

The U.S. Interests and Role in Central Asia after K2

On November 21, 2005, the last U.S. Air Force plane flew out of the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) air base in Uzbekistan. The U.S. flag was lowered, and the keys to the base were returned.¹ The handover, which came well ahead of the six-month deadline stipulated by the Uzbek government in July 2005, closed a remarkable chapter in the continuing saga of U.S.-Uzbek relations. Although it ended with unfulfilled expectations and profound mutual disappointment, only four years earlier it had opened amid pledges of long-term partnership and seemingly open-ended cooperation. Who could have predicted that it would end like that? Virtually anyone familiar with Uzbekistan and the record of U.S.-Uzbek relations since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The immediate cause for this radical downturn was the United States' critical response to the Uzbek government's excessive use of force to suppress a violent uprising in the city of Andijon in May 2005. The uprising followed a series of peaceful protests in support of local businessmen on trial on charges of Islamic extremism. The Uzbek government's actions are reported to have resulted in hundreds of deaths, including unarmed civilians. The U.S. government charged that Uzbek authorities had used excessive force, calling for an independent investigation with international involvement.² The Uzbek government countered that force was an appropriate response to an uprising by terrorists, there was no need for an international commission to investigate the incident, and the Uzbek authorities would manage the investigation on their own.³

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Central Asia is the strategic backyard of every major Eurasian power.

The downturn in U.S.-Uzbek relations has deeper roots than Andijon. The Andijon events were the final straw that broke the back of U.S.-Uzbek relations, not a bolt out of the blue. To fully appreciate the complexity of this relationship, it must be seen in the context of U.S.-Uzbek relations during the entire 15-year period of Uzbek independence, not the four years since the September 11 attacks. The rapprochement that followed the attacks had obscured the long-standing tensions in the countries' bilateral relations, but it did not do away with them altogether.

The U.S. departure from the K2 air base coincided with a dramatic improvement in Uzbek-Russian relations. In November 2005, Russia and Uzbekistan signed an alliance treaty.⁴ Rumors about a Russian takeover of the facilities at K2 spread as U.S. personnel prepared to leave the base.⁵ Although this has yet to occur and

Moscow's ability to fill the void left by the United States remains in doubt, the diverging trajectories of U.S.-Uzbek and Uzbek-Russian relations have rekindled speculations about the revival of U.S.-Russian competition for influence in Central Asia and Russia's return to its old dominions. The Russian media in particular have hailed the U.S. withdrawal from K2 as a major accomplishment of Russian diplomacy and a major setback for U.S. interests in the region.⁶

Both claims appear to be inflated. Russia's role seems to be that of a target of opportunity for Uzbek leaders eager to show Washington that they have other strategic partners and options. The damage to U.S. interests is exaggerated too, at least in the near term. In the long term, however, the consequences of the downturn in U.S.-Uzbek relations could have negative consequences for all involved—Uzbekistan, its neighbors, the United States, and Russia.

Appearances are deceptive in Central Asia, a region with importance to every major Eurasian power as well as the United States. The one remarkable and unique feature of Central Asia is that it is the strategic backyard of every major Eurasian power: Russia, China, and even India. Each of these major powers has the bulk of its interests concentrated elsewhere. The United States, too, has far more at stake around the periphery of Eurasia than in its heartland. Yet, by virtue of its position in the middle of the world's largest and most important continent and its close links with Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey, Central Asia is nobody's strategic backwater.

What, then, are the stakes for the United States there? Is it a region where the United States has to be dominant, or can Washington be content with merely keeping the region free from great-power domination, as U.S.

policy aimed to do in the 1990s, without becoming a stakeholder in it? Will a security vacuum result from the U.S. withdrawal from Uzbekistan with dangerous consequences for the entire region? Does the loss of K2 affect the long-term U.S. pursuit of much larger stakes in Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, or China? How do Washington's regional strategic interests measure up against the Bush administration's agenda of democracy promotion?

A Long and Winding Road

The period directly following the September 11 attacks, when the United States and Uzbekistan declared a "strategic partnership,"⁷ until the crack-down at Andijon in May 2005 was an unusual chapter in a relationship that has been plagued by serious differences and disagreements about fundamental principles for 15 years.

THE FIRST DECADE

Throughout the 1990s, Uzbekistan was not a close partner, let alone an ally, of the United States. U.S. perceptions of Uzbekistan were marred by frequent reports of human rights violations, economic reforms that were sluggish at best, and incidents of heavy-handed interference in the domestic affairs of its neighbors.⁸ Although it was widely recognized in Washington during these years that Uzbekistan had the potential to become the regional leader because of its size, location, and ambitions, the policy community struggled to articulate a clear statement of U.S. interests in or policy toward Central Asia. Uzbekistan was not perceived to be a cooperative partner who would buy into the U.S. vision of bilateral relations built on shared commitment to democratic values, economic liberalization, and a non-zero sum approach to international relations.

Among the U.S. business and policy communities, Central Asian hydrocarbon reserves, concentrated mostly in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, sparked a great deal of initial interest. Yet, significant as these reserves may be, their impact on the global energy stage was always projected to be marginal. Furthermore, the difficulties associated with the construction of export routes coupled with the low price of oil by the late 1990s meant that, by the end of the decade, the interest in Central Asian hydrocarbons had faded. Although self-sufficient in terms of its oil and gas needs, Uzbekistan was never actually considered a potential major player in global or regional oil and gas schemes.

The most authoritative policy statement on Central Asia, delivered in 1997 by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, defined U.S. interests in

the region as reform; conflict prevention; and, in effect, the establishment of a zone free from big-power influence and competition. Beyond these goals, the United States had little interest in the vast, remote region in the heart of Eurasia.⁹ Corruption, undemocratic governance, and sputtering economies were widely seen as prevalent throughout the region, and Uzbekistan was viewed increasingly as a country at risk of destabilization.

Indeed, Uzbek leaders also had begun to fear that their regime's stability was in jeopardy at home and threatened from abroad.¹⁰ Its human rights record was generally considered to be the second-worst in Central Asia, behind the notorious regime in neighboring Turkmenistan.¹¹ Yet, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Uzbekistan in the spring of 2000, her argument that protecting human rights would serve as a hedge against further destabilization and radicalization of the population was firmly rejected by Uzbek president Islam Karimov for fear that it would instead achieve the opposite effect.¹²

The United States also viewed Uzbekistan as a potential victim of the radical, Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.¹³ U.S. concerns about the Taliban were widely shared in Uzbekistan, as well as the rest of Central Asia. Yet, Uzbek leaders once more roundly rejected U.S. strategies for addressing the challenge posed by the Taliban, including political reform, human rights, and economic liberalization, for fear of causing domestic destabilization.

A low-level program of military cooperation with Uzbekistan was undertaken by the U.S. Department of Defense following a secret 1998 intelligence finding by President Bill Clinton. It involved joint U.S.-Uzbek covert operations designed to counter the Taliban regime, training for Uzbek military personnel by U.S. Special Forces, and intelligence sharing.¹⁴ These activities, little known outside a relatively narrow circle of policymakers, became one element of the short-term versus long-term dichotomy that came to define U.S.-Uzbek relations. For the United States, Uzbekistan emerged as part of the solution in the short term because of its operational importance and part of the problem in the long term because of its fundamental differences with the United States over how the soon-to-be war on terrorism should be fought.

FRIENDS IN NEED

These long-term concerns were sidelined after the September 11 attacks. U.S. war plans for the anti-Taliban campaign and the liberation of Afghanistan made Uzbekistan an indispensable ally whose cooperation was desperately needed.¹⁵ Overnight, Uzbekistan became the United States' strategic ally and the frontline state in the war on terrorism. The Uzbek government's decision at the time to open its facilities and airspace to U.S. military person-

nel proved enormously important, changing Uzbekistan's place on the U.S. foreign policy agenda from a second-tier problem state to one of a handful of crucial partners.

Its proximity to Afghanistan at a time when Pakistan, because of its sponsorship of the Taliban regime and domestic political fragility, was viewed as an uncertain ally was the key factor. Uzbekistan offered unique capabilities for staging combat search and rescue operations and Special Forces operations from facilities near the Afghan border.¹⁶

Because the ability to act quickly and resolutely was a critical element of the U.S. mission to overthrow the Taliban regime, Uzbek leaders' lack of concern for domestic public opinion, as well as their ability to make decisions about partnership with the United States without having to look over their shoulder for grassroots political support, must have made Uzbekistan an even more attractive partner.

In March 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Uzbek foreign minister Abdulaziz Kamilov signed the "United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework," reflecting the states' rapidly transformed relationship.¹⁷ The United States affirmed "that it would regard with grave concern any external threat to the security and territorial integrity of the Republic of Uzbekistan." It was an extraordinary and unique commitment for the United States to make in the former Soviet region, in effect amounting to a security guarantee for a country that, just a few months prior, had been relegated to the second tier of U.S. foreign policy priorities. The U.S.-Uzbek declaration also entailed a pledge by Uzbekistan to "further intensify its democratic transformation of its society politically and economically," giving the United States' long-standing reform agenda a new boost.

Indeed, this agenda had acquired a new significance after the September 11 attacks. Washington viewed political and economic reforms not just as mere acts of international charity, but also as an essential national security tool designed to prevent weak and failed states from becoming security threats. The 2003 "U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism" reasserted the importance of political and economic reform, framing U.S. efforts to combat terrorism in terms of four major tasks: defeating terrorist organizations; denying further sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists; diminishing the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit; and defending the United States and its citizens at home and abroad.¹⁸ To keep terrorists from manipulating poverty and oppression for their own advan-

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tage, the strategy called on the United States and its allies to “win the ‘war of ideas,’ to support democratic values, and to promote economic freedom.”

THERE WE GO AGAIN

When applied to Uzbekistan, this approach immediately highlighted the dichotomy in the U.S.-Uzbek relationship. It had become an indispensable ally in Washington’s campaign to defeat the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, but it remained an obstacle to the United States’ existential struggle with terrorism and its promotion of democratic values and economic freedom.

To complicate the relationship further, there can be little doubt that Uzbek leaders understood the crucial nature of the role their country played in U.S. military efforts. Because they had come through for Washington at a critical moment, they felt that the United States now owed them. This belief most likely translated into a certain sense of invincibility to U.S. political pressures for domestic change. U.S. insistence on and Uzbek resistance to change led to renewed bilateral tensions and a deteriorating U.S. image of Uzbekistan as a simmering cauldron of social, economic, and political dissatisfaction, fueled by its government’s intransigence and likely to boil over with dire consequences for the entire region.¹⁹

Both sides viewed the unrest that erupted in Andijon in May 2005 and its subsequent suppression by Uzbek authorities as vindication of their respective positions. To U.S. analysts, Andijon signaled that the boiling point had been reached. Encouraged by the success of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, U.S. policymakers would have embraced political liberalization in Uzbekistan as a welcome step in an unfolding positive trend. To Uzbek authorities, however, neighboring Kyrgyzstan’s March 2005 Tulip Revolution and resulting turmoil proved that unrest could only be dealt with by force and that any relaxation of political controls would be regime suicide. Already suspicious of U.S. efforts to promote democracy and revolutionary change, Uzbek leaders were convinced that liberalization was the worst possible prescription for their country and that democracy would inevitably and rapidly lead to chaos and the regime’s collapse. Driven by such fundamental disagreements, the relationship between Tashkent and Washington reached the impasse at which they now remain.

The Implications of Andijon

Although the exact size of the U.S. presence at the K2 base was never officially disclosed, it was estimated to have housed approximately 1,750 mili-

tary personnel and 20 C-130 transport aircraft.²⁰ The base is reported to have played an important role as a transit and support facility for U.S. military operations in Afghanistan even after the crucial period immediately following the September 11 attacks. The ongoing U.S. military presence and operations in Afghanistan call for continuing support and resupply efforts. By air and land, access to Afghanistan is complicated by a host of political, security, geographic, geopolitical, and weather-related considerations. Replicating the Uzbek facilities at K2 elsewhere is no easy task in a region where U.S. military planners have to operate within multiple constraints.

Yet, the situation in Afghanistan in 2006 is radically different than that of 2001. Today, the United States is the preeminent strategic player in Afghanistan. The requirement for facilities to stage search and rescue and Special Forces operations can be accommodated from other U.S. facilities in Afghanistan. In addition to bases in Afghanistan at Bagram and Kandahar, the United States maintains a large base in Manas, near the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.²¹ Albeit limited, these facilities present U.S. policymakers with options that they did not have in the dire days and weeks following the September 11 attacks.²²

U.S. needs in the region have also changed. In 2001, near-term requirements were dictated by the military campaign to liberate Afghanistan from the Taliban. The emphasis in U.S. policy has since shifted to longer-term strategies that emphasize reliance on security elements such as police, border controls, and counterproliferation in pursuit of U.S. counterterrorism objectives, as well as political and economic development.²³ In other words, U.S. emphasis has shifted from the first element of the “National Strategy for Combating Terrorism,” which entails active military operations intended to defeat terrorists, to the third element of that strategy, which aims to diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit. Consequently, U.S. requirements for facilities such as K2 have changed.

Still, some aspects of U.S. operations in Afghanistan cannot be changed. It is a land-locked country without a rail system. Overland resupply efforts for U.S. troops would have to rely on the goodwill and cooperation of Iran, Pakistan, or Russia, as well as several Central Asian countries. Harsh climate and terrain would further complicate a task already made difficult and costly by great distances and uncertain security conditions, making air resupply a critical factor under any circumstances.

Technology, flexibility, and significant additional expenses have enabled U.S. military planners to mitigate the impact of the Andijon events on U.S.

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operations.²⁴ Yet, current U.S. facilities in Central Asia have been reduced to one base, in Manas, Kyrgyzstan—the country that has been teetering on the brink of internal disorder since its Tulip Revolution. Domestic instability in Kyrgyzstan and its vulnerability to Russian and Chinese pressures underscore the importance of a Central Asia strategy for the United States that emphasizes diversification, flexibility, and adaptability to local conditions, rather than pursuit of democratic change as a precondition to security cooperation. Should the United States need to expand its presence in Afghanistan, new requirements would put an even greater load on the logistical arrangements that already operate at full throttle.

In addition to its operational fallout, the Andijon crisis has had important political and strategic consequences. The break in U.S.-Uzbek relations occurred shortly after President George W. Bush's second inaugural address placed democracy promotion at the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda.²⁵ The crisis became the first test of this agenda, making it impossible for U.S. policymakers to overlook the Uzbek regime's human rights practices, even if they were so inclined for operational reasons.

The vigor of the U.S. pledge to promote democracy did not go unnoticed in Central Asia, where principles have long taken a back seat to considerations of *realpolitik* and policies have been based on interests. That the United States would forsake a critical relationship with its closest Central Asian ally in the war on terrorism—one that had come through for the United States in its time of need—sent a strong signal throughout the region. That the United States would do so in the name of an abstract principle was even more troubling to the rulers of a region where democratic elections have yet to be carried out and most leaders have held power since before the breakup of the Soviet Union. If the United States was willing to break relations with Uzbekistan, its closest ally in Central Asia, and welcome the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, which overthrew President Askar Akayev, whom U.S. policymakers had praised throughout the 1990s as a poster child for economic and political reforms in the region, what was the rest of the region to expect? Clearly, the United States was prepared to sacrifice stability for the sake of democracy, a trade-off that was unpalatable to Central Asian leaders.

Can't Have the Best, Will Take the Rest

For the aging, Soviet-era leaders of Central Asia, then, the lesson learned from the Colored Revolutions (Rose in Georgia in 2003, Orange in Ukraine in 2004–2005, and Tulip in Kyrgyzstan in 2005) is that the United States is not a partner on whom they will be able to rely as they confront the biggest

political challenge since their rise to power: succession. Because they perceive any hint of democratic governance as a threat to their power, democratic elections are not usually part of their plans. The examples of Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia and Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, both overthrown by popular movements that they had tolerated instead of suppressed, are certainly on the minds of Uzbek, Kazakh, and Turkmen leaders. Moreover, they fear that the United States, heavily invested in democracy promotion, is likely to see its equities with the Central Asian people, not its leaders.

When searching for alternative partners, these leaders do not have to look far. China and Russia, their two largest neighbors, proved eager to reciprocate Central Asian leaders' interest in closer relations. Both have actually played an important role in the region for a long time, China as a result of its growing economic and political ties to its Central Asian neighbors since the breakup of the USSR and Russia as a function of its residual ties to its former dominions there. Throughout the 1990s, both resented U.S. involvement in the region. They sought to preserve their mutual sphere of influence through the establishment of the Shanghai Five in 1996, which brought together China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan in a forum for managing cross-border issues. In 2001 it became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which today is the largest Central Asian regional organization and now includes Uzbekistan as a full member and Pakistan, India, Iran, and Mongolia as observers. Post-September 11, both Russia and China relaxed their opposition to the U.S. presence in their strategic backyard. Their interests were well served by the U.S. defeat of the Taliban, which both had considered an immediate threat to their security. U.S. success in Afghanistan, however, and the lack of a clear deadline for U.S. withdrawal prompted renewed Chinese and Russian concerns and questions about Washington's long-term intentions.

U.S. support for the Colored Revolutions, especially for the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and Bush's elevation of democracy promotion to the top of the U.S. agenda in Central Asia proved a double-edged sword for Russia and China. On one hand, the shift in U.S. policy priorities gave them a chance to drive a wedge between the United States and its Central Asian partners, whose views on democracy are much closer to those of Beijing and Moscow than Washington. On the other hand, both Russian and Chinese leaders felt that their security interests were seriously jeopardized by U.S.

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support for the Colored Revolutions and that U.S. efforts would only undermine the fragile status quo in the region.

It did not take much for Moscow and Beijing to convince Central Asia's ruling elites to accept their offer of partnership. Karimov was greeted with open arms in Moscow and Beijing shortly after the post-Andijon breakdown in U.S.-Uzbek relations. Akayev found refuge in Moscow after he fled the country in the face of growing unrest. Finally, at the July 2005 SCO summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, member countries issued an appeal to the United States to clarify its intentions and set a timetable to withdraw its troops from Central Asia.²⁶

The rush by Central Asian leaders to embrace Moscow and Beijing, however, as well as Russian and Chinese efforts to curtail U.S. influence, cannot conceal the fact that the United States remains the indispensable player in the region, particularly because of its continuing presence in Afghanistan and its efforts to stabilize that country. Neither China nor Russia has the ability or the will to step into the United States' shoes in the highly unlikely event that it exited Afghanistan prematurely. Moreover, Chinese and Russian policies aimed at curtailing U.S. influence in Central Asia represent a luxury that Beijing and Moscow could not have afforded if the Taliban government had remained in charge in Kabul. Had it not been for the continuing U.S. presence and success in Afghanistan, Russia and China would have been faced with the unenviable prospect of dealing with an erratic government in Afghanistan whose goal was to establish a caliphate throughout Central Asia. It is a safe bet that the U.S. presence in their strategic backyard is the lesser evil.

What Next for the United States in Central Asia?

Afghanistan remains the pillar of U.S. presence and influence in the region, but its influence elsewhere in Central Asia has been reduced. The United States is not a member or an observer of the SCO. The lack of a framework for integrating Central Asia into the international community, such as NATO or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, through which the United States can promote its interests, is a constraint on the U.S. ability to maintain its own influence and counter that of Russia as well as China. In the absence of such a framework, Washington is limited to pursuing bilateral relationships with individual countries, which are in turn limited by the degree to which they are willing to adapt to U.S. policy priorities. This further limits U.S. leverage in the region. The United States remains committed to promoting long-term stability through political and economic reforms in Central Asia. Central Asian elites are just as committed to op-

posing those reforms if their hold on power is the price they have to pay for the region's long-term stability.

In Central Asia, U.S. offers of economic and security assistance in exchange for democratization and economic reforms is no more likely to produce the desired effect in the next 15 years than it did in the first 15 years of the region's independence. A U.S. agenda in Central Asia topped by democracy promotion and human rights is unacceptable for local elites concerned for their own regimes' survival, having been sufficiently frightened by the specter of revolutions, Colored, democratic, or otherwise. Central Asia has proven an infertile ground for democracy, and U.S. attempts to promote it there are likely to be rejected.

For the region's elites, the next big test is generational change and succession. Central Asia is still ruled mostly by Soviet-era leaders who have built regimes dependent on them personally, who have associated their ability to stay in power with the absence of a clearly defined succession mechanism, and whose eventual departure from the scene promises to be destabilizing for their countries and could easily spill over into the neighborhood, as it already did when refugees flowed from Tajikistan into Afghanistan during the Tajik civil war in the 1990s. From the standpoint of local elites approaching political succession, now is not the time to loosen their grip on power. Central Asia's experience with political succession is limited to two episodes: Tajikistan's civil war and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution. The region's aging rulers likely view political liberalization as a recipe for political suicide.

Moreover, the region is remote and poor and has few historical or cultural ties to the United States that would compel the U.S. policy community to place it in the top tier of foreign policy concerns. Its importance as a stepping stone to Afghanistan is not what it was in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Its proximity to Iran offers few if any unique advantages in the event of a crisis, given the fact that the United States maintains a presence in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in the Persian Gulf, as well as a close security relationship with Azerbaijan.

Central Asia could prove important in the context of U.S. relations with the two great Eurasian powers, China and Russia. The region's proximity to China could be valuable in the event of rising tensions with Beijing. Although the main theater of Sino-U.S. tension is likely to be the Pacific, access to Central Asia could prove helpful in that highly uncertain scenario. Russian con-

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cerns about U.S. presence and influence in Central Asia are undoubtedly fueled by suspicions of U.S. intentions vis-à-vis Russia, ranging from destabilization through democracy promotion to anti-Russian missile defense schemes.²⁷ Yet, a rational look at the state of U.S.-Russian relations leaves one wondering what advantages over Russia the United States could gain through control of

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or an indefinite presence in Central Asia. Nonetheless, Russian opposition to continuing U.S. presence in Central Asia could become a contentious issue, especially if Russian influence in the region impedes the United States or jeopardizes its objectives in Afghanistan.

Yet, Central Asia's importance to the United States exceeds its value as a stepping stone to Afghanistan and a neighbor of China and Russia. As the only global power with global interests, the United States has global responsibilities. It cannot turn away from Central Asia simply as an unprom-

ising target for U.S. efforts to promote democracy in Eurasia. This is more than a matter of mere good global citizenship. It is a matter of self-interest.

In the backyard of Eurasia, squeezed between Russia and China, Central Asia is too important to be left to its own devices or to Russian-Chinese oversight. Neither Russia nor China recognizes the need for long-term change in the region. Without such change, there is every reason to expect that parts of Central Asia could eventually regress into a state similar to Taliban-era Afghanistan, endangering its neighbors and threatening U.S. interests. In other words, if the United States does not fill the void, others will.

The challenge for U.S. policy in Central Asia is to become an agent of change in the long run without jeopardizing its relationship with the powers that be in the short term. This will require that the United States gradually rebuild the trust that was lost with Uzbekistan, the pivotal state in the region. It will also require that the United States develop a new and more sophisticated understanding of the region's political dynamics, cultural and historic peculiarities, and prospects for political and economic change.

This in turn means that the United States will have to work with the leaders and institutions that it has in countries such as Uzbekistan, not the ones it wants to have. There may simply be no better alternatives to current leaders and institutions. If U.S. cooperation with Uzbekistan is designed to advance U.S. interests in Central Asia, then sanctions, the linkage of human rights to assistance in other areas, and threats to suspend aid for non-compliance only undercut U.S. interests. With bilateral U.S.-Uzbek relations in a deep freeze, Afghanistan remains one of the few areas of mutual interest and potential cooperation. Perhaps that should be the topic to resume dia-

logue, especially since the growing NATO presence in Afghanistan affords the opportunity to resume contacts in a multilateral setting. The alternative, continuing to cut off U.S.-Uzbek security cooperation, at best denies the U.S. policy community access to some of the most important institutions in Uzbekistan's power structure and at worst limits the opportunity for U.S. policymakers to influence their Uzbek counterparts.

Notes

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