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WORKING PAPERS

UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY (1991-2001): A Decision-Making Analysis

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Abstract

di Luca Ozzano

La politica estera dell'Uzbekistan dall'indipendenza (1991) fino agli eventi legati alla guerra in Afghanistan (autunno 2001), condotta tramite un modello di analisi del decision-making, rivela molti aspetti di un difficile percorso di state-building e di transizione dal comunismo: il discontinuo processo di allontanamento dalla Russia, accompagnato da tentativi di avvicinamento agli USA coronati da successo solo dopo l'11 settembre 2001; le strategie seguite per superare difficoltà economiche (le quali, insieme a mire egemoniche uzbeke sull'intera Asia Centrale, hanno portato diverse volte sull'orlo di un conflitto regionale); il problematico rapporto con l'Islam in un Paese circondato da forze fondamentaliste; l'irrilevanza della società civile e politica e delle organizzazioni internazionali e non governative nei destini della regione.

Abstract

by Luca Ozzano

The foreign policy of independent Uzbekistan (from 1991 to the events connected to the Afghan campaign of autumn 2001), carried on through a decision-making analysis model, shows several features of a harsh path of state-building and transition from Communism: the discontinuous process of emancipation from Russia, matched by attempts of approaching the USA (crowned by success only after 9/11); the strategies pursued to overcome serious economic problems (which, added to projects of Uzbek hegemony over the whole of Central Asia, led several times to the edge of a regional war); the uneasy relation with Islamic movements in a country surrounded by fundamentalist forces; and the irrelevance of civil society and international organizations and NGOs in the Central Asian affairs.

dedicato a Cristina

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Central Asia, in its quality as link and fixed course between East and West, Asia and Europe, for centuries represented an essential playground in what today's scholars call 'geopolitical dynamics'. Here the Silk Road, route of nearly all East-West commercial contacts passed, the Greeks of Alexander the Great and Indians met, Arabs and the Chinese fought in Talas, Tamerlane set the Capital of his Empire in Samarkand, the United Kingdom and Russia confronted each other in what the former called a 'Great Game', the latter a 'Tournament of Shadows'. [1] However, when in the 1860s the last pieces of the region (the emirates of Bukhara, Khiva and Khojand, most of which are included in contemporary Uzbekistan) were conquered by the Soviet Union, an iron curtain fell on Central Asia. During the following decades the region was incorporated into the Russian Empire more and more closely, while the traditional ties with the rest of the Muslim world were cut, and the Silk Road, for the first time in centuries, was interrupted. The Soviet Rule did not bring more freedom to the land of Central Asia, mostly regarded as a deposit of raw materials and natural resources, and the fittest place to forcefully settle uneasy populations. Quite surprisingly, just in this period, contemporary Central Asian peoples were born – when the Soviets, in the framework of Stalin's nationalities theory, decided what people could be represented in an eponymous territory, drew the borders, and codified languages and literatures that now belong to the new independent Central Asian Republics.

It would be obvious to observe that during the '130 years of Russian rule' (as Allworth defined them) [2] Central Asia did not play any significant international role; moreover, until the 1950s, the region was not represented even in Moscow's central institutions. When independence came to the region after the attempted Moscow *putsch* of August 1991, it was

[1] Ahmed Rashid, *Talebani. Islam, Petrolio e il Grande Scontro in Asia Centrale*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2001

[2] Edward Allworth, Ed., *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, Duke University Press, 1994

unexpected and, generally, unwanted by the leaders of the Republics. They well knew the political inexistence and military and economic weakness of their Countries, mostly relying on their total dependence on Russia and on interrepublican exchanges. In this period, not many observers believed in the survival of these new political entities: it was a common opinion that they could soon, *de facto* where not *de jure*, be reabsorbed by the former 'elder brother', the Russian Federation. Anyway, after the independence of most European colonies in the 1960s, it was the first time that the world faced the birth of such a huge number of new States.

Unexpectedly, the leadership of the Republics everywhere (except Tajikistan) managed to build the embryo of a proper nation-state without widespread conflicts. Therefore, regional powers such as Turkey and Iran, and, although belatedly, Europe and the USA started to understand the geostrategical importance of the region. In a few years, all of them, including China and, again, Russia, came to see Central Asia as a unique opportunity to expand their spheres of influence, control strategically relevant mineral and natural resources (from oil and gas, to gold and uranium), find new markets for their products and allies against their own enemies, quickly creating a complex of new political and economic relations that Ahmed Rashid baptized 'New Great Game'. [3] Scholars, once the subject was noticed, interpreted the region as a 'gray zone' or 'empty space' where no power could dominate absolutely, [4] a 'fault zone' among Islamic, Western and Orthodox civilizations, [5] and several other ways. Nevertheless, the new States proved more eager for investment and concrete projects of development than for ideologies and theories.

The situation in Central Asia after 10 years of independence, when this research was going to find its conclusion, saw the new Republics still in deep difficulties, not only because of the ongoing problematic process of state-building, but also for a serious economic crisis, threatening Islamic incursions, renewed Russian hegemonic ambitions, and the almost dictatorial rule exerted in most cases by their leaderships. However, not all the Central Asian Republics had the same fate, and therefore they do not present an identical profile to the international relations analyst. On the contrary, each one of the new States is provided with its own peculiar ori-

[3] Rashid, *op. cit.*
[4] Fabrizio Vielmini, "Dal Turan all'Eurasia", *Limes* No. 3, 1999, p. 152
[5] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* Penguin, 1997

entations and trends, and each one would be an interesting field of study for a political scientist. Tajikistan, after a bloody civil war and years of turmoil, has recently become one of the first States in the World to incorporate a significant Islamic force into a democratic system; Kyrgyzstan, quickly opening to the market and to the western model of presidential democracy, has recently acceded to the WTO and was for a long time indicated as a positive model of democratic development; Turkmenistan has fallen under the picturesque rule of a personal dictator filling with his image every corner of the Country; Kazakhstan, with a Russian minority equaling almost the population of the eponymous nationality, has become an interesting experiment of interethnic cohabitation.

Nevertheless, and international analyst willing to study a State that can conduct an unprejudiced foreign policy, resist to the pressures of the Great Powers, and exercise some political and military influence on its neighbors would probably choose Uzbekistan, as was done for this research. The reasons for such a preeminence belong to different fields. First of all, there are obvious geographical and demographic reasons: Uzbekistan is a large Country (about the size of France) and is strategically situated in the middle of the region, not only bordering the other four Central Asian Countries, but also Afghanistan. It is by far the most populated Country in the region, and the less ethnically fragmented, which also means less influence of regional factions than in the neighboring Republics. Its territory, moreover, includes nearly all the main historical centers of the region, particularly the towns of Bukhara and Samarkand, and was the focal point of the main dynasties flourishing in Central Asia, from the Timurids, to the Shaybanids, and the Emirates of Khiva and Bukhara.

The Russians recognized this historical role by elevating Tashkent as their military and administrative center in Central Asia. Also under the Soviet rule, Uzbekistan was recognized as a *primus inter pares* in the region by Moscow, which assigned to the Republic most of the regional institutions, from the Central Asian Military District to the *Muftiyya* (Spiritual Directorship). Uzbekistan was also the most represented of the five Republics in the USSR central institutions. All these factors cooperated to provide the Country with vital infrastructures and a political experience which proved essential to its success as an independent State: it is possible to say that, in the problematic context of contemporary Central Asia, Uzbekistan was the only Country with comparative advantages able to allow it to perform a significant role also at the international level. This was in fact the purpose of the ambitious President Karimov who, after a peri-

od of necessary restructuring and State-building, began an assertive foreign policy trying to achieve independence from Moscow (both through political freedom and economic self-sufficiency) and to reach close cooperation with the NATO security apparatus, while firmly opposing every Islamist penetration. The importance of Uzbekistan as a pivotal State in Central Asia was, in fact, recognized (after some reluctance owing to its bad record in human rights), also by the USA, first as an "island of stability" in Central Asia, and, later, as the privileged partner in the region (the events of Fall 2001 just represented a turning point of a trend already testified by international analysts some years before). [6]

In short, independent Uzbekistan today represents a very interesting testing ground in relation to several primary international issues:

- The penetration (economic, political and, now, also military) of the USA in the Country, that will probably impinge upon the traditional hegemonic role of Russia in the Region.
- The quality of Uzbekistan as a frontier State against the penetration of Islamic radicalism and terrorist organizations, which constantly try to infiltrate through the borders of the Country.
- The role (especially as a close US ally) that the Country will play among the weaker neighboring Countries, all including significant ethnic Uzbek minorities.
- The 'New Great Game' regarding the region's natural resources and their development, that will probably be renewed by the reopening of the 'Afghan route' for pipelines after the fall of the *Taliban* regime.
- The strategic geographic position that makes Uzbekistan a key actor in every policy of control of arms and unconventional materials smuggling, drug trafficking, and nuclear proliferation.

This research tried to give some interpretations on Uzbekistan's foreign policy orientation by analyzing a cluster of decisions taken by its leadership during its first ten years of independent existence (from September 1991 to December 2001). The analytical framework adopted for this research is the model developed by Michael Brecher (that, unlike other patterns of analysis, has been tested by the author in his monumental

[6] Fabrizio Vielmini, "Il 'Grande Gioco' Anglo-Americamo in Eurasia", *Limes* No. 5, 2000, pp.231-246; see also the findings in the last chapter of this paper

analysis in two volumes about Israel's Foreign Policy,[7] and, recently, by Valter Coralluzzo in his book examining the Post-War Italian Foreign Policy [8]). The model is first of all inspired to the systemic analysis of politics (first developed by David Easton). Brecher, in particular, considers a foreign policy system as a flux of decisions produced by a network of structures and institutions, having specific effects on the environment and, also, a feedback effect on the system. To describe it, he makes an interesting synthesis of policy analysis models, with the contribution given by schools such as the bureaucratic politics (taking into account also the influence of the institutional apparatus and of the psychology of decision makers on decisions). This synthesis, developed with reference to the cognitive behaviorism of H. and M. Sprout and K. Boulding,[9] singles out the *Operational Environment* and the *Psychological Environment* constituting a foreign policy system.

The *Operational Environment,* existing independently from the actors' perceptions, defines the boundaries of the foreign policy decision-making process. The behavior of decision-makers is thus determined and committed by a wide number of factors, gathered by Brecher around the following 10 variables (half of them relating to the international environment, the others to the domestic environment of the Country analyzed):

1. **Global System (G)** – "the total web of relationships among all actors within the international system (states, blocs, organizations)". [10] In the present work, given the marginality of Uzbekistan (at least before 2001) in global dynamics, the variable *Global System* has solely been used as an indicator of the influence of international organizations on decisions.

2. **Regional System (R)** – "an intermediate level of interaction between the global system and the relations between any two states", characterized most of all by: "delimited scope with primary stress on a geographic region; at least three actors; objective recognition" by external actors, and

[7] Michael Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel : Setting, Images, Process, London, Oxford University Press, 1972; *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy,* London ; Melbourne ; Delhi, 1974

[8] Valter Coralluzzo, *La Politica Estera dell'Italia Repubblicana (1946-1992). Modello di Analisi e Studio di Casi,* Franco Angeli, Milano, 2000

[9] cit. in Coralluzzo, *op. cit.*

[10] Michael Brecher, Blema Steinberg, and Janice Stein, "A framework for research on foreign policy behavior", *Conflict Resolution*, Vol. XIII, N. 1, p. 82

self-identification as "a distinctive community, region, or segment of the global system". [11]

3. **Other Regional Systems (OR)** – A variable testing the influence of other regional systems, of which a state can also be part, since "states may be members of one subordinate system, more than one, or none at all". [12]

4. **Dominant Bilateral Relation (DB)** – "the total pattern of interactions between any state and a superpower or preeminent actor in the global system". [13]

5. **Other Bilateral Relations (B)** – "the total pattern of interactions between any two states except for relations involving superpowers or pre-eminent powers within the global system". [14]

6. **Military Capability (M)** – "the ability to wage war or to deter other states from attacking"; a variable taking into account "the geography, the general level of technology, military manpower, financial resources available for defense, and weaponry". [15]

7. **Economic Capability (E) –** "the total of all material and human resources available to the state for external behavior. These range from natural resources […] through industrial plant to scientific and technical skills". [16]

8. **Political System (PS)** – including "the political institutions and constitutional matrix in which authoritative decisions are made", and "various traits of the political system which may influence the decision process in foreign policy: the type of political regime […]; the character of the party system […]. [17]

9. **Interest Groups (IG) –** Groups within the internal sector of the operational environment which perform "two distinct functions […]: they communicate information about the environment to the decision-making elite and […] advocate policies to those who wield authority in the system". [18]

10. **Competing Elites (CE) –** "which vie for authority to make political

[11] Id., p. 83
[12] Id.
[13] Id.
[14] Id.
[15] Id., pp. 83-84
[16] Id., p. 84
[17] Id.
[18] Id.

decisions in the system". Unlike interest groups, which tend to advocate specific demands, they "also propose alternative sets of foreign policy demands". [19] In this work, the variable tests the influence on decisions of the Islamic groups (as well as Coralluzzo did in his book with the influence of the Communist Party on Italy's foreign policy [20]) while the activity of the non-Islamic banned Parties is included in the variable *Political System*.

Since the decision-making élite members take every decision "in accordance to their perception of reality", their *Psychological Environment* is also essential. It comprises what Brecher calls *Attitudinal Prism* (a filter through which élites see the reality, comprising both societal and personality factors), and their consequent *Images* of the operational environment and of the single issues. While the *Operational Environment* must be primarily studied through academic and journalistic sources, the analysis of the *Psychological Environment* is more complex. As prescribed by Brecher, it first relies on explicit articulations of their images provided by the élite (as the writings by Uzbekistan's President Karimov used in this study). When articulated *Images* are not available, they can be deduced from "other decisions that are made under comparable conditions", [21] from a "composite boby of assessments of the decision-makers' motivations" [22] and, eventually, "from the known content of the corresponding segment of the *Operational Environment*". [23]

Moreover, the foreign policy decisions examined in this paper are classified according to the four issue areas fixed by Brecher:

1. **Political – Diplomatic (PD)**
2. **Military – Security (MS)**
3. **Economic – Monetary (EM)**
4. **Cultural – Status (CS)**

In this paper, the decisions taken into account are, however, gathered according to a criterion of contiguity of subject/sphere of activity in four different chapters. The first deals with some crucial decisions taken in the first years of independence; the second with Central Asian policies (espe-

[19] Id., p. 85
[20] Coralluzzo, op. cit.
[21] Brecher, Steinberg and Stein, cit., p. 89
[22] Id.
[23] Id.

cially about the Tajik Civil War); the third with policies involving extra-regional actors; the fourth with decisions taken during the 2001 Afghan War.

Every decision's analysis begins with a paragraph treating the main variables involved in it (either crucial or relevant according to their degree of importance). Partially modifying the Model proposed by Brecher (along with the interpretation given by Professor Coralluzzo) the aspects of the *input* privileged here are the ones relating to the *Psychological Environment* (although with the limitations given by the sources available), that is, the presumed interpretation given to the situation by the decision-makers. The second paragraph in every decision is later devoted to the description of the flow of events leading to and preceding the decision. The last one summarily describes the implementation of the decision and its output, also providing (as an innovation to the model motivated by the specificity of the Central Asian context where all the Countries often had to deal with the same issues in the same period) a comparative perspective with decisions on the same issues taken by the leadership of the other four Republics of the region (also in order to preserve a comparative perspective that originally was one of the purposes of this research).

The final findings of the study present an analysis (both qualitative and quantitative) trying to provide an explicative (and, as far as possible, predictive) pattern about the degree of influence of the 10 variables in foreign policy decisions. Partial analyses will also deal with the variables involved in decisions belonging to different periods, and different issue areas of decision.

While reading this paper and its findings, it is however important to take into account that it was part of a much wider work, still unpublished, which also included a detailed description of Uzbekistan's operational and psychological environments – explaining, for example, why President Karimov can be considered the only relevant decision-maker of the Country. [24]

In the whole of this work there are several elements of novelty standing against the existing literature. First of all, Uzbekistan's foreign policy was rarely treated in monographic works, and never (in the huge amount of

[24] Readers looking for more information can easily found what they need by consulting the texts mentioned in the bibliography – especially the precious works written by Annette Bohr and Olivier Roy – or, if they want, by contacting the author of this paper at the address lucaozzano@yahoo.it.

essays examined) adopting a formal pattern of study. Several decisions treated, for example, were just mentioned by scholars as facts, without trying to provide comprehensive explanations. This result has also been possible thanks to a wide use of internet sources.

Among the problems faced while preparing and developing the work, the biggest was undoubtedly represented by the sources. First of all, the discipline studying Central Asian international relations is very recent, simply because until 1991 the Republics were not part of the international context. Therefore, the literature of the Soviet times analyzed them mainly in a domestic (historical, cultural and sociological) perspective, that today does not prove very useful to the international relations analyst. Moreover, several works widely considered as 'classics' were, in the opinion of the author of this work, overestimated, often presenting old materials not updated for decades. A second aspect of the problem is that, also after independence, Central Asia has been studied for a long time only as a whole, with limited attention paid to the single constituent Republics. Only in the late 1990s, monographic works on the single Countries began to appear in a limited number (I was able to get some relevant sources thanks to a period of study spent in Fall 2001 at the *Erasmus Universiteit* of Rotterdam – The Netherlands).

As for the news and journalistic sources, the problems were also significant. First of all, since the Country has been undergoing a severe censorship regime since at least 1992-93, there are almost no interesting sources available coming from the Country. The other sources available in English on the Internet are much more reliable, [25] but rarely refer to events of the first half of the 1990s. I have filled voids exactly following Brecher's instructions: first of all making use of statements about other similar decisions (the book *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* [26] written by President Karimov proved essential), and the corresponding segments of the operational environment – in addition, of course, to some authoritative opinions available in the literature.

The readers of the work will surely find other graphic versions of several names of places and people. This fact does not only depend on the double (Uzbek/Russian) version used for many names, but also on the

[25] See for example the Web Sites http://www.rferl.org; http://www.eurasianet.org; and http://www.cacianalyst.org
[26] 1996, from the Web Site http://www.gov.uz

problems given by the ongoing transition of Uzbekistan to the Latin Alphabet, and, of course, on the different methods of transliteration. When dealing with relatively famous names, I used the most common version of them; otherwise, I made the choice following a criterion of analogy with the most common ones.

CHAPTER 2
The Creation of a State

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter gathers a cluster of particularly significant decisions, taken by President Karimov and his entourage in the early years of Uzbekistan's independence. While, in fact, later decisions prove helpful to analyze the path taken by the Republic's foreign policy, with its orientation and changes, the ones presented here could be assessed as 'founding'. They deal with subjects such as the introduction of a national Army, a national currency, and an alphabet different from Russia's Cyrillic. Therefore, they cannot be seen solely as foreign policy stances, but they must be considered as essential steps – although in different issue areas – in the way which led Uzbekistan to become an independent Country. They entailed difficult choices, often taken when the situation did not allow any alternative, and without great hopes of success. Nevertheless, in absence of any of them, Uzbekistan could not have developed as a real sovereign Country.

It is also important to note that the decisions examined here were taken in a political and social environment which was significantly different from that of the following years: Karimov's power had not yet consolidated, and both political opposition and a turbulent civil society were still present and active in the Country – which also explains the relevance of variables that became less important in the decisions of the following years.

2. ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL ARMY (JULY 1992 – MS)

A) Variables Involved

Among the crucial variables determining this strategical decision (and several others, both strategical and tactical, which preceded and followed it), a place of preeminence is of course occupied by *Military Capability*. The existence and independence of a Country's national army is, in fact, a universally recognized attribute of its sovereignty; Uzbekistan's president Karimov confirmed this rule, claiming for the establishment of the Uzbek Army immediately after his popular

election as Uzbekistan's President in 1991. [27] However, what allowed him to call for a national defensive system before all other Central Asian Republics was his people's readiness to accept it, mainly determined by the activity of more or less organized *Interest Groups*. According to Critchlow, at that time "Karimov and other Uzbek Government leaders were unhappy" because "popular political pressures could no longer be ignored" after the so-called 'recruits murder scandal', thus helping "to move Uzbekistan a step closer to genuine sovereignty". [28] Moreover, 1992 was also the year of the massive students demonstrations demanding democratization. Very likely, Karimov established the Army (and especially the National Guard) also to be able to control social unrest.

A similar role, but less critical, was probably played by *Competing Elites*, represented by the Islamic movements: Karimov, in fact, made his first speech supporting the national Army after an electoral campaign weightily marked by Islamic insurgencies and demands. In the case of Namangan, for example, Karimov was not only forced to interrupt his campaign, but even to call for the help of the opposition movement *Birlik*: these facts could well have convinced him of the necessity of a better controlled security apparatus. Another variable with some relevance is undoubtedly Russia's role (*Dominant Bilateral)*, not only in its feared quality of potential hegemon in Central Asia. Some scholars also interpret the final decision about the establishment of the Uzbek Army as a reaction to the same decision taken by the Russian federation. [29] Even in this case, as we will see, decisive tactical decisions had already been taken by the Uzbek leadership, whose will was anyway evident: thus, this variable cannot be considered crucial. Another relevant input to Karimov could have been the aim to create a Central Asian defense alliance of independent Armies, presented by Karimov during his speech of 14 January 1992 at the Supreme Soviet, probably in opposition to the Slavic bloc projected then by some former Soviet leaders (*Regional* and *Other Regional*).

B) Decisional Flow

The path toward the formation of the Uzbek army probably began in

[27] Robert V. Barylski, "Central Asia and the Post-Soviet Military System", *Central Asia Monitor* n. 6, 1992

[28] James Chritchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: a Soviet Republics's Road to Sovereignty*, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1991

[29] C. Bacarrère-Bécane, and Elisabeth Sieca-Kozlowski, "L'emergence des armées post-soviétiques: le cas de l'Ouzbékistan", from the web site http://perso.club-internet.fr

1989, when public opinion all over the Soviet Union discovered the issue of the mistreatment of the non-Russian recruits in the multiethnic Soviet Army. Several Uzbek soldiers, in particular, were allegedly killed in revenge for the recent ethnic riots in the Ferghana Valley. The press, and in particular the movement *Birlik*, channeled the popular anger, and massive demonstrations were held in Tashkent; in May 1990 the Council of Ministers of Uzbekistan (already headed by Karimov) issued a decree limiting the conditions for military service of the Uzbek recruits outside Central Asia. Undoubtedly, this was a bland compromise, that did not calm the people completely, also because of the action of the new nationalist movements. [30]

The next step was made one year later when, just one week after independence was declared, Uzbekistan established a Ministry for Defense Affairs, taking some of the functions of the USSR Ministry of Defense. The Central Asian leaders, however, meeting on 13 December in Ashgabat (capital of Turkmenistan), called for a united strategical command among the former Soviet Countries, but did not address the fate of the conventional forces. The situation remained officially uncertain until the Alma-Ata meeting of 21 December (reconstituting the Community of Independent States – CIS – with the non-Slavic Countries as equal founding members), establishing a united strategical command under Marshall Shaposhnikov, though recognizing the right of every member to form its own national Army. The Russian federation further proposed to the Countries of Central Asia to limit their forces to lightly armed republican guards, while assigning all other functions to the CIS. While other leaders hesitated, Karimov made his opinion clear in his address to the Supreme Soviet on 14 January 1992, indicating his intention to establish a national Army, and proposing moreover a Central Asian federation of National Armies (that could later make an alliance both with the CIS and with the Russian federation). [31]

The first act made by Karimov to concretize this intention of his was the creation, in the same month, of the National Guard, based on Ministry of Internal Affairs troops; some days later, the Supreme Soviet placed military units and schools located in the Country under Uzbekistan's jurisdiction. Contextually, Karimov signed a decree to establish border guards under the authority of the Uzbek National Security Service, and subordi-

[30] Chritchlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-165
[31] Barylski, cit.

nated CIS border guards to this new authority. The leadership also quickly moved to recall the Uzbek personnel serving in other Countries, either outside the CIS or with their own national Armies. [32] In May, it was decided that the Uzbek recruits had to do their military service only inside the Country, leaving to their own discretion the possibility to serve in the CIS territories; Russian citizens were also forbidden to serve in the Uzbek Army. [33] These were only the first steps toward a decisive de-russification of the Uzbek Army, to be realized in the following years. In March, another Decree by Karimov declared the number of former Soviet troops in Uzbekistan to exceed requirements, abolishing the Soviet Turkestan Military District (headquartered in Tashkent), and establishing a proper Ministry of Defense. [34]

All was already decided, at least informally, but the creation of an official Army in the Country. In May all hesitations fell, when, during the same week, Yeltsin decided that "the time had come to play the Russia card". He proclaimed himself acting Minister of Defense for the Russian Federation and promulgated the formation of the Russian Army, [35] while the Tashkent Treaty of 15 May distributed the former Soviet troops and equipment among the Republics. [36] As Marshal Shaposhnikov himself admitted, "political realities had made it impossible to preserve the unified armed forces". [37] The first and more assertive Republic to create its own Army was the Ukraine, followed by Moldova and Azerbaijan. Uzbekistan soon followed them, promulgating in July the Law on Defense, which made the creation of the Uzbek Armed Forces official, and determined their function and composition. [38]

C) Implementation, Output, Comparison

The implementation of this decision was particularly long and complex, and in some fields is still going on. The first successive steps, of course,

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[32] Susan Clark, "The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces", in Mandelbaum, Ed., *Central Asia and the World*, Council of Foreign Relations, New York, 1994., p. 195

[33] Valeria Fiorani Piacentini, *La Disintegrazione dell'impero sovietico. Problemi di sicurezza nazionale e collettiva in Asia Centrale,* Rivista Militare, Roma, 1995., p. 98

[34] Archive of the Library of Congress, from the web site http://www.loc.gov

[35] Barylski, cit.

[36] Archive of the Library of Congress, cit.

[37] Barylski, cit.

[38] Bacarrère-Bécane & Sieca-Kozlowski

were decided in order to find remedies for the more urgent problems: reducing the high rate of desertion (by improving the quality of life and the income of troops), finding Countries ready to provide equipment and training (in the first years of independence mostly Turkey) and eventually establishing, from 1994, new Academies and Schools to train officers at home. These measures were necessary also to implement the line of de-russification (officially declared by the Minister of Defense of Uzbekistan), in order to substitute the majority of Russian Officials.

The output, also thanks to some favorable conditions (such as the presence in the Country of several former Soviet structures) but despite many limitations (not least the economic problems) was cautiously but undoubtedly positive. First of all, there is no doubt that in the early 1990s the only reasonable decision for a former Soviet Republic (given the environmental conditions, hostile to any other solution), was to establish its own Army. The behavior of Karimov in this context can be assessed as positive, avoiding both the radicalism of the Ukraine, and the excessive hesitations of Kazakhstan, and in accord with the presumable will of Uzbekistan's population. The Country was probably in the condition to sustain an independent Army, and a proof could be the fact that the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan both managed to defend the Uzbek borders from Islamic attacks, and were also able to intervene abroad, during the Civil War in Tajikistan.

The other Central Asian Countries kept different lines from each other, soon vanifying the dream of a tight cooperation in the field of security. Turkmenistan's leadership was the most resolute to refuse the idea of the CIS unified security, preferring to rely directly on the considerable Russian troops located on its territory (mainly because of its proximity to Iran) through bilateral security agreements. On the other hand, Kazakhstan followed a completely opposite line: probably pushed by the great number of ethnic Russians in the Country (more than the Kazakhs, at that time), President Nazarbaev repeatedly called for unified conventional CIS forces. When conditions made it necessary to form a national Army, he pursued a policy aimed at bilateral relations with Russia and tight multilateral cooperation both among Central Asian and CIS Countries. Kyrgyzstan, probably the weakest Country in the region, kept a conformist line, signing all the multilateral CIS agreements and partially relying on Russia for its security. The situation of Tajikistan will be showed with full details in the following chapter, mainly devoted to its Civil War.

3. PASSAGE TO THE LATIN ALPHABET (2 SEPT. 1993 – CS)

A) Variables Involved

In the research for this work it was not possible to find specific statements made by Karimov about language or alphabet issues: the explanation could be found again in his will not to foster interethnic rivalries and, specifically about the alphabet, in the problems about the decisions' implementation. Even in his book [39], he never mentions the words 'alphabet' or 'Latin', and barely writes about language in general terms, as a part of Uzbekistan's culture and spirituality.

Nevertheless, it is possible to understand the meaning of the important decisions taken on the subject, both through other speeches made by the President and his general opinions, and interpreting the strategical aspects involved in them. First of all, the decision about the passage from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin did not come out of the blue, but was part of a conscious strategy aimed at eradicating the legacy of the Soviet past as much as possible. As Karimov clearly affirms in his book: "after a period of more than a Century of totalitarian dependence, this process [the restoration of Uzbekistan's spiritual and cultural values] initially took quite naturally the shape of rejection of the recent past." [40] Added to the more general anti-Soviet and anti-Russian statements throughout the President's book, this phrase can easily help to interpret the decision on alphabet in this perspective. Moreover, Karimov has always been hostile to Russian hegemony in the cultural field, from the beginning of his first mandate as President (when the first law on language was drafted), till recent times (for example in December 2000 he still blamed the Russian decision to reinstall the old Soviet anthem "as a symbol of totalitarianism"). [41] Moreover, in the same paragraph of his book quoted before, Karimov continues: "at the same time, a thoughtless return to the values […] of the distant past can lead to another extreme: the denial of modern life", with "the further danger of a growth in an extremist opposition". [42] Thus, he clearly indicates the pattern of his cultural policy: in addition to the already highlighted *Dominant Bilateral*, the other crucial variable involved in this decision was *Competing Elites* (the "thoughtless return" in Karimov's words could easily be represented by the

[39] Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the 21st Century*, from the web site http://www.gov.uz
[40] Id., chapter 8
[41] AFP: "Uzbek Head Blasts Russian Plan to Reinstate Stalinist Anthem", 15 December 2000 from the Web Site http://www.uzreport.com
[42] Karimov, *op. cit.*, chapter 8

passage to the Arabic alphabet decided in Tajikistan). More generally, this decision represents a clear stance against the Slavic world, and also against the Islamic, and in favor of the West. Consequently, it is appropriate to include among the Crucial variables also *Other Regional*.

As Relevant variables, it is also possible to consider *Regional* and *Bilateral*, not only in the same perspective used for Other regional, but also because specific details of the decision suggest it. As clearly demonstrated by Olivier Roy, the Latin alphabet introduced in Uzbekistan was consciously created different from that of Turkey and Turkmenistan (whose languages are near to that spoken in Uzbekistan), even refusing the proposal of a common alphabet made by Turkish academicians. A worthwhile role in the decision was also played by *Interest Groups*, in a way similar to that played about the establishment of the Army (see previous paragraph of this research). However, in this case the variable does not deserve the degree of Crucial because the nationalist movements, although weightily influencing the decisions on language, probably did not take part – in specific – to that on alphabet (on the contrary, most of them would probably have preferred the Arabic alphabet).

B) Decisional Flow

The language spoken in Uzbekistan and its corresponding alphabet have been – as well as in the whole region of Central Asia – the object of frequent manipulations and artificial changes already in the Soviet times, as part of the so-called 'nationalities policy'. While the Kazakhs and the Tajiks already possessed their own literary language, the Uzbeks did not (and probably always used Persian, written with Arabic characters). When the Soviet scholars had the task to fix an Uzbek literary language, they found problems to choose among the many different dialects: at first, they selected the strongly Iranised dialect spoken in the southern towns; in 1927, contemporarily to a change in alphabet, the literary language was based on that of northern Uzbekistan; in 1937 it was finally fixed in the dialect spoken in Tashkent. [43]

The alphabet in which this language had to be written underwent, in all Central Asia, even more changes: starting from the Arabic alphabet (introduced by the Soviets in the early 1920s as the Central Asian standard alphabet), in 1926 there was a sudden shift to the Latin (officially as

[43] John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia*, MacMillan Press, London, 1999

the result of an all-Union 'Turcological Congress', but in reality to mark the distance from the rest of the Islamic world, outside the USSR). In parallel, in addition to the above-mentioned change in literary language, many Arabic words were substituted by 'international' (i.e. Russian) ones. In the late 1930s, however, following the new linguistic theories of Nikolai Marr, the shift was to Cyrillic, in order to prepare the merge of all Soviet nationalities "into a single people" [44] (the real purpose probably was to erode the pan-Turkic links with Turkey, which had also adopted the Latin alphabet in 1928). [45]

This situation remained stable for many decades, in an apparently quiet acceptation by the culturally colonized peoples. Only in 1989 Uzbek activists, encouraged by the *perestroika*, joined other non-Russian nationalists in denouncing the linguistic situation (in the Central Asian press of that period it is possible to find frequent recalls to the Baltic Republics, or the Caucasus). They highlighted the illogicality of a dominant Russian class that mostly did not bother to master local languages, so that even in tribunals and schools the non Russian speakers were strongly disadvantaged. [46] The situation reached a climax when the authorities, in the summer of that year, drafted the 'Bill on languages'. National opinion leaders, such as Mohammed Solih, lamented that the law, while pretending to fix Uzbek as official language, in reality granted that status to Russian, that "might be used optionally as an alternative to Uzbek". [47] Intellectuals also criticized the practice of using a Russian name where there was a native equivalent and the use of 'alien' toponyms. Although allegedly insufficient, the law approved on 21 October 1989 by the Supreme Soviet, requiring all public officers to master Uzbek, [48] marked the first step toward cultural independence from Moscow.

Before true independence was achieved, it was not possible to do much more, both in Uzbekistan and in the other Central Asian States. After 1991, the situation changed radically, and the new Constitution wanted by Karimov established without any doubt in Article 4 that "the State language of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be Uzbek" and, although ensuring "a respectful attitude" toward other languages, did not make any par-

[44] William Fierman, "The Soviet Transformation of Central Asia", in William Fierman, Ed., *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, Boulder CO, 1991., p. 30
[45] Glenn, *op. cit.,* pp. 81-82
[46] Critchlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105
[47] Id.
[48] Edward Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, Duke University Press, 1994., p. 580

ticular mention of Russian. The policy on languages was not to create problems for citizenship (although forbidding double citizenship) as happened for example in the Baltic States, while pretending high standards in fields such as education. Russian words and toponyms were also gradually eliminated from the Country and substituted by parts of the reconstruction of the Uzbek past made by academicians. The new national banknotes were monolingual and visas were written in Uzbek and English (which is becoming more and more frequently the second language of the Uzbeks). [49]

The point of arrival of this new linguistic policy was the law of 2 September 1993 deciding the shift from the Cyrillic to the Latin Alphabet.

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of the law on alphabet, presently still running, has been particularly problematic, suggesting that probably the decision was beyond the means of the Country at that time. Consequently, the initially foreseen transitional period, between 1995 and 2000, has in fact been postponed until 2005. These difficulties, however, have also been the effect of a positive pragmatic approach chosen by the Uzbek authorities: while Turkmenistan preferred a 'shock therapy' prescribing the immediate change of the alphabet on banknotes and official banners, in Uzbekistan the priority was given to education and press. A survey conducted on the Internet on April 2002 by the author of the present research showed that the Web Sites of the Uzbek Government and of the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs still had the Uzbek version of their homepages written in Cyrillic; on the other hand, the information Web Sites showed a mixed situation, with some homepages in Latin, and some others in Cyrillic.

The output of the reform, in this still transitional phase, is not clear. Undoubtedly, when fully implemented, the shift to the Latin alphabet will make it easier for the Country to comply with the standards of the western Countries and especially of the European Union, and will improve communication. However, the success of this decision will probably depend on choices about other reforms: otherwise, it would probably prove meaningless. Scholars such as Olivier Roy point out negatively the choice not to conform the alphabet to wider standards (that is, to the Turkish alphabet) and seem to consider this decision as dictated mostly by ideological reasons.

[49] Roy, 1997, *op. cit.*, p. 254

A comparison with the other Central Asian Countries on this issue shows an interesting variety of choices, difficult to find in most fields. While Turkmenistan, almost simultaneously with Uzbekistan, made the same choice, Tajikistan passed to the Arabic alphabet, and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan maintained the Cyrillic one. These differences also clearly underline the ideological character of the decisions, probably based more on the contiguity of the different Countries to different cultures and spheres of influence, than on their real needs. The differences in language policy are far lower, with all the new Republics (included Kazakhstan with its wide Russian minority) establishing the language of the titular nationality as the only official. However, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan gave Russian the status of 'communication language', preferred in interrepublican exchanges. [50]

4. INTRODUCTION OF UZBEKISTAN'S CURRENCY (JULY 1994 – EM)

A) Variables Involved

Islam Karimov's education was not that of a politician or an *apparatchik*. Both his educational career (at the polytechnic Institute in Tashkent) and his early jobs (as *Gosplan* officer and later head, and as Minister of Finance) in fact shows him first of all as an economist. Therefore, when his Country gained independence in 1991, he was well aware of the enormous economic difficulties that Uzbekistan had to face, especially in its first years. His recipe in order to try to cross this critical period (not only as stated in his book, but also as observed by several analysts), was trying to achieve self-sufficiency in some strategic fields as soon as possible, and reforming the old command-and-control Soviet system toward the market (following what he called a 'gradual path', in opposition to the shock therapy already negatively experienced by some former Communist Countries). Moreover, in the first years of independence, Uzbekistan still depended almost completely on Russian support and trade. Every innovation, therefore, had to be chosen at the right time, when the Country would be able to sustain it: this is also the case of the introduction of the new Uzbek Currency, the Soum, first introduced temporarily in November 1993, and definitely in July 1994.

The main reason for the decision was represented by the unsustainable conditions imposed by Russia to the new Republics to remain in the Ruble

[50] Roy, 2001, *op. cit.*, p. 78

zone (*Dominant Bilateral*). If accepted, they would have weightily limited the economic freedom of choice of Uzbekistan, and given to Russia a key to exert influence on its domestic affairs. Until that moment, Uzbekistan (unlike other Republics), had been very reluctant to take this kind of decision, because of the awareness that the economy of the Country could not yet sustain it. However, having to choose between jeopardizing independence and risking an economic imprudence, Karimov chose the second. This situation also implied the consideration of *Economic Capability* factors: accepting Russia's preconditions would have meant not only losing economic independence in decisions, but also giving Russia all the gold reserves of the Country (particularly huge in Uzbekistan, given its vast gold resources). Moreover, to be strictly tied to the Russian economy for a couple of years had already meant going through the negative economic and inflationist consequences deriving from the ongoing Russian economic crisis. Notwithstanding, the definitive introduction of the Soum was made thanks to a generous Turkish loan (*Bilateral*) conceded by the 'old brother' appositely for this purpose (it was the first period of the Turkish approach to the new Turkic Republics, when the Anatolian Country tried to exert a decisive influence of them, by promising aid totaling $ 3 bln.: soon this perspective would prove unrealistic and unsustainable given Turkish economic conditions). [51]

There is no evidence in the available literature of other variables that could have had some influence on this decision. First of all, it is unlikely that Interest Groups in the Country were interested in the subject (if not to ask to stay in the Rouble zone). Secondarily, although since 1993 international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF agreed with the necessity of currency differentiation for the new Republics, the Uzbek decision was carried on without any support from or cooperation with them.

B) Decisional Flow

When the CIS was formed, in December 1991, the signatory leaders committed themselves to promote "coordinated economic reforms", to build "economic relations and accountancy based on a single currency, the Rouble", to control the quantity of currency circulating, and to coordinate their economic policies. [52] However, when the non-Slavic Republics

[51] Gareth Winrow, *Turkey in Post- Soviet Central Asia*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1995

[52] Piero Sinatti, "La Riconquista Geoeconomica dell'Impero Russo", *Limes* No. 1, 1994

entered the organization, most of such economic provisions were erased from the agreement, mainly focusing it on non-economic issues. As a consequence, the reformist Russian leadership carried on its market and liberalization reforms, while most CIS partners called for a delay in the price liberalization, refused by Moscow. In 1992 the CIS experienced an economic crisis, mainly due to the meddling of the new national economic policies on the former Soviet economic system, once organized as a whole with strict interrepublican connections. In March 1992 Ukraine, following the example of the Baltic Countries, was the first CIS Republic to impose a control on commercial fluxes with Russia and Belarus, minting its own currency, the Karbovanec. The unilateral price rise decided by Russia further increased the centrifugal trend toward protectionist economic policies in the other Republics. In that period, Uzbekistan did not stand out in any way against the other CIS Countries, while Turkmenistan pursued a much more aggressive economic policy, oriented toward the new southern and eastern markets.

During 1992, several Central Asian summits and the adhesion of the new Republics to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), revealed the embryo of a common regional economic policy. Meanwhile, Russia was dissatisfied about the exploitation of the low price of raw materials within the CIS, made by some CIS members which sold their products at market prices to non-CIS Countries. Therefore, Moscow considerably reduced its export toward the CIS members.

In the monetary field, however, the Russian Central Bank was still the only Issue Bank for the whole Rouble zone; for the whole 1992 and part of 1993 it kept on issuing both *Nalicnye* (cash) Rubles – although with growing restrictions –, and *Beznalicnye* (non cash) Rubles. These latter, also named 'technical credits' were mostly transferred to the other Republics, whose firms used them to pay imports from Russia: this was one of the main reasons for the uncontrolled inflationist spiral of that period. A Russian economic analyst later estimated Russia's financial aid to Uzbekistan as representing 52.8% in its GDP (a share only a little lower was estimated for Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan). This policy was mainly pursued by the Russian leadership in order to try to perpetuate its hegemony on the 'near abroad'.

However, during 1993, Russian reformists definitely realized that this system could not work, and in September the Russian Central Bank provocatively (and, reportedly, against the will of President Yeltsin), announced the withdrawal of all the Rubles issued between 1962 and

1992. Contextually, a New Type Rouble Area was proposed. On 7 September, Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan agreed on the creation of the New Area: the provisions also included a new degree of economic coordination among the Republics. However, several Russian economists severely criticized the agreement, being afraid that the partner Countries, once they had obtained the new Rubles from Moscow, could mint their own currencies. Russia therefore added new conditions (such as the cession to Russia of an equivalent part of the national gold reserves, and the payment of interest in US Dollars) that both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan found unacceptable. Uzbekistan, along with Kazakhstan, Armenia and Moldova, announced the creation of a national currency (named Soum) and menaced to close the commercial frontiers with Russia. [53]

The new Uzbek currency was temporarily introduced in November 1993 as 'Soum Coupon', substituting the Rouble. Despite an inflation of 5-600% in two months compared with the Rouble, on 1st January 1994, the Soum Coupon was declared Uzbekistan's only legal currency. On 1st July 1994, drawing the necessary resources fron a Turkish loan, Uzbekistan substituted the Soum Coupon with the proper Soum. [54]

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of the decision on the new currency was recognized as problematic by all observers, especially because the IMF (allegedly because of the "scarce reformist inclination of Tashkent"), denied the logistical and financial support given to several other Republics. [55] At least until 1996, when some reforms were sketched, the control over the quantity of currency circulating in the Country was very limited, producing a high rate of inflation and a double exchange rate (official / black market). [56] In 1996-97 the first real reforms were drafted, also drawing the IMF support, which however was soon withdrawn, in lack of real implementation of the reforms. In the following years, Uzbekistan repeatedly announced the introduction of a full convertibility for the Soum, but at the end of 2001 such a reform had not yet been realized.

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[53] Id.
[54] Fiorani Piacentini, 1995, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334
[55] Id.
[56] id.

The output of the decision, in absolute terms, can but be assessed as negative for the Country's economy. However, the introduction of a national currency was probably a necessary and inevitable decision on the path to building a real nation-state.

This fact is also showed by the quasi-unanimity in the behavior of the other former Soviet Republics, of which only Belarus (the Republic with more political connections with Russia, some years later signing a 'Pact of Union' with it), accepted all the conditions imposed by Moscow. Among the Central Asian Republics, only Tajikistan – wasted at that time by the civil war – was unable to issue a national currency, preferring to maintain the old Rouble. On the other hand, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan were the readiest to take their own path: the latter even issuing its own national currency (also named Soum) in Spring 1993. Kazakhstan kept a conciliatory position not dissimilar from Uzbekistan's, and almost in the same period issued the Tenge. [57]

[57] Sinatti, cit.

CHAPTER 3
In Search of Regional Hegemony?

1. INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of independent Uzbekistan within the borders of Central Asia always showed a particularly high profile: while, in wider arenas, the Country can at most follow a simple line (gaining support and investments from the developed Countries and resisting Russian and Islamic pressures), in the region it plays other different roles in a complex network of interrelations.

First of all, although never openly admitted by President Karimov, it is possible to find in Uzbekistan's foreign policy hegemonic ambitions that are nearly universally recognized by the academic community. As Bohr points out, in particular, such feelings are rooted in the Soviet past, when Moscow allegedly recognized to Uzbekistan a role in the Central Asian context not dissimilar from that played by Russia in the whole Soviet Union.[58] After independence, this situation has commuted into a sort of competition between Uzbekistan and Russia for hegemony in the region with the two regional powers sometimes cooperating, and other times competing for the same targets. Uzbekistan was often forced to accept Russian superiority, and even to call for help to Moscow; on the other hand, in some situations Karimov was able to exploit geographical proximity and better availability of information to get what he wanted.

With the other Countries of the region, as already seen, the relations are diversified and sometimes ambiguous. While Turkmenistan (and in particular its dictator Niyazov) is particularly cold toward the powerful neighbor, and always relied on Russia for its defense, Kazakhstan – willing to counterbalance the Russian weight in its domestic affairs but also afraid of Uzbekistan's power – alternates moments of closeness to others of confrontation; this is more or less the same situation as in Kyrgyzstan, otherwise weaker and more subject to the Uzbek intimidation.

[58] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 49

The real theater for Uzbekistan's attempts for a more assertive regional policy in the 1990s was undoubtedly Tajikistan. This happened not only in its quality as the weakest Country in Central Asia, but also because of peculiar ties developed between the two Republics during the Soviet rule, when Uzbek meddling in Tajikistan's domestic affairs was common practice.

The three decisions chosen for this section of the research pertain to complex interrelations between Uzbekistan and the other Countries of Central Asia, examined in different periods of time. The first, included in the *Military-Security* area, will deal with the Uzbek decision to get involved in the Tajik Civil War in 1992. The following one, classified instead as *Political-Diplomatic*, will investigate the someway inexplicable shift in Karimov's stance, when he recognized the democratic opposition in the Country and called for a reconciliation with the UN help. The third (again *Political-Diplomatic*) will treat the more recent Uzbek decision to unilaterally marking the borders with the neighbors, in a period of problematic interregional relations both in the economic and in the security fields.

2. INTERVENTION IN THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR (DECEMBER 1992 – MS)

A) Variables Involved

Karimov apparently never released public statements showing his position on Uzbekistan's intervention in Tajikistan's Civil War in support of the Northern/Communist faction. The reason was probably that the deployment of Uzbek troops in the neighboring Country was officially presented as a participation in the CIS Peacekeeping Force, without any partisan role. The book later written by Karimov does not help more, since it follows the official line adopted from 1995: in the work is simply cited the "hotbed of crisis" in Tajikistan (along with that in Afghanistan), as a threat to regional (and Uzbekistan's) security, blaming the negative consequences of war and generally speaking from a completely uninterested and uninvolved perspective. Something can be inferred from more general statements: first of all, Tajikistan is the Central Asian Republic most mentioned in the book (except Uzbekistan); three times Karimov deals, in different parts of the book, with the problem of the Uzbek Diaspora, particularly significant in Tajikistan, and presents the cultures of the two nations as very close to each other.[59] This attitude

[59] Karimov, *op. cit.*, chapter 1

as an 'elder brother' more evidently appears in some of Karimov's speeches released during the terrorism emergency, in the late 1990s and in the early 2000s. In this context, the words pronounced by Karimov at the Uzbek Parliament in Summer 2000, after the IMU incursions in Uzbekistan from the Tajik territory, were: "Today security issues are indivisible for all of us […] In this context, the security of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and other neighboring Countries is also our security, the security of all people in the region. We have to well understand this […] Only through the rapid and operative coordination of our cooperative action we will be able to strike back any aggression […] We must not allow these curse[d] people to use the Tajik territory to bring about their filthy intentions". [60] In April 1999, during a speech reported by the newspaper *Vremia* and quoted by Rumer, he more openly stated: "Look at the Map and at our border with Leninabad Oblast of Tajikistan, and you will see a tongue that has been thrust out into our territory". [61]

The evident characteristics of these speeches are the security concerns of the President, which make the Variable *Military Capability* undoubtedly crucial, and the identification of Uzbekistan's security with Central Asia's, added to the Country's will to control the northern part of Tajikistan and its strategical and natural resources (*Regional* and *Economic Capability*). Another primary reason for the decision – not mentioned by the President in this specific context but widely recognized by scholars – [62] is the fear of Islamic radicalism, that is, of *Competing Elites* spreading from Tajikistan to his Country. An important factor in Karimov's consideration of this variable was also probably the role played in Tajikistan's affairs by the Republic's Qadi (religious leader), Akbar Turajonzoda, in a period when important personalities of the Uzbek *Muftiyyat* (Spiritual Directorship) were also deeply involved in Uzbekistan's public life.

Strictly connected to Competing Elites, but not as crucial for the decision, was probably the influence of Uzbekistan's *Political System*. In the literature it is even possible to find an interpretation of the decision as a means used

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[60] "Address by H. E. Mr. Islam Karimov, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in the 3rd session of Oliy Majlis of 2nd Convocation", 2000, from the Web Site http://www.mfa.uz

[61] Boris Rumer, *Central Asia and the New Global Economy*, Sharpe, London/Armonk NY, 2000, p. 16

[62] Giampaolo Capisani, *The Handbook of Central Asia*, Tauris, London/New York, 2000., p. 87; John Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, Manchester University Press, Manchester/New York, 1997, p. 178; Lena Jonson, "Russian Policy and Tajikistan", *Central Asia* No. 2, 1997, from the Web Site http://www.ca-c.org; Stuart Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97: Domestic Considerations", *Central Asian Survey*, Mar. 1999

by Karimov to crush domestic opposition and affirm his power completely, as a part of a "conceptualization of Uzbekness". [63] Finally, the Uzbek Diaspora in Tajikistan as an *Interest Group* is openly cited by Karimov in his book (as seen above), although scholars [64] think that he never played this card seriously, afraid of regional destabilization. This opinion is probably proved by the deportation to Tajikistan of the ethnic Uzbek refugees in the Country simply as a retaliation in the 'trade war' of 2000.

B) Decisional Flow

The Uzbek presence in Tajikistan's domestic affairs began as of the first Soviet delimitation of the Central Asian boundaries, when the Persian-speaking populations were mainly included in the Uzbek SSR as a simple Autonomous Republic. Only in 1929 the Russians, willing to weaken the new Republics further, created the Tajik SSR in its own right, but left the main Tajik cities, Bukhara and Samarkand, in the Uzbek SSR. The borders between the two Republics, moreover, made it necessary to cross the Uzbek border to pass form Northern to Southern Tajikistan. The reciprocal minorities were also considerable, especially the Uzbeks of Tajikistan, in 1989 still accounting for 24% of the total population. This community was very strong in the Hissar region (45%), and Kurgan Tiube (32%), though spreading all over the Country. The most significant presence, although not numerically (31%) was that in the region of Leninabad (now Khojand), which hosted for decades the Country's hegemonic faction. [65] This position of preeminence was allowed by Russia's decision to assign a particular social niche to the people of each one of the regions of the Republic, also subject to compulsive displacements of ethnic groups which lasted until the 1970s. In particular, the people from Leninabad always maintained privileged economic relations with Uzbekistan, thus impeding the formation of a national integrated economy in the Republic. [66]

Although *perestroika* was weaker in Tajikistan than in other parts of the USSR, in February 1990 the economic and cultural disproportion between the different regions led to a grass-roots protest in its Capital Dushanbe.

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[63] Horsman, cit.
[64] Horsman, cit. ; Jonson, cit.
[65] Barnett H. Rubin, "Tajikistan: from Soviet Republic to Russian- Uzbek Protectorate", in Mandelbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-211
[66] Gretsky, Sergei, "Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments and Prospects for Peace", in Roald Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower, eds., *Central Asia: Conflict, Resolution, and Change.*, from the Web Site http://www.cpss.org

The protest front, calling for democratization and equilibrium in regional representation, was formed by the Rastokhez Popular Movement (nationalistic), the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the Tajik branch of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). Although associated with more specifically regionalist groups, all these movements were mainly rooted in the regions excluded from the power, especially in the poor south of the Country. However, the leading bloc (at first supported also by the international press) always preferred to present the struggle as an ideological confrontation, although in reality the reforms asked by the opposition threatened to undermine the essence of Leninabad's power.

Meanwhile, the developments of the Soviet situation forced the Republic to declare its independence in September 1991; two months later, the Communist Party leader, Nabiev, was elected president of the Republic. The opposition, gathered around a single candidate, gained 30% of the votes, and continued to stage protests, which erupted violently in March 1992, when Nabiev arrested the pro-opposition Major of Dushanbe on corruption charges. The protests escalated after the fall of Najibullah's government in neighboring Afghanistan: violent clashes on 6 and 7 May claimed several victims. On 11 May Nabiev was forced to agree to a coalition government with the opposition. [67] Although the documented Uzbek intervention dates December 1992, some commentators [68] point out a primary role played by Karimov in this circumstance to favor the alliance of Leninabad with the Kulobi faction (traditionally forming the bulk of the Tajik Army and security apparatus). However, the opposition forces, supported by some Islamic Countries and especially by the Afghan Mujaheddin (although Karimov managed to impede that attacks were staged from the territories controlled by the Uzbek Warlord Dostum), conquered significant portions of the Tajik territory. When the war came to Dushanbe, Nabiev was forced to sign a letter of resignation on September 7, and Iskandarov, the ethnic Pamiri Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, became acting president of an 'Opposition Government'. [69]

In the same period, Karimov decided that the time had come to upgrade Uzbekistan's involvement in Tajikistan. He had declared several times that he would consider the establishment of an Islamic regime in Dushanbe a *casus belli*. [70] On September 4, together with the Russian and

[67] Rubin, cit., p. 213
[68] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 52; Gretski, cit.
[69] Rubin, cit., p. 214
[70] Capisani, *op. cit.*, p. 169

Central Asian leaders, he had issued a warning that the conflict endangered the security of the whole region. Mainly Uzbek fighters from Hissar and Kurgan Tiube, as well as Kulobis, were armed and trained in Uzbekistan. Troops from Uzbekistan were also prepared for a future offensive. Karimov also managed to convince Russia of the real threat of Islamic radicalism. Moscow then decided to employ the 201st Motorized Rifle Division, already in Tajikistan, together with Russian Border Guards, who had remained neutral until that moment. On December 6, forces backed by the Uzbek aircraft attacked the Capital, and Rakhmonov was able to take up his post in Dushanbe 8 days later. [71] On 9 December the Uzbek Parliament officially approved the deployment of Uzbek troops within the CIS forces (although these were actually formed only in August 1993). [72]

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of this decision mainly consisted in the inclusion of an Uzbek battalion within the CIS forces, along with the Russian troops, but also in many unofficial interventions, especially through Uzbekistan's support to Tajikistan's ethnic Uzbek militias. It might be possible to say that the decision was implemented independently from its formalization: in this perspective, the official decision could be considered no more than the recognition of a *de facto* situation.

The output of the decision was positive without any doubt, whatever the opinion of the observers on the morality of Karimov's purposes. The Northern/Communist forces backed by Russia and Uzbekistan managed in fact to get back the whole Tajik territory, although they were not able to impede further incursions from Afghanistan. Uzbekistan consequently regained control over Tajikistan's domestic affairs through the friendly Leninabad faction, with also positive economic consequences for the Tashkent. Karimov moreover gained complete control over Uzbekistan's political system and civil society, both crushing the Islamic opposition, and using the situation in Tajikistan as a means to tighten domestic security.

The other Central Asian Countries kept a much lower profile than Uzbekistan: while Kazakhstan participated in the CIS forces with a minimum number of troops, Kyrgyzstan's parliament (at that time still relatively independent from the executive power) refused authorization to the

[71] Rubin, cit., p. 215
[72] Capisani, *op. cit.*, p. 169

deployment, and Turkmenistan never considered the subject. [73] The only other regional power significantly involved were the Afghan Mujaheddin of Commander Massud, strong supporters of the Islamic part of the opposition.

3. SUPPORTING THE PEACE PROCESS (SPRING 1995 – PD)

A) Variables Involved

Karimov's moves of early 1995 were found surprising by scholars and, generally, by those who know his aversion to politicized Islam. However, not less surprisingly, the same scholars explained these events using nearly the same reasons previously adopted to motivate the Uzbek involvement in the war, both because the international situation had changed, and because Karimov had reached his alleged objectives. This time, the President's book, *Uzbekistan on the threshold of the Twenty-First Century* proves helpful: since the essay was written in the mid-1990s, it is reasonable to presume that it reflects the author's opinion (or at least his official stance) at that time.

In the already mentioned first chapter of his book Karimov names Tajikistan essentially to point out the negative effects of the war, interestingly linking the Tajik and the Afghan situation. He writes about his concerns: refugees, arms and drugs smuggling, interethnic confrontation, danger in changing the existing borders. In his words it is evident that what once had been a simple struggle for power in an Uzbek quasi-protectorate, had become three years later, also in the light of the rise of the *Taliban* in Afghanistan, a danger for regional security much greater than Tajikistan's opposition forces. The President in fact writes: "The destructive impact of war on society and on the State is not only apparent in economic disaster […] but also in other spheres that are of primary importance for a nation's future […] the dissemination of hatred among co-citizens, […] the flow of refugees […], the criminalization of society, the turning of war into the sole source of earnings". Later, he adds that "the threat to the security of Uzbekistan is not hypothetical, its existence is obvious", underlining his "huge efforts […] to prevent the spilling over of the conflicts and the adverse developments on to our soil". [74] He evidently connects his new position on regional conflicts to the same variables that probably had

[73] Rubin, pp. 214-215
[74] Karimov, *op. cit.*, chapter 1

pushed him to intervene in the Civil War in 1993. The main concern is still security (that is, *Military Capability*), especially in the context of the Central Asian subordinate system (*Regional*). He adds, again, *Economic Capability* reasons: years of struggle in a neighboring territory strictly interconnected with Uzbekistan had worsened the already precarious economic situation of the Republic, that had also progressively lost its control over Northern Tajikistan resources. Karimov also shows to be afraid of a possible spill over of the religious character of the conflicts in Uzbekistan's society (*Competing Elites)*. [75] Scholars just add what Karimov could not publicly admit: the progressive marginalization of the Khojandi (former Leninabadi) faction (allied of Tashkent) in Tajikistan's struggle for power, which now impeded Uzbekistan to exercise a decisive influence on Tajik domestic affairs, and therefore made Uzbekistan's military involvement in the Country no longer reasonable. [76] However, such a consideration does not change the variables involved, although adding new meanings to the decision.

Among the Relevant Variables, this time, it is advisable to include the *Global System,* with a primary role played by international organizations such as the United Nations and the OSCE in finding a solution for the conflict. [77] Of course, showing a peaceful attitude in that situation was also a means to gain international recognition for Uzbekistan. There are proofs that Karimov also called for the help of the UNHCR about the Refugees' problem. [78] An important role in the situation was also performed by the Uzbek minority in northern Tajikistan, more and more dissatisfied about the loss of political and economic power (in May 1994 the Hissari local community even blocked the vital road connecting the two Countries [79]): such a protest could not be neglected by the leader (*Interest Groups)*. Finally, the shift in Karimov's position on the war probably aimed to mark some distance from Russia's position and to limit Moscow's influence in the region (*Dominant Bilateral*). A probable proof of this was his criticism of Russia's unconditional support to Tajikistan's regime, considered as "a main reason for the deteriorating relations between Russia and Uzbekistan". [80]

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[75] Id.
[76] Bohr, *op. cit.,* p. 52
[77] Olivier Roy, "The Role of the OCSE in the Peace process of Tajikistan", in Sagdeev and Eisenhower, eds., *op. cit.*
[78] Capisani, *op. cit.,* p. 87
[79] Capisani, *op. cit.,* p. 171
[80] Jonson, cit.

B) Decisional Flow

By December 1992, "what many have called the bloodiest Battle in the former Soviet Union since World War II had claimed 50,000 lives and displaced 500,000" [81] (1/10 of the Country's population); however, the Country was entirely reconquered and the opposition fled to exile abroad, especially in Afghanistan, from where it continued to engage battle with the CIS troops. A border attack on July 1993 had a deep impact also on Russian public opinion and not only determined a Moscow's greater involvement, but also probably convinced the Russians of the necessity to find a solution to the conflict. Pushed also by international pressures, the opposing parts agreed to meet for negotiations in a far from propitious climate. The main stake was that the winner, the Khojandi-Kulobi faction (still sponsored also by Tashkent), had no interest in sharing its power with the opposition. However, after some rounds of talks, the two parts agreed on a cease-fire in September 1994, followed by Presidential and Parliamentary elections in which the opposition was partly allowed to participate. For the presidential post the Kulobi Rakhmonov defeated the Uzbek-sponsored Abdullajonov, of the Khojand clan; moreover, contextually with the election of the new Parliament, the Kulobis started to drive Khojandis from their positions in both central and local government: as a consequence, the Uzbeks of Tajikistan "came to perceive themselves as the targets of Kulobi discrimination". [82] Dissatisfaction spread also among the Russian minority in the Country and in Kazakhstan, as well as in Uzbekistan.

Karimov, dissatisfied with the developments of the situation and wary of the new regional set up, suddenly became a critic of the Dushanbe regime. The first sign of this shift was evident at the February 1995 CIS summit in Almaty, where he launched a bitter attack on President Rakhmonov. The fact that not only words had changed was demonstrated by the meeting of Karimov with the previously execrated Qadi Turajonzoda (in the meanwhile named leader of the United Tajik Opposition, UTO) in the following April in Tashkent.

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

This decision, taking the international community by surprise, never

[81] Kim Kaynard, "Tajikistan: Will We Heed the Warning?", *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 5, 1993, from the Web Site http://www.chalidze.com
[82] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 52

received a formal implementation. However, the events of spring 1995 marked the beginning of a new peaceful official course of Uzbekistan's international relations, with the Republic's leader repeatedly calling for peace and even (as seen above) criticizing Russia for its pro-Dushanbe stance. The new position was, however, secretly implemented by a series of measures aiming to weaken the Tajik regime and trying to promote an alliance between opposition forces and the Khojandi clan against the Kulobis. Undoubtedly Tashkent started to support all the groups fighting against the regime: in the following months, the relations between the two neighbors dramatically deteriorated, and Uzbekistan was accused by Rakhmonov of supporting Uzbek mercenaries now fighting with the opposition, [83] and even of complicity in the assassination attempt against Rakhmonov of April 1997 during a visit in Khojand. [84] Tashkent was also allegedly implicated in several attempts of armed rebellion in the north of the Country, successfully countered by the Russian troops. The rebels' leader, the ethnic Uzbek Commander Khudoberdiyev, was said to have invaded from camps located inside Uzbekistan. Although Tashkent officially denied any involvement, a Deputy of the Commander testified that the rebels had received help from the Uzbek Army, though not necessarily with the knowledge of Uzbekistan's top leadership. [85]

The output of this decision was doubtful, since Uzbekistan managed neither to get back the influence of the old times in Tajikistan's domestic affairs, nor to seriously challenge Russia's influence on the Country. On the other hand, the 1995 decision was probably wise, in a context that had become very costly to Uzbekistan without providing an adequate reward anymore.

As already seen in the previous decision, two of the Central Asian Republics were never really involved in the War: a comparison with them is therefore impossible. About Kazakhstan, in the same period of the Uzbek shift his domestic public opinion growingly felt "that the Country should withdraw its peace-keepers from the southern borders of Tajikistan where Kazakh troops were dying for a cause that was not their own". [86] President Nazarbaev therefore joined Karimov in his calls for peace.

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[83] Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 183
[84] Bohr, *op. cit.,* p. 52
[85] Bohr, *op. cit.,* p. 54
[86] Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 182

4. MARKING THE BORDERS (AUGUST 1999 – PD)

A) Variables Involved

From the moment of independence to the late 1990s, the Central Asian borders remained highly permeable: most of all, this situation reflected the nature of boundaries (mostly drawn by Stalin in the 1920s) that, especially in the Ferghana Valley, had no connection with the real situation (both geographically and demographically). While crossing borders, there was often no sign of change in the human and physical environment, and travelers often passed from one Country to another without finding a checkpoint. [87]

When in 1999 the Uzbek Army started to unilaterally mark the borders of the Country, no formal decision was allegedly communicated both to the press and to the neighboring Countries involved (Tajikistan was officially informed that Uzbekistan had laid land mines on its borders only in May 2001). [88] However, the theme of the inviolability of borders had always been common in Karimov's speeches, and was already mentioned in Article 3 of the 1992 Constitution, and in several parts of the president's book. In *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, in fact, the word 'border(s)' appears 26 times, and mostly in three well-defined contexts: to warn about the danger in conflicts raging just at the borders of the Country (with the risk of spillover); to highlight the risk involved in any attempt to change the existing State boundaries; to affirm the need to sign security agreements that could strengthen the borders and their inviolability. [89] Without any doubt, in Karimov's Image of Uzbekistan's international relations, borders are (quite naturally) connected with security (*Military Capability*). In the particular context of 1999-2000, however, this concern probably was strictly connected to the danger of Islamic militants' penetration inside the borders of the Country (*Competing Elites)*. Already on 3 February 1999 Karimov affirmed, in a press interview about this subject, that the group of Hizb-ut Tahrir intended "to eliminate all administrative boundaries between Islamic Countries", warning the Government not to "allow such forces to act on Uzbek territory". [90]

A new security doctrine was probably already decided at that time, but the turning point was represented by the bombing attacks shortly after-

[87] Interview by the author of this research to professor Guido Franzinetti
[88] *BBC News*, 7 May 2001, from the Web Site http://www.bbc.co.uk
[89] Karimov, *op. cit.*
[90] *RFERL Newsline*, 4 February 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

wards, and by the IMU [91] incursions of that summer. In a television speech immediately after the attack he defined the Islamic radicals as sure culprits and underlined the necessity to preserve the security of the Country.[92] On May 7, Karimov chaired a session of the National Security Council, affirming the necessity "to prevent terrorist and subversive groups from illegally entering Uzbekistan". [93] The following incursions were decisive mostly in determining the exact object of such new measures: Afghanistan and Tajikistan, where the terrorist camps were located, with the complicity of the local authorities [94] (*Regional*). The strengthening of border measures and visa requirements, however, cannot completely be explained without linking it also to the 'trade war' going on in Central Asia in the same period (*Economic Capability*). In fact, the deteriorated economic situation of the late 1990s led the Countries of the region to start imposing severe restrictions and custom duties on imports, and to limit import of goods from the neighbors, soon leading to a succession of mutual retaliations also involving gas, transportation and water resources sectors. This situation of harsh confrontation among the Republics undoubtedly contributed to the relevance of the borders issue.

The only other relevant variable involved in the decision was *Dominant Bilateral*. As already seen in the previous decision, in fact, Karimov was sharply critical about Russia's behavior when Uzbekistan called for its help against the Taliban conquering the north of Afghanistan on the Uzbek border. This may have determined Karimov's decision to further develop Uzbekistan's own capability to defend its borders (also with a different international alignment, obtained entering the GUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova – and increasing cooperation with NATO).

B) Decisional Flow

The borders issue, at least according to the existing literature, was never formalized in a single decision; the fragmentary development of the situation even suggests that it was no more than a cluster of policies and deci-

[91] Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an extremist Islamic organization affiliated to al Quaeda, and aiming at the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia through guerrilla activities

[92] "Uzbek President Speaks on Bomb Attacks", February 1999, from the Web Site http://www.euronet.nl

[93] *RFERL Newsline*, 7 May 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[94] *Uzbekistan Daily Digest*, 1st September 2000, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

sions implemented since the beginning of 1999. Such policies and decisions were probably at first the output of a more assertive foreign policy in the region decided by president Karimov in the late 1990s (also reflected, in a wider arena, by the withdrawal from the CIS Collective Security Treaty and the adhesion to GUAM). However, after the events of February and August 1999 the President probably came to the decision that a definite demarcation of Uzbekistan's borders could no longer be postponed.

Karimov's first intention to strengthen national borders was showed by a presidential Decree creating new units of border guards, signed on 14 January 1999. [95] However, immediately after the assassination attempt to Karimov of February 16 (and other similar events in Kazakhstan in the following days), the security measures along the Kazakh and the Kyrgyz borders were tightened, and, on the 1st of March, Karimov introduced new regulations on residency and visas, particularly requiring a visa for citizens of CIS Countries visiting Uzbekistan for more than three days. [96] In the meantime the relations between Central Asian neighbors had been worsened by the first events in what Boris Rumer called a 'trade war'. Kazakhstan, according to the Russian scholar, was the first to act, establishing in February limits to (and duties on) imports from Russia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In March, Uzbekistan asked Kyrgyzstan to pay its debts for natural gas supplies. [97] During the Parliamentary debate developed in Kyrgyzstan after this measure, some Deputies raised for the first time the border issue, complaining that Uzbekistan had built in the previous years no less than 27 new outposts on the borders between the two Countries, and that Uzbekistan had annexed significant chunks of the Kyrgyz territory. [98] On 19 March, a new decree fixed the deadline for all former Soviet citizens in Uzbekistan to change their old Passports into new Uzbek ones. Some days later, the Country, as well as Kyrgyzstan, increased custom duties, and the Uzbek Defense Minister openly discussed for the first time the possibility of entering the GUAM (the announcement of the accession was officially given by Georgia's President Shevarnadze on 19 April). [99]

Between April and May of the same year the trade war also sharpened,

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[95] *RFERL Newsline*, 14 January 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[96] *RFERL Newsline*, 3 March 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[97] Rumer, 2000, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13
[98] *RFERL Newsline*, 12 March 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[99] *RFERL Newsline*, 19 March 1999, 30 March 1999, 19 April 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

with mutual blockages involving not only gas, but also train transportation, coal delivery, and water supplies: reports from those days are full of news about the imposition or the end of new punitive measures, often appearing contradictory with each other.[100] In march 27-28, high-level meetings between Uzbek and Kazakh officers not only dealt with economy but also (maybe for the first time) with the borders issue: Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Qasymzhomart Toqaev said after that occasion that the border demarcation issue was "one of the most complicated questions in relations between Astana and Tashkent".[101] Also with Tajikistan, despite the signing of an anti-terrorist agreement, the series of reciprocal accusations of hosting members of the respective armed oppositions continued.[102] On 7 July, Karimov chaired a session of the National Security Council devoted to the implementation of government decisions aimed at improving security and reorganizing the armed forces and border troops. Particular attention was paid to improving cooperation between the army and the Interior Ministry forces, to preventing terrorist and subversive groups from illegally entering Uzbekistan, and to creating "mobile and well-equipped units capable of safeguarding peace and calm".[103]

In the following August these provisions proved someway prophetic, when the IMU incursions provoked not only fear in the Central Asian Countries but also new tensions among them. In this situation, Uzbek raids in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to strike the terrorists involved also civilian casualties in the two Countries.[104]

After the end of the so-called Batken incident (when some western tourists had been kidnapped by the guerrillas), news reported that Uzbekistan was unilaterally demarcating its borders in the Ferghana Valley.[105]

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of the August 1999 (presumed) decision to mark Uzbekistan's borders – clearly enough to discourage further incursions

[100] Rumer, 2000, *op. cit.; RFERL Newsline*
[101] *RFERL Newsline*, 28 May 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[102] *RFERL Newsline*, April–May 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[103] Interfax and Itar-Tass, quoted by *RFERL Newsline*, 7 July 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[104] *BBC News*, 18 August 1999, from the Web Site http://www.bbc.co.uk
[105] Nick Megoran, "The Borders of Eternal Friendship: Kyrgyz-Uzbek Relations in 1999", December 1999-January 2000, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

and infiltration of undesired elements – was not easy. First of all, because of the significant resources required not only to demarcate, but also to patrol and to adequately defend national frontiers. Moreover, Central Asian boundaries were artificially drawn by somebody who presumably did not know the reality of the territory and its people, or, on the contrary, deliberately tried to create difficulties for the new nationalities to gather. In the Ferghana valley, particularly, the same populations live on both sides of often intricate borders, and both industrial activities and water reservoirs overlap national borders. None of the commissions created in Soviet times to deal with the problem ever managed to solve it. When Uzbekistan began to implement his new policy, observers reported that the Uzbek Army had erected columns of concrete connected by barbed wire, cutting in two communities traditionally living together. People on both sides of the borders were worried about the perspective of needing a visa to meet their former neighbors (with especially serious economic damage, both at citizens' and at national level).[106] In the following months, similar actions, probably reflecting the same kind of policy, were reported also on the borders with Kazakhstan.[107] Even more serious measures were taken against Tajikistan, where training camps of the IMU were located; in this case, Uzbekistan eventually admitted to have put mines along the common border (probably a not much different policy was pursued against Afghanistan).[108]

The output of these policies was ambivalent: on the one hand, they represented a natural step in building a national State, not unlike forming a national Army or currency: it is unthinkable that an autonomous statal entity was not able to defend (or even to define) its borders. However, the way and the time the decisions were taken and implemented by Uzbekistan created serious problems and tensions in the region, with negative consequences also for the projected economic integration. Despite several attempts to settle the disputes followed, a new equilibrium was achieved only during the fall 2001, (when US-sponsored negotiations led, for example, to an agreement between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, fixing definitely 96% of the common borders).[109]

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[106] Id.

[107] "Border Trouble", *The Economist*, 19 February 2000, from the Web Site http://www.economist.com

[108] *BBC News*

[109] Alima Bissenova, "Kazakhstani-Uzbek Border Agreement Sets Stage for Broader Central Asian Cooperation", *Eurasia Insight*, 19 December 2001, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

Tashkent's decision, apparently, was not followed by similar stances taken by other Countries in the region (too weak or too vast to successfully implement this kind of policy). Scholars report instead a conciliatory behavior kept by the Kyrgyz and Kazakh authorities, also at the highest levels, which impeded the situation to degenerate.[110] These Countries probably continued to rely on CIS (that is, Russian) forces to ensure the security of their national borders.

[110] Megoran, cit.; "Border Trouble", cit.

CHAPTER 4
Extra – Regional Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The extra-regional strategies probably are the most ambiguous, (but also the most challenging for the researcher) part of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. Essentially played around the dichotomy Russia/Western Countries, it well displays Uzbekistan's efforts to get freedom from the influence of the former colonizer, in order to acquire new relations, especially with the USA. After more than a decade of independent existence for Uzbekistan, it is probably possible to say that President Karimov's efforts in this direction have been mostly successful. However, the steps in this path were neither always linear, nor, apparently, coherent. First of all, the Country's leadership was deeply influenced by Central Asia's economic and military dependence on Russia in the early 1990s; later, when Uzbekistan was provided with minimal infrastructures allowing it to pursue different international strategies, its foreign policy had a significant shift away from Moscow since 1996, especially in the military field. Nevertheless, since 1999 the Islamic insurgencies and terrorist attacks induced President Karimov to reconsider some decisions taken and to search a more constructive approach toward Moscow. The attacks against the USA happened on 11 September 2001, which determined a renewed American effort in the struggle against terrorism, changed once again the situation – maybe definitely – promoting a strong new alliance between Washington and Tashkent in several different fields.

The decisions analyzed in this chapter try to cast some light on this process and its crucial events, through three 'symbolic' decisions, involving Uzbekistan's participation in international organizations, and support to US stances and projects. Another paragraph is instead devoted to show the trend of the Uzbek-Turkish relations: Ankara was in fact one of the major players in Central Asia – mainly thanks to common ethnic and linguistic roots – in the early 1990s, while both a difficult economic situation and the suspicions of President Karimov against the Turkic 'elder brother' considerably frozen the relations between the two Countries in the following years.

2. SUPPORT TO THE AMERICAN EMBARGO AGAINST IRAN (MAY 1995 – EM)

A) Variables Involved

Although it might seem strange, the sudden statement released by President Karimov on 4 May 1995 supporting the US embargo against Iran has most of all to be seen in an anti-Russian perspective. While some scholars use it to show the anti-Islamic attitude of Karimov, the international events that provoked that stance were mostly unconnected with the Islamic world and tied to the US attempts of military penetration into the former Soviet sphere of influence and with the problem of nuclear weapons spread (*Global System*). In the early months of 1995, in fact, the Partnership for Peace NATO program was in way of development, and president Karimov was maybe its staunchest supporter, probably as a way of gaining US recognition (*Bilateral*). As he wrote soon afterwards in his book, "we think that NATO, which is comprised of democratic States, may become a stabilizing force not only in the European continent, but also, by strengthening its political structure and the 'Partnership for peace' program, in the vast Eurasian region. Our participation in the 'Partnership for Peace' program we regard as strengthening our independence and sovereignty".[111] In the same period, however, Russia (also in a difficult electoral campaign) became wary of these new international developments, and many of its leaders and candidates spoke out against NATO's expansion.[112] In the same context, another theme often treated was the destiny of the ethnic Russian former Soviet citizens: Karimov was surely worried aboout the words of Russia's Foreign Minister Kozyrev that his Country was ready to defend compatriots abroad also with arms (*Dominant Bilateral*).[113] Of course (still regarding the variable *Bilateral*) it is impossible not to consider Karimov's view of Iran and, in general, of radical Islamic Countries. In his book, he barely mentions Iran (as he often does with disagreeable subjects), and also in his speeches it is possible to find only generic courtesy phrases pronounced in the limited bilateral contacts between the two Countries. Generally, it seems that Karimov did not dislike Iran's economic cooperation unless this became cultural or religious penetration. This attitude was well demonstrated by the President's remark during an ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) summit (according to which "attempts to transform the ECO into a political forum would necessitate

[111] Karimov, *op. cit.*, chapter 16
[112] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, April – May 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[113] Id.

Uzbekistan's withdrawal"), [114] and by the repeated denial to Iran to establish a cultural organization in Samarkand. [115]

Among the relevant variables, it would be wise not to forget the huge Persian-speaking minority in Uzbekistan (*Interest Groups*) and Karimov's fear of a possible Iranian influence on it (maybe the primary reason for other decisions such as the denial of the cultural center's establishment). Another reason for Karimov's partial hostility against the Islamic Republic was undoubtedly the support it gave to Fundamentalist groups in the region, especially in the first years of Uzbekistan's independence (*Competing Elites*). [116]

B) Decisional Flow

The Islamic republic of Iran, as well as other regional powers, perceived in the independence acquired by the Central Asian Republics in 1991 a great opportunity to expand its political and economic sphere of influence. As pointed out by an Iranian scholar, Tchangiz Pahlevan, his Country followed three different lines of conduct in the early 1990s toward Central Asia. The first one, lacking information and expertise, saw in the independence of the new Republics a victory for Islam. In this perspective, Iran supported Islamic movements throughout the region, and probably also in the Ferghana Valley. Once the reluctance of the new States (Uzbekistan in particular) to deal with the subject was detected, it adopted a new approach, trying to combine the Islamic policy with other forms of cultural contacts: again Uzbekistan responded negatively, with the (above-cited) denial for the Iranic cultural center in Samarkand. Thus, the frustrated Islamic Republic had to concentrate its efforts on economic cooperation, both through the ECO, and bilateral contacts. Its economic exchanges with the region soared, but not significantly with Uzbekistan (the list reported in Pahlevan's work about the economic relations with the CIS Countries, in fact, does not mention it). [117] Bilateral relations between the two Countries, also in the following years, never became particularly tight (except for the ECO meetings and special occasions such as Rafsanjani's tour of Central Asia in October 1993). This context suggests that Iran was probably a perfect target for Uzbekistan to hit with symbol-

[114] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 47
[115] Roy, 1997, *op. cit.*
[116] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 62
[117] Tchangiz Pahlevan, "Iran and Central Asia", in Atabaki and O'Kane, eds., *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, Har-Anand, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 84-85

ical actions, in order to acquire US recognition, without too much damage for the Country.

The occasion came in 1995: while the USA and the NATO were developing the Partnership for Peace program, signing security agreements and offering military help to Countries such as Hungary and Georgia,[118] Russia experienced the first moves of a harsh (both presidential and parliamentary) electoral campaign. The far right, led by the popular leader Zhirinovsky, adopted subjects such as the NATO enlargement and the ethnic Russians abroad as main themes for its campaign: other politicians, consequently, partially followed them. On 19 April, Russian news Agency Itar-Tass quoted Foreign Minister Kozyrev saying that Russia could intervene militarily to protect ethnic Russians in the "near abroad", (notion including also Central Asia) adding that his comments were "neither a slip of the tongue, nor a pre-election ruse" .[119] On the contrary, in the following days, he showed surprise at the comments in the western press, since he had allegedly been saying similar things over the previous five years, and those words did not reportedly signal a change in Russia's policy. [120] Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev even warned visiting U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry on 3 April, that Russia might suspend the reduction of its conventional arms as required by the 1990 treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), should NATO expand to the east. [121]

This already uneasy field was further complicated by the debate about Russia's help to Iran to develop a nuclear program. From reports and interviews of those days, it is reasonable to suppose that the USA linked the problem to the implementation of the US economic help to the Russian Federation.[122] Several summits took place in those days, but with little results: the Russian leadership found itself in a very difficult situation, between the opposite needs not to face the USA too harshly and not to look too ready to surrender. Several declarations by prominent Russian politicians in the months of April and May in fact mentioned the civilian use of Russian supplies to Iran, or the exaggerations about the alleged nuclear menace represented by Iran. [123]

Karimov found in this confused situation a good opportunity to send a

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[118] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, April – May 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[119] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, 20 April 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[120] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, 21 April 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[121] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, 4 April 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[122] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, 3 April 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[123] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, April – May 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

clear message both to Moscow and to Washington. On 4 May, after a meeting with the local head of the IMF, Karimov denied the feasibility of the Russian sales of nuclear material to Iran and expressed his support to the US embargo against the Islamic Republic saying: "We know the reasons for the embargo and we support them" .[124] That same day, a popular newspaper loyal to the President condemned Kozyrev's words about protection of the Russians abroad as "far from inoffensive", also criticizing the Minister's position on the Chechen War. [125]

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

This decision probably had no implementation and no great effect on Uzbek–Iranian relations. Interestingly, a week later, Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Kamilov cancelled a visit to Iran claiming 'illness'. When the visit actually took place, in occasion of the formal opening of the Uzbek embassy in Teheran, the Iranian Press Agency reported a statement by Kamilov "rejecting the claims of some western media that his government supported the embargo against Iran" [126] However, Bohr reports that "on several occasions Uzbekistan has been the only Country other than Israel to have sided with the United States in International *fora* on the imposition of sanctions against Iran and Cuba". [127] Thus, despite the occasional denial which followed, Karimov's stance of May 1995 probably was not only an isolated event. Moreover, it represented the beginning of a more assertive foreign policy toward the great superpowers, leading to the refusal to sign the Treaty for the Defense of CIS External Borders in the same month of May 1995 and to the first official meeting with US President Clinton the following year.

The output, considering the whole situation, could thus be assessed as positive, although the negative economic consequences that could have followed Karimov's stance are impossible to evaluate (but probably low, given the limited share of foreign trade with Iran).

The other Central Asian Republics (as reported by the same Press Agency quoting Karimov's words) kept a different behavior: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, probably because of their more developed

[124] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, 5 May 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[125] Id.
[126] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, 24 July 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[127] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 64

trade with Iran (and in the case of Turkmenistan, of a long common border) did not take any particular position about the embargo. Tajikistan, on the other hand, in reason of its deep ethnic and linguistic ties with the Islamic republic, expressed its opposition to the use of "coercive methods". [128]

3. WITHDRAWAL OF STUDENTS FROM TURKEY (AUGUST 1997 – CS)

A) Variables Involved

Although President Karimov at the beginning of the 1990s talked enthusiastically about the 'Turkish model' of development, the relations between the two Countries never developed as those early days seemed to promise. First of all, Turkey never proved rich enough to provide the new Turkic [129] Republics with the prospected investments and aid. Moreover, Uzbekistan's President became more and more wary about the projects of cultural penetration (by satellite televisions, cultural associations, etc.) made by the Turkish leadership in Central Asia. He often made use of the 'Turkic' element (for example in his famous speech of 1995 about "Turkestan, our common home" [130]), and in his book it is possible to find praise of the Turkic-speaking States meetings (T6); however, in those lines, he never mentions Turkey. It is evident therefore that Turkic integration in Central Asia would be acceptable to Karimov only when promoted by Tashkent, and not by the more powerful Ankara.

What created real crises between the two Countries, and pushed Karimov to take decisions against Uzbekistan's 'elder brother' were essentially two factors: the first one represented by the presence on Turkish soil of one of the leading opponents to Karimov in exile, Muhammad Solih (*Political System*), the second by the participation in the Turkish Government of members of an Islamic Fundamentalist party, led by the Deputy Prime Minister Erbakan, between 1996 and 1997 (Karimov never released public interviews about the subject, but his behavior during these two years – as explained in the following paragraph of this work – was eloquent enough). This last factor was just the concretization of an increasing Islamist presence in Turkish society and education, and probably made

[128] *RFERL OMRI Daily Digest*, 5 May 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[129] This adjective identifies a cluster of nationalities linked by common ethnic and linguistic roots: among them, Turkish, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmens, Kyrgyzs, Azeris, Tatars, Karakalpaks and Meshketians.
[130] OMRI Daily Digest, 1995, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

Karimov particularly afraid of its influence also on young Uzbeks. The official pretext for the withdrawal of most of the Uzbek students in Turkey (made by Karimov in 1997) was in fact the discovery that Solih and Turkish Islamists had reportedly tried to recruit some of them (*Competing Elites*). The Uzbek leader was then particularly concerned about the matter, also because the Taliban were quickly conquering also Northern Afghanistam, at Uzbekistan's southern borders.

Among the relevant variables it could look obvious to include *Bilateral*, since the decision just involves Uzbekistan's bilateral relations with Turkey. Nevertheless, there are better and more specific reasons to do so. Assuming that Karimov really had the information about the recruitment attempts just in August 1997, it is anyway necessary to note that the Turkish Government involving fundamentalist forces had just fallen, and substituted by another, in which they where not present. Karimov's move, therefore, could also have been (and probably was) a warning to the new Turkish authorities to change their previous behavior toward Uzbekistan and their cultural policy involving Central Asia.

B) Decisional Flow

When the Soviet Republics became independent, part of the Turkish program of assistance to the new Turkic nations consisted in several thousands of places reserved in Turkish Universities for Central Asian and Caucasian students. Uzbekistan alone sent about 2,000 youngsters, and about 20 Turkish High Schools were opened in the Country, as well as in other former Soviet Republics. Although Turkey was a highly secularized Country, its educative system presented a high degree a religious (often fundamentalist) penetration. The high Schools named *Imam Hatip*, in particular, provided students with a religious education and taught Arabic as a second language instead of English or Russian. Run by a religious brotherhood, which was managed by the leader-businessman Fethullah Gulen (who also controlled part of Turkey's mass media), these schools (also named 'lights') boomed in the late XXth Century, becoming the forefront of the Turkish political and economic penetration in several Countries around the world (in Europe, they proliferated for example in Germany, a Country with a strong Turkish minority).[131] Another peculiarity of the Turkish educational aid program to

[131] Jean-François Pérouse, "Il mondo turco come volontà e rappresentazione", *Limes* n. 3, 1999, p. 32

Uzbekistan and the other Republics was its gratuitousness (unlike, for example, the places reserved to Uzbek students in the American Universities). This fact not only determined positive economic consequences, but proved to diminish the political control of the Uzbek Government over the students, that did not depend on its help to carry on their studies.[132] These two characteristics, summed together, could make the Turkish educational help not completely acceptable to the Uzbek leadership and an ideal hostage in case of political dispute.

This is just what happened in 1994, when for the first time the relations between Turkey and Uzbekistan froze. The reason was the hospitality given by Turkey to the Turkish dissident leader, Muhammad Solih: former Presidential candidate in his Country and poet, Solih was probably the means for the Turkish leadership to affirm its pan-Turkic policy, also above the existing leaderships, and to prove its democraticity further. This first crisis determined the first temporary withdrawal of some Uzbek students and the recalling of the Uzbek ambassador. In the following year, after the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister Ciller to Tashkent, and renewed economic ties, the relations between the two Countries improved again (and the Turkish authorities took the habit to expel Solih from the Country – as a special attention toward the Uzbek leadership –, in occasion of every high-level contact between the two Countries).[133]

The situation changed again in July 1996, when legislative elections in Turkey were won by a coalition formed by social-democrats, and the religious Welfare Party, led by Necmettin Erbakan (who became deputy Prime Minister). This new Government began a completely new foreign policy, much less oriented towards the former Soviet Republics, and looking towards other sectors of the Islamic world. In the following years, and especially in 1999, after the assassination attempt against him, Karimov had much to say about these political figures. However, in the available literature, there are no statements made by him about the subject in 1996-1997. All we know is that relations between the two Countries reached a new degree of coldness: during the twelve months of the Ciller-Erbakan Government, no high-level bilateral contact between the two Countries took place. When in October 1996 Tashkent hosted the usual Turkic summit with the political leaders of Turkey and all the Turkic Countries, the lan-

[132] *The CENASIA Discussion List*, 9 June 2000, form the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org
[133] Gareth Winrow, "Turkish Policy in Central Asia", in Atabaki and O'Kane, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 105

guage chosen for the works was Russian (reportedly because it was "the only language mastered by all participants") and the Turkish President Demirel was forced to adopt simultaneous translation. In April 1997 Karimov visited Greece, Turkey's traditional enemy, and even declared to "support the Greek position on Aegean and Cyprus", and to appreciate Greece as "a stabilizing factor in Europe and the Balkans". [134] In mid-July the Turkish President Demirel made an official visit to some former Soviet Countries, among which Kyrgyzstan, where he praised democracy as the real peacekeeping factor in the region. In the same month, pressed by the Army, the Ciller Government fell, and was substituted by another led by Mesut Yilmaz, not supported by the Welfare Party. However, on 25 August, Itar-Tass Agency reported that Karimov had recalled "some 2,000 Uzbek students studying in Turkey" (that is, almost the total Uzbek presence in the Turkish Universities), allegedly "after learning that under the former government of Necmettin Erbakan, Islamic clerics who belong to fundamentalist sects had tried to recruit those students". [135]

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of Karimov's decision was immediate, and there was no news about a comeback of the recalled students. However, in November of the same year, high-level relations between the two Countries were restored, with an official visit made by Karimov in Turkey. Only in 1999 new events brought the implementation of this decision far beyond: Karimov was allegedly informed that Erbakan had financed the Islamic leader (and future leader of the IMU) Tohir Yuldashev with 100,000 Dollars. Furious, the Uzbek President demanded the arrest and extradition of Solih (who was also reportedly involved in the bombing attacks in Tashkent of February 1999, according to the Uzbek official reconstruction), but the Turkish authorities just expelled the dissident. In response to what was considered by Uzbekistan a criminal offence, all the remaining Uzbek students in Turkey were recalled, the Turkish Schools in Uzbekistan closed and banned, the Ambassador in Turkey withdrawn again, and even some commercial contracts broken. Good relations between the two Countries were restored only in 2000, when the patient Turkish efforts for reconciliation received a response. [136]

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[134] *RFERL Newsline,* 2 April 1997, from the Web Site http://www.hri.org
[135] *RFERL Newsline*, 25 August 1997, form the Web Site http://www.hri.org
[136] Pérouse, cit.

The output of this decision could have been positive under the security profile, assuming that the Uzbek Government maintained a tight political control and the absence of any fundamentalist influence on education as its highest priorities in the field. From the economic point of view, however, Karimov's stance was considered as negative by all commentators, because Uzbekistan had much more to lose than Turkey in a freezing of relations between the two Countries.

The Turkish educational program was directed to all the Central Asian and Azerbaijani students: even several Tajik students, although their language is not Turkic, receive education in Turkey witnessing the Turkish strategy of cultural penetration into the whole of Central Asia. The program was strongly compromised by the withdrawal of Uzbekistan, which was the main beneficiary. However, there is no information available about similar moves made by the other Republics; the issue of the Turkish religious Schools has instead raised concern in Azerbaijan. [137]

4. SUPPORT TO THE BAKU-CEYHAN PIPELINE ROUTE (2 NOVEMBER 1998 – EM)

A) Variables Involved

This decision, although included in the *Economic-Monetary* Issue Area because of its content, had nonetheless an unquestionable political meaning in Karimov's intention. His Country is in fact a modest oil owner and producer and, in spite of being the only Central Asian Country raising its production since the Soviet times, it became a net exporter of the product (also thanks to a contraction in domestic consumption) only in 1997. [138] Probably, in absence of strategical implications, Uzbekistan's presence at the Ankara meeting (sanctioned the Baku-Ceyhan route) would not have been indispensable.

First of all, as highlighted by Ahmed Rashid, the pipeline issue is not but part of a wider 'New Great Game' played by both global and regional powers to gain control of Central Asia (not only because of its natural resources, but also because of its peculiar position between the former Soviet sphere of influence and the Islamic world, the East and the West).

[137] Id., p. 132
[138] *EIA Country Profile*, 2002, from the Web Site http://www.eia.doe.gov

Uzbekistan, in its quality as would-be regional hegemon is therefore almost forced to take part in the game (*Regional*), and try to put all its available influence on the desired side of the balance. As usual in his foreign policy, especially in the second half of the 1990s, Karimov took a pro-US (*Bilateral*) and anti-Russian (*Dominant Bilateral*) stance.

The USA had never concealed their strategy, theorized by Brzezinsky in the early 1990s, to create a belt of pipelines cutting Russia and its allies off the Great Game.[139] This is the same aim always pursued by Uzbekistan, trying since the moment of independence to achieve military, energetic, infrastructural and alimentary self-sufficiency from Moscow. Also about the pipelines, already on November 1997 (exactly one year before the decision now analyzed), the Uzbek Prime Minister Sultanov declared to the press, during a trip to Washington, that his Country "supported plans to transport oil from the Caspian Sea across Georgia and Turkey to world markets, by-passing Russia".[140] The main problem in following such a strategy is that Central Asia is several hundreds of Kilometers far from the open sea, and the shortest route to reach it must necessary cross Iran or Afghanistan. The former has been ruled since 1979 by a fundamentalist regime, disagreed not only by Tashkent, but also by Washington (see for example the decision on the embargo against Iran, above). The latter appeared for some time as a more feasible route, through an agreement with the different struggling factions; however, with the almost complete conquest of the Country made by the Taliban in 1997-1998, Uzbekistan followed the USA in abandoning this perspective. Especially considering the rising tension between these two southern neighbors during 1998, it was more urgent than ever to find an alternative solution.

In that period, however, already before the February 1999 attacks, the crackdown on Islamist militants in Uzbekistan had intensified, along with the worried statements of the Tashkent administration about terrorist activity in the Country (*Competing Elites*) that made it necessary more than ever not to become an economic hostage of the turbulent southern neighbors. Thus, the *Economic* factors must not be neglected while considering this issue, given Uzbekistan's need to find new ways to export its products toward the west; however, they cannot be considered as crucial for this

[139] Rashid, Ahmed, *Talebani. Islam, Petrolio e il Grande Scontro in Asia Centrale*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2001
[140] *BBC News*, 26 November 1997, from the Web Site http://www.bbc.co.uk

decision, since the option chosen was neither the quickest to realize, nor the more economically suitable (as witnessed even by some US perplexities).[141] Worthwhile to be mentioned is also Uzbekistan's need to be connected by an integrated system of infrastructures to regions such as the Caucasus and Europe (*Other Regional*).

B) Decisional Flow

Uzbekistan is the third largest natural gas producer among the CIS Countries, but this huge production is mainly destined to domestic consumption and to export to the neighbors and to Russia through the existing Soviet infrastructures. It also has minor oil reserves, that anyway allowed it to become an exporter Country in 1997.[142] When this happened, the Uzbek leadership was involved in a dispute about the most suitable ways of transport that had been going on since the earliest times of Central Asian independence, when the resources of the region were made free from the Soviet Control. The actors involved in this 'New Great Game', as theorized by Ahmed Rashid,[143] are first of all Russia and the USA, in addition to a second rank of regional powers, such as Turkey, China, Pakistan and Iran, all competing for getting the best opportunities while excluding their adversaries. A primary role in this field has moreover been played by the giant oil companies, often powerful enough to influence the decisions of their Governments, and not rarely tightly connected with them, openly or covertly.

In the 1990s, the dispute about the possible oil transport routes developed around several options, some already realized, some others just planned. The main choices on the table were:[144]

- Northern routes, towards Russia, directly to the north *via* Kazakhstan or crossing Azerbaijan and Chechnya toward the Russian port of Novorossisk. Several pipelines already exist on this route, but there are plans to develop it.
- Western Routes (favored by Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and the

[141] cfr. *RFERL Newsline*, 2 November 1998, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[142] *CIA World Factbook 2001*, from the Web Site http://www.cia.gov
[143] Rashid, 2001, *op. cit.*
[144] Data from EIA: "Caspian Tables, Maps", February 2002, from the Web Site http://www.eia.doe.gov; and "Survey Central Asia", *The Economist*, February 1998, from the Web Site http://www.economist.com

USA), through Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Georgian port of Supsa on the Black Sea (in activity since 2000), or to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, on the Mediterranean.

- Southern routes, through Iran, much more economically suitable but adversed by the USA because of political reasons (a line between Turkmenistan and Iran is however already active).
- Eastern routes, through China, essentially independent from the other options, not yet under construction.
- South Eastern routes, through Afghanistan to Pakistan, economically suitable, but with problems of instability in the regions crossed. This is the case of the old project of the Central Asia Oil Pipeline and of the US Unocal project, stalled for same reason as the southern routes.

When Central Asia became independent, the major oil companies did not perceive immediately the new opportunities offered, partly discouraged by the lack of information, partly by the expenses necessary to build new infrastructures in the region. The fist firm to work in the region was in fact a second-rank Argentinean Company, Bridas, which signed the first contract with Turkmenistan in the early days of independence, planning the construction of a pipeline crossing Afghanistan toward the Pakistani shore of the Indian Ocean. However, in the mid-1990s the USA became increasingly aware of the strategic importance of the Central Asian region and of the control of its resources. Therefore, the US Company Unocal, supported by its Government, proposed a similar project (with a participation also of the Saudi firm Delta) to the Countries involved, and won the competition thanks to its political sponsors. The main stake in this operation was to find an agreement with the different warlords (who included, as of 1994, also the *Taliban*) that were contending Afghanistan with each other with arms in a never ending civil war. [145]

In the meantime, Russia also had to solve problems created by the instability in Chechnya, through which the pipeline to Novorossisk had necessarily to pass (what also probably represented the main reason for the bloody war led by the Russian Army in the Country).

For some years, the South-Eastern pipeline was optimistically supported by the Governments of Pakistan and the USA. However, both Governments and oil Companies never managed to find an agreement with the different

[145] Rashid, 2001, *op. cit.*

factions fighting for supremacy in Afghanistan. The *Taliban* at one point were even supported as the only force able to reunify the Country and grant the necessary stability, by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and (according to authoritative voices such as that of Rashid) by the USA, mostly through the respective secret services. Nevertheless, the construction of the pipeline was continuously postponed, and the USA grew more and more skeptical about the option, especially when the US feminist groups started to harshly criticize Afghanistan's segregationist policy toward women, and the Country gave hospitality to the organization of Usama bin Laden. [146]

These factors, taken together, probably determined a surprising change in the US Administration, which in July 1997 announced that it was ready to support a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey, even crossing Iran. [147] The American attention definitely shifted away from the Afghan route after the terrorist attacks of Summer 1998 against US Embassies in Africa: missiles were launched against bin Laden's camps in the Country and a few days later Unocal officially announced the suspension of the pipeline construction plans. [148] The American attention progressively focused on the route crossing Azerbaijan and Georgia toward the port of Supsa, allowing the two Countries of the recently formed (and anti-Russia) GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova; GUUAM after the adhesion of Uzbekistan) to be involved in the affair. It was not a case that Uzbekistan, almost in the same period, expressed (as cited in the previous paragraph) its preference for pipelines bypassing Russia, while preparing its withdrawal from the CIS Security Agreement and its adhesion to GUAM.

In September 1998, twelve countries (including Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Romania, Turkey, and Uzbekistan) signed a multilateral agreement known as the Baku Declaration "to develop the transport corridor through closer economic integration of member countries, rehabilitation and development of new transportation infrastructure, and by fostering stability and trust in the region". [149]

In the end, allegedly because of environmental concerns about the safety of the Bosphorus, but mostly to involve also the US pivot ally in the region, Turkey, in the affair, the preference of the USA was given to the Baku-Ceyhan route. Meanwhile, the southern and southwestern options

[146] Id., p. 211
[147] Id.
[148] EIA, "Turkmenistan", September 1999, from the Web Site http://www.eia.doe.gov
[149] EIA, "Caspian Sea region", February 2002, from the Web Site http://www.eia.doe.gov

had become less and less realizable, also given the rising tension between Iran and Afghanistan, near to a state of war. [150] Even more worrying for Uzbekistan, on 20 October, its border guards discovered in a train traveling from Iran to Afghanistan two wagons filled with weapons, whose destination remained unclear. [151] Nearly in the same days, during the first official visit paid by Russia's President in Uzbekistan, Yeltsin and Karimov had agreed on the gravity of the situation in Afghanistan and signed a document of mutual assistance in case of attack. [152] All these factors probably determined Karimov to participate in the Ankara meeting of 2 November, and give his support to the Baku-Ceyhan route. [153]

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The November 1998 decision did not require any implementation specifically to Uzbekistan, which was not technically involved in the project. More generally, the eastern option continued to raise doubts both from Oil Companies and from some Governments (such as Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Russia, although for different reasons. The USA, too, the same day of the Ankara summit, officially stated to be bound to a "multiple pipeline project" in the region. [154] This strategic option, however, was supported in the following months more and more seriously by the US Administration, becoming its leading issue in the region: therefore, every resistance was finally overcome. The construction of the pipeline has allegedly started in summer 2002, in order to be completed before the end of 2004 (according to the US will). [155] However, the new regional situation after the war in Afghanistan could reorient the US Administration toward other options in the future.

The output of the decision for Uzbekistan can not be assessed but in purely political terms: in this perspective, the decision was just part of a process leading the country to take place among the US' staunchest allies in the region, especially by entering the GUAM (already including two of the Countries most involved in the project, Azerbaijan and Georgia). Thus,

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[150] *RFERL Newsline*, 14 September 1998, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[151] *RFERL Newsline*, 20 October 1998, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[152] *RFERL Newsline*, 12 October 1998, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[153] *RFERL Newsline*, 2 November 1998, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[154] "Ambassador Morningstar Speech on Caspian Basin Energy Policy", 2 November 1998, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[155] EIA, "Caspian Sea region", cit.

the effects of these decisions will be revealed only by the medium and long term effects of the Uzbek participation in this alliance.

Two of the other Central Asian Countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, possessed at that time neither the natural resources not the political relevance necessary to be involved in the deal. Kazakhstan supported the project enthusiastically, although already selling oil and gas to Russia through the existing pipelines and participating in other projects foreseeing the construction of pipelines toward China. Turkmenistan's President Niyazov, on the contrary, officially refused to sign the agreement on 4 November, reportedly because his Country was more interested in gas than in oil deals, and had moreover already signed a separate supply agreement with Turkey. The true reasons were probably Turkmenistan's dispute with Azerbaijan about the offshore fields in the Caspian, its political position (much closer to Russia), and its will to conclude cheaper deals (with its southern neighbor Iran). [156]

5. ADHESION TO THE 'SHANGHAI-5' (APRIL 2001 – MS)

A) Variables Involved

When the announcement of Uzbekistan's accession to the Shanghai organization (Shanghai-5, later Shanghai-6 or, more officially, Shanghai Forum) was given, the international community was taken by surprise. It was almost unbelievable that a Country following for years a path toward the West, and the USA in particular (with its climax in the withdrawal from the CIS Security treaty and the adhesion to the pro-US GUAM), suddenly entered a security organization including both China and Russia. A deeper analysis of events and statements released in the previous two years, however, reveals many factors that could be involved in the decision.

The first one of them is undoubtedly the change in the security needs of the Country. Although repeatedly calling for a massive action against Islamic terrorism, the Uzbek leadership for years had practically to face no serious menace on this side (situation that made some analysts believe that the Islamic threat was no more than a Karimov's pretext to justify his repressive human rights policy). The year 1999 represented a turning point in this trend: both the bombing attack, which took place on 16

[156] Michael Levyveld, "Turkmenistan: President Refuses to Sign Oil Pipeline Agreement", 4 November 1998, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

February in Tashkent against Karimov, and the first IMU incursions the following summer posed a serious challenge to the regime (*Military Capability*). The already crucial anti-terrorism policy, therefore, became an absolute priority in Karimov's agenda (*Competing Elites*), with the immediate need to find powerful and reliable allies. After repeatedly calling for an international cooperative solution about the issue (as for example appears in Karimov's speech at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 [157]), he probably felt frustrated not to find enough of attention in Western Administrations. This probably induced him to decide to search for cooperation elsewhere. Just on that period, in fact, the new Putin's Government was leading Russia toward a renewed interest in its former sphere of influence. Although wary of these new imperial temptations of the former 'elder brother', Karimov perfectly perceived the commonality of interests with the regional power, then engaged in an endless struggle against its own Islamic fighters (*Dominant Bilateral*). Also China, which was not only politically and economically interested in expanding its influence in the Central Asian region, but also sincerely worried about the Islamic separatists of Xinjang, appeared very sensitive about the issue (*Bilateral).* Both Countries therefore appeared inclined to supply Uzbekistan with the anti-guerrilla military equipment it needed so much after the difficult experience of the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

Other less important reasons for the decision were Uzbekistan's desire not to be completely excluded from the games of power in the region (*Regional*). After its withdrawal from the CIS Collective Security Treaty, the latter had considerably strengthened, while GUUAM was facing several difficulties. The danger for Uzbekistan was to remain isolated in the middle of a strongly integrated military region headed by Russia. For the same reason, when Uzbekistan entered the Shanghai-5, there were rumors of a new adhesion to the CIS Security Pact. [158] Other observers suspected instead that Tashkent's real intention was to develop China's aims to acquire influence in Central Asia in an anti-Russian perspective, and reports of Moscow's dissatisfaction seemed to confirm this opinion. [159] Finally, the adhesion to the Shanghai-5 surely represented an indirect mes-

[157] Islam Karimov, "Address of H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, at the UN General Assembly, September 8, 2000, from the Web Site http://jahon.mfa.uz

[158] Stephen Blank, "Karimov's Free Hand as a Dominant Military Power", *Biweekly Briefing,* from the Web Site http://www.cacianalyst.org

[159] *Eurasia Insight*, 20 May 2002, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

sage sent to the USA, officially 'strategic partner' of Uzbekistan, but in reality rather deaf about the terrorism issue.

B) Decisional Flow

The Shanghai-5 Organization was created as an informal group of States (including China, Russia, and, among the Central Asians, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) to meet annually in order to discuss the delimiting and demilitarizing of the CIS-China borders. Uzbekistan did not participate, not only because of its foreign policy choices of the mid-1990s, but also for the obvious reason that the Country had no common border with China. After an initial success, the Group widened its scope, also addressing the issue of terrorism: an agreement was reached on this subject during the 1999 meeting in Bishkek.

Meanwhile, just a few days after Uzbekistan's announcement of its withdrawal from the CIS Security Treaty, on 16 February 1999, one of the main squares of Tashkent was wasted by a horrible explosion, which left on the ground 16 victims and several dozens of wounded. Although the involvement of Islamic extremists was proved by several trials with death sentences, no claiming was reportedly made. On the contrary, when in the following summer, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were penetrated by a commando seizing hostages, the responsibility was immediately attributed to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, with bases in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and close links with Usama bin Laden's terrorist network. The guerrillas engaged the two Countries' security forces for months, until late October, when the last hostages were released, reportedly in exchange of a rich ransom. [160] In response to the incursion, not long after the Uzbek Armed Forces held joint military exercises with the Russian, Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Tajik forces, and planned another for the following spring. [161] Between the end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000 Uzbekistan also strengthened its border policy (see above the decision analyzed in chapter 3).

In the following April, the visiting US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared: «We intend to provide approximately $3 million in assistance for equipment and training to help Uzbekistan combat terror-

[160] Bruce Pannier, "Kyrgyzstan: Hostage Release Has Not Resolved Uzbek Problem", 16 October 1999, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[161] Bruce Pannier, "Central Asia: Military Exercises Suggest New Focus On Security", 5 November 1999, id.

ism and the illicit trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and narcotics and the assistance will be provided through the State Department's anti-terrorist assistance program, non-proliferation export control and border security assistance programs and counter-narcotics and law enforcement training programs.". The two Countries, however, did not agree about the economic and human rights issues, crucial for Washington's Administration. [162] In the meantime, meeting Putin in May 2000 (for the first time in his quality of Russia's President), Karimov recognized the legitimacy of Russia's interest in Uzbekistan and, although there was no official report about the visit, sources reported that the two Presidents discussed mostly about security and the danger of terrorism. [163]

On July 5, Karimov attended for the first time a Summit of the Shanghai Forum in Dushanbe, and expressed "the desire either to cooperate with the Forum or to join it". The following month, the Uzbek authorities adopted a much more cooperative position toward the neighboring Countries when new IMU incursions flared, and even signed a bilateral security agreement with Kyrgyzstan, overcoming the strained relations of the previous year. Karimov officially announced on 29 August that China was providing military aid to Uzbekistan, while a similar Russian supply was categorically denied by the Uzbek Foreign Minister Kamilov as "wishful thinking". [164] In the same period, Karimov rarely mentioned the GUUAM in statements, while there were rumors that Uzbekistan could rejoin the CIS Security Pact already in Bishkek, at the October 11 summit (however, the event did not actually happen). [165]

The following year began with rumors of a possible full participation of Uzbekistan in the Shanghai Organization. However, it was only after a visit by an even more friendly Putin to the Country (when Karimov expressed the will of cooperating with Russia in every direction and denied to follow a foreign policy leading Uzbekistan to distance itself from Moscow), [166] in early May, that Karimov officially announced that his Country accepted the invitation received to join the Shanghai group, whose "main focus would be regional security". [167]

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[162] Bruce Pannier, "Central Asia: Albright Discusses Security And Other Issues", 20 April 2000, id.

[163] *Uzbekistan Daily Digest*, 12 May 2000, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

[164] *RFE/RL Security Watch*, 4 September 2000, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[165] Robert M. Cutler, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy and its Domestic Effects", *Biweekly Briefing*, from the Web Site http://www.cacianalyst.org

[166] *Pravda*, 4 July 2001, from the Web Site http://www.pravda.ru

[167] *BBC World Service*, 11 May 2001, from the Web Site http://www.bbc.co.uk

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of the decision took place in Shanghai on 14-15 June 2001, when Uzbekistan was officially admitted to the group. On this occasion, the leaders of the six member Countries signed an agreement on combating terrorism, extremism and separatism, and agreed to the establishment of a common anti-terrorist center. The participants also expressed their interest in deepening and strengthening their trade and commercial relations. [168] More importantly, another agreement was signed in support of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, threatened by Washington's intentions to build up a missile defense shield. The meeting was followed by other agreements increasing cooperation also in the energy field and in other sectors, with a particular tight cooperation between Russia and China.

The short-term output of the decision was positive, enabling Uzbekistan to get new resources from powerful neighbors in order to fight Islamic extremism, while also launching a clear message to the new US Administration. However, the strengthening of Washington's ties with Russia and some Central Asian Republics after the events of Fall 2001, suggests that also the USA could be involved in the organization someway in the future. Of course, the effects of these new developments on Uzbekistan are impossible to foresee.

As already seen, three Central Asian Countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, were co-founding members of the organization, both because of their Russia-dependent foreign policy, and their need of security guarantees against Islamic Militants (all of them provided with an Army much weaker than Uzbekistan's). [169] Turkmenistan, faithful to its formula of 'permanent neutrality' never took into account the opportunity to enter the Shanghai organization, although relying on bilateral cooperation with Russia for the defense of its boundaries.

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[168] Maria Utyaganova, "Shanghai: Providing Stability to Central Asia?", *Field Reports*, from the Web Site http://www.cacianalyst.org
[169] Id.

CHAPTER 5
The 2001 Afghan War

1. INTRODUCTION: BEFORE 9/11

The historical centers of today's Uzbekistan (such as Bukhara) and Afghanistan (such as Kabul and Herat) were built on the Silk Road, commercially linking the West and the North with India and China. Thus, despite the limited common border shared by the two Countries, Uzbekistan is still forced to be an essential connection between its southern neighbor and the rest of the world. The USSR invasion of 1979 took place along the road connecting Termez, in Uzbekistan, with the Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif; and the same route (crossing the border marked by the Amu Darya river through what was unhappily called "Friendship Bridge") a decade later saw the withdrawal of the same troops. In this campaign, also the Uzbek military bases in the south, such as Termez and Khanabad played a primary role in logistic support to the Red Army, while many of the soldiers employed came from the Central Asian region. The ethnical links are also strong, represented by a strong Uzbek community (1.5 mln. estimated in 2001) [170] mainly settled in the northern region around Mazar-i-Sharif and Konduz.

When Central Asia got its independence in 1991, the three southern Republics bordering Afghanistan had to draw up a foreign policy toward the turbulent neighbor, mainly consisting in avoiding a spillover of its widespread conflict. Tajikistan did not manage in this, as it was also involved in a civil war, becoming the rearguard of the Tajik faction led by Massood; Turkmenistan, on the contrary, quietly continued to perpetuate commercial relations involving both smuggling and gas purchase, relying on Russia to defend its borders. Uzbekistan's leadership, proudly refusing Moscow's protection, had to find a different strategy in order to avoid Tajikistan's fate. Karimov, according to most scholars, decided then to rely on the Uzbek faction of Afghanistan (led by the warlord and former Red Army Official Dostum) to create a buffer zone of stability protecting its southern region from further Islamic influence [171]. With this purpose, Tashkent allegedly started to

[170] *CIA World Factbook 2001*, from the Web Site http://www.cia.gov
[171] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 55

provide Dostum with funds and arms (some commentators even talk of Karimov's dream of a 'Great Uzbekistan' absorbing Dostum's provinces). [172] Karimov never admitted these links officially, although recognizing that his Country supplied Dostum with "electric power, grain, medicine, and other humanitarian aid". [173] According to Ahmed Rashid, Moscow also provided aid to Dostum's faction for the same reason. [174] On the contrary, among the other factions, the main threat to Tashkent was represented by Massood, because of the large Tajik minority settled in southern Uzbekistan, that could easily have been involved in an alternative project of 'Great Tajikistan'. [175]

For several years, Karimov's strategy worked well, and also after the rise of the Talibans Dostum continued to control the six northern Provinces of Afghanistan, while the Uzbek leader unsuccessfully tried to coagulate a wide anti-*Taliban* coalition involving Russia and Central Asia after 1994. [176] While allegedly an unreliable political figure, deeply involved in smuggling and other obscure business, and easy to change his allies, Dostum managed until 1996 to make his provinces the only part of Afghanistan untouched by the Civil War, where the ethnic Uzbeks continued to lead a quiet life following western-oriented patterns. [177]

Everything changed in May 1997, when the betrayal of General Malik and of other Dostum's subordinates handed his fief over to the *Taliban*, who tried to submit the northern Provinces, while the Warlord fled to Turkey *via* Uzbekistan. However, the ungratefulness of the *Taliban* toward Malik's faction soon compromised their agreement, and while Malik's forces took control again over four Provinces, Massood launched a counteroffensive in the South, bringing about the worst defeat ever undergone by the *Taliban*. However, the following repatriation of Dostum with a harsh struggle with Malik and also the Hazara forces for the control of northern Afghanistan, definitively handed most of the territory to the *Taliban* in August 1998. [178]

This event caused great dismay in Uzbekistan's leadership, which saw its eternal foes, the Islamic fundamentalists, pressing at the southern bor-

[172] Capisani, *op. cit.*, p. 97
[173] Bohr, *op. cit.*, p. 55
[174] Rashid, 2001, *op. cit.*, p. 184
[175] Id., p. 183
[176] Id., p. 184
[177] Id., p. 79
[178] Id., pp. 80-97

ders. The following year found the Country in deep difficulties, stricken both by the mysterious February bombing attack in Tashkent, and by the IMU first incursion in the summer. Karimov openly stressed the *Taliban*'s responsibility in those events, publicly stating that the terrorists came from training camps and bases located in Afghanistan. [179] Between 1999 and 2000 he repeatedly called for a wide international anti-terrorism coalition, without great success (after the 9/11 attacks, he would several times recall these unheard prophetic words). In this period, Uzbekistan received indeed military and anti-guerrilla help from several regional and global powers, such as the USA, Turkey, Israel and, despite previous statements, also Russia. However, Karimov probably decided that this was insufficient to eliminate the source of regional problems, and in October 2000 took the decision to try to improve the Uzbek-Afghan bilateral relations: high level meetings between the two Governments started. The Uzbek President surprisingly declared that the *Taliban* "did not represent a threat to central Asia"; among the subjects treated was even the recognition of the Afghan Government by Uzbekistan (at that time, only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates has formal diplomatic relation with Kabul). [180] The negotiates, carried on secretly, allegedly did not bring any positive results.

Thus, in 2001, Tashkent was still waiting for new IMU incursions, taken for granted as soon as the mountain passes would be reopened after the winter freeze. In this perspective, Uzbekistan decided to enter the (always neglected before) security agreement named Shanghai Five (Shanghai Six after Uzbekistan's accession), including also Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Mysteriously, no incursion took place: the events would later reveal that the IMU leader Juma Namangani had been recalled to Afghanistan in order to become the commander of the ethnically-mixed Al Qaeda forces.

2. HOSTING US TROOPS (OCTOBER 2001 – MS)

A) Variables Involved

The Uzbek leadership always reportedly longed for being recognized as an ally by the USA and for a tight military (but also economic and political) cooperation with them. Karimov, even before the bombing attacks of February 1999 in Tashkent, was one of the

[179] *Uzbekistan Daily Digest*, 1 Sept. 2000, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[180] *BBC News*, 2 October 2000, from the Web Site http://www.bbc.co.uk

staunchest supporters in the world for a global anti-terrorist crusade. The events following the attacks to the Twin Towers and the pentagon gave him the chance to realize these two 'dreams'. Hosting US troops and also the aircraft employed against the *Taliban* were therefore an obvious choice: this does not imply it was simple to realize. The statements made by Karimov reveal it well: they are contradictory with each other in a way that only the differences in sources could partly explain without calling that behavior 'schizophrenic'. The truth was probably that after every public announcement about Uzbekistan's role in the Afghan campaign, Karimov had to sustain harsh pressures not only made by the former hegemon, Russia, but also by the neighboring Countries, worried about the preferential US–Uzbek relation. What will always probably remain obscure is the position of the different Uzbek factions, which, in turn, could have exercised pressures on Karimov. Undoubtedly, the President was afraid of the public opinion's reactions, which convinced him of the necessity of a strict censorship on the news about the nearby war.

Despite the President's contradictory words, the flow of events reveals that the decision of hosting the US troops in some Uzbek military infrastructures was taken between the days immediately following 9/11 and the beginning of October. It is also evident that those days were filled with both open and secret negotiations, mainly about the warranties the Central Asian Republic wanted to receive in exchange for its support to the US action. The first concrete and complete account for these events was given by Karimov only when the war had practically ended, and Afghanistan was completely freed from the *Taliban*. The occasion for this was a long speech pronounced by the President at a session of the Uzbek Parliament, in which only at the end Karimov addressed the dangerous issue of the US bases in Uzbekistan. After a long and careful introduction about the war and the situation in Afghanistan, he started saying: "Today some of political forces, state officials, public figures and the media, and primarily some states of the near and far abroad are mostly concerned of the US military's stationing in an airdrome designated by Uzbekistan, and the further fate of this airdrome". [181]

The airdrome cited by Karimov was the Khanabad base, where the American troops and planes were settled since probably the first days of October 2001. The concern in part of the international community and of

[181] Karimov, "Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the Seventh Session of Oliy Majlis", cit.

Uzbekistan's own public opinion was "whether American troops will stay here permanently or temporarily, and [...] the plans of these military forces for the future".[182] In justifying the US presence in Uzbekistan, Karimov then moved to explain the reasons pushing him to host these forces (particularly important, since after withdrawing from the CIS Collective Security Pact, he had openly declared the intention not to be part of any military bloc). In this context, he explained that "there are no other goals for our efforts but the interests of our nation, country, future generations, and our peaceful life". Consequently, he wondered "who and what can contradict the establishment of long-term and mutual beneficial ties and relations of our country and the United States of America, the most powerful country in the world (*Bilateral*) [...] of great importance for our security (*Military Capability*), in the creation of a free and prosperous country as well as in bring[ing] the formation of a market economy (*Economic Capability*)". What are, first of all, the enemies that could endanger Uzbekistan's security, making US protection necessary? They are "hostile forces, blood-thirsty and cruel people who call themselves 'true Muslims', and by announcing 'jihad' create hostility on behalf of the religion". In these lines one can clearly see the reference to Islamic movements such as the IMU and Hizb-ut Tahrir, working underground in order to subvert secular rule in the Country (*Competing Elites*), as well as the President's attempt to justify the repression operated against them.

Among the other relevant variables, the obvious ones are *Dominant Bilateral* (since the military alliance with the USA represents not only a step toward the West, but also a step away from the old colonizer), and *Other Regional (*always in the perspective of moving away from a system of alliances toward another). Another variable can be inferred from Karimov's same speech, when he blames "the attempts to strike a deal with these ignorant terrorists and the evil forces behind them, following the principle 'Don't bother me, and I will leave you alone'", adding explicitly that "unfortunately, some of our neighbors and friends did not escape this temptation", and condemning their attitude "to show that they are staunch fighters against terrorism every time they notice the situation change".[183] He surely talked about Tajikistan, for a long time hosting terrorist camps, but also probably about Countries like Turkmenistan, quietly doing business with the *Taliban* until 2001 (*Regional*).

[182] Id.
[183] Id.

B) Decisional Flow

The summer 2001 passed by with Uzbekistan always in search for allies and means in its struggle against terrorism, unusually dormant that year, although engaging the Uzbek security forces near Tashkent on 30 August. Uzbekistan had just received military supplies from China, and rumors spread by Itar-Tass about a request of weapons to Russia were immediately and categorically denied by Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Kamilov. [184] On 9 September a suicide attack made by alleged Moroccan citizens with Belgian passports killed Commander Massood of the Northern Alliance (although his death was confirmed only days later, when the fact was connected to Al Qaeda's strategies). On 11 September two civilian planes hijacked by Islamic terrorists hit and destroyed the Twin Towers of New York, and another wasted part of the Pentagon complex. While the rest of the world watched the unbelievable images, Uzbekistan remained unaware, since the Uzbek television decided not to interrupt the broadcasting of the President Tennis Cup. [185]

Although without any official claiming, the attacks were almost immediately attributed to the Al Qaeda terrorist network, already responsible in the previous years for acts of terrorism against the USA in Tanzania, Kenya, and Yemen; and despite the Saudi nationality of both the leader of the group, Usama bin Laden, and most of the suicide hijackers, it was immediately clear also to Central Asia that the first target of the 'First War of the Twenty-First Century declared by the US President Bush was doomed to be Afghanistan, hosting the main Al Qaeda bases. Thus, while all the leaders sent their Countries' condolences to the USA, they also started to be concerned about how they would be involved in the following events. Russia also made their moves, with Defense Minister Ivanov declaring that "NATO should not even consider using Central Asia for military operations against Afghanistan".

Karimov, however, responded to Ivanov's words warning that "we didn't assume any responsibility that we would always coordinate our foreign policy with anybody", adding that his main concern was the liq-

[184] *Central Asia Report*, 6 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[185] Josh Machleder, "Uzbek Leaders Remain Tight-Lipped on Country's Participation in Anti-terrorism Struggle", *Eurasia Insight*, 20 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

uidation of terrorists. On the same day, Foreign Minister Kamilov made a surprising announcement, declaring Uzbekistan "open to allowing the United States to use Uzbek airspace or territory for an attack across its 80-mile border with Afghanistan", despite threats by the *Taliban* to retaliate against any neighbor that helped America. Kamilov also said that the Uzbek Government was "prepared to discuss all the possible forms of cooperation in this respect". The US Secretary of State Colin Powell echoed this, affirming that the USA had not made specific requests to Uzbekistan, but also that soon "we will be talking with the Uzbek authorities". [186]

From these words we could assume that the decision had already been taken, and that Uzbekistan needed only a negotiation in order to get as many as possible warranties of security and rewards from the USA. In the meantime, the other Central Asian Countries appeared more reluctant to make similar statements, with Kyrgyzstan authorities warning instead of a possible spillover of the Afghan conflict. In the meantime, Russia took a softer position on the issue, maybe considering the possible advantages that it was possible in turn to get in exchange for cooperation. [187] On 19 September Ivanov was in Washington to discuss the issue, and also other Central Asian Countries, such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, took a stance similar to Uzbekistan's. Meanwhile, rumors spread that the IMU leader, Juma Namangani, had joined the *Taliban* in Afghanistan. [188] However, meeting in Tashkent on 19 September with visiting Russian Security Council Secretary Vladimir Rushailo, the Uzbek President Islam Karimov affirmed that "Uzbekistan has not yet given any commitments and not held any talks with the United States on providing its airspace and military bases for strikes on Afghanistan". [189] Maybe the President wanted to meet some Russian pressure of the moment; another hypothesis is that he wanted to receive some positive message from the USA that had not yet come. Maybe the response to these doubts, if they really existed, was the recognition made by the US President Bush in a TV speech, of the IMU among the forces backing Al Qaeda. At least this was the interpretation of Bush's words, made by the American press, while the first unofficial news about the landing of "at least two military cargos"

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[186] Peter Baker, "Uzbekistan Eager to Join US Alliance", *Washington Post*, 17 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.thewashingtonpost.com

[187] *Newsline*, 18 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[188] *Newsline*, 19 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[189] *Newsline*, 20 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

unloading unspecified materials in Uzbekistan spread,[190] also confirmed by Radio Free Europe.[191] On 25 September other Central Asian Countries upgraded their military cooperation with the USA, offering the use of their airspace for the operations against Afghanistan.[192] On the same day, Russia's President Putin affirmed: "Russia is supplying and intends to continue to supply all the information we have about the infrastructure and the location of international terrorists and their training bases. Second, we are ready to offer Russian airspace for airplanes with humanitarian aid for the region where the antiterrorist action will be carried out. Third, we have agreed on this position with our allies, including Central Asian states."[193]

All the obstacles to an effective Uzbek participation to the Afghan campaign led by the USA seemed thus removed. However, both Central Asian and US sources continued to officially deny any landing of warplanes with troops in the region.[194] The situation appeared more and more confused when Karimov stated on 26 September that Russians "do not like the fact that Uzbekistan is carrying out its own independent policy with regard to U.S. use of its facilities in the counterterrorism effort. But let me say once again that when the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan in 1979, starting a big war, no one asked for our approval". However, at the same time, Karimov said that he was "absolutely against" any involvement in any conflict with the *Taliban*.[195] The following day, he changed his position again, offering the Uzbek airspace as long as Uzbekistan's security was guaranteed. Presidential Press Secretary Rustam Djumaev added: "The most important thing is the security of our country and of our borders. When we ask for guarantees to secure them, we rely on the basic principles of international relations and international laws. These are the respect and acknowledgement of the independence and sovereignty of states, the sanctity of borders, non-interference in the domestic affairs of the states, et cetera."[196] On 28 September, U.S. Undersecretary of State John Boulton visited Tashkent to

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[190] Steve Levine & Greg Jaffe, "Uzbekistan Gets Longed-For Recognition", *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 24 September 2001, p. 3

[191] *Newsline*, 24 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[192] *Newsline*, 25 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[193] Tony Wesolowski, " Russia: Putin Offers Russian Cooperation – But How Much?", 25 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[194] *Newsline*, 25 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[195] *Newsline*, 27 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[196] Zamira Echanova, " Uzbekistan: Cooperation Against Terrorism Comes At What Price?", 28 September 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

discuss antiterrorism measures with the Uzbek leadership. Probably he had been in Uzbekistan since September 26, but his presence had been kept secret. [197] Whatever the problems were, they were probably solved, and the way to a definitive cooperation paved: on 5 October the US Secretary to Defense Rumsfeld visited Uzbekistan (at the request of President Bush himself) as the only Central Asian destination of a tour including also Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Oman. On 3 October, the Washington Post reported that 1,000 troops of the US Army's 10th Mountain Division had been deployed the day before in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. [198] On 5 October, Karimov and Rumsfeld met: although Karimov officially declared that the USA had been allowed to use one Uzbek basis and only for humanitarian and search-and-rescue purposes, and to deny the rumors of US troops deployment, [199] Rumsfeld had undoubtedly received the answers the US Administration was waiting for. Two days later, the US strikes against Afghanistan began.

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of the agreements signed between Karimov and Rumsfeld on 5 October (whatever their content could be) was as fast as the operations to carry on in neighboring Afghanistan required. Probably, the deployment of US troops and planes in the Country had already begun days before, while the agreement fixed the exact terms necessary to upgrade the cooperation to an operational level. Already the following day, US Officials told BBC that "about 1,000 US troops have arrived Uzbekistan in the first major deployment of ground forces in the campaign against terrorism" (probably the same soldiers already unofficially reported in the Country since the end of September). The same report stressed that it was the first time the American troops were deployed for operational duties on former Soviet territory, and that also intelligence cooperation between the two Countries had increased. [200] On 9 October Pentagon sources pointed out that the American forces had settled in the Khanabad base, about 100 Km. from the Afghan border; CNN also reported Karimov repeating the previous statements about the basis destination, but adding that "he was not going to investigate too much on what kind of

[197] *Newsline*, 1 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[198] Bruce Pannier: "Uzbekistan: Cooperation May Increase Stability, Security", 3 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[199] Mark Baker, "Uzbekistan: U.S. To Have Limited Use Of Air Bases, ", 5 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[200] *BBC News*, 6 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.bbc.co.uk

troops were going to be deployed" there. CNN added that operations were conducted in maximum secrecy, with no civilian allowed to approach the base.[201] Better informed Indian sources (citing an anonymous Uzbek Officer) informed that "so far, as many as 60 planes have dropped off supplies and 110 more are expected […] over 1,200 soldiers were on the ground […]", included not only the 10th Mountain Division, but also "members of the 5th Special Forces Group", and "an advance party from the Special Operation Command". In addition to the soldiers, Americans had deployed in Khanabad "seven helicopters – four Chinooks and three Blackhawks". The soldiers were both "conducting test flights inside the base", and "repairing the runways and other structures, some of which were in poor state", while "two journalists have been detained […] for venturing too close".[202]

The short-term output was problematic for Uzbekistan, which had to face both internal and external difficulties during the campaign. While the *Taliban*, according to Russian sources, had deployed 10,000 troops on the borders with the Republic, and regional powers such as Russia, China and Iran expressed their perplexities about the presence of US troops in Central Asia, the Uzbek public opinion was reportedly worried about a move that could lead to a conflict with the *Taliban*, whenever the Americans would leave, and confused about the misinformation and, often, the absolute absence of information. In a long-term perspective, however, the benefits for Uzbekistan proved invaluable: first of all, the first enemy of the Country, the *Taliban* Government which also supported the IMU, had been removed, unblocking also the commercial routes leading South; the Republic had got what appeared as a permanent US military presence. Already in the following days new contracts were signed with American firms (according to the Wall Street Journal, as a reward for cooperation)[203]; Uzbekistan also sent to the IMF a letter of goodwill about future reforms, probably expecting some encouraging shift also in the Fund's orientation. The World bank announced that Uzbekistan could "expect new loans, debt relief, and further benefits from international financial institutions, and was sending a top official to

[201] Alessio Vinci: "Uzbekistan Air Base Shrouded in Secrecy", 10 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.cnn.com
[202] C.J. Chivers, "Khanabad Base the Nerve Centre of American Build-up in Uzbekistan", *Hindustan Times*, 10 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.hindustantimes.com
[203] Selina Williams & Grigori Gerenstein, "Uzbek Mining Deals May Be Rewards for Cooperation", *The Wall Street Journal Europe,* 11 October 2001, p. 2

Central Asia for talks". [204] Some months later, Ahmed Rashid told CNN that among the Central Asian Countries "Uzbekistan had become the favorite both of Russia and the USA, raising concern even in the neighbors". [205]

However, also the other Countries of the region participated, more or less actively, to the operations. In the previous paragraphs the offer of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz airspace, later accepted by the USA, has already been cited, as well as the alleged deployment of some troops also in Tajikistan. There is no reason to think that those Republics, once Russia had aligned on US positions, were not involved in the operations against the *Taliban*. Turkmenistan's stance remained mysterious; nevertheless, in Russia there were rumors that President Niyazov had consigned to the USA the Airport of Mary and, maybe, also that of Charzhou. [206] Other sources added that "the United States and NATO have reliably asserted themselves at Uzbek, Kirghiz and Tajik bases, i.e. Manas (Bishkek), Karshi, Kulyab, Kokaidy, and Termez", [207] while no mention was made of Kazakhstan.

3. UNSEALING THE AFGHAN BORDER (DEC. 2001 – PD)

A) Variables Involved

The Friendship Bridge, on the street linking Termez in Uzbekistan with Mazar-i Sharif in Afghanistan was for decades the only route connection between the two Countries. Once connecting the USSR territories with the Afghan quasi-protectorate, after Uzbekistan's independence it had almost become an internal infrastructure, linking the Country with the Afghan provinces ruled by the Uzbek Warlord Dostum. However, after the *Taliban*'s campaign of 1997-98 capturing northern Afghanistan, Karimov had decided to seal the bridge, that remained officially closed for the next 4 years.

During the US military campaign in Afghanistan of Fall 2001, however, both international and non governmental organizations, and also politicians such as the EU representatives started to ask for the reopening of the Bridge to carry convoys of aid, more and more assertive with the

[204] *Central Asia Report,* 18 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[205] Ahmed Rashid interviewed by the CNN, 21 March 2002
[206] Giulietto Chiesa, "La Terra Trema", *Il Manifesto*, 30 December 2001
[207] *Russia Weekly*, No. 10, 2002, from the Web Site http://www.cdi.org

progressive retreat of the defeated *Taliban*. Karimov agreed already in an early phase of the War, on 25 October, to reopen the Termez Port and Airport;[208] however, he resisted for several weeks to any pressure about the Bridge. Only on the first days of December he finally came to the decision, when many factors had changed.

Crucial for the decision was first of all the American pressure, evidently witnessed by the announcement of the decision made in the press conference after Karimov's meeting with the US Secretary of State Colin Powell (*Bilateral)*.[209] There is no doubt that the US Administration, in turn pressed by international organizations, NGOs, and by the American public opinion itself about the need to give relief to the thousands of refugees displaced by the war, desired this move from Tashkent. The fact that the same request had previously been made to Karimov by European visitors, both representing single Countries, and the European Union, until a week before the decision[210] without success also shows the different degrees of influence on the Uzbek administration of the USA and Europe. The other reasons which made the decision possible are revealed by the *conditio sine qua non* posed by Uzbekistan as necessary to reopen the Bridge: Uzbek authorities had in fact insisted for weeks that their decision to keep the bridge closed was based purely on security calculations. "As soon as stability is restored in northern Afghanistan, we will consider opening the bridge," had said Uzbek Foreign Minister spokesman Bahomir Umarov. Until the end of November, such precondition was not yet accomplished, with huge bands of *Taliban* fighters still contending with the Northern Alliance the possess of Mazar-i Sharif and Konduz. However, after the capture of those cities, and especially after the slaughter made by the US Forces of the last rebel *Taliban* fighters in the Kala i Jhangi fortress, which took place in the last week of November, Uzbekistan's further refusal could but appear irrational. Now the risk of penetration of hostile Islamic forces into Uzbekistan's territory had dramatically decreased (*Competing Elites)*, while the first US ground operations in Afghanistan added to the Northern Alliance control of Northern Afghanistan gave the major security required (*Military Capability*). The *Economic Capability* factor also needs to be

[208] "Uzbekistan: Tashkent Agrees to Move Aid to Afghanistan", 25 October 2001, form the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

[209] Andrea Koppel, "Key Uzbek Bridge to Reopen to Afghanistan", 8 Dec. 2001, from the Web Site http://www.cnn.com

[210] Ahto Lobjakas: "Central Asia: EU Fails to Win Commitment from Uzbekistan on Aid Shipments", 30 October 2001; and *Central Asia Report*, 29 Nov. 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

included: during the whole Afghan campaign, the Uzbek administration never concealed that the other reward required (in addition to security) was economic aid. The circumstance in which the Bridge was doomed to reopening made no exception: both requirements were satisfied by Powell, declaring: "our interests in this region should be permanent and these relations will continue after the [Afghan] crisis". Washington also pledged to Tashkent $100 million in "additional economic and humanitarian aid and assistance in the security sphere." A further $50 million in credits was promised through the Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank of the United States to support Uzbek small and medium-sized businesses. [211]

Among the Relevant variables, the first to be considered is *Global*, represented by the long-term efforts made by the United Nations to negotiate the reopening of the Bridge, especially through the World Food Program (WFP). [212] An important role was undoubtedly also played by *Interest Groups*, both represented by the NGOs willing to increase the flow of aid to Afghanistan, and by the Uzbek faction of Afghanistan, willing to put the hands on the same supplies (General Dostum himself personally inspected the first load sent on the other side of the border). [213]

B) Decisional Flow

The immediate aftermath of the concession of the Uzbek bases to the US Army, when requests to Uzbekistan did not yet include the Bridge issue, was very fruitful. Just four days after the launching of the early air strikes on Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and the USA released a joint statement describing "the content of the agreement formalizing their bilateral cooperation in the fight against terrorism", referring to the establishment of "a qualitatively new relationship based on a long-term commitment to advance security and regional stability". [214] However, already a few days later, observers noted the protests of US human rights activists against this alliance. [215] Maybe conscious of such pressures, the Uzbek Government allowed, on 25 October, the United Nations "to use a river port in the southern city of Termez", and opened the Termez airport to humanitarian

[211] *Central Asia Report*, 13 Dec. 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[212] *BBC South Asia*, 9 December 2001, from the Web Site http://www.bbc.co.uk
[213] Id.
[214] *Central Asia Report*, 18 Oct. 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[215] Ariel Cohen, "Post-War Central Asia: A Complex Matrix", *Eurasia Insight*, 23 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

organizations to allow the stockpile of humanitarian items.[216] Nevertheless, on 31 October, during a meeting with Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel (on behalf of the EU's current presidency), Karimov ruled out to open the Bridge on Amu Darya "for humanitarian convoys in the foreseeable future". Worried about the situation in Afghanistan and the perspective of a long war in the context of regional stability, Foreign Minister Kamilov added that the Bridge would not be open "until the situation in northern Afghanistan stabilizes".[217] Reports of those days refer of a different strategy pursued by the USA and the European representatives: according to *The Guardian*, while Britain and other Europeans wanted to open up and secure routes into Afghanistan (such as the Termez crossing) to provide humanitarian aid to millions of Afghans starving, the USA saw the continuing hunt for Usama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network as the overriding priority and did not want to do anything that could detract from that effort.[218]

The events of November changed the whole situation, beginning with the *Taliban*'s defeat in Mazar-i Sharif (and the capture of the major cities of the Country made by the Northern Alliance) and ending with the fall of the last fundamentalist stronghold, Konduz. The massacre of the last *Taliban* and al Qaeda fighters in the northern Provinces of Afghanistan (made by the US and Northern Alliance troops near Mazar-i Sharif in the last week of the month) further simplified the situation at Uzbekistan's borders. Meanwhile, slowly implementing the October 25 agreement, on 14 November barges loaded with emergency supplies started to move from the Termez port.[219] On 26 November the fall of Konduz was announced, while the USA launched the first official operations with US ground troops.[220] On 5 December a provisional Afghanistan's Government led by Hamid Karzai was formed; on the following day, the Uzbek Government announced that it might soon open the Friendship Bridge connecting its Country with Afghanistan.[221] On 7 December, after the meeting with US

[216] Nikola Krastev, "Uzbekistan Allows Aid Delivery to Afghanistan", 26 October 2001, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

[217] Ahto Lobjakas: "Central Asia: EU Fails to Win Commitment from Uzbekistan on Aid Shipments", 31 October 2001, from the web Site http://www.rferl.org

[218] *The Guardian*, 22 November 2001, from the Web Site http://www.guardian.co.uk

[219] Raffi Khatchadourian, "Afghan Humanitarian Aid Shipments Begin to Move from Uzbek Border Town", 14 November 2001, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

[220] Jeffrey Donovan: "Afghanistan: Deployment of Marines Marks New Phase in Terror War", 27 November 2001, from the web Site http://www.rferl.org

[221] Bruce Pannier: "Afghanistan: as Kandahar Surrenders, Is Political Accord Unraveling?", 6 December 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

Secretary of State Colin Powell, also fixing new US financial aid to Uzbekistan (see previous paragraph) the Uzbek Government announced the decision to reopen the Friendship Bridge. [222]

C) Implementation; Output; Comparison

The implementation of the decision began with an agreement signed on 14 December by The Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Uzbekistan, Richard Conroy. The agreement set out a series of arrangements to facilitate humanitarian cross-border operations by air, rail and road, as well as the movement of humanitarian staff across the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Most importantly, the agreement expedited the delivery of food, medicine, blankets, clothing and other essential, life-saving assistance across the recently reopened Friendship Bridge. The United Nations Joint Logistics Center and the Ministry of Emergency Situations would jointly co-ordinate the passage of wagons and vehicles over the bridge and arrange for the necessary clearances.[223] However, the expedition of aid went on very slowly, mainly because of the alleged bureaucratic and technical obstacles put by Uzbek officers. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty reported that the US Administration was frustrated by Uzbekistan's reluctance to implement the agreement about the bridge. It seems that also during the third trip to the Country made by the US Secretary to Defense Rumsfeld there were negotiations about the issue, but without great progress.

The output of the decision was undoubtedly positive to Uzbekistan, whose leadership, afraid of losing control on that critical borderpoint kept a strict control over the situation. On the other hand, the decision allowed Uzbekistan not to lose the favor of its new powerful ally, the USA, while decreasing the hostility both of the US public opinion (the news about the opening of the Bridge was widely broadcast by the major US media) and of humanitarian organizations.

Among the other Central Asian Countries, the only two other ones with a common border with Afghanistan are Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. The former was the first in the region to reopen its border, probably willing to

[222] *Central Asia Report*, 13 December 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org
[223] *Afghanistan Crisis - OCHA Situation Report* No. 32, 14 December 2001, from the Web Site http://www.reliefweb.int

restart as soon as possible the advantageous economic exchanges with the neighbor (who had emerged, with the Friendship Bridge closed, as the leading aid conduit for the relief operations). Through the Turkmen route, already in November, a huge amount of aid was shipped to Afghanistan, although this route took four days, and was complicated by Turkmen visa requirements. [224] Russian border guards instead reportedly built a pontoon bridge across the Pyanj River, dividing Tajikistan and Afghanistan, also to speed up aid into Afghanistan. The construction was funded by the German government. [225]

[224] Antoine Blua, " Lack of Security in Afghanistan Sparks Recrimination over Humanitarian Aid Distribution" *Eurasia Insight*", 19 May 2002, from the Web Site http://www.eurasianet.org

[225] Bruce Pannier: "Afghanistan: as Kandahar Surrenders, Is Political Accord Unraveling?", 6 December 2001, from the Web Site http://www.rferl.org

CHAPTER 6
Findings of the Research

1. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Some of the interesting characteristics and novelties included in the pattern proposed by Brecher [226] have already been explained in the Introduction to this research. Another one, maybe the most relevant at all, is the method of data processing provided by the study of decisions, which not only allows a qualitative analysis, but also a quantitative one, which will be developed in the next paragraphs of this Chapter.

Such an opportunity originates from the structure of Brecher's model, in which a particular Degree of Relevance is attributed to each of the ten Variables considered, in each of the decisions studied. This work, in particular, will follow the modified version of Brecher's model elaborated by Coralluzzo (in his book about the Italian Post-War foreign policy [227]). The first task of the researcher, as explained by Coralluzzo, is the preliminary subdivision of the ten Variables into three categories (*Crucial, Relevant, Irrelevant*) for each of the decisions analyzed (in the present work, the subdivision has been done contextually with the study of every single decision). The second step is transforming each classification into a different score attributed to the Variables (*Crucial* = 5; *Relevant* = 3; *Irrelevant* = 1). After this operation, the analyst, by dividing the sum of all scores attributed to each Variable in the different decisions for the maximum score obtainable, gets what Coralluzzo calls "Index of Relevance". [228] The Index of Relevance of a Variable will always be a number included between 0.2 (Variable *Irrelevant* in all the decisions under examination) and 1 (Variable always *Crucial*); more importantly, it will provide the researcher with the opportunity to compare the weight of the different Variables in the foreign policy decisions of a Country. Thus, the Variables with Relevance Indexes ranging between 0.2 and 0.4 will be considered as globally *Irrelevant*, those with Indexes between 0.4 and 0.6, *Relevant*, and those above 0.6, *Crucial*.

[226] Brecher, 1972, *op. cit.*
[227] Coralluzzo, *op. cit.*
[228] Id.

However, as already demonstrated by Coralluzzo in his work, the analysis can go far beyond this comparison of raw data, and provide more accurate information about the decision-making process, both in different periods of time, and in different Issue Areas. The present research, although with a more limited number of cases taken into account, tries to follow his example, providing in Table 2 the analysis of the former and the latter five years of Uzbekistan's independent existence, and in Table 3 the Variables relevance in the four Issue Areas, with separated Indexes of Relevance for each of them.

2. THE DATA AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

Looking at Table 1, the first evident consideration to make is that not all the Variables taken into account appear as having the same weight on decisions: some of them reach a very low score, which can be judged undoubtedly as *Irrelevant*, while others, on the contrary, appear as *Crucial* at a first glance. This is the case, most of all, of the Variable *Competing Elites*, reaching a score of 0.83 (derived from the Degree of *Crucial* attributed to it in most of the decisions taken into account). It is necessary to remember that this Variable, in the present research, works as an indicator of the weight exercised by the radical Islamic movements on Uzbekistan's foreign policy. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the assumptions made in literature about the attitude of Uzbekistan's and, in general, of the post-Soviet power elites (and, especially, about the 'islamophobia' of President Karimov, as defined by Annette Bohr [229]) are confirmed by the data. The 'Islamic factor' is probably the first to be taken into account by the Uzbek leadership in nearly all kind of decisions.

A group of five other Variables reaches or even is over the threshold of the category *Crucial*: *Dominant Bilateral* (influence of Russia; 0.67), *Bilateral* (influence of other bilateral relations, mainly represented by the USA; 0.67), *Military Capability* (0.67); *Economic Capability* (0.63); and *Regional System* (0.60). Their balancing, in the complex, accurately reflexes the policy of equilibrium pursued by President Karimov (between the former colonizer and the new privileged partner, between economic and military interests, and between regional and extra-regional dynam-

[229] Bohr, *op. cit.*

ics). These data thus seem to confirm not only the qualitative results of this research, but also the general opinion of authoritative scholars, such as Boris Rumer (stating that Karimov's two main objectives are to defeat Islamic radicalism, and to establish himself as the principal leader of Central Asia, through an unprejudiced and fluctuating foreign policy[230]). All these Variables are obviously often taken into account in foreign policy decisions, because each one of them corresponds to some vital interest of the Republic: need of security, need of financial resources and of support to development, and relation with the old and the new privileged international partner.

Among the Variables standing negatively against the others, first of all we find *Political System* (0,3), proving the poverty of the Country's political life and activity: the Variable was irrelevant in nearly all decisions, and when it was taken into account, it was never because of a normal democratic activity, but because of other factors, such as dissidents in exile. This characteristic of Uzbekistan's political system, already previously noted in this research, is undoubtedly connected with a similar situation observed in civil society, despite the reported efforts made by President Karimov to foster it. The low score of the Variable *Interest groups* (0,43) reveals in fact the civil society's lack of influence on decisions, especially in the international field. Moreover, when the Variable is taken into account, it is mostly because of the pressure exercised on the Uzbek Government by the Uzbek minorities abroad, and rarely by western-style pressure groups.

The low score of *Other Regional* (0,37) is instead easily explained by the preference generally accorded in Central Asia to bilateral relations, as the privileged *locus* where to take important decisions. Thus, though some of Uzbekistan's efforts in the international field were directed toward the European Union (especially when the USA looked reluctant to engage themselves in a compromising partnership), the ASEAN Countries, and, at least in the early 1990s, toward the Middle East Region, the dialogue with these regions was mainly carried on with privileged national partners, such as Turkey, Israel, Germany, Korea and Japan. The same for International Organizations, generally with a rather negative relation with Uzbekistan, testified by the very low score of the Variable *Global System* (0.33).

[230] Rumer, 2000, *op. cit.*, p. 44

3. DIFFERENCES IN TIME

Table 2 shows the differences in the Variables Indexes of Relevance between the periods 1996-2001 and 1991-95 revealing several significant features, not pointed out by Table 1. In fact, while some Variables present an almost identical profile in both the five-year periods considered (for example *Regional, Other Regional,* and *Economic Capability*, all with changes under 0.1), others show significant shifts. This is the case of *Competing Elites*, which, although already the highest score-Variable in the first period (0.73), presents an increase of 0.2, reaching (as showed in Table 2) the enormous score of 0.93 in the years 1996-2001. This conclusive jump happened after the terrorist attacks and incursions of 1999-2000, when the fight against Islamic extremists became an absolute priority for the Uzbek Government.

In this context, that Variable has first of all to be seen as in connection with *Military Capability*, which gets the same maximum score in the post-February 1999 decisions, increasing its score between the two periods by 0.13. This connection first of all comes from the need to find an adequate protection from terrorists and incursors; not surprisingly, an increase of 0,27 is noted also in the Variable *Bilateral*, in the second period always representative of the US influence. Another probable part of this net of interconnections among Variables is the increase by 0.07 of *Economic Capability* (only lowered by the decision about the Shanghai-5, which barely involved economic factors). This is not a surprise, given that the USA are seen in Uzbekistan not only as providers of security and stability, but also of better financial conditions (the fact is also proved by the direct US investments in the Country, the new big mining contracts, and the improved attitudes of some international and financial organizations toward the Republic in Fall 2001 and after).

The data observed in the Variable *Bilateral* are particularly significant if compared to *Dominant Bilateral*, which loses 0.13 between the two periods considered. These combined shifts of the two Variables allow *Bilateral* to reach the same total value as *Dominant Bilateral* (exceeded by 0.2 only in the second period). While *Dominant Bilateral* already in the older decisions gets a high score (bringing it to the same Index of Relevance as *Competing Elites* in the years 1991-1995), *Bilateral* remains considerably lower, and gets its first high rates thanks not the USA (then not involved in the region), but to the Turkish influence (soon disappeared later). However, the second period just begins with Karimov's first official visit to the USA, and with the recognition (in

1997) to Uzbekistan of the title of 'privileged partner' of the USA. Since that moment (except for the Borders issue, which was merely regional) the Variable *Bilateral* was crucial in every decision, always representing mainly the US influence, while the Variable *Dominant Bilateral* underwent an almost symmetric flexion. Maybe it is too soon to talk about a change in Uzbekistan's dominant bilateral relation; however, if the (both military and economic) presence of the USA in the Country will continue steadily also after the end of the Afghan emergence (as some indicators induce us to suspect), the geopolitical situation of the region will never be the same it was before.

Finally, the last interesting datum in Table 2 is the enormous decrease in *Interest Groups'* Index, more than halved (from 0.6 to 0.27). This is a sure evidence of the deterioration of civil liberties in the Country after Karimov's consolidation of power: while in the early times of independence the pressure of society was conclusive, for example, for the creation of an independent National Army, and *Relevant* in some other cases, in the decisions of years 1996-2001 the Variable is not completely *Irrelevant* only thanks to the role played by the ethnic Uzbeks of Afghanistan in the post-war situation.

4. THE ISSUE AREAS

As a final contribution to the comprehension of the dynamics in Uzbekistan's foreign policy decision-making, it is also worthwhile to examine the Index of Relevance of the Variables in the four different Issue Areas (although, because of the very limited number of cases taken into account for each area, the data in Table 3 are far less conclusive).

In the *Military-Security* Issue Area – which alone accounts for 1/3 of the total decisions – it is possible to see again the close connection between the Variables *Military Capability*, and *Competing Elites*, respectively with a score of 1 and 0.9. *Bilateral* and *Dominant Bilateral* both just reach the threshold of the 'crucial zone' exactly with 0.6, while an even higher score is got by *Regional*, which testifies the preeminent Central Asian dimension of Uzbekistan's perception of security. The other Variables, more or less, follow the same patterns already observed in the main Tables.

The *Cultural-Status* Issue Area is the less represented, with only two decisions; however, it allows to verify the importance of the Variable

Competing Elites, crucial in both of them. An unusually low score is reached instead by *Economic* and *Military Capability*, while the other Variables are on their usual average.

On the other hand, the *Economic-Monetary* Issue Area presents a big surprise, with *Competing Elites* just above the threshold of Relevance (0.47). Although this peculiarity could be partially explained by the time of the three decisions (all before 1999), these data prove that the Variable *Competing Elites*, although strictly connected to most issues, is not *Crucial* in economics. In other words, fighting Islamic radicalism has not been a business for Uzbekistan and its leadership, at least until the events of Fall 2001 – which significantly altered this state of affairs. The best result obtained by *Bilateral* and *Dominant Bilateral* (both with the maximum score 1) shows, on the contrary, the deep connection of the economic matters with the international political orientation of the Country: all the decisions taken into account proved in fact to be anti-Russia or pro-USA stances taken by the Uzbek leadership. This testifies a use of economy, at least in the international field, which is not always proper, and probably not always positive for the Country (in the research, for example, we have seen the reluctance of the Uzbek leadership to do business with some Islamic Countries, because of fears of destabilization). A good result is got here by the Variable *Global*, thanks to the nuclear non-proliferation issue involved in the 'Iranian Affair' of 1995, while *Military Capability* never proves relevant in economic matters.

The Issue Area *Political-Diplomatic* restores the leading role of the Variable *Competing Elites*, reaching the maximum score 1, together with *Economic* and *Military Capability*, and proves their importance in the political dimension of Uzbekistan's international relations. An high Index (0.73) of the Variable *Regional* testifies again the prevailing Central Asian dimension of the Country's foreign policy (except in cultural and economic matters). This trend is confirmed also by the modest result of the Variables relating to the two extra-regional Great Powers (*Dominant Bilateral* and *Bilateral*), both at 0.47. It is also necessary to point out the role of the international organizations which, at least in this Issue Area, were able to get some influence on Uzbekistan's stance both in the conclusion of the Tajik Civil War and of the Afghan War of 2001. These were also the periods in which the international agencies were more involved in the Central Asian affairs: maybe their low general score could also depend on a lower involvement in other periods. Similar observations can be made about *Interest Groups*.

5. SOME BASIC POINTS FOR THE FUTURE

The events of Fall 2001, with the new factors brought into the Central Asian situation, have vanified every possibility to build a pattern trying to explain the external behavior of the Countries of the region (especially one that can allow us to foresee the future with a sufficient degree of certainty). However, this research has outlined some basic features that could represent a useful starting point for future researches, when the set up of powers in Central Asia will be clarified.

The first certain result emerging from this work is that Islamic radicalism, perceived as the main threat to the existing order, represents the main influence on Uzbekistan's foreign policy decisions. Even after the defeat of the *Taliban*, paradoxically, the opportunities for the situation to change have probably decreased: Karimov's 'Islamophobia' and anti-terrorism stance have in fact become the main paradigm also of the superpower which has become Uzbekistan's closest ally, the USA.

In the view of the Uzbek leadership, this problem is closely associated with that of the Country's need for 'stability and security' (in Karimov's words). First of all, therefore, as long as the Islamic factor will be seen as a threat, a major role in decisions will also be played by military and security factors; moreover, there will be little probability of an improvement in the degree of democratic development of the Republic, and of the emergence of an alternative leadership other than the Islamic militants.

Thanks to the 2001 events, Uzbekistan has finally found the powerful ally that President Karimov had been courting for years. Now the Country, in the opinion of authoritative scholars,[231] is the focal point of the US penetration in the post-War Central Asia. As this research demonstrated, the Afghan War was the turning point of a process that could make the relation with the USA Uzbekistan's new Dominant Bilateral Relation. The main doubt in this situation is about the role of Russia: while a cooperative option of strategic partnership might come true after Russia's *rapprochement* to NATO, there is also the possibility that Uzbekistan could become in the future not only a fault zone between West and Islam, but also between the US and Russian spheres of influence.

The main *locus* of Uzbekistan's foreign policy for most of the ten years examined was the region of Central Asia, much more than the Global

[231] Ahmed Rashid interviewed at the CNN, 21 March 2002

System, and also the extra-regional field. It is also without doubt that the leadership of the Country, when possible, tried to get influence on the neighbors (for instance, through military intervention in Tajikistan, or by means of economic pressure on the Countries of the area). The question mark is whether these hegemonic temptations of the Country could become more real in the new regional geopolitical situation, making Uzbekistan a danger for the weaker neighbors.

TABLES

TABLE 1 - Index of Relevance of Variables

	G	R	OR	DB	B	MC	EC	PS	IG	CE
Army (July 1992 MS)	1	3	3	3	1	5	1	1	5	3
Intervention in Tajikistan (Dec. 1992 MS)	1	5	1	1	1	5	5	3	3	5
Alphabet (Sept. 1993 CS)	1	3	5	5	3	1	1	1	3	5
Currency (July 1994 EM)	1	1	1	5	5	1	5	1	1	1
Peace in Tajikistan (Spring 1995 PD)	3	5	1	3	1	5	5	1	3	5
Embargo Iran (May 1995 EM)	5	1	1	5	5	1	1	1	3	3
Withdrawal Students (August 1997 CS)	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	5	1	5
Pipeline (Nov. 1998 EM)	1	5	3	5	5	1	3	1	1	3
Marking the Borders (August 1999 PD)	1	5	1	3	1	5	5	1	1	5
Adhesion to Shanghai-5 (Apr. 2001 MS)	1	3	1	5	5	5	1	1	1	5
Hosting US Troops (Oct. 2001 MS)	1	3	3	3	5	5	5	1	1	5
Friendship Bridge (Dec. 2001 PD)	3	1	1	1	5	5	5	1	3	5
TOTAL	20	36	22	40	40	40	38	18	26	50
DEGREE OF RELEVANCE	0,33	0,60	0,37	0,67	0,67	0,67	0,63	0,30	0,43	0,83

Table 2 - Relevance in Different Periods of Time

	G	R	OR	DB	B	MC	EC	PS	IG	CE
Army (July 1992 MS)	1	3	3	3	1	5	1	1	5	3
Tajikistan 1 (Dec. 1992 MS)	1	5	1	1	1	5	5	3	3	5
Alphabet (Sept. 1993 CS)	1	3	5	5	3	1	1	1	3	5
Currency (July 1994 EM)	1	1	1	5	5	1	5	1	1	1
Tajikistan 2 (Spring 1995 PD)	3	5	1	3	1	5	5	1	3	5
Embargo Iran (May 1995 EM)	5	1	1	5	5	1	1	1	3	3
Total Period 1991-1995	12	18	12	22	16	18	18	8	18	22
Index of Relevance 1991-1995	0,40	0,60	0,40	0,73	0,53	0,60	0,60	0,27	0,60	0,73
Students (Aug. 1997 CS)	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	5	1	5
Pipeline (Nov. 1998 EM)	1	5	3	5	5	1	3	1	1	3
Borders (August 1999 PD)	1	5	1	3	1	5	5	1	1	5
Shanghai-5 (Apr. 2001 MS)	1	3	1	5	5	5	1	1	1	5
US Troops (Oct. 2001 MS)	1	3	3	3	5	5	5	1	1	5
Bridge (Dec. 2001 PD)	3	1	1	1	5	5	5	1	3	5
Total Period 1996-2001	8	18	10	18	24	22	20	10	8	28
Index of Relevance 1996-2001	0,27	0,60	0,33	0,60	0,80	0,73	0,67	0,33	0,27	0,93
Diff. Period 2-Period 1	-0,13	0,00	-0,07	-0,13	0,27	0,13	0,07	0,07	-0,33	0,20

TABLE 3 - Variables Relevance in Different Issue Areas

	G	R	OR	DB	B	MC	EC	PS	IG	CE
MILITARY-SECURITY										
Army (July 1992 MS)	1	3	3	3	1	5	1	1	5	3
Tajikistan 1 (Dec. 1992 MS)	1	5	1	1	1	5	5	3	3	5
Shanghai-5 (Apr. 2001 MS)	1	3	1	5	5	5	1	1	1	5
US Troops (Oct. 2001 MS)	1	3	3	3	5	5	5	1	1	5
Total Issue Area	4	14	8	12	12	20	12	6	10	18
Index of relevance	0,20	0,70	0,40	0,60	0,60	1,00	0,60	0,30	0,50	0,90
CULTURAL-STATUS										
Alphabet (Sept. 1993 CS)	1	3	5	5	3	1	1	1	3	5
Students (August 1997 CS)	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	5	1	5
Total Issue Area	2	4	6	6	6	2	2	6	4	10
Index of relevance	0,20	0,40	0,60	0,60	0,60	0,20	0,20	0,60	0,40	1,00
ECONOMIC-MONETARY										
Currency (July 1994 EM)	1	1	1	5	5	1	5	1	1	1
Embargo Iran (May 1995 EM)	5	1	1	5	5	1	1	1	3	3
Pipeline (Nov. 1998 EM)	1	5	3	5	5	1	3	1	1	3
Total Issue Area	7	7	5	15	15	3	9	3	5	7
Index of relevance	0,47	0,47	0,33	1,00	1,00	0,20	0,60	0,20	0,33	0,47
POLITICAL-DIPLOMATIC										
Tajikistan 2 (Spring 1995 PD)	3	5	1	3	1	5	5	1	3	5
Borders (August 1999 PD)	1	5	1	3	1	5	5	1	1	**5**
Bridge (Dec. 2001 PD)	3	1	1	1	5	5	5	1	3	5
Total Issue Area	7	11	3	7	7	15	15	3	7	15
Index of relevance	0,47	0,73	0,20	0,47	0,47	1,00	1,00	0,20	0,47	1,00

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