CHAPTER-IV
KARIMOV’S NATIONAL AGENDA AND UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan being a most important and strategically located country of Central Asia has experienced many upheavals in the recent past. It remained a most vulnerable ground for Soviet exploitation. Its natural richness and resources resulted in clear invitation to outsiders. However, after having the worse colonial experiences for long seven decades, Uzbekistan got unexpected independence in 1991. But, due to its very ambitious and farsighted political elites, there arose a volatile situation. The main agenda of Uzbek political elites was to establish popularly acceptable alternate rule to communism in the country. The democratic system was the obvious choice for them to solve all political, economic and social problems existing in Uzbekistan. In the post-Soviet time Islam Abdulganievich Karimov emerged as the most influential and charismatic personality in the country to tackle the critical situation. He took the responsibility to discrediting Marxism and Leninism with the aim to establish a prosperous civil society and government by imbibing the most accepted terrain of democracy. Islam Karimov was born on 30 January 1938, in the ancient and historical city of Samarkand in the southern part of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (UzSSR). An ethnic Uzbek, Karimov was born into a family of civil servants that provided him with opportunities to pursue higher education, while emphasizing the importance of public service. He completed his academic studies at the Central Asian Polytechnic Institute and the Tashkent Institute of National Economy, earning under graduate degrees as a mechanical engineer and economist respectively. He also holds a doctorate in economics and has published several scientific articles (Pottenger, 2004:60). In 1960, Karimov began his working career at the Tashkent farm machinery plant (Tashselmash), where he was employed as an assistant foreman and later a technologist foreman. From 1961 to 1966 he worked as a leading design engineer at the Chkalov Tashkent Aviation Production Plant, a major manufacturer of cargo planes in the former Soviet Union. In 1966 Karimov was transferred to the state
planning office of the USSR, where he worked for more than 15 years as a senior scientific specialist and later served as the first deputy chairman of the office. In 1983 he was appointed Minister of Finance of the USSR, and in 1986 he became the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Deputy Head of Government of the USSR as well as Chairman of the State Planning Office (ibid.,).

In 1986 Karimov was appointed as a First Secretary of the Kashkdarya Province Party Committee and he served for three years at that post. He was then promoted to First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Uzbekistan (www.asianhistory.about.com). In June 1989 he became First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR and on 24 March 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR elected him President after the demise of the Soviet Union. In 1990 Karimov became head of the People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan. On 31 August 1991, he declared the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan and called for national elections to fill the seats in the revived Oliy Majlis and to choose the Republic’s first post-USSR President (Pottenger, 2004: 61). Thereafter, the search for unconventional democratic rule started in newly independent Uzbekistan by Islam Karimov.

Karimov’s Quest for Democracy in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan on getting independence in December 1991, following Soviet disintegration declared its commitment to democratic path. It realized the importance of democracy and acknowledged that the conflict between rival ethnic communities and between governments and minorities could only be eased by the democratic institutions and procedures. Uzbekistan comprises of more than 129 ethnic groups and 15 confessions (Kumar, 2005: 332). The leadership of the new republic resolved to create a strong nation state through the democratic path, guided by rule of law and constitution, with provisions of human rights, separation of powers, independent judiciary and regular elections. Since his elevation to Presidency in December 1991, Uzbek President Islam Karimov has been concentrating political authority effectively within newly created office and initiated a series of administrative and legal measures
with the declared objective of establishing a strong democratic state. The adoption of the new constitution in December 1991, which gave the President several exclusive powers, was the first major step towards institutionalizing these changes (Ilkhanmov, 2005: 163). Article 7 of the Uzbek Constitution vests the sole source of state power with the people of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Similarly, Article 13 of the constitution states “Democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall rest on the principles common to all mankind according to which the ultimate value is the human being, his life, freedom, honour, dignity and other inalienable rights. Democratic rights and freedoms are to be protected by the constitution and the laws” (Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1992). Karimov has been making tall claims about the establishment of democracy in the country. However, allegations of electoral irregularities in the parliamentary elections have marred the democratic claims at the official level, though on comparison one finds that the election in 1999 was conducted more democratically in comparison to 1994. Efforts were made for ensuring participation of five political parties in the parliamentary elections and there was presence of international observers during the conduct of elections (Mohapatra, 2005: 49).

The major democratic change in Uzbekistan’s political history was the conversion of Oliy Majlis, the parliament of Uzbekistan as the bicameral House, amending the Uzbek Constitution on July 22, 2002. Oliy Majlis also announced the establishment of the Central Election Commission which became functional in March 2004 (Kazi, 2004: 9). Secondly, the Presidential decrees on abolition of death penalty and on transferring the right to sanction arrests to courts in August 2005 were key developments from the point of the rights of the people. These were extraordinary steps in the post-Soviet era as the country had strong authoritarian legacies of Soviet times (Khamraeva, 2006: 293). President Karimov in his speech delivered on the Constitution Day, December 8, 2005, reiterating commitment to democratic principles, simultaneously giving due consideration to the country’s historical and religious legacies, was path breaking. He held that democracy could not be imposed by force and ‘export of democracy’ was akin to the notion of ‘worldwide communist revolution’. The President’s assertions implied that the country did not endorse the
western values as standard and universal ones and rather conceptualized its own road to democracy (ibid.).

Karimov’s government was put to severe criticism on the issue of the violations of human rights in the country. Intolerant of such criticism the Uzbek government initiated the sack of the US troops from Uzbekistan, deployed in the country under the K2 base agreement, to station up to 1500 troops at this base that was 90 miles away from the Afghan border. The last US troops left K2 in November 2005 that was four years after their deployment in Uzbekistan (Cooley, 2008: 72). However, the US government continued to apply pressure to improve human rights in Uzbekistan. The US government remained determined to fund Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the frontline institutions for promoting democracy and human rights. They continued to be committed for funding programs designed to strengthen political parties, independent media, civil society groups, human rights defenders and the rule of law (Spechler, 2007: 198). The Washington’s policy of promoting of democracy in Central Asia has not with desired success, as some of their thinkers acknowledge that the US money and policies did not improve the situation in the Republics like Uzbekistan, rather helped the leaders to establish monopoly on power. In testimony to the House of Representatives in November 2000, Congressman Christopher H. Smith said, “It may sound bizarre, but it may not be out of the realm of possibility that some of these (Central Asian) leaders who already head what are, for all intents and purposes, royal families, are planning to establish what can only be described as family dynasties” (Yazdini, 2007: 145). This prompted the Central Asian leaders to complain about what they perceive as American double standards, the standards which even many European states adhered to (Olcott, 2007: 339).

In view of excessive centralization of power with the office of President, some scholars describe Uzbek political system as controlled democracy, not the democracy as it is understood in the Western world. Islam Karimov has been President since 1991 and re-elected without meaningful opposition on three occasions and likely to rule indefinitely without a constitutional replacement. Competing personalities and parties have been eliminated, exiled or prevented from exercising any public
opposition. The President is careful to balance the interests of the Tashkent, Samarkand and Ferghana clans, and he regularly replaces governors throughout the country, deemed insufficiently loyal or effective. Suspected elements have been dealt with brutally and punished, usually without a fair trial (ibid: 185). According to Stephen Sestanovich, who acted as Special Advisor to the US Secretary of State and Ambassador at large for the republic of Russia from 1997 to 2001, “There is a widespread belief in Central Asia that democracy is not right for the region” (Mohapatra, 2005: 56). Even according to former Vice President of Uzbekistan Shukrulla Mirsaidov Uzbekistan has made a transition from one totalitarian system to another authoritarian one and there was an ongoing steady increase in personal power (Bingol, 2004: 51).

In March 1995, President Islam Karimov extended his term by following his Central Asian counterparts who used the mechanism of referendum for ensuring their continuous stay in power. President Karimov contested the 2000 election bypassing the constitutional provision enshrined in Article 90 of the Uzbek Constitution that an incumbent cannot contest election for more than two terms (Mohapatra, 2005: 48). President Karimov won 98% of the vote in the referendum and before the votes were officially counted, Uzbek radio claimed that the entire nation had ‘unanimously’ voted in favour of the President (Kubicek, 1998: 32). The voting in referendum was not fair as local Electoral Commissions allowed any one family member to vote on behalf of the rest of the members and it was rare to see all the family members casting their votes separately of their own. This was done reportedly for discouraging young people, whose opinions were thus under-represented in elections and referendums. Further, Electoral Commission officials manipulated the numbers because only 130 independent international observers from 30 countries arrived to watch the balloting. The independent Uzbek NGOs, which were registered with the government, were usually not allowed to monitor the process. To say “no”, a voter needed to blackout the question on the ballot, while to say “yes” a voter needed only to toss the unmarked ballot into a slot. Not many people could be found in Uzbekistan who made the black marks under the authorities’ watchful eyes. Moreover, the ballots of those who did not
come to vote were thrown into the ballot box, and counted as “yes” votes (Ilkhamov, 2002: 8).

Professor R.R. Sharma used the term “façade democracies” for this region. According to him, the key problem for all the countries in Central Asia is the total absence of linkages between the people at large and their governments. It certainly pushes back the formation of a healthy civil society. There is a huge gap between the declared democratic values and the socio-political realities (Sharma, 2005:27). According to professor Martha Brill Olcott “Uzbekistan is quite obviously not a democratic country, nor it is progressing towards the democracy.” The displeasure of the Uzbek population with the undemocratic regime of President Islam Karimov also seems to be growing, given the slow and erratic pace of both political and economic reform in the country (www.carnegieendowment.org).

The government has become authoritarian, highly centralized and personalized around President Karimov. Policies are largely formulated in an informal circle of close allies of the President, rather than through the formal government and parliamentary structures. There is widespread evidence of human rights abuses by the security forces against political opponents. There are plenty of cases of innocent people being arrested and sentenced for involvement in violent activity against the state and they are beaten and abused in police custody. Mass arrest of men is believed to be culmination of Independent Islamic Movement that reached at its peak in 1998 and again in 1999 after the Tashkent bombings. There was no sign that government repression had lessened following the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US. The government seemed to be even less concerned with criticism by international community. Many members of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb-ul-Tahrir have been radicalized by the repressive actions of the government. The sentences given to prisoners, accused of acting against the regime, tended to be long and arduous and conditions were said to be cruel, inhuman and degrading. There was very little opportunity for dissent to be voiced. Further, the two main opposition parties, Erk and Birlik were banned and their leaders remained in exile. Very few Birlik members remained active, and they were mainly engaged in collecting information.
regarding human rights abuses. They were often members of the human rights society of Uzbekistan. Even traditional community leadership, such as the Mahalla community chairmen, had been increasingly taken under the control of the state, and were appointed rather than elected by the local people (Lewis, 2003: 191-192). The government declared special subsidies to the “Mahalla committees” for appeasing the local people. But in 1996, research conducted by Ford foundation in Uzbekistan ruled that there was no proper implementation of the framed policies. The poor people were not getting adequate benefits of subsidies regularly. Some people commented that they didn’t know what the Mahalla Committee meant and what it was supposed to do (Kamp, 2005: 48-49).

The Uzbek press and media have also remained controlled strictly by censorship. Moreover, Uzbek press and media depicts Karimov as real prophet of Uzbek nationalism and uses phrases like ‘our prophet’, meaning Muhammad which reflects full control of Karimov on media. In spite of having a number of sacred texts associated with Uzbek nationalism, the prominent are the works of President Karimov himself. His work “Uzbekistan Towards the 21st Century” is accorded the same status as that of Bible or Koran. These works have a revered status and are kept in an elevated place in all government offices and public buildings and everyone has expected to read and quote from them (Dick, 2001). Uzbekistan, academia are not free thinkers, rather they have been browbeaten into working of the state. This led to conflict situation as the middle-aged men and women who completed their higher education in the 1970s from the cohort, and were trained at the height of the Brezhnev era, came to the apex of their career in the era of Perestroika and independence. Thus, the inspiration of nationalistic writings inevitably went to their subconscious mind (Adams, 2005: 116-117).

President Karimov invokes nationalism for creating a strong nation state. But, under the umbrella of nationalism, many democratic rights of the Uzbek people have been snatched. His stiff measures for nagging are well known. His resort to the Andizan Massacre on 13 May 2005, when thousands of people came out to the streets against the repressive rule of Karimov is well known. They were mostly young west-
ward looking leaders, who were very ambitious to stop this menace of poverty, sham democracy and corruption. But, Karimov’s troops mercilessly fired on the crowd of protestors. In this clash between soldiers and protestors, 745 people were reportedly killed (Times of India, May 19, 2005) and 2000 wounded (Times of India, May 16, 2005). Karimov harshly responded to the Andizan episode with his faulty interpretations of colored revolutions. Karimov saw Andizan as a clear sign that Uzbekistan was now infected with the ‘contagion of revolt’ from the colored revolutions following the Rose revolution in Georgia that toppled President Edward Shevardnadze in November 2003; the December 2004, Orange revolution in Ukraine that brought Viktor Yushchenko to power; and the Tulip revolution in the Kyrgyz Republic that resulted in President Askar Akayev’s abdication of power in March 2005, only two months prior to Andizan. In each case, mass protests and dramatic regime change followed international condemnation of electoral fraud in parliamentary and Presidential elections (Hill and Jones, 2006: 114). Karimov seemed to have got panicky in Andizan in May 2005, guided by the media coverage of the colored revolutions and his own particular anxiety about the rapid unraveling of the Kyrgyz government. Karimov saw Andizan as a coup attempt against his government. According to high level US, Russian and Kazakh officials whom he met in the immediate aftermath, as well as a report by British scholar Shirin Akiner, Karimov firmly believed that the assault on the prison was perpetrated with international support, including NGOs sponsored by the US government (ibid., 117).

Moreover, George W. Bush’s administration played a very confusing role for his statement regarding Andizan episode by holding equal fault of both – unarmed pro-democracy demonstrators and the Uzbek troops. Bush administration spokesman also claimed that Islamic terrorist groups may have been behind the protests that prompted the shootings. Such claims are not bearable to those, who are familiar to this region’s political situation. According to Human Rights Watch Report, there was no evidence that any of the speakers at the protest promoted an Islamic agenda, rather their grievances were overwhelmingly about poverty, corruption, and government repression (www.antiwar.com/orig/zunes.php?).
While assessing the state of democracy in post-Soviet Central Asia, the scholars have coined two different categories that are ‘soft authoritarianism’ and ‘hard authoritarianism’. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, are described as belonging to the first category and Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, are termed as ‘hard authoritarian systems’ (Bingol, 2004: 54). Like other Central Asian countries the growing authoritarian tendencies of President Karimov are also some times attributed to the lack of historical experience of democratic tradition in the republic (Mohapatra, 2005: 56).

Constitutionally, Islam Karimov’s term as President was deemed to have ended on 22 January 2007. However, the electoral legislation stated that “an election must be held in the month of December of the year in which the President’s term expires” which resulted in de facto extension of Karimov’s term to eight years (As available at www.wikipedia.org). Legally, after the completion of two consecutive terms, Karimov was not eligible to contest for third Presidential election in December 23, 2007. Violating constitutional provisions he was nominated for the third time. As expected Karimov won the election with tremendous scores and took the oath to serve as the President of Uzbekistan for the third consecutive term (As available at www.rferl.org). The summary of the results of 23 December 2007 election, showing extraordinarily high per cent of votes cast in favour of Karimov is very indicative (see table given below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CANDIDATES</th>
<th>VOTES</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islam Karimov (Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party)</td>
<td>13,008,357</td>
<td>90.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asliddin Rustamov (Uzbekistan’s People’s Democratic Party)</td>
<td>468,064</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilorom Toshmuhamedova (Justice Social Democratic Party)</td>
<td>434,111</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akmal Saidov (independent)</td>
<td>420,815</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid votes</td>
<td>14,331,347</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid votes</td>
<td>434,097</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Votes</td>
<td>14,765,444</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: elections.uz, as available on wikipedia.com)
Very recently, parliamentary elections held in Uzbekistan tried to lay the advanced impression of democracy in the country. First round of the elections held on December 27, 2009. According to head of the central election commission Mirza-Ulugbek Abdusalomov, over 270 observers from 36 countries and representatives of four international missions monitored the polls (www.en.rian.ru/exsoviet/2009). Second round of the elections took place on January 10, 2010. Voting turn out was quite excellent; about 87.8 percent of the electorates voted in the first round and 80 percent in the second round. President Islam Karimov stated that these elections were “significantly different” from previous polls and it is an initiation of transition from strong state to strong society. In terms of changes, the representation of political parties in the lower chamber increased from 120 to 135 deputies, setting aside 15 seats to ecological movement of Uzbekistan, and totaling 150 deputies (www.cacianalyst.org). Four political parties- The Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, The Adolat (Justice), Social Democratic Party, and Milliy Tiklanish (National Revival) contested the polls. But, since 1991, Uzbek elections never considered as free and fair. According to US envoy in Tashkent, the said elections did not meet internationally recognized standards of democracy. The OSCE’s office for democratic institutions and human rights declined to send a full election monitoring team because in their view, the electoral system in Uzbekistan is not a genuine one. Independent candidates were prohibited from participation in the elections (www.eurasianet.org).

Moreover, Karimov is building a strong and loyal circle to ensure that he enjoys immunity when he decides to retire. Gulnora, the daughter of Karimov, is believed by many to be ready to take over once her father decides to lay down office. Since there is no worthwhile opposition, she needs not even take the route too the presidency through election as a member of Parliament and speaker. But Gulnora is not popular with different groups which form the mainstay of the Uzbek regime and her candidature might cause dissensions. The appointment of Mirzoyev, former governor of Samarkand and Jizzak region as the new prime minister, in place of Sultanov, has given rise to speculations about his being a likely successor (Kaushik, 2005: 45). Apart from a huge criticism, there are some commendable steps taken by the Uzbek government in social and political sphere of the country. Key among the
changes is the raising of numbers of parliamentary seats to 150 from 120, among
them 15 seats automatically goes to Uzbekistan’s ecological movement, which was
created in August 2008. Another change is that new legislation guarantees 30 percent
quota in Parliament for women (www.rferl.org). In addition, on December 8, 2009
17th anniversary of adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan was
celebrated with the hope to build a new state and new society. In his official speech
President Karimov made some strong determinations with a view to have successful
parliamentary elections. He stressed for the existence of multi party system, rule of
law and equal opportunities in the country. He also confirmed the freedom of speech
and freedom of choice to Uzbek citizens (www.jahonnews.uz).

The third elections for the bicameral Oliy Majlis for 150 members were held
in two rounds i.e. on December 27, 2009 and January 10, 2010. The outcome of the
elections was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>First round</th>
<th>Second round*</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Votes</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Seats</strong></td>
<td><strong>Votes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan People's Democratic Party</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice Social Democratic Party</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Valid Votes</td>
<td>15,108,950</td>
<td>(87.8%)</td>
<td>3,960,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Voters</td>
<td>17,215,700</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,969,547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Uzbekistan)
A cursory look at the constitutional provisions of the Central Asian republics would reveal that they possess the true characteristics of democracies as these are practiced in the Western countries. However, a careful analysis would reveal that in several respects democratic systems in this region are far away from democracies as these are understood in the Western world (Mohapatra, 2006: 133). According to Professor John Anderson “political elite with wider power in largely informal political network has believed that a strong leader can ensure stability and the problems of ethnic conflict, religious extremism and social unrest can be kept in check (ibid., 166). This has given the leadership in Central Asian countries especially Uzbekistan to centralize powers, even at times violating well established democratic norms. Karimov himself is reported to have said, “At a certain stage of historical change you need a strong will and a certain figure… and you have to use some authoritarian methods at times” (ibid.). He is credited with the view that the quality of democracy is not determined by the number of political parties and organizations. These political parties and organizations must also truly express and defend the interests of all segments and levels of the society (Karimov, 1998: 109). Amazingly, he has asserted that swayed by democratic principles of free elections, freedom of association, expression and assembly, on unprepared legal, economic, social and political soil would run the risk of loosing a real democracy (ibid :112). This is indicative of the notion of democracy in Uzbekistan.

IMPACT ON THE UZBEK PEOPLE

Uzbekistan is a multi-ethnic nation consisting of over 100 ethnic groups, leading to confrontation with each other. To cater the needs of all the groups, there are required well mannered social, economic and political policies by the Uzbek government. To some extent, Karimov made efforts to tackle with all the problems, by taking some reformatory steps. But, those steps seem excellent in papers only, rather than benefiting the all groups it prejudicial towards ethnic Uzbeks only, and sometimes it overlook them also. Further, to legitimize his rule Karimov shows welfare policies to the world community also, even though those are just façade.
However, in the very first speech addressed at the very first session of Oliy Majlis of the newly independent Republic of Uzbekistan, President Islam Karimov began with main objective of the Uzbek government. There was “building an open and democratic state with market economy and formation of foundation for a civil society, and avoiding a blind copying of the developed nation’s experience and model, we are to achieve the level and quality of living these countries have reached, to ensure the democratic way of development in the country, where all rights and freedoms, welfare and decent living standards are granted for each individual irrespective their nationality, faith and convictions” (www.mansurovs.com).

In further clarification Karimov stated that in the political sphere there are the following main objectives: first, liberalization of all aspects of political life as well as the private and public building, formation of the balance of interest in society, strong mechanism of checks and balances that would guarantee the sustainable and progressive development of society and the freedom of choice for each person. It is also required that the multi-party system enters in political life in real terms. The true multi-party system means the diversity of views and ideas; it is the political space for parties to compete in particular with involvement of opposition parties. For further enhancing and developing the non governmental and public institutions, the bodies of citizens and self governance are to be created. Also ensuring pluralism and diversity of opinions and freedom of their expression is essential. Mass-media ought to become an independent and real, “fourth branch of power and the most efficient tool in implementing political rights and freedoms of citizens. Fifth, enhancing and promoting the human rights and freedoms of democratic values in the people’s minds (ibid.).

To achieve all above stated objective the spread of education was utmost important in the country to move the Uzbek people aware about their rights and freedoms. Therefore, the separate Article was mentioned in the Uzbek Constitution which is solely devoted to education, according to article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “everyone shall have the right to education. The state shall guarantee free secondary education. Schooling is to be under state supervision
(Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1992). By this the government of Uzbekistan declared the education as priority sphere for social and economic development, democratization, humanization of all fields of public life. Further, the adoption of new education law and national programme on personnel training in 1997 have given a new impetus to the development of education system and emergence of new types of educational institutions. The essence and distinguished peculiarities of new education model however, is the integrated system approach in corporation with such basic components like: personality, state and community, continuous education, science and production. The key element of new legal framework is the creation of a knowledge society by introduction of a life long learning programmers. Reforms are not only related with modification of continuous education structure and development of learning standards, with introduction of new learning approach such as multi lingual and multi cultural education as well (www.unesco.org)

According to Minister of Public education of Uzbekistan D. Yuldashev the essence of education reforms in Uzbekistan is to preserve the present intellectual potential of the educational system and to modify our goals and activities in order to develop individuals who are capable to build and live in a democratic civil society and free market economy. These reforms however do not only reflect nationalistic aspiration. Since, securing independence the Uzbekistan realized its great responsibility as citizens of the international community and as citizens of our planet. Therefore, one of our main goals is to educate a healthy generation, both physically and mentally. The main principles of our educational policy support this endeavor. Our goals are determined as the following: humanistic, democratic methods of teaching and socialization, priority to human values, natural and cultural traditions, and the separation of educational institutions from the influence of political parties and social and political movements (www.tashkent.com) In 1997, president Karimov founded ‘Umid’ a programme provided students with educational fellowships for obtaining education abroad. By the year 2000, over 700 students have been awarded the ‘Umid’ presidential scholarships to pursue graduate and undergraduate degrees in the US, the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Japan. Certainly, returning graduates are expected to bring back the influence, and those who have finished their studies are
employed by the state. The Uzbekistan’s educators established contacts with United Nations Organization and separate countries like France, Germany, The Republic of Korea, Turkey and the US. Many organizations like Peace Corp (USA), ACCELS (USA), British Council, Merci Project (Great Britain), Goethe Institute (Germany), NAFE (USA), and Save the Children Fund (Great Britain) participate in the educational efforts undertaken by the Uzbekistan (www.education.stateuniversity.com). Parallel to the democratic and educational reforms, Karimov paid his equal attention to economic reforms also, to strengthen the economic growth with establishment of market economy in the country. According to Karimov:

The economic transition to a market economy, departing decisively from the former administrative command system, is therefore, essential to all of the reforms taking place in our society. Our own model of this transition eradicates the hypertrophied economic structure of the past while reflecting the particular conditions, traditions and customs of Uzbekistan (Karimov, 1998:117).

Karimov further clarified that the economic development model will be based on the following principles: There will be no politicization of the economy, because submitting it to political ideology and to the interests of various parties and movements hampers economic reforms and adversely affects the market. It is difficult to achieve the transition from an administrative command system to a free market economy without the state playing a regulatory role. However, when market structures become sufficiently strong through irreversible reforms state influence should decrease appropriately. It is necessary to strengthen the values of democracy throughout society and to inculcate obedience to the rule of law. These steps are especially important considering the corruption and the growth of organized crime in the former Soviet countries. A strong social policy must be constituent element of market reforms; otherwise, social tensions and confrontations spring up, discrediting the process of reform. Stage by stage development helps solve problems by

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assessing their priority and adjusting strategies in accordance with the popular wisdom that says: ‘you can’t limit limitless areas’, i.e., there is no point in trying to solve all problems at once. This methodical procedure makes it possible, on the one hand, to use limited resources effectively without scattering them, and, on the other hand to see and evaluate results in the proper perspective and to introduce corrections to the reform programme if necessary (ibid.;117-18). As the main goal of the transition period that now faces the Republic is to construct a strong, democratic government based on the rule of law and a civil society with a stable market economy, the goals can be achieved through the following objectives of economic strategy: Gradual formation, through stages of a market economy with a social orientation; Creation of a diversified economy, elimination of the individual’s lack of property ownership and guarantees of state protection for private property; Grant of broad economic freedom to enterprises and citizens including a renunciation of direct intervention of the state in their economic activity; Adoption and implementation of structural transformation of the economy so far to ensure the efficient utilization of material, natural and human resources and; Formation of a new economic mentality and world view among the people (Dosumov, 2003:146).

Even the International Monetary Fund has applauded the economic policy of the Uzbek government and also appreciated the performance of the Uzbek economy. According to IMF Reports, ‘the Uzbek economy has performed well in recent years, benefiting from a favorable external environment and an improved policy framework. The authorities response to high export commodity prices has been prudent and has generally contributed to macro economic stability. The current strength of the Uzbek economy present the authorities with an opportunity to undertake the necessary reforms to achieve their short and medium term objectives’ (IMF Country Report, 2008:17). Indeed the structural adjustments of Uzbek government resulted in spiraling GDP growth rate from 1.7% in 1996 to 9.5% in 2008. The Uzbek government is seeking to attract as many as possible foreign investments. For
instance, the government announced to sell 49 percent of shares in Uzbekneftegaz, the state owned holding company that controls the country’s entire oil and gas sector to foreign investors. Uzbekneftegaz has already termed with oil services giant Baker Hughes in a joint venture to boost oil production at the country’s north Urtabulak field to over 300,000 tons per year (6000 barrels per day) (Feifer, 2002:82). However, the ground reality is totally different from the flimsy statistics figures. Uzbekistan is basically an agrarian country, almost two third of its population lives in rural areas. Thus, the reforms in the agriculture sector are crucial. In spite of market restructuring, state needs to give relaxations to the poor peasants. The government is still maintaining the old Soviet style in agriculture sector. The supply of inputs and distribution of agricultural products are in the hands of the state, with the government providing the all important water supply, the government fixes the prices for agricultural production being de facto the sole purchaser. All foreign trade of export oriented goods and commodities are under state monopoly (Azam and Makhmejanov, 2010:11). Therefore, the country has considerable number of poor population. According to World Bank Report, poverty remains a significant problem in Uzbekistan and 27.5 percent of the population, or 6.8 million people in Uzbekistan are unable to meet basic consumption needs. Approximately one- third of all poor households can be classified as extremely poor. Poverty is predominantly as rural phenomena in the country. Approximately 4.5 million poor people or 70 percent of Uzbekistan’s poor live in rural areas. Rural populations are 35 percent more likely to be poor and 58 percent most likely to be extremely poor than their urban counterparts. The most affected areas are Kashkadarya and Namangan; both have highest rates of poverty and extreme poverty. Individuals living in Kashkadarya are seven times more likely to be poor than those living in Tashkent (World Bank, 2003:11).

This kind of disparity and deliberate ignorance by the political elites for their personal gains leads to the distrust and agony towards the government and its policies. Further, the inter group cleavages and sense of regionalism arises, which resulted disastrously. According to Andrew Stroehlien of the
International Crisis Group, the Uzbekistan is one of the poorest of the former soviet Republics, with nearly 80 percent of the poor population. This figure is too high than the official figure, which makes to have a skeptical approach on presented facts and data presented by Uzbek government (www.ww4report.com). Actually, Karimov is deviating the attention of the world by manipulating the facts and figures and also concealing the real problems to getting escape from any mundane opposition. And he has succeeded in shielding himself from the wave of democratization. He has avoided the demands of local opposition groups and the international community for freedom of association, the emergence of multi party system, free and fair elections, and the rule of law by building only a façade of democracy and public accountability. In fact, post-Soviet reforms in Uzbekistan have served only to strengthen the Karimov’s grip on the public and political realms. In order to justify his strict measures and the heightened state control over the public domain, he has portrayed the Islamic insurgency, symbolized by the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and Hizb-Ut-Tahrir (HT), along with the Taliban’s seizure of power in Afghanistan in 1996, as a severe threat to the Uzbek way of life (Kalyoncu, 2005:103-04).

Though, the current social political situation in Uzbekistan is catastrophic. It has dramatically deteriorated in a way that even ordinary people are ready to take arms against Karimov regime. Those are not religious radicals, nor opposition members; they are businessmen, workers, teachers and even journalists (www.uzbekistanerk.com). Islam Karimov is iron fisted ruler, since Soviet times. For two continuous decades he is ruthlessly ruling in Uzbekistan. He has banned opposition parties, tossed as many as 6500 political prisoners into jail, and labels any one who challenges him an ‘Islamic terrorist’ (Ayittey, 2010:20). This way President’s notion of democracy and its pursuance is not in tune with his declared principle of multi-cultural society.
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