

TRANSFORMATION IN THE POLITICAL REGIME IN UZBEKISTAN: STAGES AND OUTCOME

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Researchers are showing a great interest in the political changes occurring in the post-Soviet countries. This is because these changes have led to the creation of absolutely different political regimes which at times are even totally opposite to each other in their nature and content. This has not only given experts much food for thought regarding the factors prompting the formation of these regimes, the reasons for their differences and the possibilities of further changes, but has also given rise to the need for reconsidering the traditional trans-istological approaches which view political

transformation as the democratization and modernization of the political system of a particular state.

The most important presuppositions from which our analysis of the current situation proceeds are based, first, on the hypothesis that the transformation process and the existence of so-called "paths of dependence" are historically determined; and, second, on the hypothesis that the regime which formed in Uzbekistan differs in several key characteristics from Soviet power, being more akin to the pre-Soviet regimes of the Central Asian khanates.

Was There an Alternative?

It should be noted that Uzbekistan extricated itself from its indeterminate position by means of the "winner takes all" scenario, and a noncompetitive regime was set up in the country which relies not only on formal, but also on informal institutions (with the prevalence of the latter), while differing from Turkmenbashi's power and from the situation, for example, in neighboring Tajikistan. The reason for this should be sought both in structural factors and in the nature of the special features of the transfer itself.

The most important structural factors include state- and nation-forming (the presence or absence of the experience of statehood in the pre-Soviet period, political tradition, degree of national consolidation), socioeconomic (the predominating sector in the economy, standard of living of the population), and cultural-value (the special features of culture, including religious traditions).

The main state- and nation-forming factor is the incomplete formation of a single Uzbek nation, which is shown by the presence of clans (sub-ethnic communities). The experience of statehood acquired in the pre-Soviet period was also of great significance, since it potentially hindered the establishment of a severe monocentric regime.

Uzbek society is traditionally agrarian, and during Soviet power the percentage of agriculture in the population's occupation, in the production of the GDP, and in the national income of this republic

was extremely high, which was combined with the low standard of living of its population. The dynamics of urbanization of the titular nation in Uzbekistan were a notch lower than in the neighboring republics of then Central Asia.

The role of the Islamic factor should also be emphasized. Uzbeks were always more Islamized than the region's other indigenous peoples. What is more, this society was very strong in traditionalism, which implies complete negation of anything new brought into the customary way of life from the outside. In so doing, the younger generation only receives information which helps to preserve the traditional way of life, whereby all changes in society occur only by means of traditional methods.¹

In this way, structural factors hindered (at least, they did not favor) the establishment of a polycentric regime in the republic. Specific action on the part of political actors or a grassroots revolution was needed to overturn the political heritage. Researchers believe that political dissidents, members of the cultural underground movements related in one way or another to the official culture, and the supporters of a soft line in the communist elite could also act as forces potentially capable of accelerating a weakening in the regime and its subsequent collapse. There is no need to talk about the possibilities of a developed dissident and human rights movement in Soviet Uzbekistan (they simply did not exist). And for several reasons, the special features of the late-Soviet political elite of Uzbekistan made it impossible for a split to occur among the leaders of the republic's Communist Party into advocates of a soft and hard line regarding the opposition, and consequently any form of pact agreements between the authorities and the opposition. Nevertheless, in the republic's cultural sphere, there were already certain forms of political protest. For example, as early as the 1970s, environmental, cultural, sociopolitical, and then (after the mid-1980s) strictly political problems began to be discussed in the Uzbekistan Writers' Union (after Muhammad Salih joined), which was a strictly formal organization. Admittedly, articles on these topics mainly appeared on the pages of Moscow publications. But it was thanks to the Writers' Union, which united the liberal creative elite of the republic, that the Uzbekistan opposition movement came into being, which largely promoted a weakening in the late-Soviet regime. What is more, it began relying on mass support, the basis of which was formed by the population of the republic's large cities, primarily their "Europeanized" city intelligentsia, as well as students from the rural regions.

In this way, we can say that when the Soviet regime collapsed and the period of indeterminateness set in, there were alternative political forces enjoying mass support which were potentially capable of changing the political regime and eliminating the historical (or political) heritage and political tradition (the Birluk and Erk movements which arose at the end of the 1980s). At that time and at the beginning of the 1990s, under slogans of national revival, democratization, and independence of the republic, opposition actors came together in multi-thousand meetings in the country's major cities.

But the actions of the main actor were mainly aimed at removing all the other political activists and at establishing a monocentric regime, which was justified as a necessary condition of stability in the region. It can be presumed that under other conditions, primarily if the Center had not interfered in the political processes in the republic (at the end of the 1980s), or if the Uzbekistan Communist Party had a different leader, events would have developed entirely differently. If the authorities had used softer strategies, both the arrival of members of the national-democratic opposition at the nation's helm, as well as the seizure of power by leaders of radical Islamic groups and even a split in the country might have occurred. On the other hand, the very actions of the main actor were to a certain extent caused by the structural framework of the transformation, which dictated his need to establish

¹ See: S.P. Poliakov, *Traditsionalizm v sovremennoy sredneaziatskom obshchestve*, Moscow, 1989.

a monocentric regime. As a result, we can talk about the mutual influence and mutual generation of structural and procedural factors.

In contrast to his predecessors, I. Usmankhojaev and R. Nishanov, First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee Islam Karimov, who came to power in 1989 when oppositional political parties arose and began their dynamic activity, used a flexible strategy. It evolved from a dialog with several members of the opposition, a soft-peddled discussion of meeting passions, including attempts to form a legal semi-opposition, to gradual removal from the political scene of all actors who were in one way or another capable of changing the political regime, by arresting the leaders and forcibly depriving them of resources. Karimov was right in thinking that the only true strategy conducive to retaining power in face of the weakening in the U.S.S.R. leadership was to borrow the main slogans of his political opponents and engage in a more radical struggle for their implementation. Revival of the national culture and language, rehabilitation of major historical figures of the pre-Soviet period “slandered” by Moscow, the republic’s sovereignty, and democratization of the political system were all goals Karimov essentially began to declare straightaway from the highest rostrums. For this he chose an essentially no-lose scenario for his actions—he became an even greater nationalist and democrat (at least outwardly, at the level of slogans and laws) and advocate of Islam than the most radical oppositionists, and in this way deprived them of mass support. Since the current situation helped to resolve these tasks, in particular, Karimov had the necessary resources at his disposal (a Supreme Council subordinate to him, no internal split in the elite, and weakness of the Center), he was able to successfully implement this strategy. For example, the republic’s authorities approved numerous laws affecting the development of language, culture, and religion, adopted the Declaration on State Sovereignty, and organized a campaign for restoring the good name of Sharaf Rashidov (first secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee in 1959-1983) as a “fighter against the Center’s dictatorship in the republic.” Karimov began talking about unofficial movements as an “objective and legitimate” process within the framework of democratic development as an “indication of the politicization of our society.” He admitted that the “party bodies had made many mistakes regarding the informal movements” and stated that now the party had advanced from “complete non-recognition to a constructive dialog” with them.² Along with this, Karimov hastened to legitimize himself as the republic’s president, which emphasized that he was not controlled by the C.P.S.U. Central Committee Politburo.

His next step was an attempt to divide the opposition into relatively “loyal” and “disloyal” elements. The thing was that since the opposition had less room for maneuver through formal institutions, a final split, which began as early as the end of 1989, occurred in the Birlík movement. Its more moderate members did not want to entirely lose the possibility of participating legally in political life and retained the hope of coming to power by legal means. So it agreed to tactical cooperation with the republic’s leadership and rejected meeting tactics. This part of Birlík also declared (on 20 February, 1990) the creation of a new public organization called Erk (Freedom), which was headed by Muhammad Salih. (The split in Birlík was also explained by the longtime hostile personal relations between Abdurahim Pulatov and Muhammad Salih.) The main differences in the new structure were that it instantly advanced the slogan of Uzbekistan’s immediate and full independence,³ and also severely criticized Birlík for organizing mass demonstrations. It is obvious that both the first and second provisions were also shared by the current authorities. At that time, the idea of independence interested Karimov more than democracy, and he was also encouraged by the opposition’s rejection of meet-

² Speech by I.A. Karimov at the 18th Plenum of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee on 24 November, 1989, *Pravda Vostoka*, 1 December, 1989.

³ On the contrary, Birlík’s main slogan was “first democracy, then independence.” What is more, independence was viewed by its leaders as a possible threat to the democratic trends coming primarily from Moscow.

ings, as well as its desire to cooperate with the authorities. In this respect, it is not surprising that in exchange for Muhammad Salih's complete loyalty, Karimov wanted to integrate Erk as a legal semi-opposition into the republic's political system. The party was officially registered in September 1991, and in December Muhammad Salih was even allowed to participate in the first presidential election as a candidate for the head of state. To a certain extent, we can say that the authorities had a limited amount of control over this part of the opposition, while the Birlik movement remained entirely beyond their control and was not allowed to register. But Karimov, who soon obtained new legitimacy by means of general elections and strengthened his power, no longer needed even a semi-opposition, and he set about systematic removal of all the actors he did not control from the political process—first by adopting restrictive laws, and then by means of actual elimination of the opposition parties and their leaders. January 1992 can be considered the milestone marking the main actor's new strategy, when the student demonstration was fired at, and Muhammad Salih, Abdurahim Pulatov, Safar Bekjan, and other opposition leaders were forced to emigrate since they were being criminally persecuted by the law.

Karimov's flexibility also comprised of the fact that, until August 1991, he had never been in favor of the republic's full independence, of its withdrawal from the U.S.S.R., or of rejecting Marxist-Leninist ideology. Nor did he unequivocally criticize the coup of 19 August, 2001. The position occupied by the president on this issue can be called wait-and-see: on the first and second day of the coup, when its outcome was still not clear, Karimov talked about the need to strengthen order and discipline, noting that "perestroika had entered an impasse."⁴ But right after the coup organizers were defeated, he hastened to declare independence and disbandment of all the Communist Party structures, and then did everything to present himself in the eyes of the people as a "fighter for [Uzbekistan's] national independence" and against the dictatorship of the Union Center, of which he had supposedly been in favor almost since the very first day he came to power in 1989. It is also obvious that the main demand put forward by the opposition, the republic's independence, was carried out without its efforts, deprived of its goal, and gave Karimov the opportunity to state that independence was achieved precisely thanks to him (and only him).

What is more, the main actor used a variety of methods for eliminating his political opponents. Among them we can also single out his striving to achieve the loyalty of part of the opposition by means of its legal incorporation into the political system, and formal-legal restrictions to participation in this system of certain forces and their leaders opposed to him (the issuing of restrictive laws), and the criminal persecution of political figures, as well as open coercion (attempts at physical reprisal).

This strategy allowed Karimov to retain the reins of power in his hands and to ensure relative stability in the republic. It should be emphasized that the main actor also found extricating the country from its indeterminate position by means of the "winner takes all" scenario using force strategies the most acceptable technique, since this extrication was self-evident. The unresolved territorial and ethnic conflicts, as well as the regions (Ferghana and Namangan) which might "explode" in response to any provocation "hinted" to Karimov the need for a return to authoritarianism and for elimination of all the opposition movements. To this should be added the possibility of mobilizing the masses under slogans of building an Islamic state, the example of neighboring Tajikistan, where the weakness of the authorities had given rise to a civil war, and the position of a "front-line state" (of course, taking into account the situation in Afghanistan).

⁴ "Obrashchenie Prezidenta Uzbekskoi SSR, Pervogo sekretaria Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kompartii Uzbekistana I.A. Karimova k naseleniiu respubliki" (Address of President of the Uzbek SSR, First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee I.A. Karimov to the republic's population), *Pravda Vostoka*, 21 August, 1991.

During the transformation, the opposition Islamic movements (particularly Adolat) also posed a serious threat to the main actor. The latter tried to “privatize” the functions of the internal affairs structures in investigating crimes and intercepting law violations, and also put forward the demand to create an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. Karimov saw the danger coming from these movements in time, which prompted him to take tougher measures in his fight with precisely the Islamic opposition.

On the whole, all the factors (structural and procedural) gave rise to the special features of the transformation process and extrication from indeterminacy by means of the “winner takes all” scenario. In this respect, it can be maintained that the procedural factors are a kind of extension of the structural, giving “context” to the changes and keeping them within the necessary frameworks. For example, the insufficient autonomy of the actors in the previous regime and special features of Uzbek society, which at its foundation remains non-modernized (traditional), helped to successfully apply force strategies and the resources necessary for this during the transfer, as well as to establish a mono-centric regime which relied both on informal and formal institutions.

The Special Features and Nature of the New Authorities

In our opinion, as early as the mid-1990s, clear signs of consolidation of the new regime appeared. The following facts are evidence of this: by this time, all opposition parties were made illegal; on the basis of restrictive laws on elections, a new representative body of power was formed, the Oliy Majlis (Supreme Council), in which there was not one member of the opposition parties and movements. The president extended his powers without an election (by means of a national referendum), which would have been impossible to do in an unconsolidated regime. The same regime created a pseudo-party and public organization system, which became part of its fulcrum.

Taking a look at access to supremacy, we will note that it is restricted primarily in a formal way: the law on election of the country’s president prohibits previously convicted citizens and citizens persecuted under criminal cases from participating in this process. What is more, only parties and regional soviets (councils) of people’s deputies under the president’s control have the right to nominate candidates. The possibility of candidates being directly nominated by the voters is not envisaged. In so doing, the regime essentially limited potential access to power, since an alternative candidate to Karimov could not be nominated by pseudo-parties and particularly not by regional soviets, which were headed by khokims, the president’s representatives in the regions. It is understandable that actual restrictions are no longer needed during the direct election process. Even A. Jalalov, as the only alternative candidate for head of state at the 2000 election, himself, on his own admission, voted for Karimov.⁵

The regime’s claims for supremacy can be characterized as extensive and encompass leadership throughout the entire public sphere. It can be claimed that the main actor sees his task as all-encompassing governance over the whole of public life (including Islamic organizations, political parties,

⁵ See: L.I. Levitin, *Uzbekistan na istoricheskom povorote: Kriticheskie zametki storonnika Prezidenta Islama Karimova*, Moscow, 2001, p. 24.

public movements, and the mass media), and even over public consciousness, both political and religious. In other words, the ruling elite is firmly convinced that social processes not only can, but must be controlled.

The regime could potentially incorporate the semi-opposition into the political system (providing it is completely loyal), which Karimov has stated on more than one occasion. But the Erk and Birlik structures, which still function in the republic, have not been cooperating with the regime and so not registered. And the opposition leaders who “repented” and cooperated with the president lost their independent positions, although they are engaged formally (within the framework of government structures) in human rights protection and the development of democracy in the country. As for the “nomenklatura” branch of the opposition, it is not posing any threats to the regime today: it is either partially integrated into the political system or has so few resources that it cannot even openly say it exists.

The new political parties and public organizations have become support institutions of the new regime. A pseudo-party system has formed, under which the parties are not independent political actors and do not act as organizations independent of the bodies of power, but only serve as an additional support for the consolidated regime. It is interesting that each of these parties promulgates some area of its activity which coincides with the president’s declarations (social justice, national revival, national ideology, strengthening statehood, developing the economy). For example, the Vatan Tarakkieti (Progress of the Homeland) party declared that it represents the interests of businessmen and private entrepreneurs and is in favor of “creating an economic and moral foundation for Uzbekistan’s independence and supporting the development of democracy and market relations.”⁶ The main slogan of the social-democratic party Adolat is maintaining social justice. The founders of the democratic party Millii tiklanish (National Revival) were creative workers, members of the humanitarian intelligentsia, and scientists, and it declared its goal as “strengthening statehood and developing culture.” The national-democratic party Fidokorlar (the Devoted Ones) stated that its main assignment was “to form an appropriate attitude among young people toward the national ideology and national idea, as well as a conscious perception of the idea of national independence.”

In this way, each party outwardly strives to claim its “expression of the interests” of a certain social stratum (the intelligentsia, private businessmen, farmers, young people), and the “main” one, the National-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, talks about all the areas at once and claims to represent all the people. It is understood that in so doing not one of them is striving to fight for participation in power, which makes it impossible to consider it a party as such in the generally accepted sense of this word.

The reasons for forming such a system consist in the following.

- First, the regime is experiencing a need to create a wide social base and mechanisms for guiding voters’ interests in the direction it wants, to attract various strata of society to its side, and to create additional channels for mobilizing its own social base.
- Second, this is part of the general course of Karimov’s fight against the clans and clannishness in politics. In other words, by forming parties, the president is trying to clamp down on the influence of the clan leaders and former party bigwigs, in so doing attempting to accelerate consolidation of the Uzbek nation and make the head of state the be-all-and-end-all of this process.

⁶ Predvybornaia programma partii “Vatan Tarakkieti”, in: *Uzbekistan: Etnopoliticheskaia panorama: ocherki, dokumenty, materialy*, in 2 vols., Vol. 2: *Natsionalno-kulturnye obshchestva*, Moscow, 1995.

- Third, Uzbekistan must create a new image, that is, the image of a country which is adhering to the fundamental principles of pluralistic democracy, respect for human rights, and so on.

The regime is also building a public organization system with similar goals. It is called on to encompass all social strata by means of corresponding unions formed in keeping with professional, age, and gender characteristics, and frequently also according to the territorial-production principle.

Freedom of speech, although it is guaranteed by the Constitution and special laws, is extremely limited, whereby both formally and informally. The formal limitations include the possibility of closing any form of mass media by a registered body (without a court decision), whereas censorship is considered an informal institution, despite the fact that it acts within the framework of and under the cover of a formal structure—the Department for the Protection of State Secrets of the State Printing Committee.

The structure of supremacy is monistic, which can also be seen during an analysis of even the formal institutions. For example, the Constitution grants the president the right to disband the parliament “if insurmountable discrepancies arise among its members,”⁷ that is, essentially at any time, and does not envisage impeachment of the head of state. Each session of the representative branch of power continues for two days, during which it can adopt up to 15 laws. In this way, the entirely subordinate role of the Oliy Majlis (legislative body) under the new regime can be considered formally enforced.

Another very important fulcrum of the regime is rotation of the regional leaders (khokims) by the president, who carries this out regularly, every two or three years, whereby frequently khokims are dismissed from their post for “serious shortcomings in their work” and for engaging in “nepotism, cronyism, and parochialism.” The motives for constant rotation are understandable: it is not only a way to direct mass discontent into the channel the head of state needs, it is also an instrument for preventing any regional leader, clannishness, or community spirit from becoming too strong. In so doing, Karimov is trying to eradicate traditional community ties and relations.

One of the most important characteristics of any regime has to do with the ways and types of its legitimization. If the republic’s current regime is evaluated from this viewpoint, structural factors (the accelerated increase in the authority of Islamism in society and the experience of statehood in the past) have also given rise to the possibility of its two-component (national-Islamic) legitimization. By way of the national component, the regime is addressing well-known historical personalities. For example, the main national hero, freedom-fighter, and defender of human rights in Uzbekistan is Amir Timur (1336-1405), one of the most brutal rulers of the Middle Ages. Another honorable hero is Sharaf Rashidov, who is now presented as a “fighter against the expansion of the union Center in the republic during the years of Soviet power,” while his enemies from Moscow, on the contrary, are thought of as “stranglers of the Uzbek people.” Like other CIS states, Uzbekistan is trying to create a new conception of national history. The republic’s new history has three very important ideological precepts: depiction of the more than seventy-year Soviet period of Uzbekistan’s life as a “period of colonialism” and its full-fledged criticism; rampant praise of the sovereignty gained in 1991, which was achieved as the result of the Uzbeks’ steadfast struggle for independence and not due to the collapse of the U.S.S.R.; and searching in the distant past for new heroes to make them symbols and the pride of independent Uzbekistan. From the viewpoint of this conception, the Russians are presented as conquerors and colonizers who brought the Uzbek people many misfortunes, and Russia itself (imperial, Soviet, or present-day) is seen as unequivocally negative.⁸

⁷ “Konstitutsiia Respubliki Uzbekistana,” in: *Konstitutsii gosudarstv-uchastnikov SNG*, Moscow, 2001.

⁸ See: Zh. Rakhimov, *Istoriia Uzbekistana*, Tashkent, 2001.

What is more, the president found certain ways to justify the new autocratic regime, without denying in so doing that Uzbekistan is still far from democracy. In particular, he believes that if society is democratized, the “mentality of our people and the uniqueness of national thought [will have to be] taken into consideration.”⁹ Another time, he put forward a different justification of authoritarianism, the difficult situation in the region: “I admit that there may be signs of authoritarianism in my actions... But I can give only one explanation for this: at certain times in history ... a strong executive power is still required. This is necessary in order to prevent bloodshed and conflict... If you like, it is necessary to move toward that very same democracy.”¹⁰

On the whole, it is still early to talk about the totalitarian nature of state ideology. The thing is that it does not contain (in contrast to totalitarian ideologies) a socioeconomic and/or sociopolitical integrity and internally consistent doctrine as such, which would unequivocally explain all the social processes and give forecasts for the future, like Marxism, for example.

Another component of the regime’s legitimacy can be called Islam and all that is related to it. The main goal of ascertaining legitimacy through Islam is to show that only power can be a representative and bearer of “true” Islam, refusing in so doing oppositional Islamic movements the right to represent it and taking this function away from them. For example, the most important Islamic holidays gained state recognition, and the president carried out a hajj to Mecca and made an oath on the Koran. On the other hand, the president interprets all manifestations of Islam which are alternatives to official power as deliberately oppositional and so potentially dangerous to the regime.

In other words, the conclusion can be drawn that the regime’s tough fight against the national-democratic and Islamic opposition is also explained, in addition to everything else, by the current authorities’ struggle for legitimacy, which also consists of these two components. The regime simply cannot allow the forces it does not control to take away part of its legitimacy by claiming monopoly representation of both nationalism and Islam.

After the analysis we conducted, we are bound to look for an adequate definition of the regime that has formed in Uzbekistan and identify how it differs from the former (Soviet) authorities. It can be said that as a result of the transformation, a new political regime has indeed evolved, that is, there has been a transfer from one monocentric political regime to another monocentric political regime.

- First, the new regime is also making eager use of formal institutions as part of its fulcrum, which distinguishes it from the former authorities, under which these institutions did not play any role at all. We will present just a few examples. The powers of the state’s leader, the subjugated role of the parliament, the procedure for appointing regional heads, that is, the formal status of these institutions, in contrast to Soviet times, essentially corresponds to their actual significance. In other words, the gap between the formal and informal institutions, which was characteristic of the political systems in all the Soviet republics, has significantly narrowed in the present-day political system of Uzbekistan. In this respect, we can talk about monocentrism not only at the level of informal, but also at the level of formal institutions. In other words, the main actor is relying both on informal and formal institutions which restrict political participation.
- Second, the type of legitimization of the regime has changed. Whereas earlier legitimization was based on a total world outlook ideology, now the regime relies primarily on

⁹ I.A. Karimov, *Uzbekistan na poroge XXI v.: ugrozy bezopasnosti, usloviia i garantii progressa*, Moscow, 1997, p. 26.

¹⁰ I.A. Karimov, *Stabil’nost i reformy: statii i vystupleniia*, Moscow, 1996, p. 38.

basic mentalities in the form of the country's "higher spiritual values"—nationalism and Islam.

- Third, the new regime (in contrast to the previous) is not spreading its claims for dominating the private sphere of civil life, although it is making attempts to control traditional informal institutions (for example, the mahallias). Thus, it is obvious that the regime considers the main condition of stability to be its full control over the political parties and public organizations created which claim to represent the interests of all the strata of the population before the authorities.
- Fourth, the new regime created institutions of access to supremacy which were not known to the Soviet regime, under which access to supreme power was absolutely closed. But the special features of these new institutions consist of the fact that they severely restrict access to supremacy, mainly on a formal basis.
- Finally, it is obvious that the new regime will use other mechanisms for transferring power, and not those which were used in Soviet times. Most likely this mechanism will consist of appointing a successor to the president from among the people close to him (from his clan), who will merely be officially legitimized after this by means of general elections. This mechanism is more reminiscent not of the Soviet, but of the pre-Soviet practice of power transfer.

Based on the system proposed by certain researchers,¹¹ the regime should be called "authoritarian," although it differs from classical (ideal) authoritarian regimes. It is presumed that it will be more legitimate to define the regime that has developed in Uzbekistan as neo-patrimonial, that is, based on the personal supremacy of the ruling leader or clan. M. Weber maintained that neo-patrimonialism "tends to appear every time, when traditional authority develops the administration and military force as purely personal leader's instruments... However, non-traditional element doesn't rationalize as impersonal and consists only in extreme development of use of authority at leader's discretion. This is what distinguishes it from any form of rational authority."¹² In other words, all the formal political institutions which arose in Uzbekistan after the collapse of the Soviet regime were not, as Weber put it, rationalized (in the sense of impersonality), but became instruments of dominance at the leader's discretion. In this respect, we will note that the regime is giving greater attention to the formation and development of formal institutions. But they are not being used to curb the power of the main actor, but, on the contrary, are helping to expand the resource base of his power claims, and ensuring a more flexible policy, legitimization, and other urgent needs of the current head of state.

It is obvious that in present-day Uzbekistan a neo-patrimonial Sultanic political regime has developed which has adjusted the outwardly contemporary political institutions to political tradition by making them instruments and a formal fulcrum of the personal supremacy of the head of state. In terms of its main characteristics, this regime is close to the traditional pre-Soviet regimes of the Central Asian khanates (although this statement of course requires more serious arguments based on a detailed analysis of the political practices of these khanates). It is for this reason that the conclusion can be drawn that the transformation of the political regime has led not to modernization of the republic's political system, as could be expected, but to its de-modernization and archaism.

¹¹ See: W. Merkel, A. Croissant, *Formal Institutions and Informal Rules of Defective Democracies*, Central European Political Science Review, 2000.

¹² Quoted from: J. Linz, A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore; London, 1996, p. 51.

C o n c l u s i o n :
**the Problem of
Power Transfer and
the Threat of Disintegration of
the Regime**

When talking about the problems of power transfer and the potential possibilities of regime transformation, it should be noted that “inheritance” of power by the president’s relatives is essentially excluded, since they have never manifested political activity and they are not considered possible successors (in contrast, for example, to the children of the heads of Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan). But the recently adopted Law on Guarantees of the Activity of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, appointment of Shavkat Mirziyev to the post of prime minister, as well as transfer to head of the government of several presidential powers are leading to the thought that Karimov is preparing to retire. He will probably choose a person more devoted to him (from his clan) as his successor, whereby it might possibly be this same Mirziyev (who comes from Samarkand).

As for potential threats to the regime, today the more or less significant ones can be singled out, in particular, aggravation of the fight for leadership of the country within the political elite in the event of illness or death of the leader and the absence of developed mechanisms for transferring power. Until recently, it was hardly worth classifying outside influence as one of the factors causing a weakening in the regime, since the U.S. was interested in stability in Uzbekistan, which is guaranteed by Karimov. By rendering him military assistance and economic support, Washington one way or another helped to strengthen the existing political regime. But the events of 2005 in Andijan showed the limits of this support. Clearly annoyed by the sharp criticism from the U.S. (and West as a whole) of the methods for putting down the Andijan uprising, Karimov made a decision to eliminate the American military bases in Uzbekistan, obviously understanding that the West in principle might support the forces opposed to the regime, whereby not only diplomatically, but by military means, particularly if a “convenient” moment for this arose. (For example, during the presidential election which is supposed to take place in 2007, or during the parliamentary elections.) In so doing, we should keep in mind the scenario of development of events in Kyrgyzstan, where such a revolution occurred very quickly. Rejection of partnership with the U.S. almost inevitably presupposes a strategic partnership with Russia, which Karimov talked about during his recent visit to Moscow. In this way, from now on it will not be Washington, but Moscow and its economic and military assistance to official Tashkent that will be the guarantor of stability of the regime from the outside. On the other hand, financing by the United States and other Western countries of the actors opposed to the regime could appear to be a serious factor of its destabilization (keeping in mind that this assistance will not only be rendered informally, as before, but also at the formal level, since the U.S. has already begun talking about bringing Karimov to account for what he did in Andijan and about his official recognition as a dictator).

As a result, we should not unequivocally maintain that the regime will not undergo any changes in the foreseeable future. In addition to everything else, the spheres not controlled by the main actor are leading to this thought. They could include, for example, the informal structures of the opposition parties which operate in the republic; the members the cultural elite dissatisfied with the regime; and students and specialists who receive their education abroad and count on subsequently finding a job at home. What is more, we must keep in mind that in Uzbekistan (in contrast to Turkmenistan) there

is no iron curtain, which also means no iron control over the exit of citizens abroad and their entry into the country. All of this says that small potential pockets of resistance to the regime still exist. What is more, in a certain situation, they might be “actualized” (as the example of neighboring Kyrgyzstan demonstrated). Time will show whether or not they will make a significant contribution to its next transformation.
