiced concerns that some of those freed in the prison break were IMU terrorists (Boucher 2005a). Five days later at a daily briefing, Boucher had this to say:

We deeply regret that loss of life and are deeply concerned of reports of indiscriminate firing by Uzbek authorities on demonstrators last Friday. At the same time, I think it's clear that the episode began by an armed attack on the prison and on other government facilities. There are reports of hostage-taking and other claims that should be investigated. Nothing justified such acts of violence. And we're also concerned about reports of the release or the escape of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan members. We need to reiterate, I think, the bottom line that real economic and democratic reform and an end to human rights abuses are essential to the stability of Uzbekistan (Boucher 2005b).

The State Department signaled on 25 May that US-Uzbek cooperation on counterterrorism would not be diminished by the events in Andijon as it was based on the “common interests” of both countries (Boucher 2005c). Spokesman Boucher pointed out that the US would “continue to press for the kinds of changes in the human rights situation” that provides “the best bulwark against terrorism” (*ibid*). As the international community demanded an independent investigation of Andijon, the newly appointed Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also began to express the need for an independent inquiry. Also in May, a US Congressional delegation, including Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and John Sununu, arrived in Uzbekistan. They met with representatives of unregistered opposition parties in the country. The entire delegation was initially refused permission to visit – a decision which was reversed just two days before the trip – and Uzbek officials flatly refused to meet with them (US Embassy

website). By July, the State Department had announced that levels of future aid to Uzbekistan could be dependent on such an investigation (*RFE/RL* 13 July 2005).

### **7.5 Relations rapidly decline**

The timing of the Andijon violence coincided with US-Uzbek negotiations over the long-term use of the K2 airbase. The Karimov regime began complaining even louder about inadequate compensation for the base soon after some aid to Uzbekistan was cut due to the 2004 decertification, and imposed restrictions on night flights and C-17 cargo aircraft operations after US calls for an independent inquiry into Andijon (Nichol 2005d). Although some saw these moves by Karimov simply as negotiating tactics, the fate of K2 was not at all certain. Congressional leaders pressed the administration to halt talks on basing until Karimov agreed to an investigation, and even senior Defense Department officials questioned whether Uzbekistan was “the right place for us to be” in the long run (*Washington Post* 4 June 2005). Meetings between US and Uzbek representatives occurred in April and May, but a planned meeting to continue the negotiations never occurred due to Andijon (Daly 2006).

Further complicating the already tense and complex US-Uzbek relationship were the Andijon refugees in Kyrgyzstan. The UN refugee agency UNHCR reported in July that the Uzbek government had repeatedly demanded that Kyrgyzstan return the refugees while UNHCR revealed that efforts were underway to fly them to a third country (*Eurasianet* 27 July 2005). Among those working for the evacuation of the Uzbek refugees was US Secretary of State Rice, who played a prominent role and even placed last minute phone calls to Kyrgyz leaders to arrange for the refugees to be flown to Romania (*New York Times* 31 July 2005). The morning airlift on 29 July 2005 led to an immediate response from the Karimov regime, which sent a diplomatic note to the US embassy in Tashkent later that day ordering the US to leave the airbase at K2 within 180 days. The eviction notice came less than a month after a summit held by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – whose members include Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan – approved a declaration demanding a timeframe for US withdrawal from its Central Asian bases (*RFE/RL* 8 July 2005).

At a September Tashkent news briefing, US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried said that the US was not appealing the decision and intended to vacate the base as requested (*RFE/RL* 29 September 2005). Fried announced that the US had agreed to pay the Uzbek government \$23 million for services rendered to the K2 base during its four years of operations, nonpayment of such debts had been one



complaint of the Uzbek government (*ibid*). Congress attempted to block the payment in October 2005 and make its dispersal dependent on a renewal of Uzbek cooperation on counterterrorism and an independent inquiry into the Andijon violence (Nichol 2005d). Instead, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld used 2005 funds to complete the payment (Meppen 2006).<sup>27</sup> The last US military planes left the K2 base in Karshi-Khanabad on 21 November (*RFE/RL* 22 November 2005). After the 29 July eviction notice, Uzbekistan gradually terminated its cooperation with the US on anti-terrorism efforts, revoked US overflight privileges, and shifted its focus towards Russia and China by signing agreements on closer military and economic cooperation (*Washington Post* 20 September 2005, *Jamestown Monitor* 27 September, 18 January 2006).

## 7.6 Analysis

This final period illustrates the culmination of Washington's policy dilemma with Tashkent. The four years that the US operated out of the K2 airbase marked a period of intense cooperation between the two countries. Only during what proved to be the final two years of US operations from K2 did Washington direct any strong criticisms at the Karimov regime's human rights record and failure to implement any democratic reforms. The December 2003 announcement by the State Department that Uzbekistan would lose its certification for CTR funding was unexpected, especially after Powell's testimony in mid-2003 which claimed progress was being made. The November 2003 revolution in Georgia and Tashkent's immediate reaction against US-funded NGOs represent one plausible explanation.

The language of the 2004 decertification announcement pertaining to the Strategic Partnership Agreement speaks directly to the Karimov regime's restrictions on US-financed NGO programs in the country. Congressional legislation tied part of the Uzbek aid package to *specific* reforms mentioned in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement and did not include the usual national security waiver. This may have forced the administration's hand somewhat with regard to both certifications. Finally compelled by Congress to certify specific improvements rather than invoke broad generalities, the Bush administration made the choice to decertify. Although this move had little real effect on aid levels, it showed the Karimov regime that future American support might begin to depend on genuine reform.

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<sup>27</sup> Meppen points to on-going base negotiations in other countries and the symbolic message of the US paying its debts as the rationale behind Secretary Rumsfeld's unconventional funding procedure.

The apparent disagreement between the State Department, the Pentagon, the White House, and Congress first became visible during these decertifications and became increasingly obvious in the following months. While Secretary of State Rice worked towards forcing an independent inquiry into Andijon, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld reportedly worked to block an investigation (*Eurasianet Commentary* 27 June 2005). The split within the administration was painfully obvious in 2004 when the Pentagon restored \$24 million in aid to Uzbekistan after the State Department had withheld \$21 million due to decertification. Tensions between the Department of Defense and Congress surfaced again the next year after Andijon and the payment demanded by Karimov for services rendered at the K2 airbase, when Congress unsuccessfully attempted to block the payment. Even disagreements within the State Department seemed possible, as Secretary Pascoe consistently claiming progress by the Uzbek regime while Secretary Craner focused much more on the failure to reform.

Analyst Stephen Blank, writing just after the events in Andijon, remarked that “to external observers American policy towards Uzbekistan looks like it is divided, ambivalent, and uncoordinated, despite administration claims to the contrary” (*Jamestown Monitor* 22 June 2005). Blank saw a need for a “coordinated inter-agency policy on Uzbekistan” so that Karimov could not “successfully play US cabinet departments against each other” (*ibid*). Media speculation of a divided administration led State Department spokesman Sean McCormack, speaking about Andijon on June 14, 2005, to declare: “We are speaking with one voice with respect to this issue” (*Jamestown Monitor* 17 June 2005).

In terms of the base eviction, the continued use of K2 by the Americans was already looking doubtful by the time of the Andijon crackdown in May 2005. Was the base important enough to US interests that other concerns were downplayed in a last-ditch effort to save the base? In early 2005, C-130 aircraft still transported on average 50 tons of cargo and 60 passengers a day through K2, supported by around 1000 military personnel at the base (Nichol 2005d). The Defense Department claimed that the loss of K2 presented logistical problems, but would not noticeably affect operations in Afghanistan or in the war on terror (*ibid*). One analyst argued that the loss of the Uzbek base places increased pressure on the other bases in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan itself, reducing the administration’s political maneuverability (Marten 2005). In addition, K2 was used as a logistical hub: transferring airlifted cargo to container trucks which could reach US bases inside Afghanistan. The K2 base and the overland route fed by the cargo planes represents the only road access into Afghanistan available to the US (*ibid*). The airfield was deemed “undeniably critical in supporting our combat operations” by the Pentagon (*Washington Post* 4 June 2005). Some reports suggest the Bush administration were in

negotiations to secure the use of K2 as a cooperative security location (CSL), a facility housing military equipment and some contract personnel, but few or no troops (Nichol 2005d). This would suggest plans for a permanent (though less central) role for the air base.

The initial weak response by the US to the Uzbek government's actions in Andijon, occurring in the middle of ongoing base negotiations between the two countries, also points toward inconsistencies in US policy. The mute response was perhaps intended to lessen Andijon's impact on the ongoing basing talks, but international pressures again may have forced the administration's hand on the issue. US statements concerning the violence in Andijon sounded less like a country pressing for human rights and more like one attempting to keep a balanced and measured response. State Department official L. Nicholas Burns claimed the US "made a clear choice, and that was to stand on the side of human rights," when US involvement in the refugee airlift was followed by the eviction notice for K2, implying that the US knew this would be the consequence of such an action and proceeded nevertheless (State Department Press Release 2005). However, disagreements over payments for Karshi-Khanabad and negotiations over its continued use had dragged on for nearly two years by the time the Andijon violence occurred. This fact, coupled with the weak initial US response to Andijon most likely intended to save the negotiating process, sheds doubt on the accuracy of the State Department's announcement about 'choosing' human rights in the matter.

US policy during this period revealed competing factions within the foreign policy establishment and exhibited both realist and liberalist components. Due to a lack of policy coordination, these two factions worked against each other much of the time. The realists in the Pentagon and the White House saw their efforts to placate the Karimov regime consistently frustrated by other actors. For example, the application of normative stipulations on military aid to Uzbekistan through the certification process represented the placement of a liberal concept over realist policy actions. The realists would rather not have such restrictions.<sup>28</sup> The threat of decertification made the military aid less dependable and therefore less attractive to target countries, which in turn made the aid and the decertification leverage less effective. This could be one factor in Karimov's abrupt turn toward Moscow after 2003. In addition, US efforts to assist the Andijon refugees, knowing it risked alienating a key ally in the region and putting the future of the US base at further risk, cannot be explained from a realist perspective. If

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<sup>28</sup> The realist approach of the Pentagon is evident in this observation from Meppen (2006:30): "Karimov maintained confidence, however, in his personal relationship with Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. It is not unusual in private meetings in Central Asia for local leaders to attempt to distinguish between Department of State, for whom they often hold great antipathy, and the Department of Defense, usually a source of largesse and little criticism".

the US were to first engage in actions detrimental to US-Uzbek relations, increased pressure for internal reform would have longer term effects than the refugee crisis. Why engage in risky behavior for issues which do little to further US interests?

It appeared that international pressures to condemn the Uzbek regime and conduct an independent investigation factored into the US response. These actions are clearly influenced by a more liberal faction that, just as the realists had encountered liberal interference, also met with resistance when pursuing its agenda. Congressional legislation concerning the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement linked concrete reforms to continued aid. This was opposed by the White House and apparently the State Department as well. The State Department decertified Uzbekistan in December 2003 for CTR funding but a presidential waiver allowed the funding to continue. After a security waiver was intentionally left out of the 2004 legislation, the State Department decertified Uzbekistan and aid was cut. Again, however, the White House and the Pentagon circumvented this process by awarding aid from other sources. Congressional efforts to block the \$23 million for K2 failed after the Defense Department outmaneuvered them. Lastly, echoing Strobe Talbott's 1997 speech, the State Department continued to insist that the US hoped to move away from geopolitics and power balancing. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried declared as recently as October 2005: "we do not look at Central Asia as an object in a great game. We do not look at this as a zero sum contest between us, the Russians and Chinese" (Fried 2005)

This period in the US-Uzbek relationship most clearly exhibits the struggle to reconcile security interests with human rights concerns. The period 2003-05 perhaps best illustrates the chaotic and sometimes incoherent realities of foreign policy and national responses to crisis. Events in 2005 developed rapidly and gave the US little time to prepare a coordinated, coherent response. The stakes were high for multiple US interests: basing rights, regional influence, international prestige, human rights. Policymakers in Washington were split between those advocating a more realist approach and those pressing for a liberalist policy. It is in this final period that the importance of theoretical foundations in shaping foreign policy is best observed and illustrated. Uncoordinated efforts by various actors within the US foreign policy establishment maneuvered to influence US actions according to their respective beliefs. The result was an ineffective mix of actors working at odds with one another and the eventual failure by all actors to accomplish their respective goals.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusions**

In answering the research question posed at the start of this thesis, some general observations are first drawn from the empirical data contained in the preceding chapters, followed by a brief review of the four periods of US policy towards Uzbekistan. With a final analysis completed, the hypotheses will then be evaluated to find which of the three best corresponds to the data. Finally, a few broader issues and ‘lessons learned’ from the US experience in Uzbekistan will be addressed.

### **8.1 General observations on balancing in US foreign policy**

Balancing the three policy concerns of human rights, democracy promotion and security occurred on two levels during the period studied. On one level, the president, in his role as chief diplomat, had the most immediate and wide-reaching influence on foreign policy decisions. He set the tone for US policy through various decisions on such things as diplomatic visits, criticism or praise in speeches, and budget proposals sent to Congress. Through these actions, the White House integrated issues concerning human rights, democracy and security, and struck some balance between them when they were at odds with one another. In general, the president has been the most visible and most influential force in US foreign affairs, but certainly not the only one and perhaps not the most influential in US-Uzbek relations. Many of the important policy actions in this study were carried out by lower-level administration officials or members of Congress exercising their influence through budget appropriations or oversight measures.

On a more complex level, then, balancing resulted from the process of competing factions in Washington jockeying to get their agendas incorporated into US policy. Although the administration formally conducted American foreign policy and purported to balance the three issues discussed in this thesis, they were often balanced only in a rhetorical sense and focused on the ‘big picture’. The various agencies of the government that dealt in day-to-day diplomacy took many lesser decisions which comprised the bulk of American foreign policy. In terms of concrete policy actions, there was a great deal of interaction between groups vying for influence and the chance to affect policy. Various actors within the US policymaking establishment contributed to policy formation, including the White House (the president and his closest advisors), the State Department, the Defense Department, and the US Congress. Among non-state actors, NGOs and academic institutions which publish articles on policy issues and offer expert testimony before Congress were among the most significant. The independent media focused the public’s attention on certain issues. Various interest groups also generated private and public pressures to further their causes. But the groups of actors most directly responsible for US policy were the aforementioned governmental ones, each pursuing a mix of realist- or liberalist-

oriented agenda. For simplicity's sake, the interests of these groups can be divided into two 'factions' and described as pursuing either a realist agenda or a liberalist agenda. When there was little to fight over, the two factions were not readily identifiable and acted more or less as one. When clear interests emerged for each of the factions and those interests diverged, the strain of finding common ground for a unified foreign policy became discernible. This process of integrating diverging views on policy direction constitutes the second means of balancing security with more the normative issues of democracy and human rights.

## **8.2 Applying the general observations to the data**

These two levels of balancing and the concept of liberal and realist factions within US policymaking circles can be clearly seen in the empirical data. Lacking any perceived security interests in Uzbekistan, the Clinton administration could press Tashkent on human rights issues in 1995-97. Rhetoric from the White House during this time was loaded with the liberal language of democracy promotion. Inconsistent policy was seen from the president and the Pentagon: as Clinton snubbed Karimov, Secretary Perry offered warm words of support. Whether this represented a true rift between the White House and Defense Department or a conscious policy decision is difficult to ascertain. The US embassy bombings in Africa, the Clinton Administration recognized the advantages of Uzbek cooperation in the hunt for Osama bin Laden and toned down its criticism. From 1998-2000 the balancing act seemed to occur as much within the White House as between the competing foreign policy actors. State continued to issue its annual country reports on human rights, but even they were toned down in comparison to the worsening domestic situation in Uzbekistan. The realist approach gained more support during this period and it was only in the last year of the Clinton Administration that the tough criticism returned during Secretary of State Albright's speech in Tashkent. Even then, however, the US struck a balance and awarded \$3 million in security assistance to Uzbekistan during Albright's trip.

After the terrorist attacks in September 2001, US policy toward Uzbekistan seemed all-encompassing. The Bush administration negotiated the use of the vital airbase at Karshi-Khanabad while the president's speeches were loaded with liberal language of freedom and democracy around the globe. The White House balancing act tried to include issues of human rights, democracy, and security in its policy. This pleased supporters of both realist and liberalist approaches as there was 'something for everyone' in this policy, which was formalized in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Agreement between the two countries. Human rights criticisms were toned down and the lack of substantial reforms by the Karimov regime were not commented upon by high level US officials, but the liberal faction remained

hopeful that Tashkent would honor the commitments to reform contained in the 2002 agreement. The realists, pleased with the use of K2, tried to keep the Uzbek government content. The stage was now set for the US policy meltdown that was to come in the following years.

President Karimov's crackdown on US-funded NGOs in response to the Ukrainian and Georgian 'color revolutions' of 2003 and 2004, along with Tashkent's constant complaints for more compensation for the use of K2, sent US-Uzbek relations on a downward spiral. It also revealed the clear split in US policymaking circles. The White House balanced the issues rhetorically, but with little real prioritizing of anything other than security concerns. A more liberal faction consisting of elements from the US Congress and the State Department reacted to the NGO restrictions by decertifying Uzbekistan for some aid, while the realists in the Pentagon and the White House criticized the decertification and scrambled to find funds with which to placate the Karimov regime. The stakes were high in this policy fight and the different approaches (often working at cross-purposes) by the White House, State Department and the Pentagon cannot possibly be part of a coordinated policy. With large and steadily growing cracks in the relationship, the violence in Andijon shattered what was left of US-Uzbek relations. Even after the K2 eviction notice and the abrupt halt to Uzbek cooperation with the US, the realist faction sought to pay the Karimov regime \$23 million while the liberals struggled to halt the payment.

Through the competition between US foreign policy actors, the issues of security, democracy, and human rights were integrated with varying degrees of coherence into US policy. Actions which promoted some strategic interest in Uzbekistan, from the close counterterrorism cooperation in 1998 to the increased support to Tashkent in return for basing rights in 2002, represented a choice to work in partnership with (and therefore symbolically support) a government notorious for its human rights violations. These decisions were taken by both the Clinton and Bush administrations and despite liberal language in both administrations' security policies calling on the US "to take strong measures against human rights violators" (National Security Strategy 1997) "and "to speak out honestly about violations of the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity" (National Security Strategy 2002).

The human rights promotion tools (listed by Liang-Fenton in chapter two) most prevalent in US policy actions included private diplomacy, country reports by the US State Department, congressional actions, cultural and scholarly exchanges, and democracy building programs. Throughout the entire period examined, incentives were seen much more frequently than sanctions, public diplomacy was used sparingly, and the image presented by the US to the media was one of slow but continuous

progress by the Uzbek government. Both funding for democracy promotion as well as diplomatic support or criticism of Tashkent's record fluctuated greatly, and the US offered far more 'carrots' to the Uzbek government in the form of assistance and training than it punished with 'sticks' such as withholding funding, making funding contingent on reforms, or public criticism beyond the annual country reports. Despite a tendency to overstate Tashkent's progress toward reforms, US-funded democracy proponents in Uzbekistan worked under difficult conditions to better civil society in that country. Perhaps the US favored strategic interests over those of human rights or democracy, but the latter two concerns were never completely absent from US policy.

### **8.3 Connecting the data with the hypotheses**

The first hypothesis, grounded in classical realist thought, predicted a purely instrumental use of human rights and democracy as part of a pragmatic, security-driven foreign policy. Based on the empirical data in the previous chapters, this hypothesis can be easily rejected. That period which most resembles this argument, namely the two years directly after 9/11, still contained some elements of liberalism which were more than simple window dressings. There was a firm belief that engagement with Uzbekistan would lead to liberalization and reform, even though the US was dependent on Tashkent for the use of K2. The terms of the Strategic Partnership Agreement clearly required movement towards reform and was duly signed by the Uzbek government. Democracy promotion funding doubled in 2002 before settling back to levels higher than were seen during the Clinton years. Realism would not have demanded such superfluous details: the acquisition of K2 would have sufficed. In all the periods of US-Uzbek relations examined, there were elements of both liberalism and realism and while the balance tipped toward one approach and then back again, no period can be said to represent a purely realist perspective.

The data supports a position somewhere between hypothesis two, which suggested the incorporation of normative components in foreign policy only when convenient, and hypothesis three, which supported the permanent inclusion and prioritization of normative elements in US policy. Thomas Carothers argues that hypothesis two has been standard US policy for decades, "a semirealist balancing of sometimes competing and sometimes complementary interests. Where democracy appears to fit in well with US security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy. Where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored" (Carothers 2004). This analysis fits well with some of the data presented here, as the US appeared much more proactive regarding human rights (and to some extent democracy promotion) during the first period examined, while security interests clearly affected the administration's position during the second period. The



empirical data shows, surprisingly, a steady increase in security-related cooperation and assistance prior to 11 September 2001; post-9/11 American policy simply accentuated the pre-existing pattern.

Hypothesis two is less convincing, surprisingly, when applied to US policy from 2001-05. A US policy which prioritizes existing security interests over normative ones, as Carothers argues, would not have maintained such high levels of democracy promotion funding, refused to negotiate with the regime regarding payment for basing rights, or withheld funding due to lack of democratic reforms. The security interests of the US would have been much better served if Washington had substantially reduced NGO funding in Uzbekistan in 2004 and found ways to compensate the Karimov regime for use of K2 (short of violating a long-standing policy of nonpayment for military base use). The realists in the White House and Pentagon were more successful in the beginning to influence US policy, but Congressional and State Department actions quickly tilted US policy slightly towards liberalism again. It would therefore be inaccurate to describe the entirety of US policy towards Uzbekistan as consistent with the Carothers quotation and hypothesis two of this thesis.

Carothers himself agrees that provisions for including human rights and democracy promotion have been institutionalized in US foreign policy (Carothers 2004). The implementation of these provisions remains problematic, however. The US granted military aid and CTR funding – with Congressional approval – to Uzbekistan beginning in the 1990s despite human rights restriction that clearly should have applied to the Karimov regime and made it ineligible for this type of assistance. The State Department annual reports on human rights shone a spotlight on abuses, but they become little more than another bureaucratic procedure without any high-level acknowledgement of the reports or the abuses. The third hypothesis of this thesis, therefore, accurately described ‘official’ US policy as seen in documents and statements by administration officials, but the empirical record of the past ten years in US-Uzbek relations shows US policy rather often falls short of truly prioritizing normative issues of human rights and democracy.

The dynamic nature of foreign policy (and of politics in general) tends to discourage simple, concise answers to such a multifaceted theme. An approximation, as offered here, becomes the best and most accurate answer possible. Just as the hypotheses act as approximations without capturing all the complexities of US foreign policy, theoretical perspectives serve much the same purpose. Theories in international relations are useful as a sort of shorthand, an abbreviation for a formal set of views and beliefs. But precisely because theories must espouse a formal set of views, there are limits to how well a single theoretical perspective can account for the complexities of foreign policy. In the present study,

multiple groups of actors contributed to US foreign policy, a reality acknowledged by liberal theory. As argued above, realism can easily account for the motivations of some actors who influence US foreign policy. This includes, first and foremost, the Department of Defense and the White House. Similarly, other actors at various times espoused a more liberal perspective, including elements in Congress, the State Department, and the Clinton administration. These groups of actors succeed in partially influencing policy with varying success at any given point in time. The entirety of US policy therefore appears as a jigsaw puzzle, made up of constantly changing combinations of realist and liberalist-inspired puzzle pieces. While it is the role of theory to simplify realities in order to better analyze and explain them, attempts to classify the entire puzzle as liberalist or realist risks losing important details which refute such a blanket classification.

#### **8.4 Some lessons learned from the US experience in Uzbekistan**

There are several general themes in US policy which can be drawn from the empirical data. The first deals with US policy regarding foreign military basing in authoritarian countries and the dangers inherent in such an action. Second, US policy regarding democracy promotion in Uzbekistan will be examined to reach some conclusions on the pitfalls of building democracy in autocracies. Finally, the broad issue of US policy in the region, given US policy towards Uzbekistan, will be considered.

##### *Maintaining military bases in authoritarian countries*

After the establishment of a US airbase at Karshi-Khanabad, US officials argued that K2 gave the US increased leverage with the Karimov regime to press for reforms (Crouch 2002, Dobriansky 2004). After several years, it became obvious that the reverse was in fact true: the US stepped lightly around the abuses and lack of reforms by Karimov due to the base's importance to US military planners. The weak US response in the wake of the Andijon violence, which occurred during the 'last chance' phase of base negotiations, was further confirmation of the linkage. This dynamic, where the small state in effect can dictate the terms of its relationship with a great power, runs counter to the conventional 'might-is-right' rules of power politics. President Karimov actively courted American involvement in Uzbekistan during the 1990s, realized the relationship wasn't providing the benefits he had hoped within a year of signing the 2002 Strategic Partnership, and then began a process of rapprochement with Moscow. The entire Us-Uzbek relationship was much more dependent upon the actions and signals by President Karimov than by US policy, although the uncoordinated policies of the Americans exacerbated the problem.

The eviction highlighted another problem with autocrats as hosts: they are fickle and unpredictable. As Alexander Cooley (2005:85) observes, “agreements with an authoritarian state last only as long as the ruling regime does – if even that long – because the status of such treaties is subject to the regime’s fortunes rather than to a lasting institutional framework”. Lacking institutionalization of the basing agreement, the US was left completely dependent upon remaining in the good graces of President Karimov.<sup>29</sup> Finally, US bases in authoritarian countries like Uzbekistan attract the ire of radical domestic opposition groups who see the US as supporting the host country’s repression, a situation which undermines US security (see Cooley 2005, Crosston 2006, Carothers 2004). Choosing to base US forces in more pluralistic countries might better ensure the country’s long term security and help avoid policy conflicts with human rights and democracy building issues.

### *Democracy Promotion*

Democracy promotion in authoritarian countries such as Uzbekistan can be challenging, if not impossible. Diplomatic pressure from the US to reform, even if successful, results in superficial measures which can be rescinded by presidential decree at any time. The authoritarian nature of regimes such as Karimov’s precludes any lasting institutional changes which may survive the changing whims of the autocrat. Even legally binding documents such as constitutions and treaties were routinely flouted by Karimov. Working to promote changes from the bottom up in a grassroots approach has become even more challenging after the so-called color revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan.

As Carothers (2006) argues, US involvement in these events, along with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to install democratic governments and a constant barrage of democracy rhetoric from the US, has led autocratic governments to link democracy promotion with regime change. In this, the autocrats are correct: democracy promotion technically aims to replace their authoritarian regimes with pluralistic ones. Many autocratic leaders are questioning the wisdom of allowing US-funded NGOs to operate in their countries for this purpose, what Carothers (2006) calls in the title of his article the “backlash against democracy promotion”, and scores of NGOs have been forced close as they did in Uzbekistan. Carothers (2004:71) argues against the “instrumentalization of pro-democracy policies – wrapping security goals in the language of democracy promotion and then confusing democracy promotion with

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<sup>29</sup> Karimov’s foreign policy can be quite erratic. Uzbekistan left GUUAM in 2002 only for Karimov to retract the announcement later saying Uzbekistan only ‘suspended’ its involvement. It finally left the organization for good in 2005. (Nichol 2005a, Torbakov 2005). In addition, Karimov announced a close security relationship with Russia in May 2000, reversed himself and criticized Russian involvement in Central Asia a year later in May 2001, just one month before entering the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (consisting of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia and China) and thereby agreeing to closer economic and military ties with fellow member Russia (Rashid 2002).

the search for particular political outcomes that enhance those security objectives". Attempts by the US to combine democracy-building efforts with its security interests can lead to these types of unclear, counterproductive or outright disingenuous democracy policies.

### *US policy in Central Asia*

US policy can, at the very least, be criticized for its incoherent and fragmented nature in Uzbekistan, but larger issues are even more disconcerting. The Cold War was for decades the main focus of US foreign policy, and its abrupt end left the US without a suitable security framework to replace it until the US foreign policy establishment seized upon terrorism as the new global security threat after 2001. Combined with Cold War mistrust of Russia, the realist faction in the US looked toward Central Asia as a continuation of the 'Great Game' despite statements by the State Department encouraging a view beyond the zero-sum game scenario. The Russians seemed to still be playing a game of the zero-sum variety, maneuvering for influence in the Central Asian countries throughout the period studied here. Despite obvious common interests in the region with Islamic extremism, drug trafficking and regional instability, the US and Russia did not cooperate with one another on these issues. The Russian anti-terrorism base in Kyrgyzstan sits less than thirty kilometers from the US base at Manas, a testament to the parallel strategies pursued by both countries.

In addition, the US tendency to favor bilateral agreements over regional and multilateral arrangements arguably contributed to an unnecessary balance of power environment in the region. By aligning itself so closely with Uzbekistan for reasons of strategic convenience, the neighboring countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan may have felt inclined to nurture relations with Russia given Uzbekistan's aggressive behavior toward its neighbors regarding border disputes, trading policies and cross border incursions by the IMU. Tajikistan's existing close ties with Russia were reaffirmed with an economic package and a new Russian military base, Kyrgyzstan agreed to the Russian counterterrorism base after US-Uzbekistan ties strengthened in 2002, and with thousands of kilometers of territory bordering Russia, Kazakhstan also continued its good relations with Moscow (see Bohr 2004). After the K2 eviction, Tashkent's abrupt end to cooperation with the US, and the recent strengthening of ties between Russia and Uzbekistan, the US has found itself shut out of Central Asia. Even the base at Manas, Kyrgyzstan is threatened as President Bakiev has pressed for a staggering rent hike for continued US use of the airport, from \$2 million to \$207 million (*BBC News* 15 February 2006). The reliance on bilateral agreements and diplomatic efforts, while necessary for detailed basing agreements and other cooperative efforts, carries with it the inherent weakness of complete dependence upon that country to facilitate US foreign policy actions.

Even a superpower like the US cannot control every environment and influence every outcome, especially when the region in question lies halfway around the world. At the most basic level, effective US foreign policy requires access and opportunity in order to work toward its political goals in a country. These conditions are now absent in Uzbekistan, where most avenues of political action are presently closed to the US. An ineffective mix of policy prioritization has left Washington without any political leverage across its spectrum of interests in the country. The United States should in the future remain vigilant against expedient solutions to immediate security concerns that might undermine its ability to reconcile the rhetoric with concrete policy actions. Consistent, coherent, and coordinated policies represent the best approach for finding an appropriate balance between immediate strategic interests and stated US long-term objectives of peace and stability through the encouragement of representative governments and institutions which respect universal human rights.

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Energy Information Administration of the United States website (EIA), via  
[www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspian.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspian.html)

Eurasia Foundation  
[www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

Federation of American Scientists (FAS) US foreign military assistance primer  
[www.fas.org/asmp/profiles/aid/aidindex.htm](http://www.fas.org/asmp/profiles/aid/aidindex.htm)

Jamestown Monitor  
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US Agency for International Development  
[www.usaid.gov/about\\_usaid/usaidhist.html](http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/usaidhist.html)

US Embassy in Uzbekistan:  
[www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx](http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx)

US Export Import Bank  
[www.exim.gov/index.cfm](http://www.exim.gov/index.cfm)

### **Online media sources**

The Asia Times	<a href="http://www.atimes.com">www.atimes.com</a>
BBC News	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk">www.bbc.co.uk</a>
The International Herald Tribune	<a href="http://www.iht.com">www.iht.com</a>
The Guardian	<a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk">www.guardian.co.uk</a>
The New York Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a>
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)	<a href="http://www.rferl.org/">www.rferl.org/</a>
The Telegraph	<a href="http://www.telegraph.co.uk">www.telegraph.co.uk</a>
The Washington Post	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com">www.washingtonpost.com</a>
US News and World Report	<a href="http://www.usnews.com">www.usnews.com</a>

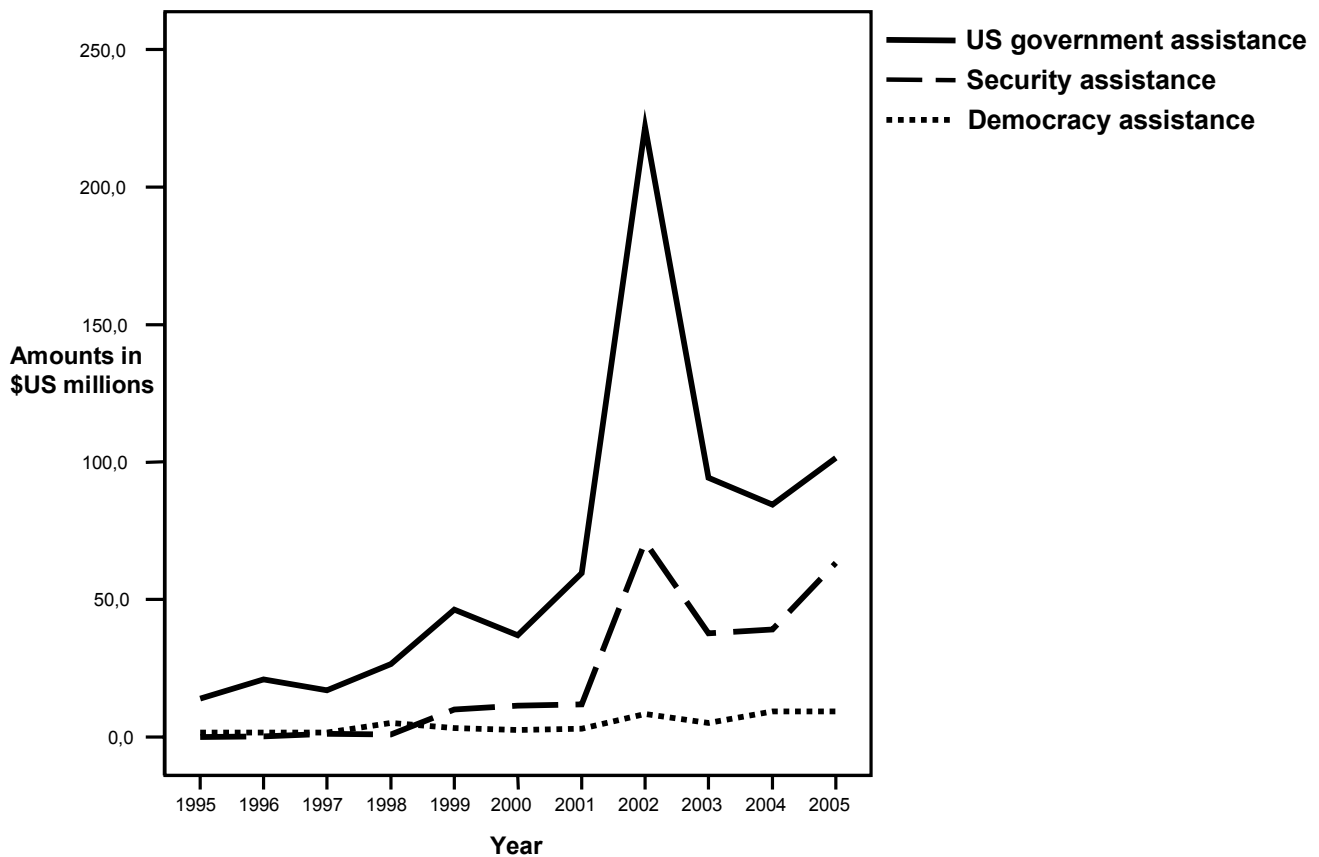
**Appendix A: Interviews conducted in Tashkent from 26 February – 11 March 2006**

- Dildor Alembekova, Uzbek NGO leader
- Atanazar Aripov, chairman, Erk Democratic Party
- Fabienne Asiani, freelance consultant (Asia Development Bank, SOROS foundation)
- Andrea Berg, country director, Human Rights Watch
- Marc Bojanic, human dimension officer, OSCE
- James Bonner, USAID representative in Uzbekistan
- Jeff Erlick, country director, Eurasia Foundation
- Richard Glaub, country director, National Democratic Institute
- Nigora Hidoyatova, leader, Ozod Dehkon (Free Peasants party)
- David Holiday, country director, Counterpart
- Kamiljon Karimov, education officer, UNESCO
- Alo Khodjaev, former editor and opposition figure
- Mansur Mirovalev, journalist, Associated Press
- OCSE economic dimension team, including Kimberly Bulkey, Nodir Khudayberganov, and Ulugbek Ruziev
- Jon Purnell, US Ambassador to Uzbekistan
- Branka Sesto, country director, Freedom House
- Feruza Tajibaeva, spokesperson, Sunshine Coalition
- Farkhod Tolipov, independent analyst and former professor, University of World Economy and Diplomacy
- Major Joseph Willoby, air attaché, US embassy



## Appendix B: Overview of US assistance to Uzbekistan 1995-2005<sup>30</sup>

Year	US Assistance <sup>31</sup>	Security Assistance <sup>32</sup>	Democracy assistance	Humanitarian assistance	Total US Ex Im Bank Loans
1995	11.3	0.1	1.6	2.7	55.0
1996	21.0	0.3	1.6	9.0	80.0
1997	16.9	1.2	1.7	22.7	301.0
1998	26.5	1.0	5.0	4.5	379.0
1999	46.2	10.0	3.3	29.0	256.0
2000	36.9	11.5	2.5	27.5	30.5
2001	59.6	11.8	2.9	25.4	136.0
2002	221.8	71.0	8.4	78.2	70.0
2003	94.2	37.7	5.2	42.0	96.0
2004	84.6	39.1	9.2	16.4	0.0
2005	101.6	63.3	9.3	20.0	81.0



<sup>30</sup> Sources: State Department NIS reports, Eurasia reports, State Department fact sheets, HRW annual reports, Meppen (2006), Garcia and Stohl (2003), US Export-Import Bank site. No single source provides a complete overview of aid due to extra-budgetary payments and assistance from a variety of sources within the US government, less detailed reporting prior to 2001. These figures are the best estimates of the author and any errors are most likely from underestimating funds.

<sup>31</sup> Humanitarian assistance and US Export Import bank credit guarantees not included as part of US assistance totals.

<sup>32</sup> Security assistance includes FMF, IMET, EXBS (border security), law enforcement, and non-proliferation/CTR funding. Some aid from 2004 and 2005 (mostly FMF and IMET) was not dispensed due to State Department decertification. Amounts ranged from \$8 million in 2004 to \$24 million in 2005, though the total amounts budgeted are shown here.

Appendix C: Map of Uzbekistan

