

# Revolutionary Change in Central Asia

By MARK N. KATZ

Central Asia's authoritarian rulers have managed to remain in office for a remarkably long period. The same men who were in power in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan when the Soviet Union broke up at the end of 1991 were still in power at the beginning of 2005. Political turmoil during the period immediately after independence led to the downfall of Tajikistan's first president, but the man who became president in early 1993 has remained in office ever since then. However, the seeming stability of authoritarian rule in Central Asia was shattered in the spring of 2005 by the "Tulip Revolution," which not only overthrew Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akaev, but also brought to power leaders who advocate democratization.

It is not yet clear, of course, whether Kyrgyzstan really will democratize. Even so, what was remarkable about the Tulip Revolution was that it overthrew such a long-serving authoritarian ruler so quickly and easily. Further, the downfall of Kyrgyzstan's Akaev has also raised—or perhaps more accurately, increased the number of—questions about how vulnerable to overthrow Central Asia's other authoritarian rulers might be.

Simply because Akaev was overthrown, of course, does not mean that the others will be, too. Each of these countries, and each of its rulers, is different from the others. The resources each of these regimes possesses, as well as the problems each faces, are not exactly the same. The other four Central Asian rulers have been much tougher than Akaev was vis-à-vis their political opponents. Nevertheless, these regimes share certain similarities, including: (1) the remaining post-Soviet authoritarian rulers are ageing, and the succession to them is unclear; (2) corruption is so pervasive in each of these regimes that economic development has been severely stunted; (3) much of the pop-

ulation in these countries—especially the large proportion engaged in cotton production—lives in poverty; and (4) disaffection is growing over how these regimes serve to enrich the elite at the expense of the general population.

Although it is not inevitable that the other authoritarian rulers of Central Asia will be overthrown the way Akaev was, what happened in Kyrgyzstan has certainly raised expectations that democratic revolution could spread to one or more of the region's other republics. Central Asia, though, is also part of the Muslim world. Although Central Asia remained isolated from Islamic fundamentalism during the Soviet period, fundamentalist currents present in the broader Muslim world quickly found their way into the region afterward. Just as it is elsewhere in the Muslim world, there are forces seeking to bring Islamic rule to Central Asia—forces that, given the serious problems plaguing this region and the inability or unwillingness of the present authoritarian regimes there to deal with them, might succeed in one or more of these countries. It is also possible, however, that the current authoritarian regimes—already in power for a decade and a half—will manage to stay in power for at least another decade and a half or even longer. Authoritarianism might even make a comeback in Kyrgyzstan if Akaev manages to return, or if (in the more likely event) Kyrgyzstan's new democratic leaders turn out not to be so democratic after all.

These three alternatives—democratic revolution, Islamic revolution, and continued post-Soviet authoritarianism—appear to define the political choices open to the five nations of Central Asia. What is not yet clear is which of these nations will go down which of these paths. This, of course, is not something that can be definitively foretold. This article will instead attempt to examine the prospects for continued authoritarian rule, democratic revolution, and Islamic revolution; how the policies of external

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actors affect the prospects for each of these scenarios; the likely impact of one democratic revolution (that is, the one in Kyrgyzstan) on the region; the likely impact of one (hypothetical) Islamic revolution there; and an assessment of the longer term implications of each of these three scenarios in the region.

### **PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED EX-COMMUNIST AUTHORITARIAN RULE**

The success of the Rose, Orange, and Tulip revolutions in sweeping away ex-communist authoritarian regimes has raised the prospect—even the expectation—that this might occur in more or even all other former Soviet republics, including the Central Asian ones. The success of democratic revolutions in toppling seemingly well-entrenched authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the developing world only reinforces the sense that this process could spread from Kyrgyzstan to the other “stans.” Many authoritarian regimes, though, have proven to be highly durable—including, until now, those in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. And although there are many important similarities between these four on one hand and Kyrgyzstan on the other, there are also important distinctions between them that point to continued ex-communist authoritarian rule in the former group, even if this were to succumb to democratic revolution in Kyrgyzstan.

Contested election results have been the impetus for many of the democratic revolutions that have taken place recently, including those in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. But, as Jason Brownlee has argued, it is not elections themselves that destabilize authoritarian regimes (2004). Indeed, many authoritarian regimes regularly hold elections that are widely believed to be fraudulent and, yet, remain in power without any apparent difficulty. Elections in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have simply not been open to meaningful contestation.<sup>1</sup> Elections in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have allowed opponents of the regime to run, but have always delivered lopsided victories in favor of government-backed candidates with little public protest against this.<sup>2</sup> Parliamentary elections with questionable results took place in Tajikistan at virtually the same time in early 2005 as those that took place in neighboring Kyrgyzstan, but Tajikistan did not experience a democratic revolution or even a serious attempt at one (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005b, 2005c). Whereas Kyrgyzstan's 1991 presidential and 1995 parlia-

mentary elections were relatively free, subsequent elections were not. Public protest did arise over election-related as well as other issues, but the Akaev regime was able to quell it.<sup>3</sup>

What accounts for the difference between Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and other Central Asian republics, including Kyrgyzstan, prior to 2005? One difference appears to be the willingness of each regime to use deadly force against its opponents. The Turkmen and Uzbek regimes have never hesitated to use force against their opponents, and the Tajik government fought a civil war against its challengers. In March 2002, Kyrgyz government forces killed four protestors who were demonstrating against the detention of an opposition politician (International Crisis Group 2002).

The Akaev government, however, did not use deadly force against its opponents in early 2005. It threatened to do so. It even sent riot police to beat up—but not fire on—the demonstrators in front of the presidential palace—a move that backfired because it provoked the much larger crowd of demonstrators to respond in kind and to seize the palace (International Crisis Group 2005b). But Akaev did not use deadly force on this occasion—something that he himself proudly acknowledged shortly after he fled Kyrgyzstan (Peuch 2005).

Whatever the reason why Akaev did not use deadly force against his opponents in March 2005, it is highly doubtful that the rulers of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, or Tajikistan would show similar restraint. Indeed, the Uzbek government did use deadly force to suppress opposition activity in Andijon in May 2005 (International Crisis Group 2005c). The Kazakh government has generally attempted to appear more civilized by co-opting opponents if it can or detaining them through the state-controlled judicial system if it cannot (Blua 2005; Alibekov 2005a). It seems likely, however, that the Nazarbaev regime would order the use of force against its opponents—especially after it saw what happened to the Akaev regime in neighboring Kyrgyzstan, when it did not take this step (Kharlamov 2005).

If, indeed, the other Central Asian rulers are willing and able to use force against their opponents, this alone should enable them to prevent opposition forces from rising up or, unlike Akaev, to crush them should they somehow manage to do so. This being the case, these other regimes have strong prospects for surviving in the short or even medium term. Sooner or later, though, each of these regimes must confront the

issue of succession as their rulers grow older. And there is reason to believe that, due to their nature, the succession issue may prove especially perilous for the ex-communist authoritarian regimes of Central Asia.

Central Asia's authoritarian presidents no longer rule by virtue of being the leaders of predominant political parties. Nor do they rule as leaders of their armed forces. Instead, they rule by being at the head of networks of elites who seek to retain firm control over the state both to remain in power and to advance their own private interests. Further, the manner in which they have pursued their own private interests has often harmed the general public and curtailed economic development. For, instead of seeing successful private economic activity as something that can benefit the state or even themselves, these elites appear to fear it as something that will undermine their control over both state and society. Thus, they have sought to control economic activity to both maximize their own profit and prevent it from threatening their positions. The result, of course, is that their actions have only served to limit private economic activity (International Crisis Group 2004a, 2005a; Transparency International 2004, 204–05).<sup>4</sup> Further, this is a problem that affects all the Central Asian republics. Despite their different circumstances, the Central Asian states with higher GDP per capita are no less corrupt than those with lower GDP per capita. According to Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranked 145 countries (with 1 being the least corrupt and 145 the most), Uzbekistan was ranked (along with seven other countries) at 114, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (and five others) were ranked at 122, and Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (and six others) were ranked at 133 (Transparency International 2004, 235–38).

The way that Central Asia's authoritarian presidents have exercised power is as follows: Elites are allowed to use their positions to advance their private interests in exchange for supporting the president. If any of these elites stops supporting the president or does anything else he does not approve of, he can dismiss them from their positions, deprive them of the ability to make further private gains, and usually take away any previous ones that they may have made. The Central Asian presidents are aided in their ability to remove anyone they distrust both by the greed of the ruling elite as a whole and by the existence of rivalries within it. Greed and fear reduce the likelihood that other elites would ally with anyone

whom the president has turned against. Rivalry among elites enables the president to find allies against anyone who might develop a following (Collins 2004).<sup>5</sup>

Even if an authoritarian Central Asian president wanted to, it would be very difficult for him to reform this "kleptocratic" economic system. For, in order to reform it, he would have to greatly reduce, if not eliminate, corruption. Attempting to eliminate what the ruling elites gain from corruption, however, would be extremely dangerous because this could motivate them to overcome their rivalries and unite against the president.<sup>6</sup> Nor, of course, have the Central Asian presidents and those closest to them shown any sign of being willing to forego corrupt practices themselves.

What has happened since independence, however, is that a degree of differentiation has arisen among the elite in the Central Asian republics. The presidents and their "inner circles" (that is, their families and a few other close associates) have increasingly come to control major elements of each country's economy and are widely believed to have reaped an increasingly larger share of the gains available through corruption. The "outer circle" elites are not happy about the "relative deprivation" that they are suffering, but fear risking both their positions and their ability to derive what gains that they can from them. This is the situation that arose in Kyrgyzstan prior to the Tulip Revolution (International Crisis Group 2004b; Kimmage 2005). Under these circumstances, the succession issue becomes crucial, for whoever captures the presidency (as well as those closest to him or her) will be able to reap the lion's share of the gains from corruption.

A succession struggle, should it occur, might end quickly with the ex-communist authoritarian regime remaining intact. Then again, it might be prolonged. If so, this might provide other forces—be they democratic or Islamic fundamentalist—with an opportunity to vie for power. This might occur, for example, if one or another elite leader or faction seeks an alliance with these outside forces against rivals inside the regime. And once the outcome of a political struggle appears to be going against the president or his designated successor, the rest of the elite has a strong incentive to abandon the "sinking ship" of the old regime and ally with—and attempt to control—whatever replaces it. It is ironic that Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution broke out due to the belief that Akaev had rigged the 2005 parliamentary election results to favor his

supporters, but that these so-called pro-Akaev parliamentarians agreed to recognize Kurmanbek Bakiyev as acting president in return for his recognizing the results of the 2005 parliamentary elections (Dubnov 2005).

Whether or not a scenario such as this will come about elsewhere in Central Asia cannot be foretold. What it suggests, though, is that the potential for rivalries to emerge among the elites of these kleptocratic regimes—especially over the presidential succession issue—may create crises, of which the democratic and/or Islamic fundamentalist opponents of these regimes will undoubtedly seek to take advantage. Even if succession from the first president to the second avoids this set of problems—either through an arranged transition such as from Yeltsin to Putin in Russia or from Aliyev the father to Aliyev the son in Azerbaijan—this does not guarantee that subsequent transitions will be able to. Thus, although these regimes appear relatively strong vis-à-vis their opponents on a day-to-day basis even in the aftermath of the Tulip Revolution, the combined impact of corrupt economies, elite rivalries, popular disaffection, and uncertainty over presidential succession in the other four republics indicates that they could all face regime crises sooner or later. Increased defections on the part of elite regime figures to the opposition might be an indicator that such a crisis is brewing.

### PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Countries in the former USSR and elsewhere that have experienced democratic revolutions have had three elements in common: (1) the emergence of a democratic opposition movement; (2) a disputed election result, or some other precipitant, which serves to galvanize both the democratic opposition movement and the general populace to engage in widespread protest against the regime; and (3) an authoritarian regime that is unwilling or unable to suppress the democratic opposition with deadly force.

All three of these elements were clearly present in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. To what extent, though, are they now present, or appear likely to be present, in the other four Central Asian republics?

The first—the emergence of a democratic opposition movement—appears to be an obvious requirement for a democratic revolution. Without the presence of a democratic movement, a democratic revolution is not possible (though a nondemocratic revolution is). The

actual strength of popular support for democratization, though, might not become clear until a precipitating event that enrages public opinion against the regime occurs. The presence of even a strong democratic opposition movement, though, will not guarantee that a democratic revolution will occur.

The strongest democratic movement in Central Asia outside of Kyrgyzstan is the one in Kazakhstan. This, of course, does not mean that the Kazakh democratic movement is very strong. But it does exist and is able to operate within Kazakhstan to some extent. There is also a democratic movement in Tajikistan, though its principal leader is now in prison there (Saidazimova 2005b; Pannier 2005b). As the Kyrgyz case has shown, however, being held as a political prisoner may actually help propel someone who is widely regarded (correctly or incorrectly) as a democratic leader to high office if a democratic revolution occurs. There may be, then, some political space for democratic movements to emerge in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan if a precipitating event that led to widespread support for them were to take place, but the governments are working actively to prevent such a precipitating event.

Uzbekistan does have a democratic movement, but it is very weak and divided. Further, many of its leaders are in exile (International Crisis Group 2004a; Saidazimova 2005c). If there is a democratic movement inside totalitarian Turkmenistan, it is almost completely invisible. Most Turkmen opposition figures appear to be in prison or living in exile (International Crisis Group 2004c). The tight controls that these two regimes exercise over internal and external communications make it very difficult for democratic opposition movements to emerge in them.

The second element—disputed election results that serve to galvanize both the democratic opposition movement and the general populace to engage in widespread protest against the regime—has usually been present in democratic revolutions, but may not be absolutely essential. Some other event may serve as a precipitant to widespread popular protest, such as the August 1991 attempted coup in Moscow in the former Soviet Union. By their very nature, though, disputed election results have often served to galvanize protest against an authoritarian regime, as they did in the Philippines and Serbia as well as Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. But, as was mentioned earlier, the mere fact that election results are disputed does not guarantee that they will

precipitate widespread protest.

The fact that Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have allowed for some degree of contestation in their elections, while Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have not, suggests that there is some opportunity for disputed election results leading to widespread protest in the former, whereas there is none in the latter. After disputed election results led to democratic revolution in Kyrgyzstan, however, both the Kazakh and Tajik regimes appear to have become more determined than ever not to allow anything like this to occur in their countries (*EurasiaNet* 2005a; Pannier 2005a). It is possible, of course, that their actions in this regard might prove counterproductive and trigger the widespread popular opposition that they wish to avoid.

The May 2005 antigovernment demonstrations in Uzbekistan show that something other than disputed election results can trigger widespread opposition activity. In this case, it was the detention of twenty-three Islamic-oriented businessmen in Andijon. This event, however, did not trigger popular protest nationwide, but only in Andijon and a few other locales in the Fergana Valley (International Crisis Group 2005c). Except possibly for the sudden death of Turkmenbashi, it is difficult to envision what could trigger widespread popular protest in Turkmenistan that might lead to democratic revolution.

The presence of the first two elements may presage the vigorous attempt at a democratic revolution, but this will not succeed without the presence of the third element: an authoritarian regime that is unwilling or unable to suppress the democratic opposition with deadly force. As was mentioned earlier, Akaev claimed even after being ousted that he had been unwilling to use deadly force against his opponents. The authoritarian rulers of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, by contrast, have already proven that they are quite willing to use force against their opponents. Nazerbaev's willingness to do so in Kazakhstan has not yet been put to a significant test.

It must be emphasized, however, that a dictator's willingness to use force against his opponents does not guarantee that force will be used against them effectively. The crucial moment in democratic revolutions elsewhere has been the defection of elements from the regime's security forces to the democratic opposition. This has occurred in many democratic revolutions, including those in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan.

The reason why even a small-scale defection

from the security services to the democratic opposition can be so crucial is that it confronts the security services as a whole with a difficult problem. Before a defection from the security services to the democratic opposition, the suppression of the regime's opponents merely entails cracking down on largely unarmed protesters. After such a defection, however, the security services are confronted with the task of firing on armed men. And if even a small defection to the democratic opposition cannot be nipped in the bud immediately, more and more defections might occur, and a real fight may become necessary in order to stop them. The command to fire on defectors from the security services might lead to further defections in order to avoid such a fight. In such a situation, the security services can quickly become immobilized even if relatively few of their personnel have become converts to democracy. If this happens, the regime collapses, and the democrats come to power (Katz 2004).

Assuming that a democratic opposition grows strong enough to require the regime to order the use of force against it to remain in power, it is simply unpredictable whether a defection from the security forces to the democratic opposition will occur. A regime that would fire on its unarmed opponents would presumably select only the most trusted officers to do this. Indeed, these officers might believe themselves to be willing and able to obey such an order until they are actually confronted with a situation in which they have to carry it out. Some might simply prove unwilling to fire on unarmed citizens. Others may have secretly been in contact with the democratic opposition, thus paving the way for overt defection. Still others might calculate that if the old regime is likely to fall anyway, those who do fire on the opposition will face prosecution or more immediate retribution when the new one comes to power.

Officers who decide not to obey orders to fire on a democratic opposition movement will not necessarily defect to it; the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising proved this (Katz 2004, 167). There is, however, a strong incentive for officers choosing not to fire on the democratic opposition to defect to it: If it survives, the authoritarian regime is highly likely to dismiss as well as punish any officers who do not obey such an order. The possibility of getting a better position with the new regime may also be an incentive to defect. And, of course, once this process begins, it is more likely to cascade until the point where virtually no one is protecting the regime.

There is no guarantee, of course, that any officers would defect or that this would lead to cascading defections if a democratic revolutionary situation arose in any other Central Asian republic. On the other hand, the authoritarian rulers of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have no assurance that they could prevent such defections if widespread democratic protests sprang up in their countries. In other words, if it gets to the point where widespread democratic protest erupts, authoritarian leaders may not be able to prevent the defections from the security forces, which will allow democratic revolution to occur—especially when an emerging democratic opposition is actively seeking to recruit security service personnel into its ranks.

### PROSPECTS FOR ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

Democratic revolution is not the only type of revolution that could occur in Central Asia. Nondemocratic revolution could also occur. There have, of course, been various types of nondemocratic revolution in other countries in the past, including Marxist, nationalist, pan-nationalist, and religious fundamentalist. The nondemocratic revolutionary movements active in Central Asia, though, are Islamic fundamentalist ones that also advocate pan-nationalist goals either for the region or for the entire Muslim world. Although usually still referred to as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), this movement changed its name—and its ambition—to Islamic Movement of Turkestan (that is, all of Turkic Central Asia) (Weitz 2004, 505–06). Hizb ut-Tahrir advocates the resurrection of the caliphate—a single state encompassing the entire Muslim world (Siddiqui 2004, 3–4; Haqqani 2004, 29–32; Baran 2004, 7–15).

Many of the same factors that give rise to a democratic opposition can also give rise to an Islamic one: authoritarian regimes facing succession crises, pervasive corruption, widespread poverty, and growing disaffection. One difference in the motivation of a democratic opposition movement and an Islamic one is that, whereas the former sees America and the West as ultimately being part of the solution to the problems its country faces, the latter sees them as being an important cause of these problems as well as an obstacle to its ambitions (Baran 2004, 13).

Just as there have been variations in how democratic revolutions occur, Islamic revolutions (and nondemocratic revolutions in general) can also occur in different ways. The three suc-

cessful Islamic revolutions that have occurred so far—Iran in 1979, Sudan in 1989, and Afghanistan in 1996—each occurred in idiosyncratic ways. Different routes to Islamic revolutionary regimes are also possible in Central Asia (as well as other Muslim countries). Indeed, there are three broad possibilities for this to occur (with plenty of room for local variation): electoral means, insurgency, and coup d'état.

The possibility that an Islamic revolutionary movement could come to power through electoral means is certainly a concern in the Middle East. The fear is that, if elections were held, Islamists would come to power and would then do away with elections. But, as in most of the Middle East, Islamists in Central Asia have not been able to vie for power via elections, either because elections are not meaningful (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) or because governments control the outcomes even where some contestation is permitted (Kyrgyzstan in the past; Kazakhstan and Tajikistan still).

In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the electoral path to power for Islamists does not seem viable. One of the notable features of Kyrgyzstan's 2005 democratic revolution was that Islamists played virtually no role in it (Khamidov and Saipov 2005; Saidazimova 2005a). It does not seem that they have any meaningful political strength there. While Hizb ut-Tahrir reportedly has some following in Kazakhstan—especially among the Uzbeks residing in the south (Rotar 2005; Rashid 2002, 130–31)—Islamists do not appear to have much strength in this country, which has both a large Slavic population and a largely secular Muslim one.

In Tajikistan, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) does participate in elections. This party was part of the governing coalition that briefly held power in 1992 after ousting Tajikistan's first ex-communist president, participated in the civil war following the Russian intervention that put another ex-communist back in power, and agreed to the 1997 cease-fire that allowed it to play a subordinate role in Tajik politics (Rashid 2002, 95–114; International Crisis Group 2003, 7). In the 2005 Tajik parliamentary elections, the IRP won only two seats (*EurasiaNet* 2005b). Had the elections been free and fair, it may well have won more. The IRP, though, appears to represent regional interests in Tajikistan and is no longer a revolutionary party. Indeed, the truly revolutionary Hizb ut-Tahrir appears to regard the IRP as collaborationist (Kabiri 2004, 71).

It is not clear what sort of electoral strength

Islamists might have in Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan, because this path to power is not open to them or any other opposition group in these two countries.

Insurgency is another possible path to Islamic revolution in Central Asia, but although this was attempted, it has so far proven unsuccessful. To the extent that there were Islamic revolutionaries within the opposition fighting against the reimposed ex-communist regime in Tajikistan during the 1992–97 civil war, they ended up being either defeated or co-opted (Rashid 2002, 102–6). Similarly, the IMU attempted to launch insurgencies in Uzbekistan from its bases in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan in 1999 and 2000. It appeared to be in the process of trying this a third time in 2001 when 9/11 occurred, and the American-led intervention in Afghanistan forestalled it. In each of these cases, not only was the IMU unable to seize power, it could not even sustain an insurgency inside Uzbekistan (Rashid 2002, 159–86). This is in marked contrast to, among others, the Chechen rebels (many of whom are Islamists) who, although unable to achieve their objective, have succeeded in sustaining an insurgency for many years now.

Merely because insurgency has not yet been sustained in post-Soviet Central Asia, of course, does not mean that this could not happen in the future. So far, though, Central Asia seems inhospitable to revolution by this means. The democratic revolution in Kyrgyzstan, as noted earlier, appears to have undermined whatever strength Islamic revolutionaries may have had in that country. An attempt to launch an Islamic revolutionary insurgency in Kazakhstan would be vigorously resisted not just by the government, but by the Slavic and secular Kazakh populations. The authoritarian regimes in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have already shown that they can defeat insurgents, albeit with some outside help in the Tajik case. Despite its many problems, Turkmenistan has not so far proven amenable to insurgency either.

Islamic revolution via coup d'état is not yet something that has occurred in Central Asia, but this is a scenario that should be taken seriously. Unlike the IMU, which has directly confronted the Uzbek government, the supposedly nonviolent Hizb ut-Tahrir is reportedly engaged in clandestine recruitment throughout Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan (Baran 2004, 20–23, 77–79). It is possible that it has met with some degree of success in infiltrating Central Asian security services. Of course, there is no way of knowing how successful Hizb ut-Tahrir has been

at this. If, however, its infiltration of any Central Asian republic's security services ever reaches a critical mass, it could be in a position to launch a swift, sudden coup. As previous cases have shown, it is not necessary to control all of a country's security services to carry out a coup successfully. Infiltration of a few key units usually suffices (Luttwak 1968, 138–65). These are sometimes able to pull off the coup before the others are able to react. Security services are usually unwilling to fight against their fellows who not only have defected away from the old regime (just as in democratic revolutions), but who, after a coup, now constitute the new regime.

Not all coups, of course, are revolutions. Revolutionaries, though, have come to power elsewhere through infiltrating the armed forces until a critical mass is reached, which allows them to launch a successful coup d'état. Could this happen in Central Asia? This seems highly unlikely in Kyrgyzstan, where the security services have just recently defected to the democratic opposition and not the Islamic one. This also seems unlikely to occur in Kazakhstan, where Islamic revolutionary coup makers would have a very difficult time retaining control of this ethnically diverse, largely secular state. In Tajikistan, where regional differences are especially salient, it is doubtful that Islamists—who appear to be stronger in the less powerful regions (International Crisis Group 2003, 7)—would be able to infiltrate security services drawn mainly from the more powerful regions of the country.

In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, by contrast, this may be more of a possibility. Indeed, in these two countries, where there appears to be little possibility of democratic change, infiltration of the security services by Islamic revolutionaries who then launch a coup may be the most likely means of bringing down these regimes. This is not to say that this could be accomplished easily. But if Islamic revolutionaries can come to power anywhere in Central Asia, the seizure of power by security services that they have infiltrated in countries where the regimes have most thoroughly destroyed the democratic opposition (such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) may be their best hope.

Whether such a coup attempt could succeed cannot be foretold. It appears, though, that Hizb ut-Tahrir is attempting to infiltrate all elements of the societies in which it operates, including the security services. Unlike either the electoral path to power or insurgency (both of which take time and provide warning to others that they are being attempted), the

advantage of a coup for Islamists who have infiltrated the security services is that this could occur very quickly and without any warning. This would certainly catch external powers off guard, who would then be confronted not with an impending Islamic revolution, but with one that is a fait accompli.

### IMPACT OF EXTERNAL ACTORS

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, America and the West were hopeful that democratization might take root in Kyrgyzstan and perhaps elsewhere in Central Asia (Gleason 1997, 97, 150–52). There were signs that Iran supported the Tajik opposition, which contained Islamist elements, in the early 1990s (Rashid 2002, 218). Russia and China appeared most comfortable with the ex-communist authoritarian regimes there, though Moscow had differences with some of them (Gleason 1997, 138–46; Rashid 2002, 193–204).

But, whatever their preferred type of regime in Central Asia, all these governments (and almost all others) acquiesced to the status quo of ex-communist authoritarian regimes ruling there from the breakup of the USSR until 2005. Although America and the West were unhappy that democratization did not advance in this region, the continuation of ex-communist authoritarian regimes was preferable to them than the feared possibility of Islamic revolutionary ones coming to power there (Rashid 2002, 189–93). Even Iran pulled back from supporting the Tajik opposition and helped negotiate the 1997 cease-fire that resulted in the Moscow-backed ex-communists remaining the dominant force in Tajikistan. This change of policy in Tehran may have resulted from a desire not to alienate Moscow (whose cooperation Iran needed for building a nuclear reactor) as well as the rise of the anti-Shia, anti-Iranian Taliban in Afghanistan (which raised the unwelcome prospect of other Sunni revolutionary regimes in Central Asia also being hostile toward Iran) (Rashid 2002, 218–21).

The international Islamic revolutionary movement, of course, has hoped for Islamic revolution in Central Asia as well as elsewhere in the Islamic world all along. Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, however, was the only government that actively promoted this policy through providing sanctuary and support for the IMU (Weitz 2004, 507). Yet even the Taliban claimed that its brand of Islamic revolution was not for export (Ewans 2002, 272). With the downfall of the Taliban after 9/11, though, there is no government seek-

ing Islamic revolution in Central Asia (although, of course, the international Islamic revolutionary movement continues to do so).

Although most states have acquiesced to their continued rule until now, the 2005 upheavals in both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have raised the prospect that the ex-communist authoritarian regimes throughout Central Asia might be vulnerable. External actors could affect the outcome to internal upheavals in Central Asia. But just as when the Central Asian republics first became independent, different external actors are once again pursuing different ends in this region.

The Russian government has made clear that it prefers the ex-communist authoritarian status quo to democratic revolution (and, of course, to Islamic revolution). But as in Georgia and Ukraine, once democratic revolution occurred in Kyrgyzstan, they accepted this outcome. Indeed, Moscow seemed to acquiesce to democratic revolution far more readily in Kyrgyzstan than it did in either Georgia or Ukraine (Blagov and Torbakov 2005). It even seemed that Putin had developed an “if-you-can’t-beat-’em, join-’em” approach when, in early April 2005, the principal Tajik opposition leader, Mahmadrusi Iskandarov (who planned to run against President Rakhmonov) was freed from prison in Russia—which had put him there in December 2004 at the Rakhmonov government’s behest (Saidazimova 2005). It is doubtful, though, that his subsequent abduction by Tajik authorities and imprisonment in Tajikistan could have occurred without the Kremlin’s active cooperation.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Putin administration indicated its support for the Karimov government’s use of force against what were primarily unarmed protesters in May 2005.<sup>8</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov declared the conflict to be “Uzbekistan’s internal affair,” and blamed Islamic militants for the crisis (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005a; International Crisis Group 2005c). What this indicates is that, although the Putin administration is likely to acquiesce to democratic revolutions where they occur, it supports active—even forceful—measures by the ex-communist authoritarian regimes of Central Asia to forestall them.

The Chinese government’s friendly reception of Karimov in Beijing shortly after his use of force in May 2005 indicates that Beijing also prefers the ex-communist authoritarian status quo to democratic revolution (as well as to Islamic revolution) (Podelco 2005). Beijing’s acquiescence to democratic revolu-



tion in Kyrgyzstan, though, suggests that China will also accept this where it occurs. As much as it does not like them, China appears less willing than Russia to take active measures to forestall democratic revolutions in Central Asia (Skosyrev 2005).

The European Union prefers democratization to the present ex-communist authoritarian regimes, but prefers these authoritarian regimes to Islamic fundamentalist ones. EU governments advise against, even condemn, the use of force by these regimes against unarmed opponents. For the most part, however, they do not take strong action that would help democratic revolutionaries come to power or prevent authoritarian regimes from using force against them (Lobjakas 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; O'Rourke 2005). In effect, they acquiesce to whatever happens.

The United States also prefers democratization to the present ex-communist authoritarian regimes, but also prefers these authoritarian regimes to Islamic fundamentalist ones. As shown by the actions of the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek and U.S.-government backed NGOs, the U.S. government is prepared to help democratic opposition groups where it can (Smith 2005). It also strongly advises against the use of force against them. On the other hand, Washington does not want to risk losing military facilities and other interests in Central Asia by antagonizing authoritarian regimes in supporting their democratic opponents in places where the latter have little chance of coming to power (Tully 2005). Thus, while more willing to push for democratization than its Western allies, there are limits to how aggressively the U.S. will pursue this, as was shown in Uzbekistan in May 2005.

The prospect of revolutionary change poses a special challenge for Iran. The Islamic Republic has no ideological affinity for Central Asia's ex-communist authoritarian regimes. Tehran, though, fears that the success of democratic revolution in Central Asia will lead to an attempt to bring it to Iran. Nor, however, does Iran wish to see Islamic revolution in Central Asia that brings to power Sunni fundamentalist regimes that will not be under Iran's control and are highly likely to be hostile toward Tehran. On the whole, then, Tehran prefers the continuation of ex-communist authoritarian regimes in Central Asia to the other two alternatives. But where democratic revolutions have occurred in the former Soviet Union, including Kyrgyzstan, Tehran has moved quickly to establish normal relations with the new regimes. (Tehran appears to prefer democratic revolution to Sunni Islam-

ic revolution in the region.)<sup>9</sup>

The international Sunni Islamic revolutionary movement obviously wants Islamic revolution to take place in Central Asia, and does not want either the ex-communist authoritarian regimes to remain in power or democratic revolution to occur there. This movement appears to be providing aid to Central Asian Islamists, though clearly not enough yet to enable the latter to take power anywhere (Schwartz 2005; Khamidov and Saipov 2005). As was noted earlier, Islamic revolutionaries appeared to play little or no role in Kyrgyzstan's democratic revolution. To the extent that democratic revolution undercuts the demand for Islamic revolution, the international Sunni Islamic revolutionary movement undoubtedly prefers the continuation of ex-communist authoritarian regimes (which can stoke demand for Islamic revolution) to democratic revolution (which forestalls it).

Finally, there exists something of an international democratic revolutionary movement in the form of the pro-democracy NGOs from established democracies as well as those from countries, such as Georgia, that have experienced such revolutions themselves (Anjaparidze 2005; Spencer 2005). These NGOs have a very strong preference for democratic revolution and wish to see the existing ex-communist authoritarian regimes overthrown. They certainly do not favor Islamic (or any other kind of nondemocratic) revolution, and see democratic revolution as the best way of forestalling this possibility. These NGOs are highly dependent on there being sufficient political openness within an authoritarian regime for them to work with the local democratic opposition. More important, there has to be a local democratic opposition for these NGOs to actually work with if the latter are to be effective.

What complicates matters for external actors seeking to affect the politics of Central Asia is that there are three possible outcomes for the region, not two. External actors (especially governments) that prefer democratization to ex-communist authoritarianism also prefer ex-communist authoritarianism to Islamic revolution. Until now, they have avoided pushing for democratization for fear that weakening ex-communist authoritarian regimes could backfire and bring about Islamic instead of democratic revolution. This phenomenon, combined with the fact that key neighboring countries (Russia and China) prefer the authoritarian status quo anyway, has produced an environment where, on balance, the policies of external actors toward the region have been more supportive of contin-

ued ex-communist authoritarianism in the region than any other alternative. Clearly, though, this "consensus" was not strong enough to prevent democratic revolution in Kyrgyzstan, which those external actors preferring this alternative supported enthusiastically, and which even those preferring a continuation of the ex-communist status quo prefer to Islamic revolution.

### **IMPACT OF DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION ON THE REGION**

In that democratic revolution has already occurred in Kyrgyzstan, we have already begun to see what affects democratic revolution in just one country has had on the region. These effects include:

A rising expectation, both in the region and beyond, that because democratic revolution occurred in Kyrgyzstan, it could (though will not necessarily) occur in other Central Asian states;

Fear on the part of the remaining four ex-communist authoritarian leaders that what happened to Akaev could also happen to them, accompanied by determined efforts to prevent this. Uzbekistan's Karimov has already exhibited such efforts in an extreme form when he ordered the use of force against primarily unarmed demonstrators in Andijon and elsewhere in the Fergana Valley in May 2005;

Increased friction between those external actors (such as Russia and China) that prefer that ex-communist authoritarian regimes remain in power and not succumb to democratic revolution on the one hand, and those (such as the U.S. and the EU) that have acquiesced to authoritarian ex-communist regimes remaining in power but would prefer them to be replaced by democracies. This increased friction between Russia and America in particular might result in one or both regarding the other as its principal rival in the region and in less willingness to cooperate against their common opponents—Islamic fundamentalist revolutionaries.

These three effects would probably have occurred if democratic revolution had taken place in any of the five Central Asian republics, and not just Kyrgyzstan. There is one additional effect, however, that appears to have resulted because this type of revolution occurred in one of the three less populous Central Asian republics and not one of the two more populous ones. Understandably fearful of its more powerful neighbor, the new government in Kyrgyzstan did not attempt to export or promote democratic revolution in Uzbekistan when

opposition to the Karimov regime arose just across the border in May 2005 (Khamidov 2005). Had democratic revolution occurred first in either Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan (or if it occurs in either of them at some point in the future), one of these larger states might well feel less inhibited about promoting democratic revolution in the other Central Asian republics than Kyrgyzstan has been so far.

But just as successful democratic revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine may have helped inspire the democratic opposition in Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz—as well as Georgian and Ukrainian—democratic revolution may inspire the democratic opposition in other Central Asian republics, whether the new government in Bishkek wants this or not. Further, whereas the new Kyrgyz government might refrain from promoting democratic revolution in larger neighboring states that it fears, the international democratic revolutionary movement as a whole is not likely to feel so inhibited. Whether Bishkek (or anyone else) likes it or not, the Tulip Revolution may contribute to similar attempts in other Central Asian states. As indicated earlier, these attempts may fail if ex-communist authoritarian regimes are both willing and able to use force to suppress them (that is, if their own security forces remain loyal to them). However, a second successful democratic revolution in Central Asia appears likely to increase expectations that democratic revolution will sweep throughout the entire region, and may render members of the security services fearful of the consequences of attempting to suppress something that they may increasingly see as inevitable.

It should be noted that democratization in Central Asia, as has sometimes occurred elsewhere, could result in unleashing ethnic tensions that authoritarian regimes had previously held in check by force. Ex-communist authoritarian regimes and their backers will seize on the emergence of such tensions in a country where democratic revolution has occurred to argue that, in the future, similar revolutions must be prevented. This problem, should it arise, may require vigorous diplomatic and other efforts on the part of the U.S. and EU to successfully resolve.

### **IMPACT OF ISLAMIC REVOLUTION ON THE REGION**

If Islamic fundamentalist revolution occurs anywhere in Central Asia, the immediate effects of this are likely to be:

A rising expectation, both in the region and beyond, that because Islamic fundamentalist revolution occurred in one Central Asian country, it could (though will not necessarily) occur in other countries of the region;

Fear on the part of not just the remaining ex-communist authoritarian regimes, but also any democratic ones (Kyrgyzstan and possibly others) that Islamic revolution could come to their countries. This fear would also be accompanied by determined efforts by all these Central Asian governments to prevent this;

Increased cooperation between external actors favoring ex-communist regimes (Russia and China) and those favoring democratization (the U.S. and the EU) against the common threat of Islamic fundamentalism. In that each side will fear the prospects of political change resulting in Islamic revolution, both are likely to be willing to preserve the status quo to prevent this. In other words, the principal external powers (the U.S., EU, Russia, and China) will all be willing to work with the existing ex-communist authoritarian regimes as well as with any existing democratic governments in the region. Iran might tacitly join this alliance (as it did with Russia in Tajikistan, and later with America and Russia in Afghanistan) in the highly likely event that it saw Central Asian Islamic revolutionaries as anti-Shia and as ideological competitors. Of course, the underlying problems within ex-communist authoritarian regimes that give rise to both democratic and Islamist opposition movements will persist.

As several scholars of revolution have observed, revolution in one country often leads to war between it and others.<sup>10</sup> Even when this does not happen, tensions usually rise dramatically. The democratic revolutions of recent decades have not conformed to this pattern, but the Islamic revolutions all have. Stephen M. Walt has argued that this occurs because other nations—as well as the great powers—fear that the new revolutionary regime will try to aggressively export its revolution, whereas the new revolutionary regime fears that the status quo powers will seek to reverse its revolution (Walt 1996, 32–43).

An Islamic revolutionary regime anywhere in Central Asia would have some capability to export Islamic revolution with its own armed forces, or to support this through providing sanctuary to Islamic revolutionary groups targeting nearby countries. The petroleum wealth that Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan possess would give Islamic regimes in them substantial

means with which to do this (although it is difficult to imagine Islamic revolution occurring in the latter). Tajikistan is poor but could serve as a source of inspiration and support for the oppressed Tajik population in neighboring Uzbekistan. An Islamic revolutionary Uzbekistan, though, would pose the greatest threat both because it has the largest population in the region and also because there are large numbers of Uzbeks in each of the neighboring countries who it could support if they adhere to the new regime's revolutionary ideology.

It cannot be foretold, of course, whether war would occur in Central Asia if an Islamic revolution took place in any country there, or what the outcome of such a conflict would be. Although such a revolution would undoubtedly inspire Islamic revolutionaries elsewhere in the region seeking to emulate it, there is reason to believe that Islamic revolution would not sweep through the region like wildfire. First, the other Central Asian states are likely to be so fearful that Islamic revolution will spread to their country that they will very quickly agree to (or even insist on) a larger American military presence to protect them—something that Russia and China are also likely to acquiesce to, just as they did in the face of a common Islamic revolutionary threat after 9/11. In addition to thwarting an attack from the revolutionary state, this increased presence may even create an opportunity for the kind of reform that could undercut domestic demand for Islamic revolution in ex-communist authoritarian regimes. An American presence might also serve to bolster the democratic opposition.

Second, and, whether or not the above occurs, Islamic revolution in one Central Asian country is likely to enhance nationalist tensions in the region, which could inhibit its spread to other countries. An Islamic revolution in Uzbekistan, for example, is likely to enhance fears that the spread of this revolution will lead to Uzbek domination over the rest of Central Asia—something which non-Uzbeks would naturally resist. An Islamic revolution in Tajikistan would allow Tashkent to rally its Uzbek population against the “Tajik threat” in its midst. In other words, wherever Islamic revolution first occurs in Central Asia, others in the region are likely to fear the spread of this revolution leading to domination by the state it spreads from.

But even if Islamic fundamentalist revolution succeeds in two or even more Central Asian countries, it is doubtful that these new revolutionary regimes would cooperate with each

other for long—if at all. Whereas relations between democratic governments are generally peaceful, relations between nondemocratic revolutionary regimes—especially ones that espouse the same or similar ideologies—tend to be highly conflictual (Katz 1997, 55–81). Just because they all may share the same or a similar revolutionary ideology does not mean that Tajik (or any other Central Asian) Islamic revolutionaries would willingly defer to Uzbek ones, or vice versa. In short, although their ideology may be transnationalist, Islamic fundamentalist revolutionaries are likely to behave like nationalists. An attempt, then, to combine some or all Central Asian states into an Islamic superstate by any one group (especially the Uzbeks) is likely to be seen by others as an attempt to dominate the region. What this means is that even if Islamic revolution occurs in two or more Central Asian states, the ideological, nationalist, ethnic and leadership disputes that are likely to erupt between them make unification unlikely to occur or to last for long, even if it does. What this also means is that if rivalries do indeed emerge between Islamic revolutionary regimes in the region, the U.S. as well as others will have the opportunity to exploit those rivalries.

#### LONGER TERM IMPLICATIONS

This article has argued that the likely political alternatives for Central Asia are: (1) the continuation of ex-communist authoritarian regimes; (2) democratic revolution; and (3) Islamic fundamentalist revolution. It must be emphasized, though, that the victory of any one of these three outcomes in political crises like the ones that occurred in Kyrgyzstan in February–March 2005 or Uzbekistan in May 2005 is not necessarily the end of the story.

The successful crackdown on primarily unarmed demonstrators in Andijon by the Uzbek government, for example, does not mean that the Karimov regime is now secure. Indeed, his use of force on this occasion may result in furthering opposition to him—of both the democratic and the Islamic fundamentalist varieties. Karimov may now be in a no-win situation: The use of force against his opponents results in his having even more opponents, but the failure to use force against them only serves to embolden his opponents who, instead of being reconciled to him for not using force, remain aggrieved by his previous use of it. Other Central Asian ex-communist authoritarian rulers who use force against their opponents, of course, are in a similar situation.

The Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan suggests

that, where they have the opportunity to do so, the populace in Central Asian countries will support the democratic opposition and not the Islamic fundamentalist one. The forceful suppression of the nonviolent, loosely organized democratic opposition, however, may leave the violent, tightly organized Islamic fundamentalist opposition in a better position to seize power if the old regime falters (possibly as a result of Islamists infiltrating it). Indeed, if resentment develops due to popular perceptions in Central Asia that America and the West support ex-communist authoritarian regimes that suppress their democratic opponents, the Islamic opposition may increasingly be seen by many in the region as the best hope for getting rid not just of these regimes, but of the foreign influence which is seen to be propping them up.

The Tulip Revolution has given rise to the hope that democracy will not only take root in Kyrgyzstan, but also that similar democratic revolutions might occur in other countries of the region. It is still not certain, though, just how democratic Kyrgyzstan's democratic revolution will turn out to be. On the one hand, Kyrgyzstan may experience genuine democratization that will inspire the democratic opposition elsewhere in Central Asia and the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Tulip Revolution may yet turn out to have been the means by which one part of the ex-communist authoritarian elite seized power and privileges away from another part (that is, the Akaev family and its closest supporters). If the latter scenario arises and Kyrgyzstan reverts to authoritarianism, the perception might arise that democracy was tried in Kyrgyzstan, but that it failed. Indeed, it is possible that this perception could arise even if the new Kyrgyz government is genuinely democratic, but is either unable to raise living standards to meet rising expectations, or worse yet, is unable to prevent them from falling. The notion of democracy could become discredited throughout Central Asia if the Tulip Revolution is eventually judged a failure by public opinion there. This could have ominous consequences. Support for democratic change might well decline. Some might conclude that an "efficient" strong man (such as someone like Nazarbaev) is what is needed. Others might conclude that Islam is the solution to Central Asia's problems.

It is, of course, highly doubtful that the revolutionary variety of Islam can provide much of a solution. Far from delivering peace and prosperity to their nations, the three modern Islamic revolutions that have succeeded (in Iran,

Sudan, and Afghanistan under the Taliban) brought war and poverty to them instead. There is little reason to believe that nondemocratic Islamic revolutionary regimes in Central Asia could do any better, even if they tried. If they simply replace one form of despotism with another, it is highly doubtful that Islamic revolutionaries will be able, or even willing, to overcome the ethnic tension, poverty, corruption, disaffection, or leadership struggles that helped foster their movements under ex-communist authoritarian regimes in the first place. To the extent that Islamic revolutionaries enjoy any degree of public support before they seize power, the experience of Islamic and other non-democratic revolutionary regimes elsewhere strongly suggests that they are likely to lose this after doing so. Islamic revolutionary regimes that come to power in Central Asia, then, are also likely to be unstable and subject to overthrow. Nevertheless, unpopular Islamic fundamentalist regimes can remain in power for a prolonged period of time, as the Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated.

Neither ex-communist authoritarian regimes, democratic governments, nor Islamic revolutionary ones are likely to be stable in Central Asia so long as ethnic tension, poverty, corruption, disaffection, and leadership struggles remain serious problems there. It has been argued here that the structure of the ex-communist authoritarian regimes is such that they are highly unlikely to resolve problems such as these. Islamic revolutionary regimes are also highly unlikely to resolve them either; indeed, they may only succeed in aggravating them. Democratic governments have the greatest potential for resolving these problems, but there is no guarantee that they can, especially in a country as poor as Kyrgyzstan.

Now that the Tulip Revolution has occurred, the U.S. has an enormous stake in its success. For if, with the help of the U.S. and others, the Tulip Revolution leads to genuine democratization and increased prosperity in Kyrgyzstan, this will increase the demand for democratization throughout Central Asia and increase the likelihood that democratic governments, and not Islamic revolutionary ones, replace any other ex-communist authoritarian regimes that fall. But if democracy fails, authoritarianism re-emerges, and poverty and corruption remain in Kyrgyzstan, democracy is likely to be discredited throughout Central Asia and ex-communist authoritarian regimes that fall may well be replaced by Islamic revolutionary ones instead.

## NOTES

1. For an overview of how elections have been conducted in these countries, see Freedom House "Freedom in the World" reports for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. See also International Crisis Group, "Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan"; and Ruzaliev, "Elections in Uzbekistan."

2. See Freedom House 2004 "Freedom in the World" reports for Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. See also Dave "Kazakhstan's 2004 Parliamentary Elections."

3. See Freedom House "Freedom in the World" report for Kyrgyzstan.

4. In 2004, GDP per capita (as measured on a purchasing power parity basis) ranged from \$1,100 in Tajikistan, \$1,700 in Kyrgyzstan, and \$1,800 in Uzbekistan to \$5,700 in Turkmenistan and \$7,800 in Kazakhstan (CIA 2005). According to the CIA, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line was 19 percent in Kazakhstan, 28 percent in Uzbekistan, 40 percent in Kyrgyzstan, 58 percent in Turkmenistan, and 60 percent in Tajikistan (CIA 2005; 2003 estimate for Turkmenistan, 2004 estimates for all others). These figures, though, are based on "national estimates" that may understate the true picture.

5. Kathleen Collins portrays Central Asian politics as a power struggle among rival clans (2004). For the most part, though, these clans appear to be groupings of allied elites and their clients who vie with similar groupings for political and economic power.

6. Collins described how powerful Uzbek clans opposed currency convertibility since this would undercut their economic interests. "Because antagonizing these clans was too risky, Karimov avoided making necessary economic reforms for attracting investment and spurring growth" (2004, 253). See also Yermukanov, "Nazarbayev's Anti-Corruption Campaign."

7. "Kommersant's sources in Dushanbe maintain that a plane with Makhmadruzi Iskandarov on board took off for Tajikistan from the Chkalov military airfield near Moscow" (Volkhonsky 2005).

8. A debate has emerged concerning what actually happened in Andijon on May 12–13, 2005, and how many people were killed then. Some have claimed that the incident was perpetrated by a relatively small number of armed insurgents, which Uzbek security forces then fought against, while others portray it as a primarily peaceful demonstration by largely unarmed citizens whom Uzbek security forces fired on. There is an element of truth in both views: the incident appears to have begun with armed insurgents forcefully seizing the Andijon prison and setting free its inmates, which then led to a large number of unarmed citizens seizing on the occasion to come out onto the streets and express their frustration with the government. For the former view, see Akiner, "Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005"; for the latter view, see International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan."

On balance, the claims of a higher number of deaths are more credible than the claims of a lower number. The higher estimates are based on the accounts of many eyewitnesses, while the lower estimates are based on the claims of the Uzbek government as well as Western-based scholars who were not present during the fighting.

9. These views were expressed by Central Asian specialists and others I met with in Iran, May 16–18, 2005. See also Moaveni, "Iran's Leadership Views 'Velvet Revolution' Trend with Caution."

10. For three different explanations as to why this occurs, see Walt, *Revolution and War*, 18–43; Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 234–60; and Snyder, "The U.S. and Third World Revolutionary States."

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