Chapter-II

UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY
The independent khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand ruled Central Asia or Turkestan during sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Russia annexed these Khanates by second half of nineteenth century and made Tashkent the administrative centre of Turkestan. The Turkistan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created on 20 April 1918 after the unification of Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand. On 27 October 1924 the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was established. Tashkent became the capital in 1930. With the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the five Central Asian Republics (CARs) emerged as independent countries. Uzbekistan was the first among the CARs to declare its independence. It became independent on 1 September 1991.

Out of the five CARs, Uzbekistan is the only country that shares border with all other CARs, making the country strategically significant. The total area of the Republic is 447,000 square kilometres and the total land border of the Republic is 6,221km (CIA The World Fact Book 2009). Uzbekistan shares border with Kazakhstan (2203km) in the north, Afghanistan (137km) in the south, Turkmenistan (1621km) in the west and Kyrgyzstan (1,099km) in the east and Tajikistan (1,161km) in east and southeast (ibid). The country lies between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers. It has a population of 27,865,738 million and ranks 44 among the world's most populated countries (ibid). Among the five CARs, Uzbekistan has the largest population.
Map- 2.1

Political Map of Uzbekistan

URL: http://www.uzbekembassy.in/about_uzbekistan/mapofuzbekistan.htm.
The Administrative Division of the Republic comprises of 12 Provinces and one Autonomous Republic. The Provinces or “viloyats” are- Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Namangan, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya, Tashkent, Ferghana and Khorezm. The Autonomous Republic is Karakalpakstan with Nukus as its capital.
Uzbekistan is rich in natural resources like natural gas, petroleum, gold, coal, uranium, silver, copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, molybdenum. The proven oil and gas reserves of Uzbekistan are 0.6 thousand million barrels and 1.58 trillion cubic metres respectively (BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2009). Uzbekistan ranks first among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and fifth in the world in terms of gold reserves (MBendi Information Services 2010). It is the ninth largest producer of gold in the world (ibid). The GDP growth rate in 1994 was 5.5 percent, which increased to 9.6 percent and 9.0 percent in 2007 and 2008 respectively (Asian Development Bank 2009).

The Republic has a strong defence force, which is a part of the Soviet legacy. In 1994, the Armed Forces Academy was set up in Uzbekistan, first of its kind in Central Asia (Bohr 1998: 58). Uzbekistan also has four higher military colleges (ibid).

Uzbekistan adopted a new Constitution in December 1992. Uzbekistan has a Presidential form of Government. The Republic introduced Bicameral Legislature through a national referendum in 2002. The first election to the bicameral Legislation was held in 2004. The National Legislature, “Oliy Majlis” consists of the Upper
Chamber (Senate) with 100 members and a 120 member Lower Chamber (Legislative Chamber). Uzbekistan joined the CIS and the United Nations in 1991 and 1992, respectively.

**DETERMINANTS OF UZBEKISTAN’S FOREIGN POLICY**

Chapter 4, Article 17 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan enshrines the Foreign Policy guidelines of the Republic. It says-

“The Republic of Uzbekistan shall have full rights in international relations. Its foreign policy shall be based on the principles of sovereign equality of the states, non-use of force or threat of its use, inviolability of frontiers, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and other universally recognised norms of international law. The Republic may form alliances, join or withdraw from unions and other inter-state organisations proceeding from the ultimate interests of the state and the people, their well being and security”.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan outlines the main principles of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy in the document “Objectives of Uzbekistan’s Foreign Policy Course”. The basic principles of the country’s foreign policy as stated in the document are “priority of national interests of the state and norms of international law, non-interference to internal affairs of other states, resolution of all disputes in peaceful manner”. The Document also indicates the main challenges facing the Republic, which need to be addressed. It emphasises Uzbekistan’s interest to “resolve the Afghan problem, to fight terrorism, extremism and narco-aggression, to create a nuclear-weapons-free-zone in Central Asia”. Enumerating the Republic’s ‘multi-vectored’ foreign policy orientation, the Document further states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2007)-

“Establishment of relations with many countries on the principles of equal rights and mutual understanding helps Uzbekistan to be integrated into the world community, and realize international political, economic, scientific and cultural cooperation. Enhancement and development of relations with neighbouring countries is one of the most important foreign policy priorities of Uzbekistan. Further intensification of regional cooperation is a vitally important condition of peace, stability and prosperity in Central Asia. Special attention is paid to the constructive cooperation within the framework of the Central Asian cooperation Organization. Developing dynamically and gradually its relations with the countries of the West, Asia-Pacific, Southeast and South Asia, Uzbekistan aspires to make these relations more substantial. Based upon the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (1996) between
Uzbekistan and the European Union, our country intensifies a political dialogue and trade relations with the EU. Cooperation with the CIS has not lost its actuality. Countries can coordinate their positions for the realization of both common and specific national interests on bilateral and multilateral bases within the framework of this cooperation. After the proclamation of its independence, Uzbekistan gained an opportunity to establish direct contacts with Islamic countries of Asia, near and Middle East, the countries that are close to Uzbekistan spiritually, culturally and traditionally. Development of political, economic and cultural relations with these countries has a positive dynamics”.

The basic factors guiding Uzbekistan’s foreign policy decision making are-

(Karimov1997: 254)

- "Supremacy of the national interests of the state with an overall consideration of mutual interests;
- Equity and mutual benefit, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states;
- Openness for cooperation, irrespective of ideological conceptions, commitments to universal values, peace and security;
- Priority of international law standards over the internal ones;
- Promotion of external relations on both bilateral and multilateral agreements”.

The changing dynamics of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy is interesting to understand the overall Uzbekistan-U.S. relationship. In the past eighteen years, several changes took place in the Republic. Various international and domestic issues have shaped Uzbekistan’s relations with the outside world. Since independence the four phases of the Uzbekistan foreign policy are- 1991-September 11 2001, 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2008-till date. The first phase reflects Uzbekistan’s growing interest to move closer to the west. Initially, after independence, Uzbekistan’s desire to reduce its dependence on Russia encouraged it to cooperate with the west. The second phase strengthened Uzbekistan’s ties with the U.S., which got an unprecedented boost after September 11. Uzbekistan became one of the key partners of the U.S. in its war efforts in Afghanistan. The bilateral relation reached it peak with the signing of the Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2002. The third phase after the May Andijan incident witnessed thaw in Uzbekistan’s relation with the west and a policy shift in favour of Russia and China. Finally, rapprochement with the west is visible but with no major tension with Russia and China. In all these years, Uzbekistan other than engaging with these major players has also been looking for increased cooperation with other countries.
"The making of foreign policy is essentially an exercise in the choice of ends and means on the part of a nation-state in an international setting. It is necessary, first of all, to formulate a broad end or goal which will give a sense of purpose and direction to foreign policy. This goal need not, and in fact should not be static in content; it must be a conceptually long-term goal to which immediate objectives, and the short-term policies pertaining to them, can be related.--------[decision making in foreign policy] is essentially an "incremental process" involving the interplay of a wide variety of basic determinants, political institutions, organizational pulls and pressures of a bureaucratic-political nature, and the personalities of the decision makers" (Bandyopadhyaya 1979: 1).

The basic determinants influencing decision making in foreign policy are—geography, economic development, political tradition, international and domestic milieu, military strength, political institutions, personalities of the ultimate decision-makers, their ideological preferences, psychological propensities, and above all, their need for personal political existence (ibid: 2).

The geo-strategic location of Uzbekistan, having the highest population in the region, significant military power in the region, rich natural resources, and personality of President Karimov, international and domestic developments are some of the major factors that have also shaped Uzbekistan’s foreign policy orientation from time to time. Geographically, the country is strategically located. Since it border all the CARs, any country having influence in the Republic could also have some influence on the other CARs. Moreover, its location makes it an important transit country for new pipelines connecting Central Asia to international market. However, being double landlocked makes it difficult to get access to sea ports and hence to international markets, hindering its trade with wider international market.

The geo-strategic location and rich natural resources of the Republic drew international attention to the Republic after independence. Among the five CARs, Uzbekistan has a commendable defence force. Uzbekistan was the centre of the Soviet Army’s Turkistan Division and in the Soviet day’s military hardware was transported through Uzbekistan and some of these hard wares could still be found in the Republic (Akbarzadeh 2005: 89). After independence, Uzbekistan took over the military hardware. It made Uzbekistan’s ‘national’ armed force superior to other CARs.
Another determining factor is the personality of President Karimov, his preferences and his equation with other leaders. Karimov was the first Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan and in March 1990 was elected unopposed as the President by the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Since independence till date he has managed to be in power. Threat posed to Karimov’s regime by Islamic forces made Karimov apprehensive of growth of Islamic extremism in the Republic. Fearing support from the fundamentalist forces from Afghanistan, Karimov has been vocal of speedy resolution of the Afghanistan situation, which is also vital for regional security. Even during the Tajik civil war, Karimov was concerned that Islamic forces in Tajikistan would influence Islamic groups in Uzbekistan, who in turn might pose threat to the Karimov’s regime. Karimov banned all parties based on religious grounds and has also severely restricted religious freedom.

The relations among CARs are also not always harmonious. Sharing borders with all the CARs therefore makes it imperative for Uzbekistan to have a carefully charted out policy with its neighbours. There are ethnic Uzbeks scattered all over Central Asia. Ethnic Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan no doubt influences Uzbekistan’s relation with its immediate neighbours. For example the ethnic clashes between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 and the subsequent refugee problem in Uzbekistan affected the relation between the two countries and also the regional politics. The IMU incursions in Uzbekistan – Kyrgyzstan border in 1999-2000 reflected the need for greater cooperation among the CARs.

New borders among the five CARs after independence affected the cross border trade and people to people contacts, often creating discontent among the people. Mining borders and sudden closure of the borders have caused hardship to the common people.

Another irritant among the five republics is sharing of natural resources. Two water rich republics Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan wants to use its water resources as a bargaining tool while dealing with the water deficit CARs. Unlike the other three republics, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are not rich in oil and gas and are dependent on the other CARs. Energy rich CARs have often used its resources to put pressure on
Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. For example Uzbekistan cut gas supply to Kyrgyzstan in 2009, causing lots of problems. Uzbekistan has been worried about Tajikistan’s plan to build the Rogun dam, which Uzbekistan feels would jeopardise its interests.

Some of the major issues that have shaped Uzbekistan’s relation with the major powers are-

**Human Rights**

Uzbekistan’s human rights records are still poor. In the name of controlling Islamic extremism, the government have resorted to various repressive measures. The Jaslyk colony in Karakalpakstan, which keeps political prisoners, is notorious for its harsh conditions and torture. Media freedom is severely restricted and all media performs self-censorship to avoid complications with the authorities. The Law on Religious Organizations adopted in May 1998 puts various restrictions on religious activities in the Republic.

The human rights situation has worsened after the May 2005 Andijan incident. The government crack down on the people after the Andijan incident has increased and several fled to other countries. Most of the foreign funded NGOs were closed and their re-registration process made difficult after 2005. The Tulip Revolution, Orange Revolution and others believed to be supported by western funded NGOs made Karimov critical of NGOs working in Uzbekistan. Fearing similar fate, Karimov intensified his crack down on foreign NGOs.

The human rights situation in Uzbekistan has been one of the thorny issues in Uzbekistan’s relation with the west. Prior to 9/11, human rights issues have often created problems in developing closer Uzbekistan-U.S. relationship. However, human rights issues were ignored after Uzbekistan became a key ally of the U.S. in its war efforts in Afghanistan. These issues again emerged as obstacles in the bilateral relationship since 2004. The U.S. Department of State reduced its assistance to Uzbekistan since 2004 because of lack of progress in improving its human right records. The EU has also been vocal of its criticism of the poor human rights situation in the Republic, especially after 2005.

---

1 For details see Chapter 6
The demand by the west for an independent international investigation of the Andijan incident further strained Uzbekistan’s relation with the west. However, without any meaningful change in the situation, signs of rapprochement between Uzbekistan and west are visible. Among the EU members, Germany has always maintained a healthy relationship with Uzbekistan even after Andijan incident, which helped it to keep its base at Termez, even after EU-Uzbekistan relations deteriorated. Moreover, Germany played a key role in improving EU-Uzbekistan relation.

Russia and China, both important regional players have always been silent on the human rights issues and has never raised this issue in their bilateral dealings. It helped these two countries to move closer to Uzbekistan, especially after Andijan incident.

**Strengthening National Identity**

Post-independence search for a national identity became one of the important tasks for the newly independent Uzbekistan. The Republic wanted to establish an identity that would help Uzbekistan to separate itself from Soviet identities. After independence, as a means to create distinct Uzbek national identity, many festivals began to be celebrated, which never existed during Soviet period. Independence Day is celebrated every year on 1 September. Another festival that is widely celebrated in the country is Navruz, celebration of the New Year, which has presently emerged as the central state festivity. Muslim festivals like Kurnabairam and Uraza-bairam festivals were given official status and declared State holidays (Yerekesheva 2004:584). Uzbekistan’s policy towards promoting national identity is highlighted in President Karimov book, in which he stated that-“Historical memory, restoration of an objective and truthful history of the nation, native territory, territory of the state is given an extremely important place in the revival and growth of national self-consciousness” (Karimov 1997: 119).

Celebrating the “Golden Heritage” (oltin meros) of Uzbekistan emerged as a means to promote Uzbek nationalism (Khalid 2003: 587). Temur became a national hero and scholars like al-bukhari, al-Maturidi, and al-Tirmidhi were honoured after independence (ibid). Emphasizing the contribution of great historical Uzbek figures, President Karimov stated (Karimov 1997: 120)-
“Our great ancestors: Imam Bukhari, At-Termisi, Naqshband, Khadji Akhmad Yassavi, Al Khoresmi, Beruni, Ibn Sino, Amir Temur, Ulughbek, Babur and many others have greatly contributed to the development of our national culture, really became the national pride of our people.---Historical experience, succession of traditions—all this should become those values, on which new generations are brought up”.

Further President Karimov also highlighted that there is a need to change people’s perception about Temur, who now is revered as a national hero in Uzbekistan. He wrote (Karimov 1997: 120-121)-

“How many times in the past when we read and heard about “Temur—a conqueror”, about “Temur—a destroyer” we asked ourselves: “How could such culture and economy flourish on our land during his reign?” Only after gaining independence we could render proper veneration to our great ancestor. ---Temur’s personality is a heritage not only for us, his descendents, but also for all peoples in our region, for the whole civilized mankind”.

The Uzbek language was made the State language in 1989. Preferences were given to ethnic Uzbeks in bureaucracy and the security forces (Khalid 2003: 587). Uzbekistan with the creation of its armed forces in 1992 reduced “dramatically” the number of non-indigenous officers (Bohr1998: 58). Before independence the ethnic Uzbeks constituted only 6 percent of the officer cadre in the armed forces, which in 1996 increased to 80 percent (ibid).

Another interesting development after independence was rise of use of Islamic identities. Post independence “the changing attitude towards Islam acquired new dimensions and soon became an important part of public debate” (Yerekesheva 2004: 584). Today Islam in Uzbekistan and in the region became a symbol of “national identity” (Khalid 2003: 583). Islam had existed even during Soviet times but discreetly. With independence adhering to Islamic principles became open. There was rapid increase in number of mosques built in the Republic. In 1992, Quran was translated in Uzbek. Using of Islamic identities like veil for women and Islamic caps for men became common. President Karimov too used the Islamic card and took oath of office on both the Constitution and the Quran and also went to Mecca for Haj (Yerekesheva 2004). Among the five CARs, Islamic revivalism was more in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as compared to the other three CARS (ibid: 585).
Uzbekistan has faced the brunt of Islamist extremism since its independence. Several Islamist extremist groups emerged in the Republic, which posed threat to the Republic and shook the stability of the region. The Feghana valley in Uzbekistan since independence have seen rise of fundamentalist groups. The two main extremist groups that have posed threat to the government of Uzbekistan are Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islami (HuT). These groups have promised an alternative to the Karimov government. The common people’s dissatisfaction with the Karimov regime, corruption and poverty helped these forces to gain sympathy of the people. In 1999-2000, IMU forces led series of attacks on Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border in their efforts to remove Karimov government. The U.S. in September 2000 declared IMU as a terrorist outfit, which came as a relief for Uzbekistan. After counter attack by the Uzbekistan government, the IMU forces took shelter in Afghanistan. Most of the IMU guerrillas were killed during the U.S. attack in Afghanistan, disintegrating the movement and killing its top leadership.

HuT has been operating in the Central Asian region since independence of the CARs and has today become a major threat to the Karimov regime. HuT too wants to remove Karimov and establish an Islamic Caliphate in the region. However, HuT claims that it does not believe in violent methods.

The Karimov government fearing threat to his regime has resorted to various repressive measures, often penalizing innocent people for being devout Muslims. Terror attacks in 1999, 2000 and 2004 in Uzbekistan further helped Karimov to justify his crack down on extremist forces. Karimov has banned parties based on religious identities. Religious freedom in the Republic is severely restricted, especially after the Andijan incident. After Uzbekistan’s participation in the ‘war against terror’, crack-down on Islamic forces has increased in the Republic.

Afghanistan under Taliban rule, role played by Islamic forces in the Tajik civil war and IMU incursions made Karimov concerned about the growing threat from extremist forces. President Karimov in his book (1997: 3840) highlighted seven reasons how Islamic fundamentalism is manifested towards Uzbekistan-

---

2 For details see Chapter 6
• "In the attempts to disseminate fundamentalism to undermine the confidence of the faithful Muslims to the state-reformer, to destroy stability, national civil and interethnic harmony that are fundamental pre-conditions of the transformations for the better changes. Islamists target to discredit democracy, the secular state, the multi-national and multi-confessional society.

• We must have a clear-cut idea, particularly our youth, the younger generation, that those who follow populist, attractive, but entirely noisy and ungrounded slogans of the fundamentalists about justice, turn out to hostages of the others’ will, that in the end, command not only their brains, but also their fate and destiny.

• In provoking confrontation among social groups and regions of population that is based on "true" and "false" principles of religiousness. This sort of activities led to the split of the nation in Algeria, Afghanistan.

• The situation of the never ending civil war on the southern borders of Uzbekistan, in neighbouring countries reproduces new generations of terrorists, armed militants who consider themselves to be true Muslims, fighters for faith, and those who are eager to impose their monstrous ideas to our people.

• In creating a repulsive image of Uzbekistan among both Muslims and non-Muslims states and their public opinion to which they want to present us either as anti-religious atheists or as hidden supporters of the state Islamization.

• In shaping a global confrontation between the Islamic and the non-Islamic civilizations that has the most negative impact on the integration processes within the world community that preserves the backwardness of the newly independent states. And, what is worse, people’s expectation of the "civilization clashes' is based on the religious philosophies.

• In exerting influence on mass mind the concept of religion being a universal means to solve all economic, political and international problems and contradictions”.

Democratization

Chapter 2, Article 7-14 of the Uzbek Constitution enshrines the democratic philosophy of the country. Article 7 states that the-

"people are the sole source of state power in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Power shall be exercised in the interests of the people and solely by the bodies empowered therefore by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the laws passed on its basis. Any seizure of powers belonging to state authority, suspension or termination of activity of the bodies of state authority, contrary to the procedure prescribed by the Constitution, as well as the formation of any new or parallel bodies of state authority, shall be regarded as unconstitutional and punishable by law.

3 For details see Chapter 6
Though the Constitution guarantees the ultimate power in the hands of the people but in practice the picture is different. President Karimov has been power since independence and has been ruling with an iron fist. Since independence, all Presidential and Parliamentary elections have failed to meet international standards as observed by western observers. All genuine opposition forces have been crushed. The opposition candidates who are allowed to contest also endorse President Karimov and his policies. Multiparty system exists only in papers. There is no scope for political debates. None of the actual opposition parties like Birlik and Erk have been allowed to register so far. Akbarzadeh (2005:89) is of the view that “beyond this multiparty façade, Uzbek politics was [is] as authoritarian as its Soviet predecessors. None of these parties behaved in a fashion that could be interpreted as autonomous of the ruling regime. Instead they derived legitimacy from their commitment to President Karimov and his rule. They competed with each other not over divergent platforms or policy agenda, but over the extent of their loyalty to one man. In this respect, despite all appearances, politics in post-Soviet Uzbekistan had regressed from a system of one-party rule to a system of one man rule”.

Lack of progress in democratic reforms has been one of the major irritants in Uzbekistan’s relations with the west. The U.S. and other western countries have been critical of the elections conducted in the Republic. However, observers from the CIS and other regional countries have called the elections “free and fair”.

Membership to Multilateral international agencies

Uzbekistan since independence has been members of several multilateral institutions. President Karimov in his book (1997:253) stated “Uzbekistan is a full and equal member of the most prestigious and influential international organizations and builds up friendship relations with dozens of countries in all continents closely cooperates with major banking and financial institutions, non-governmental organizations”.

Uzbekistan became member of United Nations in March 1992. President Karimov (1997: 258) wrote that “the United Nations integration potential is huge and the components of this potential are the specialized agencies with which Uzbekistan is promoting a fruitful cooperation today. Integration with the world community through the United Nations activity for us is precisely a broad cooperation with such UN
agencies as UNESCO, World Health Organisation, International Labour Organisation, UNCTAD, UNICEF and others”.

Uzbekistan is a member of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. It has observer status at the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization and is a signatory to the Convention on Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States, the Paris Convention on Industrial Property, the Madrid Agreement on Trademarks Protection, and the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

Uzbekistan recognises the importance of cooperation with regional bodies like Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and other regional bodies. Uzbekistan’s membership with these regional groups also reflects its foreign policy orientations. Uzbekistan has joined and relinquished its membership from several multilateral organizations, depending on its foreign policy priorities. Initially after independence, Uzbekistan tried to move away from Russia. With Uzbekistan moving closer to the U.S., the Republic joined GUAM, (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova), a west supported group to reduce Russian influence in the region. Uzbekistan joined GUAM in 1999, making it GUUAM. However, Uzbekistan moved out of the group in 2002. Uzbekistan was an active participant of the NATO PfP programme until 2005, which it joined in 1994. Uzbekistan was one of the founding members of the CSTO. It walked out of the group in 1999 while rejoining it in 2006. In January 2006, Uzbekistan joined the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc) but suspended its membership from the Organization in October 2008.

CONSOLIDATION OF SOVEREIGNTY

Uzbekistan became a sovereign Republic in 1992 after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. Since then Uzbekistan has been maintaining its sovereign principles and pursuing an independent foreign policy. The Preamble to the Constitution reads as follows-

“The people of Uzbekistan solemnly declaring their adherence to human rights and principles of state sovereignty, aware of their ultimate responsibility to present and future generations, relying on historical experience in the
development of Uzbek statehood, affirming their commitment to the ideals of democracy and social justice, recognising the priority of generally accepted norms of international law, aspiring to a worthy life for the citizens of the Republic, setting forth the task of creating a humane and democratic rule of law, aiming to ensure civil peace and national accord, represented by their plenipotentiary deputies adopt the present Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan”.

Chapter 1 of the Constitution deals with the sovereign principles. Article 1 says Uzbekistan is a sovereign democratic Republic. Article 2 states that the state shall express the will of the people and serve their interests and state bodies and officials shall be accountable to the society and the citizens. Article 3 enshrines the basis of Uzbekistan’s independent policy making. It states, “the Republic of Uzbekistan shall determine its national-state and administrative-territorial structure, its structure of state authority and administration, and shall pursue independent home and foreign policies. The state frontier and the territory, and create the conditions necessary for their development”.

Uzbekistan has attracted international attention ever since its independence. Several players are engaged in the Republic, often leading to competition. Depending on its national interest Uzbekistan is trying to get the maximum benefit from each of the external players and chart out its independent foreign policy orientation. Uzbekistan has been following a “multi vectored” foreign policy, trying to keep a balance between all the players. As reflected in President Karimov’s words-(Karimov 1997: 256)

“Uzbekistan simultaneously participates in the integrational processes on various levels-global and regional; however it attains a very important principle: rapprochement with one state does not imply moving away from the other. We are against when strengthening partnership with one country would take place at the expense of weakening partnership relations with the other. So the integration of Uzbekistan with the world community is a multivectoral process”.

**UZBEKISTAN AND MAJORS PLAYERS**

Uzbekistan’s relation with various intra and extra regional powers is important to understand the contours of the Uzbekistan’s foreign policy orientation. Some of the important players in the region are Russia, China, the U.S. Iran, Turkey, etc. Each wants to establish their spheres of influence in the region accentuating the competition among them. Uzbekistan being a significant country in the region has also witnessed
great power competition. The great power play in the Republic plays an important role in influencing the Uzbek foreign policy decisions. For example, Uzbekistan’s closeness with Iran would not go well with the U.S. while the U.S. will support Uzbekistan’s proximity with Turkey. Moreover, the U.S. would like to see a reduced role of Russia and China in the Republic and in the region in general and similarly both these countries would not like to see stronger U.S. presence in the region. Interestingly, Uzbekistan has actively taken part in the great power play in its territory. Uzbekistan has adjusted its foreign policy priorities according to its national interests. In the past eighteen years, Uzbekistan’s foreign policy formulations have passed through various phases and its equation with the major players has also changed from time to time, depending on international and domestic developments.

Russia

Russia’s historical linkages with Uzbekistan have its own share of advantages and disadvantages. Advantage because it controls the oil and gas pipeline systems in the country, which is a part of Soviet legacy. Moreover, Russia knows the region and the country well and also is well acquainted with the decision makers in the Republic. Disadvantage because past historical baggages have led to suspicious and grievances, which have affected Russian position in the Republic.

Immediately after independence, Uzbekistan wanted to move out of Russian influence and develop closer ties with the west. Few domestic developments also created distance between Russia and Uzbekistan. Uzbek was made the official language and Cyrillic was replaced by Latin alphabets, which did not go well with Russia. Similarly, Russian names in most of the public places and state institutions in Uzbekistan were replaced. In 1993, Uzbekistan walked out of the rouble zone and adopted its national currency Som.

Uzbekistan has expressed its displeasure with the presence of Russian troops in Tajikistan. Uzbekistan rejected Russia’s designs to defend the USSR’s old borders by refusing to sign the Treaty for the Defence of the CIS External Borders in May 1995 (Bohr 1998: 57). Uzbekistan has reportedly said, “we are capable of reliably defending our 156-kilometre border with Afghanistan with our own forces and

4 For details see Chapter 7
without the intervention of border troops from other countries, first and foremost from Russia" (ibid). Uzbekistan after independence in order to meet the new challenges made significant changes in its armed forces. As in 1996, Uzbekistan armed forces numbered 70,000 with another 180,000 troops on alternative service and also significantly increased the number of ethnic Uzbeks in official cadres (ibid: 58).

It is worth mentioning that the coldness in the bilateral relation was also attributed from the Russia side. Russia under President Yeltsin did not pay much attention to the Central Asian region. Russia during this period was more interested in developing closer ties with the west and the Central Asian region was “regarded as a potential ‘dead weight’ that could impede integration with the developed West” (ibid). However, a shift in the Russian attitude started since mid 1990s. With Yevgenii Primakov becoming the Foreign Minister in 1996, a shift in Russian foreign policy from west to the South and East became evident (ibid: 58-59). Primakov after assuming office made his first foreign trip to Central Asia, reflecting the renewed Russian interest for the region lying in its backyard. However, by this time, the Uzbekistan-U.S. relations have already soured. During Primkov’s February 1996 visit to Uzbekistan both sides signed only one of the several proposed agreements (ibid: 59).

Despite hiccups in the relation Russia has remained a major economic partner for Uzbekistan. Except few years after independence, Russia has remained the main trade partner of Uzbekistan. A major share of Uzbekistan’s trade is with Russia. Also, Russia is the major player in the Republic’s energy sector. Gazprom, the Russian gas major has major stake in Uzbekistan’s energy sector, both in extraction and transportation. Moreover, Uzbekistan is dependent on Russia for transporting oil and gas from the country to the international market. All pipelines connecting Uzbekistan to international market pass through Russia.

After Uzbekistan became U.S. key partner in the ‘war against terror’, Uzbekistan- U.S. relations strengthened, which gave the Republic the desired opportunity to distance itself from Russia. Uzbekistan also saw this opportunity as a means to attract more economic assistance from the west, which it was successful.
Another major shift in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy came after the May 2005 Andijan incident. After being isolated by the west post Andijan incident, Uzbekistan again moved closer to Russia. Uzbekistan rejoined CSTO, a Russia led security organization in the region in 2006, which it had left in 1999, indicating closer relation with Russia. Earlier in 2005, Uzbekistan also joined the EurAsEC, also a Russian led economic group. Uzbekistan-Russia bilateral ties reached new heights with the signing of the Treaty of Alliance on 14 November 2005.

However, it is not to suggest that all is well in the Russia-Uzbekistan bilateral relationship since 2005. Suspicion exists on both sides. Moreover, since 2008, there are signs of rapprochement with the west, which might again dampen Uzbekistan-Russia bilateral ties.

China

China, another regional player is gaining foothold in the region, especially as an economic partner. Uzbekistan does not share border with China but has drawn considerable Chinese attention, both for strategic and economic reasons. China’s Xinjiang region shares border with Central Asia. China did not want the Uighur population in the Xinjiang region to get support from the Uyghur population in Central Asia, which would have helped the East Turkestan Movement in the Xinjiang region. Also ethnic Uyghurs are present in Uzbekistan and ethnic Uzbeks are settled in Xinjiang region. China has successfully able to garner support from the CARs not to allow their territories for the Uyghur cause. Uzbekistan in its efforts to keep good relations with China has crushed all Uyghur movements in the Republic. All Uyghur organizations speaking in favour of the Uyghur movement are banned and Uyghur press is also restricted in the Republic (Tarimi 2004). Uzbekistan has supported one-China policy and accepted Taiwan as an inalienable part of China.

Economic cooperation is the foundation of the bilateral ties. China has emerged as a major trading partner of Uzbekistan and from 2003-2008 has been in the list of top five trade partners of Uzbekistan. In 1999, the Uzbek-Chinese Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic cooperation and Scientific and Technical cooperation was established. China is also engaged in the Republic’s

5 For details see Chapter 7
energy sector, which is still today a Russian stronghold. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China’s largest oil and gas producer is helping to explore and develop oil and gas fields in eastern and western Uzbekistan, including in the Aral Sea. The Central Asia-China pipeline carrying Turkmen gas would also pass through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. China is also investing in other sectors like railways, electricity and has been assisting the Republic in developing its civilian nuclear power potential.

The shift in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy after the Andijan crisis further strengthened the bilateral relationship. China’s silence on human rights situation and terming the Andijan incident as an internal affair of Uzbekistan cemented the bilateral ties. China was the first country that President Karimov visited after the Andijan incident. Both sides signed the Treaty on Friendly and Cooperative Partnership in 2005, indicating strengthening of bilateral ties.

**European Union**

European Union (EU) is gradually making its presence stronger in the region. Over the years EU and Uzbekistan ties have developed. The EU document on European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership in 2007 reflects EU’s special attention towards the region. Uzbekistan has ratified the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with EU, reflecting Uzbekistan’s eagerness to work closely with the EU. From 1991-2006, the EU/EC assistance to Uzbekistan was €228.85 million. Under the Technical Assistance to the CIS (Tacis) Programme, Uzbekistan from 1991-2006, received €168.95 million.

After the Andijan incident of May 2005 Uzbekistan’s relation with the EU got a severe jolt. The EU also demanded an independent enquiry of the Andijan incident, which the Karimov government refused. The EU responded by taking punitive actions against Uzbekistan. The EU imposed visa restrictions on twelve Uzbek government officials, who were said to be involved in the massacre. EU also banned arms sales to Uzbekistan. In November 2006, EU extended the ban on arms sale for one more year and the visa ban for another six months. These sanctions failed to bring about the

---

*For details see Chapter 7*
desired change in Uzbekistan. Karimov till date has not allowed independent investigation of the Andijan incident.

Despite no change in the Karimov government’s attitude, EU has softened its position with regard to Uzbekistan. In October 2006, Pierre Morel, the EU’s special representative for Central Asia, visited Uzbekistan. The EU in 2008 discontinued the travel restriction on the Uzbek officials and the travel ban has been put on suspension since October 2007. The arms embargo was lifted in 2009.

Another interesting development since 2005 was that although Uzbekistan’s relation with the EU deteriorated, it maintained good relation with Germany, an important EU member. Germany was instrumental in improving EU-Uzbekistan relations under its Chairmanship in 2007. EU’s desire to improve its relationship with the CARs is based on the greater geo-politics of the region. Uzbekistan is a key country in the region. For a successful EU policy for Central Asia, Uzbekistan will be one of the important countries.

Iran

Iran’s location makes it an important regional country. It provides the landlocked Central Asian countries access to sea ports, increasing their trade opportunities. Uzbekistan-Iran relation has not been smooth and both sides remain suspicious of each other. Few developments in the 1990s have accentuated the suspicion on both sides.

After independence, Uzbekistan’s desire to develop closer ties with the U.S. affected its relation with Iran. Given U.S.-Iran standoff, Uzbekistan developing closer cooperation with Iran would have nevertheless, distanced Uzbekistan from the U.S., which Uzbekistan could not risk. President Karimov endorsed the U.S. imposed trade embargo in 1995, which created bridge between Iran and Uzbekistan (Akbarzadeh 2005: 58-59). On 4 May, 1995 Karimov was reported to have said that “I am on the side of the United States, which declared a trade embargo on Iran” (SWB 1995b). Later on the Uzbek Ambassador to Iran denied that Karimov had supported the embargo and that the President’s remarks were distorted with the aim of marring the good relations between Iran and Uzbekistan” (ibid). Uzbekistan also supported the US
led 'Iran-Libya Oil Sanctions Act of 1996 in the UN General Assembly, another effort to build good relation with the U.S., which naturally did not go well with Iran (Akbarzadeh 2005: 59). Moreover, cancellation of the visit to Iran by the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Komilov’s scheduled for in May 1995 further strained the bilateral relation. Following this decision, a commentary in an Iranian newspaper in May 1995 criticised Uzbekistan for playing double standards with Iran. It said, “on the one hand Uzbekistan opts for enhanced relations with Iran in different fields and wishes to use Iran’s transitional routes, but in practice it adopts a policy of double standards and treats Iran with a kind of hypocrisy” (SWB 1995a). Earlier Karimov’s support for the U.S. embargo has already created a crack in the relationship.

Moreover, Uzbekistan was apprehensive of Iran’s support to extremist forces in Tajikistan and to the Shia population in Uzbekistan (Akbarzadeh 2005: 58). President Karimov feared that “Iranian presence in Central Asia might encourage revival of the Tajik culture and nationalism, which in their turn will foment separatism in Bukhara and Samarkand” (Jani 2009).

Although political relation between the two countries has not been always cordial, both sides have developed their economic ties. In 2007, the trade between the two sides was US$ 584.1 million (Embassy of the Republic of Iran 2010). The bilateral trade reached more than US$ 600 million in 2008 (Jani 2009). The main Uzbek exports to Iran are cotton fibre, coloured metal and metal productions, ferrous metals and productions, products of oil refining and a gas condensate, machinery, services, fertilizers, chemical fibres. The main imports from Iran are fruits, fats and oils of animal or vegetables, footwear, chemical fibres, washing-up liquids, carpets, plastic materials and products, services, organic chemical products, coffee, tea, spices and medicines (Embassy of the Republic of Iran 2010). There are more than eighty nine companies with Iranian investment working in Uzbekistan, of which twenty three are completely owned by Iranian investors (ibid). Iran could become a major transit corridor for Uzbek goods. The construction of the Tejen (Turkmenistan)-Sarakhs(Iran) - Bandar-Abbas (Iranian port) railway line has facilitated CARs access to international markets via Iran. In 2007, the volume of Uzbekistan’s trade through Iran and its ports reached to 2.7 million tonnes (ibid). Highlighting the bilateral
economic cooperation, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, in 2007 said, “cargo transit through Iranian ports is of high significance for Uzbekistan and his country is ready to remove certain barriers to further expansion of cargo transit by forming joint technical committees” (The Journal of Turkish Weekly 2007).

In spite of strong economic cooperation, developing closer political relation will not be easy for Uzbekistan. Any move to build closer cooperation with Iran will be opposed by the U.S. With Uzbekistan’s relation with the U.S. improving since 2008, Uzbekistan has to delicately balance its relation with Iran and the U.S. At this stage it is the U.S. who needs Uzbekistan’s cooperation for the U.S. mission in Afghanistan; however, proximity with Iran will certainly not go well with the U.S. policy makers, thereby complicating the bilateral relation.

**Turkey**

Turkey is yet another player in the region. Turkey has an advantage in the region because of its cultural affinity with the Turkic speaking population in Central Asia. Immediately after independence of the CARs, it was expected that Turkey would play a greater role in the region. Even the U.S. supported a greater role of Turkey in the region, primarily to counter Iranian influence in the region.

Uzbekistan since independence has established relation with Turkey. Back in 1996, the then Turkish President Suleyman Demirel visited Uzbekistan and both sides signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (SWB 1996). Two other agreements signed during this visit were on environmental protection and on avoiding double taxation (ibid). Initially Uzbekistan also hoped to gain from closer cooperation with Turkey. However, Turkey’s own domestic problems, its efforts to be recognized as a European country and lack of financial capability hindered its involvement in the region. Uzbekistan soon became disillusioned with Turkish role in the region. According to Bohr (1998: 61) “although President Karimov formally hailed the ‘Turkish model’ of development at the beginning of the post-independence period, expectation turned to disillusionment when the Turkish government proved unable to supply Uzbekistan with investment and financial aid in the amounts required, offering instead an expansion of cultural and educational ties”.

68
The cultural relation, which was an important component of the bilateral relation, received a setback in 1997. Karimov in 1997 recalled about 2000 students studying in Turkey after there were reports suggesting that “Islamic clerics had made attempts to recruit them” (Bohr1998: 61). The cultural relation was further affected after Uzbekistan closed six Fethulla Gulen schools and six other Turkish government schools in 1999 (SWB 1999). Following the terror attacks in Uzbekistan in February 1999, the Uzbek authorities became suspicious of the activities of these schools (ibid).

With the coming to power of Mesut Yimaz in June 1997, the bilateral relation started improving, though hiccups existed. Highlighting the friendly relation both countries share, President Karimov in 2000 pointed out that “both countries were interested in raising bilateral relations to a new level, strengthening friendly ties and developing all-round Uzbek-Turkish relations. The centuries old relations with the Turkish people and their respectful attitude towards our country show that our friendship is eternal” (SWB 2000b).

The economic cooperation between the two sides is increasing. Turkey is an important trade partner of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan’s export to Turkey has increased from US$ 29.1 million in 1993 to US$ 78 million in 2000, US$ 235.9 million in 2005, US$ 558 million in 2007 and US$ 528 million in 2008. Import from Turkey was US$ 238.7 in 1993, which declined to US$ 90.9 million in 2000, increasing to US$ 166.2 million in 2005, US$ 247.6 million in 2007 and US$ 370.6 million in 2008. As in 2007 there were 534 Turkish funded companies working in Uzbekistan, out of which 122 are using 100 percent Turkish capital (The Turkish Weekly 2008).

Unlike Iran, Uzbekistan’s relation with Turkey will not be opposed by the U.S. Improving ties with Turkey will thus not hamper Uzbekistan’s ties with the west.

**Afghanistan**

Uzbekistan is one of the three CARs, which shares border with Afghanistan. The Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border is 85 miles (137km) long (Afghanistan Policy Page, 2010). The Friendship Bridge constructed during the Soviet period connects the two countries, which was closed in 1997 and reopened in 2001 (IRIN 2002).
The developments in Afghanistan will have spill over effects in Central Asia, particular in the three bordering countries of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Drug emanating from Afghanistan has been using the Central Asian region to reach Russian and European market. Drug trafficking is thus yet another problem threatening regional stability, which is also a cause of concern for Uzbekistan. Moreover, ethnic Uzbeks constitute 9 percent of the total population of Afghanistan (Background Note, 2010). The Uzbeks in Afghanistan are concentrated in Northern part of Afghanistan. This ethnic affinity also makes Afghanistan important for Uzbekistan.

With Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan in 1994, President Karimov became apprehensive of the spread of extremism from Afghanistan to Central Asia. The fear was accentuated after Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) attacked Uzbekistan in 1999-2000. IMU forces got shelter and support from the Taliban forces. President Karimov in 2000 had stated that “fugitives from Uzbekistan have undergone training in Afghanistan and Tajikistan and have become professional militants and terrorists” (SWB 2000a). President Karimov during his speech in the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 pointed out the threats emanating from the deteriorating Afghan situation, which would have its impact on the international peace and security (Daly et.al, 2006: 70).

Uzbekistan supported the U.S. mission in Afghanistan to oust the Taliban forces from Afghanistan. However, still today Afghanistan is far from stable and reports of Taliban resurgence further adds to the threat. The CARs are concerned with the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. Moreover, if the U.S. pulls out its troops from Afghanistan as stated by President Obama, Afghanistan situation would further deteriorate, which would also threaten the peace and security of the Central Asian region. Further, Uzbekistan’s concern for the worsening situation in Afghanistan and its impact on Central Asia is reflected in Karimov’s speech at the 2010 SCO summit at Tashkent. President Karimov had said, that “there is no need to prove that without solving the problem in Afghanistan, which has for the past 30 years torn in war, it is impossible to talk about peace and stability in Central Asia” (Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2010).
To address the Afghan problem President Karimov had suggested the 6+3 plan, which includes Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Pakistan and China plus Russia, U.S. and NATO. President Karimov also outlined the basic principles of the 6+3 plan- (ibid)

- “There is no military solution to the Afghan problem.
- In addressing the conflict and stability in Afghanistan, priority should be directed at the provision of targeted economic assistance to the long-suffering Afghan people, at the construction of transport and communications and social infrastructure, ensuring population’s employment, and resolution of pressing problems of combating poverty.
- It is necessary that the historical, ethno-demographic characteristics of Afghanistan, ages-old customs, traditional values of Islam that are adhered to by the multinational and multi-religious people of the country, be taken into account and respected.
- Without engaging the people of Afghanistan and all – without exception – opposing forces, ethnic and religious groups in the process of reconciliation, and without reaching consensus among them, the war in Afghanistan may last long.
- An active participation of three key players – the United States, Russia and NATO – in this process is important. Decisive here is reliance on neighboring nations, the countries that directly border Afghanistan. Only with engaging these countries with influence on ethnic groups in Afghanistan, will it be possible to hope for a positive outcome”.

However, the proposal has been opposed by the U.S. as any discussion on Afghanistan has to include the legitimate government in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan recently has also agreed to allow the U.S. to use its territory for the Northern Distribution Network. In 2009, Uzbekistan won the tender to build the 75 kilometre railway line connecting Hairaton-Mazar-i-Shariff, which is expected to be completed by 2011 (Ferghan.ru 2009). Uzbekistan for its own security would like to see a stable and peaceful Afghanistan soon and is thus cooperating to bring about a change in Afghanistan situation.

CONCLUSION

Uzbekistan’s foreign policy since independence has passed through various phases. The changing dynamics in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy reflects that national interest is the driving force behind its foreign policy decisions. Various issues like human rights, democratization, Islamic extremism, drive for nationalism etc have played a major role in shaping Uzbekistan’s foreign policy. These issues would continue to be
determining factor in Uzbekistan’s relation with the various players engaged in the Republic.

Uzbekistan like Kazakhstan has been following a ‘multi-vectored’ foreign policy. However, so far Uzbekistan has not been very successful in balancing the various players in the Republic, especially the big three— the U.S., Russia and China. Generally, Uzbekistan has moved close to Russia and China when its relation with the west has deteriorated. Similarly, Uzbekistan’s tilt towards west was to reduce the role of China and Russia in the country.

Uzbekistan is actively participating in the great power play in its territory and not a mere spectator. It has successfully bargained its position according to its priorities and no longer just an object of great power competition. The recent rapprochement with the west further indicates the trend. However, constant shift in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy is sending wrong impression about the Republic.