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## **UZBEKISTAN: A PRIME TARGET FOR WESTERN IMPERIALISM**

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The recent death of Uzbek president Islam Karimov, who had been in power since the creation of the independent state of Uzbekistan 25 years ago, has brought the little-known Central Asian nation into the spotlight. Whenever the Western media referred to the deceased Uzbek leader, dictator and autocrat were the usual terms used to describe him.

But distant and unknown lands are often easily misrepresented — particularly when misinterpretation is politically expedient. Few people have any idea of the history of Uzbekistan, nor of the complex social, economic and in particular, geopolitical context that gave rise to Karimov's long tenure as the country's leader. It is time to take a closer look at a nation people in the West may be hearing about more often in the near future.

### Uzbek Democracy

The first thing to say about Uzbekistan is that it is a democracy, or to be more precise a bourgeois democracy. The country has a bicameral parliamentary system, with the Oliy Majlis or General Assembly and the Senat. There is separation of powers, and the electoral system has several political parties. The Western media establishment have probably told you it is a dictatorship. They are not entirely wrong. Uzbekistan is a dictatorship of those who own the means of production, just like France, the UK, the United States, Russia, China and most other countries in the world — that is what we call a bourgeois democracy.

On the 29th of March 2016, Islam Karimov was elected president for a fourth time with over 90 percent of the national vote. It would be his last term as president, as the constitution of 2002 stipulated that the president could only serve two terms. His previous two terms did not legally count, as they were before the adoption of the constitution in 2002.

The Organisation for Security and Organisation in Europe, the EUs self-proclaimed democracy observatory, has repeatedly dismissed the democratic election process in Uzbekistan. The reason for the EUs hostility has nothing to do with democracy. The EU is hostile because the Uzbek state prioritises national interests over those of the EU, the United States, and NATO. All three bodies are quick to label any country a dictatorship if it refuses to submit obsequiously to the dictates of Western imperialism. Recent parliamentary reforms have given the Uzbek Prime Minister more powers; and Parliament now has the right to nominate the Prime Minister, who can also convene meetings of the cabinet. When one compares the powers of the Uzbek president to those of his French counterpart, it is difficult to understand how he could be called a dictator. In fact, since the reforms of the Fifth Republic, the French president has more power than most other presidents in the world. Yet no one calls him a dictator.

There are two points to consider here. European elites have perfected a form of pseudo-democracy which the French call *alternance* (alternation in English); one of two or three main political parties gets elected every 5 years, so the face of power changes and it appears that the people have a say in how the country is governed, but in reality all parties represent the same class interests. In Western pseudo-democracy time limits are important and the more the leaders change the better. It is the brief temporality of an elected president which legitimises the pseudo-democracy. Presidents in European countries are usually unpopular, as they betray their own electoral promises. The public have no idea of what it is like to have a genuinely popular president. So, when they see a president such as Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, or Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan getting 90% of the vote, they immediately assume the election must be rigged. This prejudice also prevents international experts from objectively analysing the country in question.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the election monitors from the Community of Independent States called the March 2016 Uzbek presidential elections free and transparent. They are not incorrect, for the democratic system in Uzbekistan is no less popular, and no less free, than the European or American systems. In fact, it is probably far more democratic. No foreign unelected parliament issues directives to Tashkent about how it manages its fiscal or economic policies, unlike all 27 states in the EU, which are subject to treaties made by bureaucrats that serve the interests of oligarchs at the workers expense.

## Social Orientation

Since independence, Islam Karimov sought to maintain the countrys self-reliance in the face of a world rapidly deteriorating into corruption and chaos. Contrary to the advice of Washington Consensus consultants, Uzbekistan brought finance and key sectors of the economy under state control. The Central Asian nation is rich in gold, silver, coal, oil, lead, zinc, tungsten, and uranium. The results of Uzbekistans state-capitalism have been nothing short of dumbfounding. Uzbekistan has seen major economic growth at 7 and 8 percent, a thriving young population and a lowering,

rather than the raising of inequalities. Western economists call it the Uzbek growth puzzle – they cannot understand how a country which defies western financial sapience could be so successful! Since June 2016, the Uzbek government has implemented legislation which requires foreign NGOs to seek approval from the Ministry of Justice before they can receive foreign funds. The government promotes the work of NGOS, provided they are not fronts for foreign powers attempting to subvert the democratic process.

Uzbekistans population is growing too, having central Asias largest population of 32 million people. Although Uzbekistans population growth is only half of what it was during the construction of socialism in the 1930s, the current healthy growth rate makes Uzbekistan one of the most promising countries in Central Asia, with over 60 percent of the nations population under the age of 25.

As the declassified US Nation Security Memorandum 200 on worldwide population growth published in 1974 shows, population growth in major developing countries rich in natural resources is likely to create discontent with U.S corporate exploitation of those countries due to the massive unemployment and poverty it will impose on the countrys young population. The Uzbek government is keenly aware of the importance of the countrys youth. A new law on state youth policy was promulgated by the countrys interim president Sharkat Mirziyoyev on the 14th of September and requires that new educational facilities for youth be set up around the country. Education is free in Uzbekistan, from primary to third level. As part of the states promotion of family values, 2016 was designated Mother and Child Year. The state is making astronomical efforts to improve health care for mothers and children. The state also provides favourable loans and in expensive accommodation to young families.

Given the fact that the Uzbek government is critical of Western attitudes towards sexuality and the family (President Karimov said that the Wests promotion of democracy and homosexuality were part of the same anti-social agenda) there is no evidence whatsoever that the Uzbek state is engaging in practices which go against its own stated interests. Western Malthusian elites, however, regularly obsess about the danger of population growth. It is therefore hardly surprising that they would attribute their own criminal fantasies to their enemies. Stories of Uzbek doctors sterilising female patients have circulated in the Western media, including the BBC.

There is not a shred of evidence to support the far-fetched conspiracy theory worthy of a sci-fi movie. The false rumours have been spread by Uzbekistan pro-Western fifth columnists in the medical profession. They have a vested interest in promoting the privatisation of the countrys health care system, and as the Wests war against Syria has shown, the Hippocratic Oath is not always upheld by medical professionals. Uzbekistan provides free health care to all its children and consigns up to 9.9% of the state budget for that purpose. Americans believe they are free until they read their medical bills and realise they can no longer afford to live in a house. That never happens in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Pornography and the promotion of violence in media are banned in Uzbekistan. Such laws contrast markedly with the United States where the promotion of violence and death is called cinema and the sexual exploitation and reification of women is a key facet of Western freedom.

Uzbekistan has imposed extensive restrictions on genetically modified crops. GMOs in baby food were banned this year and further restrictions are likely. The development of agriculture is a major objective of the Uzbek government. The country is almost self-sufficient in the production of foodstuff and prices are kept under control by state intervention. Uzbekistan intends to become a big exporter of fruit and vegetables in the future. In 2009, I stayed in an Uzbek farmhouse. I had a chance to sample the products of local agriculture there. The quality of the fruits and vegetables I ate in Uzbekistan surpassed anything I had eaten in Europe.

During collectivisation in the 1930s, millions of poor Uzbek peasants were liberated from centuries of feudal exploitation and famine. For the first time in their history the peasants were the masters of the land. Soviet modernisation during the Stalin period brought great benefits to the toiling masses. Living standards were transformed.

However, the Khrushchevite reforms in the USSR in 1957 brought socialism to an abrupt and tragic end. Henceforth, the USSR was organised along capitalist lines. Moscow's attitude to Uzbekistan changed too. The smaller republics lost the equal status they had enjoyed during the Stalin era and became satellite states of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Soviet socialism had morphed into Soviet social imperialism. Henceforth, the Uzbek Socialist Soviet Republic (Uzbek SSR) would be encouraged to concentrate on producing cotton for export to the RSFSR. Soviet monoculture was a disaster and Uzbekistan has made great strides in developing its post-Soviet model of agriculture. Like Cuba, post-soviet Uzbekistan is pursuing agricultural policies now on a capitalist basis which it would have pursued on a socialist basis were it not for the Khrushchevite counter-revolution of the 1960s.

Attitudes towards the country's socialist past are often quite positive in Uzbekistan, (notwithstanding the anti-communist rhetoric of soviet state-capitalist apparatchiks such as Karimov!) When I visited the country in 2009, I was surprised to see that many schools still used old Soviet textbooks with quotations from Lenin on education. However, bourgeois nationalism is the ruling ideology today and most statues of Lenin have been replaced by those honouring Timurlane.

During the Stalin period, Soviet komsomols were sent to Central Asia to teach the peasantry and workers how to read and write in their own language. During this period books in the USSR were published in over 60 languages. Soviet policy required the fostering and promotion of indigenous

languages and cultures. Although the USSR promoted scientific atheism, workers in the Uzbek SSR were busy renovating the countrys magnificent 14th and 15th century mosques. When the USSR was dissolved in 1991, it was the high educational level of the countrys people which enabled Uzbekistan to become the first post-soviet state to achieve pre-1989 levels of GDP. In many respects, the countrys current leadership is not too dissimilar to the Soviet period. It is precisely the social orientation of Uzbek state policy which worries Western corporate interests and their media disinformation agencies. State capitalism has enabled Uzbekistan to reduce some of the inequalities associated with neoliberalism. In 2015 the countrys decile dispersion ratio was reduced to 7.7% from 8.5 in 2010. There is hardly any other state on earth which has managed to reverse, albeit modestly, inequalities.

## Lies About Uzbekistan

In order to create the impression that Uzbekistan is a rogue state with no functioning legal and administrative system, stories which show that it has in fact such a system, are twisted and turned on their heads so as to indicate the opposite. Take, for example, the recent house arrest of Goulmara Karimova, the daughter of the former president. According to Le Monde, she was arrested due to the fact that she criticised those in power □ a gigantic and ludicrous lie! Goulmara was arrested by the state authorities on serious charges of corruption, involving foreign companies in Holland, Denmark and Sweden, who attempted to bribe their way into the lucrative Uzbek telecommunications market. The affair had nothing to do with the president who continued to function. Contrary to Le Mondes spin, Goulmara Karimova was arrested, not because she criticised the state but because the state criticised her!

Her alleged role in the corruption case is still pending trial. It is of course, astonishing that a country could have such a strict legal system. In the West, no action is taken when the sons and daughters of ruling elites engage in corrupt business practices. No one batted an eyelid, for example, when former U.S. Vice-President Joe Bidens son became a major stakeholder in Ukraines national gas company after the U.S.-backed coup there in 2014. The fact that former British Prime Minister David Camerons father had a fortune stacked away off-shore did not become a national crisis in Britain either. The son of millionaire former French foreign minister Laurent Fabius has a long list of corruption charges against him, but no one would have suggested that he was arrested due to a difference of opinion with the French government!

## The Andijan Terrorist Insurgency

A major source of lies and disinformation about Uzbekistan concerns the way in which the government dealt with a terrorist insurgency in the South-Eastern city of Andijan in 2005. On the 12th/13th of May 2005, Islamist terrorists raided police barracks and administrative buildings in Andijan in an attempt to spark an Islamist insurgency against the secular state. The terrorists

caused the death of up to 200 people and many police were tortured to death. Some, who escaped, had been doused in petrol and were about to be burnt alive.

The support shown for the terrorists by the United States and its European allies proves that the uprising had the support of the Central Intelligence Agency. The U.S. State Department propaganda NGOs Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were instrumental in providing disinformation about the terrorist insurgency to the Western media establishment, who then dutifully called the terrorists peaceful protesters, blaming the violence on the Uzbek police and military. A highly comprehensive study of the events was made by Dr Shiren Akiner of London University, who concluded that the Uzbek governments version of events was far closer to the truth than the concocted stories of oppositionists liberally quoted in the Western press.

The Andijan insurgency was called a massacre and was used by the United States to impose sanctions on the country. The techniques of the Andijan insurgency were used again in 2011 by Western intelligence agencies when terrorists stormed a police barracks in Benghazi, Libya, executing several police officers, while the media claimed that they had been shot by Gaddafis henchmen as they had refused to fire on peaceful protesters. The Big Lie about the Andijan Massacre is still being used today to demonise Uzbek democracy and justify Western aggression towards the country.

Boiling people to death!

Craig Murray is a former British ambassador to Uzbekistan who was dismissed from his post in 2004 by the Foreign Office, reportedly due to accusations of sexual misconduct. Murray has done much to publicise unsubstantiated allegations of prisoners being boiled to death by the Uzbek security forces. None of the allegations have ever been proven but they have become part of the propaganda arsenal used by Western imperialism against the staunchly independent Uzbek state. Murray has since turned into a human rights activist and has accused the Uzbek government of holding thousands of political prisoners. A political prisoner is any crook or misfit stupid enough to believe that they can build a utopia by accepting Western money for the purposes of destabilising the Uzbek state.

There are many of these crooks languishing in Uzbek prisons; takfiri terrorism would have destroyed the country had it not been for carefully coordinated state repression. That is not to say that all prisoners in Uzbekistan are guilty of the crimes of which they are accused. In bourgeois states, justice invariably involves the wealthy locking up the poor. There is no reason to believe things are any different in Uzbekistan. French prisons are teeming with young paupers locked up for months and years awaiting trial, many of whom are innocent. In fact, French prisons are hell on earth, where torture is widely practised. Thousands of prisoners attempt suicide to escape the torment.

British prisons are no better, torture and misconduct by staff are common. The U.S Government openly supports the use of torture against prisoners. So, it is this context of the global problem of prison torture that one must investigate claims made by the Western political establishment against Uzbekistan. Murray has accused the Uzbek state of boiling prisoners to death. The Uzbek government has denied the allegations and have cooperated with international agencies investigating their prisons. Since 2002, the International Red Cross have been visiting Uzbek prisons and not found any evidence of torture. Rather than simply telling the truth, however, they have made vague and unsubstantiated claims that the Uzbek authorities have failed to cooperate with their investigations. Could it be that the Uzbek governments failure to cooperate is their failure to supply the Red Cross with the proof they need to condemn the countrys treatment of prisoners? After all, the Red Cross, far from being an independent organisation, works very closely with Western governments. In fact, many of the organisations managers should be in jail for the embezzlement of billions of dollars in charity money, most notably in the case of Haiti.

One will recall the theatre of the absurd during the Western-backed war against the Peoples Democratic Republic of Afghanistan during the 1980s when the government of that country did everything in its power to cooperate with the concerns of Amnesty International, even opening many of its prisons to their investigators, while U.S National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the architect of the CIAs terror campaign, sat on Amnestys Board of Directors!

Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, many leftists criticised US support for unpopular secular dictators as one of the reasons driving Islamist enmity for the United States. It is what I refer to as the Angry Arab theory of the war on terror. The theory is popular in Soros-funded pseudo-leftist media outlets. It was the argument used by the Qatari TV station Al Jazeera to create the impression in 2011 that a popular uprising was taking place in Tunisia and Egypt against US-backed dictators. Many leftists based their criticisms of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes on their supposed lack of solidarity with the Palestinians and their allegedly brutal treatment of Islamists. This attitude played right into the hands of the US NGOs who instigated the notorious, right-wing, reactionary Arab Spring — a series of people-power coups which wrecked two nation-states who were beginning to navigate away from the US sphere of influence.

The fact that Tunisia under Ben Ali had been praised by the UN for its poverty reduction

programme and that Tunisia's National Solidarity Fund was about to be adopted as a global model, was of no significance to the leftist aficionados of CIA revolutions! Murray has made no criticism of the criminals running Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International and the outrageous lies they spread in the service of war and genocide. While many see Murray as a crusader for human rights and peace, his vilification of Uzbekistan serves British interests in the same way his comments as British ambassador that opening the country up to foreign plunder was the solution to the country's supposed democratic deficit. Murray is lying about Uzbekistan and he has done his best to silence people with superior credentials – honest and forthright academics such as Dr. Shirin Akiner.

## The Big Prize

In his 1998 book *The Grand Chessboard – American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperative*, Zbigniew Brzezinski calls Central Asia and Russia the grand prize coveted by US Imperialism. With its vast mineral resources covering Mendeleev's entire Periodic Table, its strategic position along the Silk Road, Uzbekistan is a key connecting state in the Russian and Chinese-led project of Eurasian integration. New high-speed trains linking the country's major cities make Uzbekistan a key partner in Eurasian infrastructural integration.

Uzbekistan has close historical, religious and cultural ties with Iran and relations between the two countries have been good. Iran's emergence as a regional power will foster further commercial and diplomatic links with Uzbekistan. The Karimov administration showed considerable dexterity in its foreign relations. In order to maintain independence from Russian imperialism, Tashkent turned more towards Beijing. On the 19th of December 2012 Uzbekistan left the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). The decision was taken in accordance with the country's new foreign policy concept of the Four Nos: no foreign military bases; no military blocks; no international peacekeeping operations, and no to the mediation of Central Asian conflicts by imperial powers. During the US-backed coup in the Ukraine, Karimov remained neutral.

Uzbekistan has strong economic ties with South Korea, particularly in the automobile market. Uzbekistan intends to emulate South Korean industrial development. Although US/South Korean relations are good, recent moves by South Korea to increase relations with Russia and China have troubled Washington. If the US were to destabilise Uzbekistan, South Korean interests would be greatly affected, pushing that country closer to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and possible steps towards unification with the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea.

Recent loan cancellations from Russia have improved relations between Moscow and Tashkent. If the US decides to take out the Uzbek state using Takfiri terrorists as foot soldiers, it will have to turn to Moscow. Moreover, Russia shares the same concerns about GMO crops as Uzbekistan. Given Chinese imperialism's embrace of GMOS, Tashkent needs to maintain independence from Beijing's increasingly assertive agro-business interests.

US Government foreign policy analysts have acknowledged that Uzbekistan is the key to US strategy in Central Asia. A presidential election is due to be held on the 4th of December this year. The current interim president Shavkat Miroziyoyev is considered by some circles in the West as a reformer – in other words, weak, corrupt and likely to be easily bought out by US interests. Whether or not that is true remains to be seen. The head of Uzbekistans National Security Service, Rustam Inoyatov, is considered a hard-liner. The country will need a hard-liner who will continue the Karimov legacy if it is to survive the coming years. There is a significant threat of Takfiri terrorism coming from Tajikistan, where Islamic State terrorists are being trained by the United States. On the very day Islam Karimovs illness was made public, the border with Tajikistan was closed due to the terrorist threat. Tajik separatism in Samarkand and Bukhara could also be revived if the U.S were to apply the Syrian model to Uzbekistan. Although Tadjiks are a small minority, their Persian ancestry and history is quite antagonistic to the Turkic Uzbeks. In 1992, The Independent newspaper wrote:

Some young Tajiks talk darkly of the need for Samarkand and Bukhara to merge into a greater Tajikistan, an area that would correspond to that ruled by the emirate of Bukhara before Samarkand fell to the Russian empire in 1868.

Tajik separatism was palpable when I visited Samarkand in 2009, with many people there identifying as Tajiks rather than Uzbeks. The countrys internal divisions could also be instrumentalised by imperial powers. The autonomous regions of Karakalpakstan are rumoured to be considering annexation (Crimea-style to Russia) though there is no evidence to support these claims. Nevertheless, the US might encourage the region to secede from Uzbekistan while blaming the destabilisation on Russia. Alternatively, a US-instigated coup bringing fascists to power might move Karakalpakstan closer to Moscow. Russia could also use its influence in the region to pressure Tashkent to hold its place on the Eurasian chessboard. Moscow-based geopolitical analyst Andrew Korybko sees a possible kossovisation of the gas-rich Karakalpakstan region by the US as a likely component of US-instigated hybrid war.

President Putin described Islam Karimovs death as a great loss. Karimov helped build a modern, prosperous, independent nation in an extremely hostile international environment. Strong and competent leaders are hard to find. If you hear media reports in December of peaceful, pro-democracy protesters being repressed by a brutal dictator killing his own people, you can safely assume that the Uzbek people have elected a popular president. Some philologists say the word Uzbek means independent. Karimov did a good job protecting the nations freedom. Lets hope his legacy is continued.

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Kaynak/Source: