Chapter III

DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES
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The United States established diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan on 19 February 1992 after the Republic declared independence on 1 September 1991. The U.S. opened its Embassy in March 1992. The first Embassy of Uzbekistan in the United States was opened in February 1993. Ever since Uzbekistan’s independence, several visits from both sides have taken place, which laid the edifice of the bilateral relations. Nevertheless, post 9/11, the number of bilateral visits increased, especially from the U.S. side to Uzbekistan. However, it is worth mentioning that the visits in the 1990s established the groundwork for a stronger bilateral relationship that emerged after 9/11, culminating later into strategic partnership in 2002. Bilateral visits helped to understand the ground realities and develop personal relationship on both sides, which strengthened the relations between the two countries. After the Andijan incident and the closure of the U.S. base at Karshi-Khanabad (K2), the bilateral relation sourced and shook the bonhomie created after the start of the U.S. led war in Afghanistan in 2001. With the deterioration in the bilateral relations in 2005, the diplomatic exchanges between the two sides also declined, however, again picking up since 2008.

The chapter analyses the diplomatic exchanges between the two countries during 1991-2006, which is the period of the study. Few visits post 2006 is important to show the changing attitude on both sides and the improvement in the relationship, which is important to analyse the wider regional politics. The study has been divided into three phases (1991-2001, 2001-2004 and 2005 onwards) to indicate a clearer picture of the trends in the bilateral visits. The number of the visits and the content of the discussion show the priority on both sides.

DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES, 1991-2001

The U.S. was one of the first countries to recognise Uzbekistan as an independent sovereign country. With the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two in 1992, several high-level exchanges took place on both sides from time to time. The first

The next visit by President Karimov was his six-day visit to the U.S. in June 1996. Earlier visits of Karimov to the U.S. were to participate in the UN General Assembly sessions whereas the June visit was a private trip to the U.S. Karimov met the then President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Secretary of Defence William Perry and Secretary of Energy Hazel O’Leary (SWB 1996a). He also met congressional representatives, heads of the National Security Council, the Central Asian-American Enterprise Fund and the World Bank (SWB1996c). During this visit, President Karimov inaugurated the new Uzbek Embassy building in Washington. The visit was primarily aimed to encourage U.S. investment in Uzbekistan and to make the American business community aware about the business opportunities in Uzbekistan. A number of agreements to promote economic cooperation between the two sides were signed during President Karimov’s visit to the U.S.; for example, an agreement with the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), which gave credit worth US$ 400 million to a joint venture between Uzbekneftegaz, the Uzbek State Oil and Gas Company and Enron Oil and Gas Company (U.S.) for the development of natural gas deposits in Uzbekistan (SWB 1996a). OPIC also agreed to support Uzbekneftgaz to produce lubricants under a licence from another U.S. oil company, Texaco (ibid). The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) agreed to grant Uzbekistan US$ 1 million to conduct a feasibility study for the joint production of civil aircraft in Tashkent during this visit (ibid). Assuring President Karimov that the U.S. is committed to assist Uzbekistan to reach out to the world, President Clinton during a meeting with Karimov said that the U.S. would “continue to help Uzbekistan set up strong ties with the West as well as integrate fully with the world community” (SWB 1996b). The interaction between the two sides also included human rights issues in Uzbekistan, transition to market economy and implementation of political reforms (ibid).
In November 1997, the then Uzbek Prime Minister Otkir Sultanov visited the U.S. Agriculture, communications and mining were identified as areas of potential U.S. investments. Sultanov met Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, U.S. Secretary of Energy, Federico Pena and Administrator of the International Development Cooperation Agency, Brian Atwood and others. Emphasising on the growing economic proximity between the two sides, Sultanov said,

"Uzbekistan is now the USA’s second biggest trading partner in the former Soviet Union. Annual trade turnover between the two countries now exceeded 700m dollars and direct US investment in Uzbekistan had reached 800m dollars. Joint ventures worth two billion dollars are under consideration" (SWB 1997c).

Assuring the U.S. businesspersons to invest more in the Republic, Sultanov highlighted that the Uzbek legislation had lessened U.S. investors’ risk (ibid). He also signed an agreement with the Export Import Bank for loan worth US$ 50 million for constructing a baby food factory in Uzbekistan (SWB 1997d).

Uzbekistan’s desire to move closer to the U.S. and reduce its dependence on Russia was apparent during this visit. Uzbekistan showed its interest to build pipelines bypassing Russia in line with the U.S. design in the region. Prime Minister Sultanov expressed Uzbekistan’s support for pipelines transporting Caspian oil through Georgia and Turkey to Mediterranean. He said, "we believe that this is the optimal choice which will ensure the safety of energy resources, above all for the United States. Undoubtedly, we welcome such a decision and, as far as Uzbekistan is concerned, we do not accept any other alternatives" (ibid).

President Karimov’s next visit to the U.S. was from 23 to 25 April 1999 to participate in the 50th anniversary of North Atlantic Organization (NATO). President Karimov during this visit also met then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Karl Inderfurth, World Bank President James Wolfenson, Exim-Bank President James Harmon, and International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Shigemitsu Sugisaki, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee Bill Archer and a group of Senators and Republican Senator Sam Brownback (Daly et al. 2006: 69-70).
President Karimov again went to the U.S. in September 2000 to participate in the UN Millennium Summit from 7 to 8 September 2000. In his speech at the Summit, Karimov highlighted to the delegates the grim Afghan situation and the threat it imposes to international peace and security (ibid: 70). Karimov’s words were significant as within a year from the speech the world faced the September 11 debacle. He stated that the “continuing war in Afghanistan stands as a threat to security of not only the states of the Central Asian region, but this is also a threat to the whole world” (ibid).

As part of the itinerary of this visit, President Karimov also met the then U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Since 1999, Uzbekistan has suffered terrorist attacks from extremist groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) trying to topple the Uzbek government. Strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation to fight terrorism featured prominently in the discussion during this visit (ibid: 71). The U.S. during this visit acknowledged Uzbekistan’s concern that the IMU’s “main goal is to topple the current government in Uzbekistan” (ibid). Karimov had lobbied for the U.S. to declare IMU as a terrorist organization, which finally materialised in 2000 when the U.S. blacklisted IMU as a ‘Foreign Terrorist Organisation’ (ibid). The development was a major diplomatic victory for Uzbekistan.

The first high-level visit from the United States to Uzbekistan was by the then Secretary of State James A. Baker in February 1992. It was part of his visit to Central Asia and Caucasus countries. Karimov was reported to have agreed to adhere to principles like free elections, respect for human rights, minorities and establishment of free market to ensure stronger ties with the U.S. (Friedman 1992). These declarations may be just symbolic but important. In the words of the Secretary of State Baker, “such declarations may be insincere, it is nevertheless useful to get public statements of allegiance to basic democratic principles, since it will establish a baseline against which to judge the leaders and determine the shape of American relations with them”

1 "Them" indicates the countries Baker visited in this trip: Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry visited Uzbekistan in April 1995. Both sides discussed on regional security and military cooperation (SWB 1995d). The two
sides agreed to conduct joint military exercises and laid down the “programme of joint actions envisaging re-training of national military personnel and conducting joint military exercises” (SWB 1995c).

During Perry’s visit, Uzbekistan’s tilt towards the U.S. was evident. President Karimov remarked that the U.S. “presence in Central Asia was a guarantee of stability in the region” (SWB 1995d). He further said that the U.S. presence in the region is necessary “not only to contain conflict in hot spots but also to prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the region” (ibid).

Uzbekistan’s closeness with the U.S. and unwillingness to develop closer cooperation with Russia was further reflected in Karimov’s statement that Uzbekistan harbours no design to move back to the Russian orbit (ibid). Karimov had expressed concern about Russia’s growing interest in the former Soviet republics (ibid). He said, “Uzbekistan will never turn back. We have chosen our own way of development and are not going to imitate other countries” (ibid). Uzbekistan’s desire to reduce dependence on Russia made it look for friends in the west. Emphasizing on the independent foreign policy orientation of Uzbekistan, Karimov said, “Uzbekistan had won its independence and will never forsake it----. We have declined to sign the treaty on combined CIS troops and single border troops command. In long run, it encroached on our state sovereignty” (SWB 1995b). Uzbekistan joined the NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP) in July 1994, reflecting the growing closeness between the two countries. Russia reasserting its influence in the former Soviet countries, which Karimov called “imperialist ambitions” and “chauvinist attitude” of Russia, “Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan and Tajikistan”, “continuing war” in Afghanistan, “instability” in Tajikistan and “military clashes on the Afghan-Tajik border” are threats thwarting progress of Uzbekistan (SWB 1995a). To tackle these challenges, Uzbekistan need assistance from the U.S., indicated Karimov to the Defence Secretary. The U.S. presence could facilitate the “maintenance of stability and the prevention of those threats which Uzbekistan might face”, pointed out Karimov (ibid). Moreover, political and economic reforms in Uzbekistan and few other areas where the Republic was looking forward for the U.S. assistance (ibid).
As part of this visit, Perry met his Uzbek counterpart, Major General Rustam Ahmedov. Uzbekistan in its quest to reduce its dependence on Russia welcomed the U.S. presence in the Republic with open arms. The U.S. also tried to promote cooperation with Uzbekistan, a geo-political and geo-economically important country in the region. Perry indicated the “important role” Uzbekistan play in Central Asia, which has been “highly instrumental in preventing conflicts in Tajikistan and Afghanistan” and the “United States is ready to help the Republic in every way in promoting its democratic reform and in augmenting its stability” (SWB 1995b). Praising the Republic, Perry said that Uzbekistan is “an island of stability in the roaring sea of instability” (ibid). Uzbekistan joining the NATO’s Partnership for Peace had contributed to the peace and security in the country, said Perry (ibid). The U.S. however, pressed the need for more political reforms along with progress in economic reforms.

Though the most significant visit in 1995 from the U.S. side was the visit by William Perry the visit of Perry was preceded by visit of a delegation led by Malcolm Toon, co-chairman of the US-Russian Commission on American Prisoner of Wars (PoWs) and those missing in action visited Uzbekistan on 22 February 1995. The delegation met President Karimov and representatives of the Uzbek National Security Service. The visit addressed some historical issues. Toon requested the Uzbek government to help find missing U.S. residents who could have landed in Uzbekistan during the Soviet period as a result of the Second World War, the Cold War and the wars in Korea and Vietnam (SWB 1995e). The U.S. Commission also gave the Uzbek authority information on the fate of twenty Uzbek citizens who were taken prisoner or gone missing during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (ibid).

As a mark of goodwill diplomatic gesture, the U.S. President Bill Clinton send a letter dated 4 March 1996 to President Karimov after the establishment of the Joint U.S-Uzbek Commission on conversion (SWB 1996d). President Clinton complimented Uzbekistan’s effort in maintaining stability in the region and expressed interest for “closer cooperation” between the two countries (ibid). Emphasising the strategic significance of Uzbekistan, the letter said, “because of Uzbekistan’s strategic position, it could play a key role in building a system of regional cooperation in Central Asia to
promote trade, help resolve the conflict in Tajikistan and tackle important regional issues such as drug trafficking and ecological problems" (ibid).

A U.S. delegation led by James Collins, Coordinator of the U.S. policy in the CIS visited Uzbekistan on 6 March 1996. The delegation met the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defence Minister and the Uzbek Parliament. Both sides discussed ways to promote and improve the bilateral relations (SWB 1996e).

The next important visit to Uzbekistan in 1996 was by the then U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO, Robert Hunter on 5 April. He met President Karimov and other Uzbek government officials. President Karimov stressed that “further cooperation under NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme was important for Uzbekistan, and that the U.S. delegation visit would create good preconditions for strengthening our developing relations” (SWB 1996f).

The year 1997 witnessed six high level visits from the U.S. to Uzbekistan, reflecting the growing interest on both sides to strengthen the relationship. The first of this visit was by then Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Robin Raphel who visited Uzbekistan for three days from 4 to 6 February 1997 while touring Afghanistan and Pakistan. She met President Karimov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov and other high-ranking officials of the government of Uzbekistan. Afghanistan was one issue that received the maximum attention during this visit. Both the countries share similar concerns about the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and were of the view that “Afghanistan’s territorial integrity must be maintained and the conflict must be resolved under the aegis of the United Nations through negotiations involving all factions and groups” (Uzbekistan Information Directory 1997b).

The next visit to Uzbekistan this year was by the Chairman of the House of the Ways and Means Committee, Congressman Bill Archer on May 26. Few other important visits in the month of August were by Republican Senators John McCain and Phil Gramm (14-15 August) and US Ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson (17 August) (Daly et al. 2006: 67). Senator McCain and Gramm met Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov, Defence Minister Rustam Ahmedov and other government officials (SWB
1997b). Among other things, the discussion emphasised on the situation in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, regional security and the economic reforms of Uzbekistan (ibid).

Amb. Ross Wilson, then acting Special Advisor for the Newly Independent State, accompanied Richardson during his visit. Highlights of the discussion were UN reform, regional security issues with special reference to the situation in Tajikistan, Afghanistan and the bilateral Uzbek American relations (Uzbekistan Information Directory 1997a). President Karimov during Richardson’s visit supported the UN proposal to “resume the repatriation of Tajik refugees from Afghanistan to Tajikistan through mediation of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees” (ibid). It was also agreed that Tajik refugees as designated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would be returned to Tajikistan in consonance with international norms and standards and with due respect to their security needs (ibid). UNHCR with cooperation from the Government of Uzbekistan was to arrange the details of the transit through the Uzbek territory by the refugees (ibid). Both sides expressed their willingness to cooperate and support the peace process in Tajikistan as provided in the Tajikistan Peace Accords, including the Protocol on Political Guarantees (ibid). Both sides expressed happiness on the “positive developments in Uzbek-American relations in the political, commercial/economic and other spheres” (ibid).

The most high profile visit from the U.S. side till 1997 was the visit by former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton for three days to Uzbekistan from 13 to 15 November. The visit to Uzbekistan was a part of her five-nation tour of the former Soviet Union, which included Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Russia and Ukraine. During her visit, she attended the inauguration of the Women’s Wellness Centre, established in collaboration with the American International Health Alliance, with assistance from Operation Provide Hope (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 1997). The Centre is part of the Tashkent Medical Institute, the largest medical facility in the region. She also discussed the role and status of women in Uzbekistan; health and education issues in the Republic especially that of children and women (ibid). Ms. Clinton’s visit was in general to show the U.S. support for the countries of the region and their reform efforts (ibid). Pointing at the importance of the visit, President Karimov said, “in Hillary Clinton’s visit
we see, first and foremost, Uzbekistan and America’s increasing wish to get closer to one another, to understand one another better.------ And most importantly—our countries’ increasing wish to be, first and foremost, partners, strategic partners in their relations” (SWB 1997c).

The last U.S. delegation visiting Uzbekistan in 1997 was the one day visit by a U.S. delegation led by Congressman Gerald Solomon (Republican-New York), Chairman of the House of Representatives Rules Committee on 21 November (Daly et al. 2006: 67). The delegation met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov and other officials. Congressman Solomon described Uzbekistan as “not only the key state in Central Asia but also a country of strategic importance” (SWB 1997f). The discussions focussed primarily on strengthening cooperation in areas like trade, economy and the settlement of conflicts in the region (ibid). Appreciating the development in the Republic, the delegation remarked, “Uzbekistan has gained its own reliable path of development” (SWB 1997f).

Other than the above-mentioned official visits from the U.S., Javier Solana, the NATO Secretary General visited Uzbekistan in March 1997 and had talks with Uzbek Defence Minister Rustam Ahmedov and Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov. During Secretary General’s meeting with Uzbek Foreign Minister Komilov said, “Uzbekistan, in accordance with its foreign policy regulations, would not join any military or political blocs. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan intends to cooperate actively with all security agencies, including NATO” (SWB 1997a). Both sides agreed that security would not be viewed from military perspective only and thus agreed to cooperate to deal with emergency situations, research and the implementation of environmental protection programmes (ibid). Solana pointed out that NATO would establish a “new partnership system” giving a “comprehensive foundation” for cooperation with Uzbekistan (ibid).

The year 1998 also saw several important visits from the U.S. side. Five delegations from the U.S. came to Uzbekistan in 1998. The first visit this year was a delegation led by Robert Livingston on 3 April 1998. The delegation met President Karimov, officials at the Foreign Ministry and the speaker of the Parliament. The
delegation highlighted that the relation between the two countries can be improved by increasing contacts between Uzbek Parliamentarians and the U.S. Congress (SWB 1998a). Areas of cooperation pointed out during the visit were security and economy (ibid).

Livingston’s visit was followed by Kansas Republican Senator Sam Brownback visit from 14 to 17 April. Senator Brownback later co-authored the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999. Counsellor to the Department of Commerce and Clinton Administration’s expert on Energy and Commercial Cooperation with NIS States, Jan Kalicki visited Uzbekistan on 20 April 1998. The visit saw the signing of an agreement on expanding cooperation in trade, economy, oil and gas between the two sides (SWB 1998c). Other issues discussed were cooperation in power engineering and implementation of agreements signed at the first meeting of the Uzbek-U.S. Joint Commission in Washington in February 1998 (ibid).

Military cooperation was the focus of the 2 October 1998 visit by Anthony Zinni, Central Command Commander in Chief (Daly et al. 2006: 68). At an interview with an Uzbek T.V, the U.S. Central Command Chief described his visit as “really interesting” (SWB 1998b). He said, “the developing relations between the armed forces of the USA and Uzbekistan will have good prospects for the future” (ibid). The last visit of the year to Uzbekistan was a delegation consisting of the Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for NIS States, Ambassador Stephen Sestanovich, Assistant Secretary of Defence Theodore Warner, and Acting Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State on Assistance to NIS States William Taylor from 4 to 5 November 1998.

Starting the U.S. delegation to Uzbekistan in the year 1999, Ross Wilson, Deputy Special Adviser to the U.S. Secretary of State for NIS States toured Uzbekistan from 2 to 4 February. In May, there were three U.S. delegations visiting Uzbekistan-Anthony Zinni on 17 May 1999, Jan Kalicki from 17 to 18 May and Stephen Sestanovich on 25 May.

Sestanovich participated in the Joint Uzbekistan-USA Commission held in Tashkent. In a meeting with President Karimov, both sides exchanged views on
"expansion of political and economic relations as well as favourable conditions for entrepreneurs" (SWB 1999). Sestanovich said, "relations between both countries', communities should be boosted along with inter-governmental ties" (ibid). Karimov while highlighting the importance of Uzbekistan's relation with the U.S. said, "U.S. assistance is important for strengthening Uzbekistan's independence, democracy and effective implementation of economic reforms. ---- The United States has become a major economic partner of Uzbekistan. This cooperation enhances peace and stability in Central Asia" (ibid).

Karl Inderfurth, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs visited the Republic on 19 July. Senator Richard Shelby (Republican-Albama) visited Uzbekistan on 12 November. Anthony Zinni's second visit in the same year was on 3 December 1999. There were altogether seven U.S. delegations visiting the Republic in 1999.

Out of the six visits from the U.S. side to Uzbekistan in 2000, the most high profile was the four day visit by Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright from 16 to 19 April 2000. Ms. Albright is the second U.S. Secretary of State to visit Uzbekistan; the first was by James A. Baker III in 1992 (SWB 2000). She met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulazia Komilov and other high-ranking government officials in Uzbekistan. During her meeting with President Karimov, both sides discussed various issues on peace and security, ensuring stability in the region, in particular, on broadening cooperation in tackling the menace of international terrorism and drug trafficking (ibid). Security issues featured primarily during Ms. Albright's discussion with Uzbek officials. The ongoing fighting in Afghanistan, emergence of extremist groups and drug trafficking in the region, bombings in Tashkent, intrusion into neighbouring Kyrgyzstan's southern territories by terrorists are issues that concerns the U.S. (SWB 2000b). The Secretary of State assured the Uzbek government that the U.S. would "do everything in its power to help Uzbekistan deal with such problems" (ibid). As a means to ensure peace and stability in the region, the U.S. government allocated US$ 10 million of aid to Uzbekistan, announced during Secretary of State's visit to the Republic (SWB 2000h). It was agreed that the U.S. and the Uzbek customs services would in future work together
to combat international terrorism and spread of drugs (SWB 2000i). At a speech in the Customs Committee College, Albright said,

"The United States and Uzbekistan share common interest in halting terrorism, drug trafficking and spread of weapons of mass destruction. These are direct threats to our citizens and yours. That is why the United States has been expanding its export control and border security programmes, especially in Central Asia. As part of our expanded threat reduction initiative, we have been providing pagers and other radiation detection equipment to Uzbekistan and other newly independent states" (ibid).

Before Albright’s visit, John Beyrle, Deputy to Ambassador-at-Large for NIS States, U.S. Department of State toured the Republic on 4 February. General Anthony Zinni visited Uzbekistan from 14 to 17 May, his fourth visit since 1997. Stephen Sestanovich, Theodore Warner and William Taylor again paid visit to Uzbekistan from 12 to 13 July 2000; the team earlier visited Uzbekistan in 1998. The delegation met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Komilov, Defence Minister Yuriy Agzamov and Finance Minister Rustam Azimov. Both sides “exchanged views on further developing the relations in other fields and on regional security” (SWB 2000c). Both sides acknowledged that the military cooperation between the U.S. and Uzbekistan had become “more active, and that projects that have been implemented jointly were a practical contribution by the two countries towards reinforcing peace and stability in Central Asia (SWB 2000g). The discussion also included means to development of military cooperation between the two countries in future (ibid). General Tommy Franks, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command toured the country from 27 to 28 September 2000. At the meeting with President Karimov, both sides discussed the “state and prospects of development of relations between the Uzbek and U.S. armed forces as well as issues relating to the situation in the region” (SWB 2000d).

Stephen Sestanovich paid his second visit on 7 December 2000. This was Sestanovich’s fourth visit to the Republic in the last three years. At the meeting with Sestanovich, President Karimov said that he sees “dynamism as a distinctive feature of the Uzbek-American relations and there is well grounded confidence that policies in relations will not be changed in future” (SWB 2000e). Sestanovich said, “he had held planned consultations and talks on wide range of issues, which serve the mutual interests
of both countries. In particular, special focus was placed on the further dynamic
development of the economy, politics and issues of guaranteeing security in the region”
(ibid).

Other than governmental visits, NATO Chief Robertson visited Uzbekistan as part of his five-nation tour of Central Asia in the first week of July 2000. At a meeting with Uzbek Prime Minister Otkir Sultanov, the major issues discussed were international terrorism and illegal circulation of drugs (SWB 2000f). Indicating the purpose of the visit to the media at Tashkent, Robertson said, “NATO is paying important attention to reinforcing mutual relations with Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia. Global security and above all, the threat of terrorism are our common problems and in this direction we have opportunities to cooperate with Uzbekistan” (ibid).

**DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES, 2001-2004**

After September 11 attack on the U.S. and the beginning of the “war on terror” in Afghanistan, the CARs, especially Uzbekistan became an important actor in the U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan. With Uzbekistan agreeing to lend support to the U.S., the bilateral relation reached qualitatively new heights. Diplomatic exchanges also increased substantially during the period 2001-2005. However, it is worth noting that the high level visits that took place before September 11 laid the groundwork, facilitating the U.S. to garner Uzbek support for its operation in Afghanistan. The bilateral relation during this period reached its zenith with the signing of the Strategic Partnership in 2002.

The year 2001 saw some important visits from the U.S. side to Uzbekistan before September 11 incident, which also needs to be highlighted. In April, John Beyrle, Acting Special Advisor to U.S. Secretary of State for NIS states visited the Republic as part of the delegation’s Central Asian tour (April 23). He led a delegation from the Department of State, Defence and Treasury. The delegation met President Karimov and other high-ranking officials in Uzbekistan like the Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Defence Minister etc. The discussion involved broad range of bilateral and multilateral issues of mutual interests (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2001c). Afghanistan remained a concern for both. Answering to a question during the
Press Conference, Beyrle said that “both United States and Uzbekistan share very deep interest in seeing a peaceful negotiated resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan” (ibid).

There were two visits from the U.S. side in the month of May. General Tommy Franks, U.S. CENTCOM\(^2\) Commander-in-Chief visited Uzbekistan from 18 to 19 May 2001 as part of his five nation tour. Phil English, a Congressman visited the Republic on 29 May 2001 just after General Frank’s visit. General Frank met President Karimov, Chief of the Joint Staff Gen. Tulkun Kasymov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Komilov and few other civilian and military officials like the Hokim of Samarkand Erkin Ruziev, Commander of the Central Military District Major General Ismail Ergashev and others (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2001a).

The discussion between the two sides revolved around various issues of mutual interest like bilateral military and regional security (ibid). Indicating the healthy military ties between the two countries, General Frank at a Press Conference on 18 May said-

> “the relationship between the military of the United States of America and that of the Uzbekistan remains excellent. That relationship has grown over the years and I would anticipate that it will continue to grow even stronger in the future. We will continue to work on issues such as counter-terrorism, countering the flow of narcotics across international borders, the control of contraband and smuggling. This sort of cooperation, which has characterised our relationship, will certainly continue in the future” (ibid).

Post 9/11 days marked a paradigm shift in the Uzbekistan-U.S. relationship. Uzbekistan became a frontline state in the U.S. ‘war on terror’. Uzbekistan’s proximity to the U.S. helped the two to cement their bilateral ties in the times of crisis. The first high-level visit from the U.S. after the 9/11 incident was the visit by the then Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld. He visited Uzbekistan twice-in 2001; once on 5 October and the next from 3 to 4 November 2001. By the time of Rumsfeld’s October visit, it was already clear that Uzbekistan was ready to cooperate with the U.S in its operation in Afghanistan. Indicating the Uzbek readiness to lend assistance to the U.S., Karimov said,

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\(^2\) CENTCOM is responsible for promoting peace and regional stability among the nations of Middle East, Central and South Asia and Northeast Africa. Other than promoting bilateral military relations, CENTCOM also sponsors military educational exchange programmes and provides humanitarian assistance during natural disasters and other emergencies in the countries that come under CENTCOM’s responsibility. Its headquarter is at Tampa, Florida.
"The first point is Uzbekistan grants its airspace to American aircraft and helicopters. The second point is Uzbekistan is ready to upgrade and step up cooperation between special services for the exchange of intelligence information. Uzbekistan gives its permission and gives use of one of its airfields and its facilities for the United States' aircraft and helicopters as well as for personnel employed in search and rescue operations as well as for personnel employed in search and rescue operations. At the moment there is work going on the legal document, which will formulate the mutual commitments, and obligations, and guarantees. And I would like to use this opportunity to say that we have no secret deals, no covert negotiations with the United States. As soon as this document has been formulated, it will be subject to public attention. It should be said that in the course of these three years, Uzbekistan has been witnessing the inhuman face of terror; therefore, we cannot afford standing aside, and we are taking part in this anti-terrorism operation that the international community called for" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2001d).

At a Press Conference held during this visit, Rumsfeld stressed that Uzbekistan’s relation with the U.S. is not limited to cooperation in the war efforts in Afghanistan. He said'

"the interest of the United States in Uzbekistan precedes the events of September 11. And the interest of the United States is of a long-standing relationship with this country and not something that is focussed on the immediate problem alone” (ibid).

Rumsfeld second visit in 2001 was from 3 to 4 November and he met President Karimov and personnel at the Ministry of Defence of Uzbekistan. A wide range of issues were discussed like those dealing with “development of bilateral relations between the military agencies of the Republic of Uzbekistan and of the United States” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2001e). Operation in Afghanistan was high on the agenda of the discussion between the two sides.

General Tommy Frank visited Uzbekistan thrice in 2001 (18 May, 30 October and 21 November). In the October visit, General Frank met President Karimov and few other ministers. The discussions mainly revolved around campaign against terrorism, military training and military exchange activities between the two countries (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2001b). He reiterated that the military ties between the two countries are based on “mutual benefit” (ibid). During his November visit, he met the Uzbek Defence Minister Gulyamov.
In the month of November 2001, there were six U.S. delegations visiting Uzbekistan. The first was by then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, which was followed by Lynn Pascoe, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs visit to the Republic on 7 November 2001. Andrew S. Natsios, Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), visited CARs to review the humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. As part of this visit, he spent four days (from 11 to 14 November 2001) in Uzbekistan. He met Prime Minister Otkir Sultanov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Macroeconomics and Statistics Rustam Azimov, First Deputy Foreign Minister Sadyk Safaev and other senior government officials (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2001i). The visit was used mainly to discuss different issues relating to humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and USAID programmes in Uzbekistan (ibid). Natsios visit to CARs was to facilitate “getting food and other aid into northern Afghanistan where the greatest number of people are in critical need of help. With winter approaching, it’s vitally important that we use every available means and every possible route to get aid into Afghanistan immediately” (ibid). Natsios also visited Termez in southern Uzbekistan, which shares border with Afghanistan. He met the Hokim of the region and discussed “coordination of humanitarian relief for the people of Afghanistan with the United Nations and other international organization officials” (ibid).

Two other important visits this month were by Ambassador James Dobbins, U.S. Representative to the Afghan Opposition on 18 November and Senators John Warner (Republican) and Carl Levin (Democrat) on 20 November. Levin was the Chairman of the United State Senate’s Armed Services Committee. They met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov and Minister of Defence Qodir Ghulomov.

One of the most important visits of the year 2001 was the visit by then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell on 7 December 2001, which was a part of his ten-nation tour to Europe and Eurasia. Powell’s visit marked the inauguration of the “Friendship Bridge” over the Amu Darya River to facilitate the flow of supplies into Afghanistan (The Avalon Project Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy 2001). The growing closeness between the two countries was evident in statements made by both President Karimov and the visiting U.S. Secretary of State. Echoing similar sentiments, both sides
pointed that the bilateral relation is not restricted to the Afghan crisis only and is aimed at
catering to the long-term interests of both sides. President Karimov in a Press Conference
at Tashkent on 8 December said- (ibid)

“We have just had a very open and candid exchange of views on the issues pertaining to
bilateral relations as well as to the situation with the antiterrorist operation. If you think
that we focussed our attention mainly on the situation in Afghanistan, you will be
mistaken. And it should be said that Secretary Powell revealed great knowledge of the
situation in Uzbekistan not only with regard to the Afghanistan events but also he showed
very deep knowledge on the political situation in this country, the fate of democratic
reforms, and the events in the fields of economy and human rights and have this conflux
of questions of mutual interest, the issues which are of interest for both countries and
where Uzbekistan can be duly criticized. ---As a result of these negotiations we arrived at
the complete understanding of the number of issues and most importantly pertaining to
the issue of anti-terrorist operations”.

Powell in the same Press Conference stressed that U.S. looks for long-term
relationship with Uzbekistan. He said- (ibid)

“that our interests in Uzbekistan and in this region go far beyond the current crisis in
Afghanistan. In the months ahead, we look forward to deepening and widening our
relationship with Uzbekistan on security issues, on economic issues, issues of political
democratization and human rights, and we had a very full exchange of views on all of
these matters”.

The year 2002 marked the highest number of delegations visiting Uzbekistan
from the U.S. side. Altogether twenty-five U.S. delegations visited Uzbekistan in 2002,
highest till today. Out of these twenty five visits, six alone were in the month of January.
The month also saw the signing of the Framework Agreement on 27 January between the
two sides.

Starting this year's visit, Zalmay Khalilzad, President's aide for regional issues
and special envoy to Afghanistan paid a visit to Uzbekistan on 5 January. A nine-member
U.S. delegation led by Senator Joseph Lieberman (Democrat-Connecticut) and Senator
John McCain (Republican -Arizona) visited the Republic on 6 January. The other
members of the team included Jack Reed, (Democrat, Rhode Island), Susan M.Collins,
(Republican-Maine), Fred Thomspson (Republican-Tennessee), John Edwards
(Democrat-North Carolina), Chuck Hagel (Republican-Nebraska), Bill Nelson
(Democrat- Florida) and Jean Carnahan (Democrat-Missouri) (Embassy of United States
in Uzbekistan 2002w). The delegation met President Karimov and other senior
government officials in Uzbekistan.
Another delegation in January of 2002 was the six-member Congressmen delegation led by Representative Jim Kolbe (Republican-Arizona) from 12 to 13 January. His entourage included Jack Kingston (Republican-Georgia), Maurice Hinchey (Democrat-New York), Roger Wicker (Republican-Mississippi), John Sununu (Republican-New Hampshire) and Earl Pomeroy (Democrat-North Dakota) (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002p). The Congressional delegation met high-ranking Uzbek government officials like Prime Minister Otkir Sultanov, Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov and Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov (ibid). The delegation also interacted with Uzbek human rights activists (ibid).

Senator Tom Daschle (South Dakota-Democrat), the Majority Leader of the United States Senate visited Uzbekistan from 13 to 17 January 2002. He led a high level delegation comprising of Senators Bob Smith (Republican-New Hampshire), Byron Dorgan (Democrat-North Dakota), Richard Durbin (Democratic-Illinois), Senator Mark Dayton (Democrat-California) and member of the House of Representatives Ellen Tauscher (Democrat-California) (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002x). The delegation met President Karimov and Foreign Minister Abdulazia Komilov to discuss several bilateral and multilateral issues (ibid). On 18 January, Daschle at a Press Conference stated that the primary reasons for the Congress delegation's visit to Uzbekistan were to assess the U.S. operations in Central Asia and to better "understand the military and diplomatic progress" that have taken place. With Uzbekistan does not end with the completion of military operation in Afghanistan. Daschle also expressed similar sentiments like other visiting delegations that the U.S. cooperation (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002l). Outlining the U.S. policy in the region Daschle made few observations.

"First, the military success is the beginning, not the end of U.S. effort in the region. Second, the U.S. is apprehensive of leaving a void in Afghanistan in particular but in the region as well. It is very important to recognize that should that void ever be created, we could be right back to where we were six months ago. Third, in an effort to ensure that a void is never created in Afghanistan, it is essential to lend support and assistance to the people and the government of Afghanistan as is practical. It ought not to be done unilaterally. It must be done in concert with the nations that have already been involved, but it must be done. We would hope that some level of immediate economic and technical assistance could be made available to the people and the government of Afghanistan. It is sorely
needed. Fourth, we believe that our country will recognize that our presence and our relationship with the people of Uzbekistan and the countries in the region is one that we look upon in long terms, not simply in immediate terms and a recognition of the importance of our relationship in the long term is critical to our success in this region” (ibid).

During the delegation’s interaction with the Uzbek government officials they pointed out the U.S. concern for human rights situation and economic and political reforms in the Republic, which were still in bad shape. Senator Daschle said,

“The independence of Uzbekistan has now been nearly one decade. We recognize that in that period of time there has been some progress. The US hopes that Uzbekistan will continue to find ways to assure the world community that they will build upon the progress that has been made thus far. A lot of work is still to be done” (ibid).

Senator Smith, who was a part of Daschle’s entourage while answering a query on U.S.-Uzbek economic cooperation said,

“Uzbekistan is rich in oil and gas and there are opportunities for our two countries to have economic cooperation in the future. That would be in the long run. In the short term, we are grateful for the cooperation of Uzbekistan, by providing us the military installation for our troops to use in the operation in Afghanistan which has been beneficial to both our countries” (ibid).

General Tommy Franks, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command visited the Republic from 21 to 25 January 2002. He met President Karimov, Uzbek Defence Minister Qodir Ghulomov and other high-level government officials and discussed various bilateral and multilateral issues. Addressing a Press conference at Tashkent, he pointed out that though the campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan is successful largely but it would take time to destroy all the bases of terror in Afghanistan (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002k). He ruled out the possibility of U.S. permanent military base in Uzbekistan or in any other CARs (ibid). The visit led to the signing of the military cooperation document between the U.S. Central Command and Uzbek Ministry of Defence. The military cooperation between the two sides would involve military-to-military exchanges, education and security assistance (ibid). General Franks again visited Uzbekistan from 22 to 23 August.

One of the most important visits in the month of January was by then Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Elizabeth Jones and Deputy
Assistant Secretary of Defence Mira Ricardel to Uzbekistan in the end of January, i.e.
from 28 to 29 January 2002. At a Press Conference on 29 January, Assistant Secretary
Jones briefed on the Joint Security Consultations held in Tashkent during the delegation’s
visit to Uzbekistan. Outlining the main features of the Joint Security Consultations, she
said,

“Although we call this Joint Security Cooperation Consultations, we include
under security everything that has to do with the well being of a nation. That
includes not only the military-to-military relations with Uzbekistan, but also all
aspects of finance, trade, economic relations. Because, after all, a country cannot
have security without its population having jobs and being able to take care of its
children, to take care of its citizens and their families. The security of a country
also includes democracy and human rights. Because, after all, a country cannot be
secure unless the people of the country believe that they have a free choice in the
leadership of that country” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002e).

She also appreciated the Uzbek initiative to work closely with IMF and
implement IMF guidelines in future. She reiterated that the United States would extend
support to Uzbekistan to meet the challenges that come in the way to introduce reforms
(ibid).

Echoing similar sentiment, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence Ricardel said,
“we value highly Uzbekistan’s cooperation and support in Operation Enduring Freedom.
This support has been instrumental to the success of the operation” (ibid). The visit,
Ricardel said, assessed the “current status of the military-to-military relationship and also
chalked out the future direction of security relationship” (ibid). The visit saw the
establishment of an U.S.-Uzbekistan Bilateral Working Group, headed by senior level
officials from the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defence and the Uzbek Ministry of
Defence (ibid). The Group would look after cooperation, including “focusing U.S.
security assistance to Uzbekistan” (ibid). Ricardel stressed that the U.S. interest in
maintaining “long term security and stability of Uzbekistan” and both sides would
“continue to develop bilateral defence and security ties through military-to-military
engagement plans, exercises and training” (ibid).

General Richard B. Meyers, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff visited
Uzbekistan from 19 to 20 February 2002, which was his first visit to the Republic after
assuming office. The General met President Karimov, Defence Minister Kodir Gulomov and Chief of Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan Colonel-General Tulkun Kasymov and other government officials (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002a). General Myers pointed out that the bilateral relationship is a “qualitatively new relationship today than it was even six or seven or eight months ago. There is much closer collaboration on security issues” (ibid). The discussion was primarily focussed on the general security environment in Uzbekistan, security scenario in Afghanistan and the region and the future of bilateral military-to-military cooperation (ibid).

The next visit this year was a nine-member U.S. Congressional delegation led by David Hobson (Republican-Ohio) that visited Uzbekistan from 1 to 5 March 2002. The other members of the delegation were Edward Royce (Republican-California), John Oliver (Democrat-Massachusetts), Sheila Jackson Lee (Democrat-Texas), Thomas Allen (Democrat-Maine), Harold Ford, Jr (Democrat Tennessee) and Robert (Robin) Hayes (Republican-North Carolina), Robert Ney (Republican-Ohio) and Mike Rogers (Republican-Michigan) (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002q). The delegation met the Uzbek Minister of Defence Qodir Ghulomov and the discussion was mainly on bilateral security and defence issues (ibid).

Another U.S. Congressional delegation visited Uzbekistan from 24 to 26 March 2002. Senator Richard Shelby (Republican-Alabama), who is also Vice-Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, led the delegation. Other members were Senator Bill Nelson (Democrat-Florida) and Representative Bud Cramer (Democrat-Alabama). The three-member delegation met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov and Defence Minister Qodir Ghulomov. Illegal drug trafficking, war on terrorism and international assistance to rebuild Afghanistan were the main issues discussed during the meetings (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002r).

A team of U.S. Congressmen led by Representatives Dana Rohrabacher (Republican-California) visited Uzbekistan from 2 to 5 April 2002. The entourage consisted of Representative Martin Meehan (Democrat-Massachusetts), Jim Gibbons (Republican-Nevada), Silvestre Reyes (Democrat-Texas), Todd Platts (Republican-
Pennsylvania), Adam Schiff (Democrat-California), Ed Schrock (Republican-Virginia), Bill Shuster (Republican-Pennsylvania) and Jeff Miller (Republican-Florida) (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002s). The delegation met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov and Defence Minister Qodir Ghulomov and discussed a wide range of security and defence issues of mutual interest (ibid). Another visit this month was on 22 April by Zalmay Khalilzad, his second visit this year.

A ten member U.S. Congressional delegation led by Representative Curt Weldon (Republican-Pennsylvania) visited Uzbekistan from 27 to 28 May 2002. The team consisted of Representatives Solomon Ortiz (Democrat-Texas), Roscoe Bartlett (Republican-Maryland), Sylvestre Reyes (Democrat-Texas), Joe Wilson (Republican-South Carolina), Corrine Brown (Democrat-Florida), Alcee Hastings (Democrat-Florida), Carrie Meek (Democrat-Florida) and Brian Kerns (Republican-Indiana). The delegation met President Karimov. Security and defence were the main issues dealt by the two sides.

The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Lorne Craner visited Uzbekistan on 7 June. His meetings during this trip included Prime Minister Otkir Sultanov, State Advisor for Law Enforcement Bodies and Activities Tursunkhon Khudoybergenov, General Procurator Rashit Qodirov, Minister of Justice Abdusamad Polvon Zoda, Minister of Internal Affairs Zokirjon Almatov, First Deputy Foreign Minister Sodiq Safaev and leaders of the human rights organizations working in Uzbekistan (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002o). The discussions were mainly centred on human rights, democratic reform, freedom of speech and establishing a civil society in the Republic (ibid).

The U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lynn Pascoe visited Uzbekistan from 13 to 16 June 2002. He met Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Komilov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Macroeconomics and Statistics Rustam Azimov, Secretary of the National Security Council Mirakbar Rakhmankulov and Chairman of the Board of the Uzbekistan Muslim’s Organization, Mufti Abdurashid Bakhromov (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002v). He also met with Uzbek human rights activist (ibid). Pascoe described the bilateral relationship in the following words—“the
close cooperation in the war against terrorism has changed the nature of the relationship between the U.S. and Uzbekistan quite dramatically" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002i). Since the war on terror, human rights issues and political and economic reforms have often been sidelined while dealing with Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, the visiting delegation from the U.S. has raised the issues with Uzbekistan from time to time. Pascoe emphasised that the cooperation for the war on terrorism has not changed the U.S. position on the need to bring “changes in Uzbek society” and introduce political and economic reforms (ibid). With regard to the U.S. economic assistance to Uzbekistan, Pascoe said,

“The secret to economic development in the modern world is to figure out how to use the global economy to best aid you and your people. So, when we are talking about assistance, when we are talking about cooperation, when we are talking about economic reforms, our interest is not to put some aid into this part of the economy or that part of the economy. We are talking about how you re-orient an economy so it can make maximum use of the international wealth that’s out there” (ibid).

Again, a delegation of seven U.S. Congressmen led by Representative Duncan Hunter (Republican-California) was in Uzbekistan from 29 to 30 June 2002. Other members of the delegation were Jim Saxton (Republican-New Jersey), Bob Etheridge (Democrat-North Carolina), Shelley Moore Capito (Republican-West Virginia), Jo Ann Davis (Republican-Virginia), Susan Davis (Democrat-California) and Darrell Issa (Republican-California). The delegation met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov and Defence Minister Qodir Ghulomov to discuss a wide range of security and defence issues of mutual interest (Embassy of the United States in Uzbekistan 2002t).

The U.S. Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill visited Uzbekistan from 16 to 17 July 2002. He met President Karimov and Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan and other government officials. The discussion mainly revolved around bilateral and regional issues. Both sides also discussed Uzbekistan’s “commitment to fulfil the IMF Monitoring Programme” and expressed satisfaction that Uzbekistan has been able to attain most of the commitments as indicated in the Programme (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002b). Both shares a “very strong partnership and it’s certainly been strengthened by our
work together since September 11”, said the Secretary (ibid). He also indicated that there is a need to provide opportunity for more American investors to “become familiar with the opportunities” in Uzbekistan (ibid).

Another visit in the month of July 2002 was by the President of the American Bar Association, Robert Hirshon on 8 July. The delegation also included other members of the American Bar Association/Central and Eastern European Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) Executive Board and the Executive Director of the Organization. ABA/CEELI in association with the USAID is engaged in facilitating legal reforms in Uzbekistan (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002c). The delegation met judicial and court personnel in Uzbekistan (ibid).

The first visit in the month of August was by General Peter Pace, Vice-Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, who is the second highest-ranking military officer in the U.S. Armed Forces from 8 to 10 August 2002. During his visit, General Pace met with Uzbek President Islam Karimov, Minister of Defence Qodir Ghulomov and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002z). The discussions covered a wide range of bilateral military and regional security issues of mutual interest (ibid). As a goodwill gesture, the General participated at the ceremony to return Mukhouddin Umurdinov’s lost medal of Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union to his son3 (ibid).

Amb. William Taylor, State Department Coordinator for the U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia leading the delegation of the U.S. government and NGO representatives visited Uzbekistan from 22 to 26 August. The other visit in August was by General Tommy R. Franks from 22 to 23 August. Calling the visit as a routine visit to the region, General pointed out that the purpose of the visit was to “talk about the great support that our coalition has received to do our work in Afghanistan, and to discuss military-to-military relationships between our own military and militaries of the various countries here in Central Asia” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002j). Answering to questions regarding the timeline of the U.S. base at Khanabad, the General

3 Umurdinov was a Soviet war hero who participated in World War II. He was from the Ferghana region of Uzbekistan who received the title in 1943. The stolen medal was bought by U.S. collector Henry Sakayda.
categorically pointed out that the U.S. has “no document with Uzbekistan for a long-term military presence in the region” (ibid). He said, the “purpose for having basing, staging and over flight in the region is Operation Enduring Freedom” (ibid). However, he stressed that the military-to-military ties between the CARs and the U.S. will continue to develop in future (ibid).

An eleven member bipartisan delegation of the U.S. House of Representatives led by Representative Peter Hoekstra (Republican-Michigan) visited Uzbekistan from 22 to 23 August. The other team members are James Barcia (Democrat-Michigan), John Shadegg (Republican-Arizona), Mike McIntyre (Democrat-North Carolina), Jerry Moran (Republican-Kansas), Bob Schaffer (Republican-Colorado), Mark Green (Republican-Wisconsin), Rush Holt (Democrat-New Jersey), Ken Lucas (Democrat-Kentucky), Paul Ryan (Republican-Wisconsin) and Patrick Toomey (Republican-Pennsylvania). The delegation met the Uzbek President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov and Defence Minister Qodir Ghulomov. The discussions were on a wide range of issues including the “war on terrorism and political and social issues- everything from education to human rights, economic development, and economic assistance and the process by which we gain and move towards a stable regime and stable government in rebuilding Afghanistan” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002j). Hoekstra remarked that the U.S. is “committed to the rebuilding of Afghanistan. We are committed to continued economic and political reform in Uzbekistan. We very much look forward to building an enhanced relationship with this president and with the people of Uzbekistan” (ibid). Reiterating Congressman Hoekstra’s sentiment, Congressman Barcia also emphasised that the U.S. presence in the region will be long-term (ibid).

Robert Kennedy, the Director of the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, USA, visited Uzbekistan from 9 to 10 September 2002. He met the Minister of Defence, Qodir Gulyamov, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sadyk Safaev, the Director of the Institute for Strategic Studies, Ravshan Alimov and German diplomats (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002z1).
The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Democracy Lorne Craner visited Uzbekistan on 8 November 2002. This was his second visit in 2002. The November visit included meetings with Prime Minister Sultanov, Foreign Minister Kamilov and Justice Minister Polvonzoda, officials in the Interior Ministry, some Uzbek human rights activists and independent journalists (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002f). He pointed out that though the bilateral relation since September 11 have “improved dramatically” and appreciate Uzbekistan’s support to the U.S. in its war efforts but the U.S. “will not sacrifice its long-term commitment to protect human rights for short-term political expediency” (ibid). He indicated that the human rights situation in Uzbekistan is poor but also pointed out that few developments that have taken place, which gives hope for better situation and the reason to continue to talk further (ibid). These developments are allowing the Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit Uzbekistan, the registration of a human rights group in the early part of 2002 and the formal lifting of censorship (ibid).

Another significant visit this year was the visit by Dr. William Lash-III, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Market Access and Compliance on 20 November 2002. The visit was to follow up on the commitment made by both countries while signing the Declaration of Strategic Partnership to work with the Uzbek government, entrepreneurs, and the U.S. companies doing business in Uzbekistan (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002g). He met Prime Minister Sultanov, Deputy Prime Ministers Ganiev Azimov and Ismailov and both Uzbek and American business people in Uzbekistan (ibid). Lash stressed the importance of Uzbekistan cooperating with the IMF, promoting economic reforms, the importance of working with the business community to improve the economic and business environment in Uzbekistan (ibid). The U.S. delegation discussed issues of transparency and the rule of law with the Uzbek authorities; also stressed the importance of convertibility of currency, cancelling the tariffs introduced in 2001, and narrowing the spread of the official exchange rate and the over-the-counter rate (ibid). The U.S. Department of Market Access for Commerce Access and Compliance expanded its programmes substantially in Uzbekistan, announced Dr. Lash (ibid).
The U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agriculture Affairs, Alan Larson paid a visit to Uzbekistan on 13 December 2002. He met President Karimov and Minister for Macroeconomics and Statistics Rustam Azimov. The visit was primarily to “promote economic reforms in Uzbekistan, discuss bilateral economic cooperation and to develop a dialogue with representatives of the U.S. and Uzbek business community” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002d). Under Secretary Larson indicated that the U.S. “values its relationship with Uzbekistan and that both countries have an interest in promoting regional cooperation for the future of a stronger and a more prosperous Central Asian region” (ibid). Answering to the question raised at the Press Conference at Tashkent as to the level of economic reforms achieved in Uzbekistan and whether the level of reforms affect the U.S. aid and economic relations with Uzbekistan, the Under Secretary said,

“The country is in the middle of a very difficult post-socialist reform programme. We know from other parts of the former Soviet Union and the countries of Central Europe that reforming the institutions of an entire society never is an easy task. One of the points that we have made today was to stress the importance of moving forward and not retreating or deviating from the path of moving towards a market economy. The United States has been increasing its assistance to Uzbekistan over the last few years. The stronger the reform effort is here, the more successful we will be, both in convincing the Congress to support economic assistance and in shaping assistance policies that can reinforce and support economic reform measures” (ibid).

Other than government officials visiting Uzbekistan, the year 2002 saw a non-official visit. Imam Yahya Hendi, the Islamic Chaplain at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. visited Uzbekistan from 21 to 23 June 2002. He participated in a series of programmes sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan. He spoke at the Islamic State University in Tashkent and interacted with alumni from the U.S. government sponsored academic exchange programmes (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2002h). He met the heads of local NGOs, religious leaders and others in Ferghana, Andijan and Kokand (ibid). It was Imam Hendi’s second visit to Uzbekistan; the earlier was in February 2001 where he participated at a conference on Islam and Modern Society sponsored by the U.S. Embassy at Tashkent (ibid). Yahya’s visit reflected the diverse nature of the U.S. diplomatic exchanges with Uzbekistan.

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4 The Georgetown University is the first American University to have a full-time Muslim Chaplain.
After a long gap, a high level visit from the Uzbek side to the U.S. took place in March 2002. President Karimov paid his first official State visit to the U.S. from 11 to 14 March 2002. He met then President George Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other U.S. officials. During the meeting with Karimov, President Bush with regard to human rights issues said that the U.S. is “not going to teach” (Daly et al. 2006: 79). Bush’s words indicate some sort of softness on the issue from the U.S. side as a reward for Uzbekistan’s contribution to the U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan. Karimov’s visit led to the signing of five agreements (ibid: 79-80). The most significant development of the visit was the signing of a five-point Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework by the Uzbek Foreign Minister Kamilov and the U.S. Secretary of State Collin Powell (Aliyev 2002). It was reported that before Karimov’s visit, human rights activists have urged the U.S. administration to put pressure on the Uzbek government to improve its human rights records (ibid). Karimov kept the visit a low profile affair, “apparently out of a desire to keep controversy over Uzbekistan’s human rights record to a minimum” (ibid).

The first visit from the U.S. side in the year 2003 was made by then Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Elizabeth Jones for one day on 24 January. Her earlier visit to the Republic was in January 2002. Her interaction with the Uzbek government officials included President Karimov, Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov, Interior Minister Almatov and Defence Minister Kadyr Gulyamov, which included various issues pertaining to economy, human rights and security. At the Press Conference, the visiting Assistant Secretary pointed out that the purpose of the visit “was to review all of that are on the agenda between the United States and Uzbekistan particularly since we signed the Strategic Framework document” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003e). Answering to the question regarding the security cooperation between the two countries, Jones said, “we define the support that we have for Uzbekistan’s security as including not only military work that we do together but also economic and political reform” (ibid).

A delegation of six U.S. Congressmen led by Representative Michael “Mac” Collins (Republican-Georgia) visited Uzbekistan from 15 to 16 February 2003. Collins
entourage consisted of Bill Pascrell (Democrat-New Jersey), Terry Everett (Republican-Alabama), Michael Capuano (Democratic-Massachusetts) and Joe Wilson (Republican-South Carolina). The delegation met the Uzbek Minister of Defence, Kadir Gulamov. Both sides highlighted the “positive effects the U.S. military forces are having on the security in the region” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003i).

Ambassador Bill Taylor, Coordinator for the U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasian and Special Representative for Donor Assistance to Afghanistan, visited Uzbekistan from 15 to 16 May 2003. Ambassador Taylor met Foreign Minister Sadyk Safaev, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Relations Elyor Ganiev, Deputy Prime Minister for Uzbek Roads Rustam Yunusov and Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Economy Rustam Azimov to “discuss the on-going reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003b). Ambassador Taylor expressed the U.S. interest was “to look ahead for further collaboration to reconstruct Afghanistan” (ibid).

One of the significant visits of the year 2003 was that of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe on 5 June. He met Uzbek government officials like Minister of Interior Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister Ganiev, Ministry of Defence Gulamov and people working on human rights issues. Pascoe pointed out the U.S. concern with the human rights situation in Uzbekistan but at the same time also appreciated the steps already taken by the Uzbek government (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003d).

Three U.S. delegations visited the Republic in August 2003. On 13 August 2003, the U.S. Central Command Commander General Abizaid visited the country. This was his first official visit to Uzbekistan. He had meetings with President Karimov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sadik Safaev and Minister of Defence Major-General Kadyr Gulyamov and discussed a wide range of issues like bilateral cooperation and regional security (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003h). The U.S. Senator Richard G. Lugar (Republican-Indiana), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a senior U.S. lawmaker visited Uzbekistan from 18 to 19 August 2003. Senator Lugar’s visit was primarily to “discuss a range of bilateral and multilateral issues, including
non-proliferation and arms control" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003f). The delegation met senior government officials of Uzbekistan including President Karimov and Foreign Minister Safaev.

A delegation of five Congressmen led by Representative Curt Weldon (Republican-Pennsylvania), visited Uzbekistan from 27 to 28 August 2003. Representative Weldon’s entourage consisted of Solomon Ortiz (Democratic-Texas), Silvestre Reyes (Democratic-Texas), Nydia Velazquez (Democratic-New York) and Corrine Brown (Democratic-Florida). The visit was also to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues with senior government officials of Uzbekistan including President Karimov and Foreign Minister Sodik Safaev (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003j). The delegation also met Speaker of the Parliament, Erkin Halilov.

Stephen M. Minikes, the U.S. Ambassador to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) visited Uzbekistan from 18 to 19 September 2003. In addition to the various bilateral and multilateral issues, Uzbekistan’s role in OSCE was also discussed between the two sides. He said,

"The purpose of my visit is to listen to broadest range of opinions of what is happening with the primary focus being on the areas that are within the OSCE’s mandate. Those being of course the human dimension, human rights, the rule of law, civil society, economic development, economic dimension and environmental dimension. And of course security dimension although that is not a principal focus of this particular trip. What makes this trip particularly encouraging to be here is that Uzbekistan is a country with which we enjoy very fine relationship. But there are also many important issues where we need to work on and where progress is an essential ingredient also of the US-Uzbek relationship" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003g).

Like other U.S. officials visiting the Republic, Amb Minikes also expressed similar sentiments regarding human rights situation that Uzbekistan is gradually making progress in human rights (ibid). The other visit from the U.S. side in the month of September (from 8 to 9 September 2003) was undertaken by then newly appointed Director of the George C. Marshall European Centre of Security Studies, Dr. John Rose (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003c).
The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M Veneman visited Uzbekistan for a day on 10 November 2003 to discuss bilateral issues concerning agriculture (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003k). She visited local agricultural initiatives at Samarkand. She met Uzbek government officials like Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the Agency for Foreign Economic Relations Elyor Ganiev, Governor of Samarkand region Shavkat Mirziyaev, Deputy Governor of Samarkand region Nozir Ibragimov (ibid).

The Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, Elizabeth Jones and Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Lorne Craner visited Uzbekistan from 7 to 11 November 2003. The delegation had meetings with President Karimov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sodiq Safaev, Minister of Internal Affairs, Zokirjon Almatov, Minister of Justice, Abdusamat Polvan Zoda and Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov. The visit by Ms. Jones and Mr. Craner was mainly to “take stock of how we (the U.S.) are doing in promoting each of those issues but also to press hard for continued progress in each of the areas that is addressed in the Strategic Framework Document” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2003a). Ms. Jones further pointed out the progress made in Uzbek-US relations- “The important point for us is that we are able to see progress in each of these areas and we have a very clear roadmap, very clear sense of how to achieve progress on the remaining elements of the Document” (ibid). Their discussion varied from issues like human rights, democracy, economy, U.S. military base in Uzbekistan etc. Speaking of importance of Uzbekistan in the overall U.S. security structure, Ms. Jones said,

“Uzbekistan occupies, by virtue of its geography, a strategic position in the continent. But more importantly, because of its reliability, because of its desire to work in a collaborative way with the United States, it has enhanced its strategic importance in the region. But as much as we appreciate our ability to use Karshi Khanabad airbase, it is extremely important to the United States as well that we be able to work with Uzbekistan to enhance political and human rights priorities and behaviour, and to work collaboratively with Uzbekistan to develop a prosperous economically viable country in which people have jobs and have good economic prosperity. And we have been heartened by the progress that’s been made as Assistant Secretary Craner mentioned, it was very good policy for Uzbekistan to invite the UN Rapporteur on Torture to come to investigate the situation with torture. Uzbekistan has now developed a work plan and its working vigorously on that work plan. The same goes for the economic sphere where
convertibility has now been accomplished. There is still any number of very serious threats in the region from narcotics, from terrorism, from weapons, trafficking in persons and all of those need to be addressed and we think we have good partner in working on many of these issues with Uzbekistan” (ibid).

At a Press Conference in Tashkent, Assistant Secretary Jones while answering the reasons behind calling Uzbekistan an “area of strategic vital interests” said,

-“Partly because of its physical position but more because of its attitude we are able to work with Uzbekistan to counter the numerous threats that we see in the world. We have programs that are focused on countering terrorism, on working against narcotics, trafficking, trying to assure against trafficking in persons, programmes like that, because so much travels through and across Uzbekistan because of its physical position. But at the same time there can be no future, no prospective for that kind of cooperation without there being an increased ability of the people of Uzbekistan to have a say in the future. We think that is a critical element of stability. Not only in terms of political choice and political participation but also in terms of jobs, which requires job creation, it requires investment, it requires improving the investment climate, it requires improving the ability to deal in commercial terms along international norms. So that’s why we include in our strategic Framework all of those issues because they all together formed a strategic relationship. It’s not a one-issue relationship” (ibid).

Altogether twelve U.S. delegations visited Uzbekistan in 2004. The first visit from the U.S. side in this year was by Ambassador Carlos Pascual, Coordinator for the U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia and USAID Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia Kent Hill on 6 February 2004. As part of their tour to four countries of Central Asia, the delegation reviewed the U.S. assistance efforts in Central Asia. In their two days visit to Uzbekistan they interacted with a wide range of people in the Republic. In Namangan they met the Regional Governor Tulkun Jabborov, participants of the U.S. government exchange programmes and NGOs working on various USAID finance, agriculture and democracy programmes (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004b).

In Tashkent, the delegation met the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economics Rustam Azimov, Uzbek Foreign Minister Sadik Safaev and Deputy Chairman of the Agency for Foreign Economic Relations Hasan Islamhodjaev (ibid). Apart from meeting officials, the delegation interacted with the graduates of Tashkent’s State Law Institute Human Rights Clinic (ibid). Amb. Pascual in a Press Conference mentioned that the purpose of the visit as “an opportunity to assess the progress the countries are making towards opening their economies and political systems. And it that context it helps us to
make judgements about how the United States can best support the process of promoting a more open and competitive political and economics” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004a).

Uzbekistan's poor performance in improving the human rights situation and political and economic reforms became a concern for the U.S. Answering a question posed by Internews- whether the U.S. is going to reduce investments in Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan, Amb. Pascual said that the recent legislation passed by the U.S. Congress has a special provision on Uzbekistan. It specifies that before the U.S. “can provide assistance to the Central Government (emphasise on Central Government of Uzbekistan), we must determine that there has been progress in implementing the Strategic Framework Agreement between the U.S. and Uzbekistan. And the legislation places a special emphasis on issues related to human rights, democracy and political institutions” (ibid).

The second visit in 2004 was made by the U.S. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld on 24 February as part of his official travel to the region. The U.S. delegation led by Secretary Rumsfeld met President Karimov and Uzbek Minister of Defence. He said,

“our relationship is strong and has been growing stronger.----- we have a Framework of Strategic Partnership, which involves military-to-military relationships and also we look forward to strengthening our political and economic relationships. So, one road, one path towards that end is the NATO Partnership For Peace Programme. The relationship between our two countries is important to us, and we certainly value the friendship of Uzbekistan and the people of Uzbekistan and are grateful for the stalwart, steadfast support in our efforts against terrorism” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004d).

In April 2004, three delegations from the U.S. visited the Republic. Representatives David Dreier, McCarthy, Napolitano visited Uzbekistan from 4 to 5 April 2004. The delegation led by Representative Dreier reviewed the “U.S. regional security presence, including the on-going operations in Afghanistan. The delegation discussed relevant regional political and security issues, as well as bilateral trade relations” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004c). The U.S. Commanding General of the Combined Forces Command for Afghanistan, Lieutenant General Barno
visited Uzbekistan on 13 April to discuss the Republic's support for the war on terror (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004f). He met Minister of Defence Kodir Gulomov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sodyk Safaev and National Security Council Secretary Ruslan Mirzaev (ibid). The Secretary of U.S. Air Force, Dr. James G. Roche paid a visit to Uzbekistan on 14 April.

Another important visit this year was by the then Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Elizabeth Jones on 14 July. She met President Islam Karimov and Uzbek Foreign Minister Sodiq Safaev and participated in roundtable discussions regarding civil society in Uzbekistan. The discussions revolved around variety of bilateral and multilateral issues—economy, human rights, security, and democracy (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004h). In the month of July, another delegation from the U.S. side toured Uzbekistan. The U.S. Central Command Commander General Abizaied visited Uzbekistan from 25 to 26 July and interacted with senior Uzbek government officials like Minister of Defence Kadyr Gulyamov and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sadik Safaev. This was his second visit to the Republic; the earlier was in August 2003.

The U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers visited Uzbekistan from 11 to 12 August. General Myers met President Karimov and senior Uzbek Government officials like Minister of Defence Kadyr Gulyamov and Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov and discussed wide range of issues relating to bilateral cooperation and regional security (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004e).

The month of November in 2004 saw three U.S. delegations visiting the Republic. The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Market Access and Compliance William H. Lash III visited Uzbekistan from 11 to 13 November 2004. He had meetings with Foreign Minister Safaev, Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Economic Relations Ganiev, Head of Foreign Investment Relations for the Cabinet of Ministers Rozukulov, First Deputy Minister of the Economy Saidova, and First Deputy Chairman for the State Property Committee Yakovlev and interacted with members of the American Chamber of
Commerce in Uzbekistan. The main highlight of the visit was to discuss the bilateral economic relationship (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004).

The next visit in November was by the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary Laura E. Kennedy for European and Eurasian Affairs from 15 to 20 November. The third visit in November was by acting Assistant Secretary of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Ambassador Michael G. Kozak from 16 to 18 November. He met President Karimov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Safaev, Minister of Internal Affairs Almatov, Minister of Justice Zoda, General Prosecutor Kodirov, Chief of the Investigations Directorate Sharafutdinov, Chairman of the National Human Rights Centre Saidov and Central Election Commission Chairman Buritosh. He also interacted with the leaders of the five registered political parties, leaders of independent political parties, human rights activities and non-governmental organizations. His itinerary also included meeting with Namangan Regional Governor Najmiddinov and Andijon Regional Governor Begaliev. In Namangan, he also met human rights activists and independent candidates of the Parliamentary elections. Ambassador Kozak wanted to discuss the Parliamentary election that was scheduled for December 2004. The U.S. was “concerned about the lack of competition in the Parliamentary election” and discussed the “need of opposition to participate” in the election. He also discussed with the Uzbek Government on the steps taken to deal with torture and suggested the opportunity for “further Uzbek-U.S. cooperation in introducing habeas corpus (judicial supervision of detention) and establishing independent mechanisms to investigate police abuse” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2004g). The last visit this year was by a U.S. Congressional delegation led by Representative Mike Pence from 12 to 13 December 2004.

BILATERAL VISITS, 2005-2009

The Turbulent Period, 2005-2007

The Uzbekistan-U.S. relation was at its peak after 9/11, especially in the years following the beginning of the U.S. led operation in Afghanistan. However, gradually discontent between the two became apparent, which exploded after the Andijan incident and the
subsequent closure of the U.S. military base at K2. As the relationship deteriorated, bilateral diplomatic exchanges also were substantially cut down.

In 2005, there were only two visits from the U.S. side whereas even in 2004 there were twelve delegations from the U.S. that visited the Republic. On 29 May 2005, Senator John McCain (Republican Arizona), Senator Lindsey Graham (Republican South Carolina) and Senator John Sununu (Republican, New Hampshire) visited Uzbekistan on a self-appointed fact-finding mission (Daly et al. 2006: 98). This was the first visit by U.S. officials after the much-criticised Andijan incident. The Uzbek displeasure with the U.S. was evident as no Uzbek government officials met the visiting U.S. delegation (ibid). McCain in a press conference at Tashkent on 29 May criticized the Uzbek government’s action and demanded for an independent international enquiry of the Andijan incident. Senator McCain’s remark at the Press conference reflected the U.S. concern with the situation post Andijan incident-

“We find the recent events to be shocking but not unexpected in a country that does not allow the exercise of human rights and democracy. We believe there should be a complete investigation conducted by the OSCE and I believe that the United States must make this government understand that the relationship is very difficult, if not impossible, if a government continues to repress its people. And history shows that continued repression of human rights leads to tragedies such as the one that just took place”. He further said that Uzbekistan to address the crisis should “allow registration of political parties, cease the economic repression of the people, allow free media to function, and don’t go the way where the Russian’s are” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2005b).

Echoing similar sentiments, Senator Sununu pointed out the high degree of political and economic repression prevalent in the Republic. He said,

“this level of political and economic repression is unsustainable. It will only serve to stimulate discontent and unrest among the people in Uzbekistan, prevent them from achieving real economic independence and prosperity, and prevent the United States and Uzbekistan from achieving any type of normal or significant relationship” (ibid).

Senator Graham also expressed his deep concern about the situation in Uzbekistan and the need for international investigation of the incident. Both Russia and China had avoided criticizing the Uzbek government, encouraging Uzbekistan to move closer to Russia and China and thereby increasing the geo-political competition in the region.
Senator Graham in the Press Conference highlighted his concern with the Russia and Chinese reaction to the May incident. He said,

“people we met with do not believe at all that the people in this country support what happened. And for the government to refuse to allow independent verification says everything I need to know about this government. And when they are supported by the Russians that makes me even more convinced and the icing on the cake is the Chinese. So this is a trifecta” (ibid).

Another visit in this turbulent year of bilateral relationship was the delegation led by then Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Daniel Fried from 27 to 28 September 2005. His visit to Uzbekistan in September 2005 was a part of his trip to the region. His entourage included representatives of the National Security Council staff and the Department of Defense. Fried also shared similar sentiments regarding poor performance of human rights and democratic reforms as expressed by McCain and his team. While the visit of the U.S. delegation on 29 May was received with cold shoulder in Uzbekistan, Assistant Secretary in September could meet President Karimov. He also met representatives of American business, American non-governmental organizations, Uzbek civil society, senior Uzbek thinkers and former officials in foreign policy (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2005a). Fried while addressing reporters in Uzbekistan expressed the U.S. concern about the developments in the Republic. He said-

“our purpose in coming here was to discuss bilateral relations with Uzbekistan after a very difficult patch. After a difficult period, this included grave concerns, which we have expressed about the human rights situation here following the events in Andijon. Our purpose was to determine the basis for moving ahead in relations and determining what basis there is cooperation, taking as a basis the Joint Declaration of 2002. I mentioned this declaration because it outlines a number of areas on which our cooperation should be based” (ibid).

Fried also stressed the importance of the development of democratic reforms, respect for human rights, civil society and economic reform in the Republic. He said, “democracy is an inalienable part of our overall relationship with Uzbekistan. Our security interests and our interests in democratic reform are indivisible” (ibid).

No other diplomatic visits took place during the year 2005. Even the former U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice during her trip to the region in October 2005 did not
visit Uzbekistan. She visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and dropping Uzbekistan from her itinerary indicated the frozen Uzbek-U.S. bilateral relationship.

Only one visit from the U.S. side took place in 2006, which was significant in this turbulent phase. The U.S. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, Richard Boucher visited Tashkent in August 2006, indicating a change in attitude. This was Boucher’s first visit to Uzbekistan in the new capacity after the establishment of the new Bureau of South and Central Asia in the State Department in 2006. Boucher during his visit met President Karimov and the Uzbek Foreign Minister, reflecting desire on both sides to mend differences. He also interacted with people from Uzbekistan working on democracy, civil society and other development matters. At a Press Conference during this visit, Boucher said,

“Our interest in cooperation with Uzbekistan is to help it find new opportunities to move forward with is independence. We are not here to play games. We are not here to try to contend with any other powers. We expect Uzbekistan to maintain all its ties with Russia, with China, with Europe, with Turkey and other nations we want to establish a new basis for cooperation. The areas that we identified in our strategic partnership statement of 2002 indeed remain valid. We agreed that we have common interests in security issues, fighting terrorism, drugs, proliferation and things like that. We have interests in economic and business cooperation and all of the things that go with such cooperation. And we have an interest in the economic and political development of a healthy society here” (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2006).

However, Boucher emphasized on the need for Uzbekistan-U.S. cooperation to tackle security challenges in the region and the need for economic cooperation but also acknowledged the existing glitches in the bilateral relation like the Andijan incident and human rights situation. While he indicated the reasons for the poor relation, he at the same time expressed that both sides should work out positively to find ways to bridge the differences. At a Press Conference during this trip, he stated,

“we are going to establish the basis for cooperation then we discuss some of these issues as well. Also, we talked about these areas of common interests in practical ways. And we also talked in a practical way about the actions that are needed to try to rebuild trust, to try to achieve real cooperation in these areas. These are good discussions, these were thorough discussions. But I cannot tell you at this moment what will happen next. It will depend on what both sides actually do to pursue and develop this cooperation. For our part, we are willing to try” (ibid).
After 2005, the bilateral relation showed a downward trend but Boucher’s visit reflected the changing mood in the U.S. This was further taken forward by then U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Evan A. Feigenbaum’s visit in 2007 (from 28 February to 5 March). His meetings in Uzbekistan included people working to develop civil society, alumni of the U.S. Department of State-sponsored educational exchanges, journalists and several high ranking government officials like the Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov, National Security Advisor Murod Atayev, Minister of Defence Ruslan Mirzaev, Deputy Prime Minister and General Director of the Agency of Communication and Information Abdulla Aripov, Minister of Public Education Turobjon Juraev, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Higher and Secondary Special Education Rustam Kasymov, State Advisor on Religious Affairs Bahrom Abduhalimov and Human Rights Ombudsman Sayyora Rashidova (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2007).

The aim of the visit was “to explore a way forward in U.S.-Uzbek relations after a very difficult period” (ibid). At a Press Conference he said,

“We face three challenges in the relationship. The first is that both sides—the American and the Uzbek—have stated their commitment to cooperation. Our challenge, individually and jointly, is to turn these declaratory statements of commitment into concrete actions that transform the relationship. Our second challenge is to do this in a multidimensional way. There are many aspects of American policy in Central Asia: security, trade and economics, political development, democracy and human rights, energy, terrorism, transnational issues, and regional issues. We do not have a one-or two-dimensional policy and so we cannot have one-or two-dimensional relationships. We want full, multidimensional, productive relationships with every country in the region. We believe that there is a basis for such a relationship with Uzbekistan and we will continue to try to find it. In fact, we do not have to look very far to find a vision for that relationship: the 2002 Strategic Framework Agreement between our two countries. This is the fifth anniversary of the Framework Agreement. This multidimensional agreement includes cooperation on security, on trade, on political development, on all of these issues. What we want to do here is to build on our track record of success because we are very proud of our successful cooperation and we hope that our Uzbek colleagues are proud of it too. We want to take areas of the relationship that have a great deal of potential and where we have begun to cooperate but have not yet realized that full potential. These areas include education and trade—we have made a good start but we have not yet realized the full potential of our relations. We hope to remove obstacles and thus to do more cooperatively in these areas. And third, we want to address our
differences in a spirit of mutual respect. We continue to have some differences. But we do not want these differences (ibid).

**Improving ties 2008 onwards**

Uzbekistan, a strategically located country in Central Asia and with rich natural resources would continue to be a priority in the diplomatic realm of the U.S. foreign policy. The downward trend in the bilateral relation started improving since 2008. As reflected above there were only two visits from the U.S. in 2005 and in 2006 and 2007 there was only one visit from the U.S. However, since 2008, the scene changed and there are signs of the U.S. re-engaging with the Republic. Six visits from the U.S. took place in 2008. Starting the visits in 2008 was the visit by Admiral William J. Fallon, Commander of the U.S. Central Command on 24 January 2008 (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2008a). He met President Karimov and other senior government officials. It was his first trip to the Republic after assuming office as Commander. Among other issues, regional security and Afghanistan featured prominently.

Fallon's visit was a turning point in the Uzbek-U.S. bilateral relation, which had deteriorated ever since the Andijan incident. Analysts see the visit as “an intensification of U.S. efforts to block Russia from strengthening its energy position in Central Asia---the visit extends beyond purely military matters. Some believe the main aim is to lay the groundwork for a U.S.-Uzbek rapprochement” (Eurasia Insight 2008).

Acting Deputy Secretary Pamela Spratlen visited from 27 March to 1 April 2008. She met Speaker Dilorom Tashmukhamedova, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Norov, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Elyor Ganiev, Chairman of Religious Affairs Committee Ortiq Yusupov and Secretary of the National Security Council Murod Ataev. She interacted with representatives of various NGOs like Open Dialogue, the National Democratic Institute, International Committee of the Red Cross and Human Rights Watch. She described the bilateral relation as “multi-faceted” but expressed concern about the human rights situation in the Republic (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2008f).
Richard Boucher visited the Republic from 30 May to 3 June 2008 and met President Karimov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Norov and Secretary of the National Security Council Murod Ataev. He also met the Hokim of Samarkand Uktam Barnoev and also visited the Islamic University at Tashkent. Major issues discussed were border security cooperation, counter narcotics, human rights, education, regional economic cooperation and reconstruction in Afghanistan (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2008b). Addressing a Press Conference, Boucher remarked that-

"it is no secret that we lost a lot of trust in the relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan in the last few years. But I think both sides would like to rebuild [it]. I think we'll do that by working together, by achieving things together that are in our interest.---The United States and Uzbekistan share some common interests---they are worth working on for both our peoples" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2008e).

He said that there have been progresses in human rights situation like the passing of the habeas corpus, allowing the Red Cross to visit prisons, etc (ibid). He clearly indicated that the U.S is not planning to set up bases in Uzbekistan but is looking for cooperation from Uzbekistan to support the overall efforts in Afghanistan (ibid). The U.S. wants to "involve the neighbours much more closely in the stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan", said Boucher (ibid). He said, "we have seen the flow of non-lethal supplies to coalition and NATO forces. We've seen---we appreciate having an increased transit of NATO officers through Termez base. We're not really out here looking for bases" (ibid).

Another visit this year was by Deputy Assistant Secretary George Krol from 24 to 26 July 2008. Both sides discussed on "possibilities of further steps for cooperation between the U.S. and Uzbekistan------progress would continue in all facets of the relationship, including in the areas of security, economics, and trade and in humanitarian, cultural and educational cooperation" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2008g).

The two other visits this year were in the month of August and September. The Acting Commander of the U.S. Central Command, Lieutenant General Martin E Dempsey visited on 28 August. Lieutenant General James Lovelace, Commanding General for the U.S. Army Central Command visited from 23-24 September 2008. Both
the delegation interacted with high ranking Uzbek government officials and the discussions were mainly on regional security, Afghanistan, counter-narcotics efforts, military-to-military cooperation and others (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2008d).

The year 2009 also saw some high-ranking U.S. delegations visiting the Republic. Altogether, there were seven visits from the U.S. this year. The first visit this year was by General David Petraeus, Commander of the United States Central Command from 16 to 17 February 2009. He met President Karimov and senior Uzbek officials at the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Regional security issues, mainly Afghanistan were the primary agenda of discussion (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2009a). He again visited the Republic on 18 August. He met President Karimov and senior officials from the National Security Council and the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade (Press Releases, 18 August 2009). During this visit, both sides signed an agreement outlining the programme of military-to-military contact involving educational exchanges and training for the year 2010 (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2009c). This visit too primarily focussed on regional security and the deteriorating Afghan situation. The government sources denied that there were any talks on military bases in Uzbekistan (ibid).

Claudio Lilienfeld, the Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for South and Central Asia visited the Republic from 28 to 29 April 2009 as part of his five-nation tour of the region. He met First Deputy Prime Minister of Rustam Azimov, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Investments and Trade Nasiriddin Najimov, leaders of Central Bank of Uzbekistan and Chambers of Commerce. The purpose of the visit was to “better understand regional trade issues and identify opportunities to enhance trade and investment opportunities between the two countries”. He said that the Uzbek economy has “grown enormously” since 1997 and there are many “opportunities for more trade” between the two countries (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2009e). He also pointed out the glitches hampering trade between the two countries like convertibility between soum and the U.S. dollars and complicated customs procedures (ibid). If the government of Uzbekistan introduces some changes to address these
problems it would make a lot of difference, said Lilienfeld (ibid). Moreover, Lilienfeld pointed out that the two countries could find ways to strengthen economic cooperation with Afghanistan (ibid).

Another visit this year was by U.S. Congressman Eni Faleomavaega from 27 to 28 June 2009. Faleomavaega was the first member from either Chamber of the U.S. Congress to visit Uzbekistan in the past four years (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2009d). He met the Deputy Prime Minister Shaimatov and Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov. The visit was primarily to improve the bilateral ties and to raise the awareness in the U.S. Congress about the significant role the region plays (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2009e).

The next important visit of this year was a delegation led by William Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from 12 to 13 July 2009. The other members of the team were National Security Council Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia Michael McFaul and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Central Asia David Sedney. The delegation also visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. In Uzbekistan, the delegation met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov and other senior officials. Regional security, economic development and growth of civil society institutions were the highlights of the discussion between the two sides. Burns highlighting Obama administration's approach to the region said, "we have an opportunity before us in a new administration to strengthen ties between our two countries. --- We see this visit as a first step in that direction. And our relationship should include increased ties at many level" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2009f). Indicating the importance of the Republic, Burns said, "Uzbekistan obviously plays an important leadership role in this region" and thus Uzbekistan's efforts in Afghanistan is important and both the U.S. and Uzbekistan need to cooperate to resolve the Afghanistan crisis and in the long term regional security (ibid). Robert Blake, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs visited Uzbekistan from 11 to 14 October 2009, his maiden visit after assuming office. He met President Karimov, Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov, Head of the Legislative Chamber, President of Senate and other senior government officials. Both sides discussed ways to "build partnership across a wide
range of areas" like Afghanistan crisis, trade and development, border security, cooperation on narcotics, the development of civil society and individual rights. Answering to a question on human rights issues in Uzbekistan at a Press conference, Blake said that both sides would in future initiate a Bilateral Annual Consultation to discuss "full range of priorities on our bilateral agenda" (Embassy of United States in Uzbekistan 2009b). William Burns initiated bilateral Consultation mechanism during his visit in July.

The last visit of 2009 was by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State of South and Central Asia George Krol from 18 to 21 November. His meetings included Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov, Deputy Prime Minister Elyor Ganiev, business leaders and others.

Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan visited Uzbekistan in February 2010. He also visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Georgia. His trip to Turkmenistan was cancelled at the last moment, raising eyebrows among analysts, though the official statement is that the visit was cancelled due to some logistic complications. His trip clearly indicates the U.S. interest in seeking the cooperation of CARs and Caucasian countries as alternative supply routes to Afghanistan, necessitated by the constant attack on its current main supply route through Pakistan. Uzbekistan is an important country for the Northern Distribution Network. He said, “most of the supplies coming through that entry point into Afghanistan- the Northern Distribution Network- come through Uzbekistan” (U.S. Department of State 2010).

However, some analysts believe that the visit to the region was not a successful one. Paul-Quinn-Judge, Central Asia Project Director for the International Crisis Group calls Holbrooke’s visit as “very perfunctory” (Eurasia Insight 2010). He further said,

"Following the annual bilateral consultations established recently with Uzbekistan, a visit was in the cards. I suspect it was a very quick punching of a few cards. It certainly didn’t look like he had much on his agenda here” (ibid).

Amb. Bhadrakumar (2010), former Indian diplomat on the other hand stressed that the “tour turned out to be somewhat more than symbolic; it wasn’t altogether bereft
of results". The region per se does not come under Holbrooke's purview. Bhadrakumar argues that "Washington would like to measure how the regional powers - especially Russia, Iran and China - react to Holbrooke's appearance in Central Asia at a time when the Afghan war appears set to spill over into the region" (ibid).

**CONCLUSION**

After independence, Uzbekistan like other CARs established diplomatic relation with the United States. Uzbekistan and the United States have exchanged several high level diplomatic visits to enhance their bilateral understanding and improve their relations. Post September 11 brought about a dramatic change in the bilateral ties and in the number of high-level delegations visiting each other. The visits that took place before 9/11 facilitated Uzbekistan to become a pivotal state in the U.S. campaign against terror. Karimov had visited the U.S. in 1993 and 1995; though both these visits were to take part in the UN General Assembly sessions. In 1996, Karimov went to the U.S. for a private trip. He again visited the U.S. in 1999 and 2000 to participate in the 50th anniversary of NATO and the UN Millennium Summit, respectively. His first official State visit to the U.S. was in March 2002 and till date however, it remains the only State visit by President Karimov to the U.S.

From the U.S. sides, there have been several visits from various departments of the U.S. government. The first visit from the U.S. side was by then Secretary of State James A. Baker III in February 1992, even before the U.S. Embassy in the Republic was opened. Two of the U.S. Secretary of State has so far visited the Republic, James A. Baker in 1992 and Madeleine Albright in 2000. During 1995-1996, few visits took place from the U.S. side but since 1997, it became more or less a regular affair. Since 1997 onwards, there has been plethora of visits from the U.S. side until 2004. In 1997, the number of visits from the U.S. side was six, followed by five in 1998, seven in 1999, six in 2000 and twelve in 2001. So far, the year 2002 with twenty-five visits recorded the largest number of visits from the U.S. to Uzbekistan. In 2003 and 2004, there were eleven and twelve visits, respectively.
With the Andijan incident and the closure of the K2 base, the bilateral relationship was almost frozen. Diplomatic exchanges also went down drastically. In 2005, there were only two visits from the U.S. followed by one in both 2006 and 2007. However, the scenario underwent a change since 2008 and signs of rapprochement became apparent. The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the constant attacks on the main supply route through Pakistan to Afghanistan necessitated the U.S. to look for allies among the CARs. For the Northern Supply Distribution Network, Uzbekistan’s support is crucial. Uzbekistan has lent its support to allow transit of materials through its territory as part of the U.S. Northern Supply Distribution route. Richard Holbrooke in his February 2010 visit to the Republic acknowledged Uzbekistan’s pivotal role in the Northern Distribution Network system. Uzbekistan shares border with Afghanistan at Termez, which makes it prone to problems emanating in Afghanistan. The deteriorating Afghan situation is a threat to Uzbekistan and its stability is a concern for Uzbekistan too, which makes it an eager player to participate in the resolution of the Afghan crisis.

Regional security and Afghan crisis were the prime issues discussed between the two sides even before 9/11 incident. Until the end of the Tajik civil war, peace and stability of Tajikistan was an important issue too. In addition to regional security, political and economic reforms and human rights situation were also discussed between the two sides. Nevertheless, with Uzbekistan becoming a strategic partner since the beginning of ‘war on terror’, the U.S. was either silent or less critical of the poor human rights situation and condition of political and economic reforms in the Republic. Security and defence then became the central theme as necessitated by the deteriorating Afghan situation. Military cooperation assumed importance in the bilateral consultations. The Annual Bilateral Consultation mechanism was started in 2009, which discusses priority issues in the bilateral relation.

The U.S. muted response to poor human rights and reform issues since September 11 has met with criticism. However, it is to be noted that the U.S. delegations visiting Uzbekistan from time to time put forward these issues to the Uzbek government even after 2001, though in much less stricter terms. For example, Lynn Pascoe during his visit in June 2002 said that Uzbekistan’s support to the war efforts in Afghanistan has not
changed the U.S. position on the need for reforms in Uzbekistan. Lorne Craner, in his November 2002 visit reiterated the U.S. commitment to protect human rights in the Republic and stated that the U.S. would not compromise it for "short-term political expediency". For Uzbekistan's support, the U.S. appreciated some of the steps taken by the Uzbek government like giving access to the country to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, lifting censorship etc, though these initiatives in reality are very small compared to the actual needs. As time moved on, the U.S. uneasiness with the human rights situation in the Republic was quiet visible. Amb. Carlos Pascual during his February 2004 visit said at a Press Conference that the U.S. assistance to Uzbek government would depend on the progress made in implementing the Strategic Framework Agreement, that have outlines issues like human rights, democratic and political reforms. Pamela Spratlen while visiting the Republic in March 2009 also expressed deep concern with the poor human rights record in the country.

Diplomatic exchanges have been active between the two sides from 1992-2004 and again since 2008 onwards. However, surprisingly till date no U.S. President has ever visited either the Republic or other CARs. Even at the peak of the Uzbek-U.S. relationship, Presidential visit from the U.S. side was missing. On other hand, from time to time, there have been several visits by Russian President to Uzbekistan and vice versa. President Boris Yeltsin visited Uzbekistan in October 1998. Vladimir Putin visited Uzbekistan as President of Russia in May 2000, followed by his visit in August 2003. Putin after his re-election as President for the second time in 2004 visited Uzbekistan (June), his maiden trip abroad after assuming office. With Putin coming to power in 1999, there was a marked shift in Russian policy towards the region lying in its backyard. During Yeltsin's time, Russia ignored the region but since Putin coming to power, the region assumed prime importance in Russian foreign policy thinking. Choosing Uzbekistan as the first country to visit after assuming office reflected the importance Russia attaches to the Republic. After assuming office, the new Russian President Dmitry Medvedev chose to visit Kazakhstan in the region as his first foreign trip, a step that did not go well with the Uzbek authorities. Medvedev, however, visited Uzbekistan in January 2009.
President Karimov has also several times visited Russia since independence. In March 1994, Karimov visited Russia, followed by in May 1998, May 2001 and April 2004. Immediately after the May Andijan incident, President Karimov visited Russia in June 2005, reflecting the tilt towards Russia after its relation with the U.S. was severely damaged. Russia’s position on the Andijan incident was that it is an internal matter of Uzbekistan, which was much to the liking of the Uzbek government after being severely criticized by the west. Again, he visited Russia in November 2005. Later on, President Karimov visited Russia in May 2006 and February 2008.

China has made major inroad in the region as well as in Uzbekistan. China’s silence on human rights records and mute response to the Andijan incident has further enhanced Uzbek-China ties. Even Chinese Head of the State has visited Uzbekistan. The first visit by a Chinese Head of State to Uzbekistan was by then President Jiang Zemin in July 1996. President Hu Jintao visited Uzbekistan in June 2004. Interestingly, China was the first country that President Karimov visited after the Andijan incident, indicating the bonhomie both shared. Both sides however, claimed that the visit was planned much before the Andijan incident took place. President Karimov’s earlier visits to China were in 1992, 1994 and 1999.

The diplomatic exchanges between Uzbekistan and the U.S. reflect the trend of the bilateral relationship, which has witnessed several difficulties. The three phases of the diplomatic exchanges have been quiet interesting. Form 1991-2001, the diplomatic exchanges put the bilateral relations on a strong footing. However, nobody expected anything like 9/11 but Afghan situation under Taliban was a threat to the stability of the region, necessitating closer cooperation with the CARs. Uzbekistan with its strategic location was an important country. This phase also introduced the U.S. to the major issues concerning the region. Post 9/11 until 2004 saw the height of friendship as a result of the ‘war on terror’, which also witnessed several diplomatic exchanges. Post Andijan until 2008, diplomatic exchanges declined because of damaged bilateral relationship. Since 2008, diplomatic exchanges have been revived again between the two countries, indicating improving ties between the two countries.