

## Thaw in Uzbekistan. Reforms by President Mirziyoyev

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It has been almost two years since the death of the long-serving leader of Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov, and since Shavkat Mirziyoyev took up power (September 2016). The change has had spectacular results, including signs of liberalisation of the previous, extremely authoritarian system of rule, and economic reform, for instance with regard to stimulating growth of small-scale business, and in fact activation of Uzbekistan on the international stage and normalisation of relations with neighbours. Meanwhile, certainly the most important process under way in Uzbekistan is that of consolidation of power by the new president, and a key element of this is dismantling the might enjoyed to date by the National Security Service. The curbing of the position of the National Security Service, which has been successful so far, entails internal restructuring of the state apparatus. The limited liberalisation and opening up to the world are mainly a result of this process.

Mirziyoyev has created a new dynamic both internally and in the region. The effects will only become clear in the long term. The outcome of this new situation is uncertain; consolidation of the new president's power and the ensuing reforms are accompanied by constantly recurring crises which were frozen during Karimov's rule. There are also external threats – a possibility of return to custodianship of Russia, a country which is fortifying its position, China's increasing economic dominance, and growing strength of radicals among the Uzbek minority in northern Afghanistan. The emerging processes are therefore proceeding fast, and thus it is hard to determine whether the new Uzbekistan under President Mirziyoyev will prove to be a stable country in which the liberal reforms will continue.

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### Karimov's legacy

Uzbekistan's location (bordering all of the other former Soviet countries and Afghanistan), its population and economic potential, and its relatively well established identity and regional ambitions make it a crucial country in Central Asia. Over the 27 years of authoritarian rule under President Karimov, a repressive authoritarian system was built with highly developed state structures. Karimov's survival and personal security, and internal stability, were a priority in Karimov's political system. This dictated how the authorities acted, and led, when Karimov's

rule was in decline, to Uzbekistan becoming an isolated centre for conserving autocracy, oscillating between various global players, in which extensive and corrupt special services became the main instrument. Being a neighbour to unstable countries that are experiencing the effects of armed conflict and revolution (Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kirgizstan) has only increased fear on the part of the political elite of possible liberalisation, making the country more authoritarian in nature and leading to brutal action against political opposition and fear on the part of the authorities of modification of the old Soviet political and economic structures, which

were centred on control of society. These fears led to economic, social, and political problems being frozen and Uzbekistan's self-isolation, making Uzbekistan less attractive on the international scene for global political partners, and generating conflicts with neighbours.

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As the political system evolved, the National Security Service (SNB)<sup>1</sup> became the most important state institution created to ensure security, survival and internal stability. It was the backbone of the entire state structure, and controlled all aspects of political, social, and economic life in Uzbekistan, and through this it also gained revenue. The main, unofficial source of financing for the SNB was exploitation of various social groups in connection with inspections and repression, above all in the economic and also political and religious spheres. This entailed breaching democratic freedoms, human rights, and even Uzbekistan's law and Constitution. The actions of the SNB blocked the development of independent political, social and religious life of any kind in Uzbekistan<sup>2</sup>. Gen. Rustam Inoyatov, head of the SNB, became one of the most important people in the country.

Even at the beginning of Karimov's rule the secular and religious opposition was liquidated. At the same time, repression became more extreme as it was used to tighten the authorities' control over society. The Uzbekistan ag-

riculture- and industry-based economy found itself in a crisis. Even though the country has the best balance in terms of its own production in the natural resources region of Central Asia, it has been dominated by cotton monoculture destroying the water and ecological system, and putting strain on the social system. During Karimov's rule, one of the main sources of the country's income apart from cotton, due to rising unemployment, was revenue from Uzbekistan gastarbeiters, recruited mainly in Russia. Since 2014 this revenue has started to fall significantly as well, contributing to the deteriorating economic climate in the country.

An element that has blocked Uzbekistan's economic development is the SNB's multi-dimensional control over financial flow and the private sector, and the inefficiency of the public sector. Business activity was only possible if protection money was also paid to "custodians" in the special forces. Control over financial flow caused a black market to emerge for currency, from which the SNB profited. This was one of the major obstacles on the road to Uzbekistan's economic development.

### **Mirziyoyev's internal reforms: the economy and politics**

When he took over from his predecessor, the new president had a choice between adapting to the existing system, in which he had functioned as the long-serving premier, or moving on, and changing the system. Mirziyoyev chose the latter option. Under these new circumstances it was especially important to build relations with the SNB from scratch. Having chosen the road of change and confrontation, Mirziyoyev used this to free himself from the control of the services, trying to release the country's potential and intensify its economic development at the same time by weakening the SNB's control. He sought allies at home and abroad to enable safe succession and consolidation of power, and gave Uzbekistan an opportunity for economic growth.

<sup>1</sup> An acronym was used that was taken from the Russian name of the service – *Služba Nacyonalnoj Biezopasnosti*. While the official Uzbek name is *Milliy Xavfsizlik Xizmati (MXX)*.

<sup>2</sup> As Karimov's rule began to decline, rap music and teaching of political science, for instance, were banned.

Since 2016 there has been liberalisation of Uzbekistan's political and economic system. This liberalisation has considerably improved quality of life of society. In February 2017 President Mirziyoyev approved, in a decree, a large-scale programme for political and economic reform for 2017–2021, and began to implement it. Five areas of priority for development of the country were specified – improving construction of the state and society (in the spirit of democratic reform and modernisation, it was announced that e-government would be introduced); ensuring the rule of law and judicial and legal reform; development and liberalisation of the economy; development of the social sphere; ensuring security and harmony between various national groups and religious tolerance, and implementation of a sustainable and constructive foreign policy<sup>3</sup> beneficial to all concerned.

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Five crucial sectors were also identified which are to be the motors behind economic growth up until 2021. These are the textile industry (changing the vector from production of cotton to processing cotton on the premises is a major goal) production of industrial and building materials, the agricultural sector (mainly fruit and vegetables), and the pharmaceutical and tourism sectors. At the same time, the Uzbekistan authorities promised to improve the investment climate for foreign capital, and they regularly attempt to bring back Uzbekistan capital (in both small and medium-sized business, and oligarchs as well) from abroad.

<sup>3</sup> Ўзбекистон Республикаси Президентининг 2017 йил 7 февралдаги ПФ-4947-сонли Фармонида 1-Илова 2017–2021 йилларда Ўзбекистон Республикасини ривожлантиришнинг бешта устувор йўналиши бўйича Ҳаракатлар Стратегияси, <http://www.lex.uz/docs/3107036#3109143>

In September 2017 the Uzbekistan public were allowed to purchase, for business and private purposes, unlimited amounts of foreign currencies at the market rate. Cash dispensers were introduced in the country, and unrestricted trade in cash was permitted. This led the official value of the UZS to almost double, but the universal corruption in the control of the SNB over business was also undermined. The system of repression was partly dismantled, in stages: the SNB's powers were reduced, it was systematically cleansed, and using falsification and torture<sup>4</sup> to obtain evidence in court trials was prohibited and became punishable by a prison sentence. To date there has been no indication from human rights groups in Uzbekistan that this rule has been broken. The practice of individual pardon was introduced for the first time in the country's recent history at the president's initiative. The persons released from prison during Mirziyoyev's rule included political prisoners detained for a long time (usually the longest in the CIS), who were notorious symbols of breach of human rights by the previous regime. The pardons introduced by Mirziyoyev began to be supported by religious grounds, for instance when more than two hundred people were pardoned for the first time in Uzbekistan's recent history to mark a Muslim holiday<sup>5</sup>. This was connected with a revolutionary change made during Mirziyoyev's rule, which was limited liberalisation in religious matters.

<sup>4</sup> *Sud-tergov faoliyatida fuqarolarning huquq va erkinliklari kafolatlarini kuchaytirish bo'yicha chora-tadbirlar qabul qilinganligi munosabati bilan O'zbekiston Respublikasining ayrim qonun hujjatlariga o'zgartish va qo'shimchalar kiritish to'g'risida*, 5.04.2018, <http://xs.uz/uz/post/sud-tergov-faoliyatida-fuqarolarning-huquq-va-erkinliklari-kafolatlarini-kuchaytirish-bojicha-chora-tadbirlar-qabul-qilinganligi-munosabati-bilan-ozbekiston-respublikasining-ajrim-qonun-huzhzhatariga-ozgartish-va-qoshimchalar-kiritish-togrisida> *Laws were passed to stop the common practice of obtaining evidence for court cases by means of falsification and torture.*

<sup>5</sup> Мирзиёев впервые в связи со священным Рамазан хайитом помиловал 226 граждан, 13.06.2018, <http://muslim.uz/index.php/rus/novosti-2018/item/8876-mirziyoev-vpervye-v-svyazi-so-svyashchennym-ramazan-khajitom-pomiloval-226-grazhdan>

When the previous president was in power, repression in this area was the main tool for the SNB's control over society. When liberalisation began, dialogue was also entered into with the political opposition and Muslim clergy abroad. Lists of suspects of religious extremism, which SNB officers regularly used to take bribes from people who would otherwise face arrest, were abolished. Symbols of the Muslim religion were allowed to be displayed in public. This would not have been possible during the times of the fervent secularism of the previous president. At the same time, Mirziyoyev began to exploit religion in domestic politics in instrumental fashion, following the example given by neighbours, among other things by expressing views in public which were similar to those of the influential religious authority figures in questions of condemnation of easing of moral values, indulgent lifestyle, nepotism, etc. Elements of freedom of speech and dialogue with the authorities in the hitherto strictly controlled electronic sphere were allowed. The measures described above were warmly welcomed by the Uzbek public and also made the new president of Uzbekistan very popular in neighbouring countries<sup>6</sup>.

## Dealing with the SNB

The measures taken by Mirziyoyev which are described above were opposed by the SNB, which had penetrated all aspects of life in the country. When consolidating his power and trying to revive the economy, the president found himself in conflict with a powerful and independent tool of repression and control in his country. As a result of the clash between the president and the SNB there was a massive cleans-

<sup>6</sup> For more details see for example interview with an oppositionist from Tajikistan, presenting the president of Uzbekistan in a positive light in neighbouring Tajik society, М. Кабири, *Мы предложим правящей элите Таджикистана идею общенационального договора*, «Независимая газета», 3.06.2018, [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2018-06-03/100\\_kabiri.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2018-06-03/100_kabiri.html)

ing, reshuffle, and replacement of personnel. The main areas of conflict between the president and the disloyal apparatus became not only the SNB but also other structures penetrated by SNB officials, which include the public prosecutor's office and the foreign and finance ministries.

**The SNB's powers were reduced, it was systemically cleansed, and using falsification and torture to obtain evidence in court trials was prohibited and became punishable by a prison sentence.**

The official reasons for the mass arrests, reshuffles and dismissals were allegations of treason, corruption, and dealing in narcotics. After 22 years in office, the omnipotent General Inoyatov, in charge of supervising breeding of fish<sup>7</sup>, was dismissed. The general's influential replacements were sentenced to life imprisonment. Following criticism of actions of the Ministry of Finance, more than five hundred employees<sup>8</sup> were dismissed from the ministry. Almost all of the heads of the peripheral government authorities were dismissed (along with the heads of the peripheral militia, public prosecutors' offices and tax offices) as were dozens of heads of district authorities. They were replaced with personnel loyal to Mirziyoyev. The scale of the reshuffle is demonstrated by this year's show trial of Prosecutor-General Rashid Kadyrov<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Before that time another influential rival of the president, Rustam Azimov, was removed from public life in the country in a similar way. Rustam Azimov was a long-serving finance minister and deputy prime minister. He was also transferred to an agricultural position.

<sup>8</sup> Расмий: *Молия вазирлиги тизимидан 500 дан ортиқ ходим ишдан бўшатилган*, 12.12.2017, <http://uza.uz/oz/politics/rasmiy-moliya-vazirligi-tizimidan-500-dan-orti-khodim-ishdan-27-12-2017>

<sup>9</sup> Former KGB and SNB officer and long-serving prosecutor general, and above all a millionaire with assets in Uzbekistan, CIS and the EU. He amassed this level of wealth due to a corrupt system of successfully closing court cases and granting amnesty to those convicted.

The trial led to a string of arrests, with 25 influential state officials<sup>10</sup> arrested in a single day. In subsequent cleansing waves, conducted level by level, SNB officers who had been involved in arresting their predecessors and whose posts they had inherited<sup>11</sup> were also arrested. The SNB's powers were reduced so that it no longer had jurisdiction for instance over interior troops, and it was deprived of some of its special powers, which were returned to the Interior Ministry. To deal with the SNB definitively, former personnel loyal to the new president in power ministries that rivalled the SNB and were previously subordinate to the SNB were used (mainly from the public prosecutor's office and the interior ministry). Among others, General Zakir Almatov<sup>12</sup>, the interior minister known for strong-arm rule from 1991–2006 and a political rival to the leadership of the SNB, returned from political oblivion to be appointed advisor at the interior ministry. He is seen by the public however as responsible for brutally suppressing mass public protests in 2005 in Andijon<sup>13</sup>. The president has been forced to perform reshuffles within the existing structures, stopping at people who are tried and tested from outside the SNB (but often with similar reputations) due to the scarce reserves of personnel. Thus Mirziyoyev's reforms are in fact reorganisation of the power apparatus on the basis of personnel decisions. The president is reaching for persons who proved themselves during his premiership

<sup>10</sup> С. Ислон, *Rashitjon Qodirov ishi doirasida bir kunning o'zida yana 25 kishi ushlandi*, 22.03.2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/29115672.html>

<sup>11</sup> А. Искандар, *Мирзиёев "Ит ўғри" деб атаган МХХ раиси ўринбосари, генерал Тошпўлатов ҳибсга олинди*, 14.03.2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/ozbekiston-mxx-toshpolatov/29098774.html>

<sup>12</sup> *Zokirjon Almatov IIVga qaytdi. Vazirlik obro'sini ko'tarishga va'da berdi*, 27.02.2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/29066197.html>

<sup>13</sup> Government sources say that during the massacre 187 people were killed, while according to independent sources there were many times more civilians killed in the brutal pacification, for more details see *"Bullets Were Falling Like Rain"*, The Andijan Massacre, May 13, 2005, Human Rights Watch Report, June 2005, Vol. 17, No. 5(D).

and is also making use of his family connections in the highly populous eastern part of the country (Fergana Valley), from where residents can now join government. During Karimov's rule, residents of the region were treated as untrustworthy representatives of a place of refuge for the religious opposition. These strategies of the president are clearly far from the image of democratic reformer excellently developed for the sake of the West.

### **The clash between the president and the SNB led to mass cleansing, reshuffles, and replacement of personnel, for which the formal grounds were allegations of treason, corruption, and trading in narcotics.**

Mirziyoyev's final act to deal with the rival power structure was to destroy the notorious Tashkent Prison (the important visual symbol of violation of human rights by the SNB<sup>14</sup>), move the SNB headquarters from the centre to the outskirts of the capital, and change the name of the reformed structure to the State Security Service. It soon became known colloquially by the Russian version of the acronym, SGB (Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti) in allusion to the KGB<sup>15</sup>. The new SGB is not intended to perform the same role as the interior ministry and army by having its own extensively developed military structures. The dismissed SNB officers are however employed, following checks, in the militia and army, probably to prevent them becoming a destructive force. The scale of the informal political struggle and the ensuing dangers is also demonstrated by information that

<sup>14</sup> Tashkent Prison (Toshkent qamoqxonasi, commonly known as ToshTurma) was an archaic, overpopulated SNB detention centre notorious for torture and poor conditions Detention Centre 1. The foundations were laid in the times of the tsars. In Soviet and modern Uzbekistan it was a symbol of the Gulag.

<sup>15</sup> The official Uzbek name of the new special service is Davlat Xavfsizlik Xizmati (DXX).

judges (who at one point were the professional group at greatest risk) have been ordered to possess a weapon or armed security<sup>16</sup>.

### **Mirziyoyev becoming open: the new Uzbekistan and its neighbours**

For the president, a key element in the building of the new Uzbekistan was settling the question of relations with neighbours and becoming politically open to global superpowers, and the most important goal was stimulating the economy to bring about macroeconomic and microeconomic growth. Mirziyoyev took a series of measures aimed at reforming international policy, attempting also to cleanse this area of state activity of the stigma of the SNB and other elements of Karimov's legacy. One of the allegations made by Uzbek oppositionists in exile was that the diplomatic service was overwhelmingly infiltrated by SNB officials. In practice they performed intelligence and counterintelligence activities for the regime rather than their official functions. The president reacted to criticism regarding this situation, declaring among other things that SNB<sup>17</sup> officials would be dismissed from posts in embassies.

At the same time, these structures preserved Karimov's geopolitical testament. His foreign policy was essentially centred on counteracting the spread of instability from neighbours, the Uzbek diaspora (Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan were considered the most dangerous as they function in the most liberal and democratic political system in Central Asia) and global superpowers. The isolationist concept codified in 2012 of Uzbekistan's foreign policy was founded on a ban on placement within Uzbekistan of foreign military bases, not joining military and

political blocs and peacekeeping operations abroad, and rejecting mediation from foreign superpowers in conflicts in the Central Asia region<sup>18</sup>.

Mirziyoyev began the political reform in this area by becoming open to the world and normalising relations with neighbours against whom his predecessor had pursued an aggressive policy. This primarily concerned the smaller neighbours (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) inhabited by a large, commercially active Uzbek minority which is in various phases of ethnic conflicts with the nominal national groups in those countries. The painstaking process of demarcation of borders and dividing water resources, opening new border crossings, restoring airline connections and lifting visa restrictions was resumed, applying a strategy in which its own interests were secured by working together with its neighbours.

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The most vivacious relationship at strategic partnership level was forged with its most powerful regional rival, Kazakhstan. Working with Astana, political and economic integration projects were launched in the Central Asia region. As part of the regional integration, including its unstable southern neighbour, in March 2018 Uzbekistan organised a conference in Tashkent, attended among others by high-ranking US and Russian officials, on the future of Afghanistan. A country outside of the region (but close

<sup>16</sup> Судьяларга қурол берилиб, оиласига қуролли соқчилар ажратилади, *xabar.uz*, 19.03.2018, <https://www.xabar.uz/huquq/sudyalarga-qurol-berilib-oilasi-ga-qurolli-soqchilar-ajratiladi>

<sup>17</sup> Из узбекских посольств уберут сотрудников СНБ, *Vesti.uz*, 14.01.2018, <https://vesti.uz/iz-uzbekskih-posolstv-uberut-sotrudnikov-snb/>

<sup>18</sup> M. Fumagalli, *When Security Trumps Identity: Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy under Islam Karimov*, in: *Constructing the Uzbek State. Narratives of Post-Soviet Years*, ed. by M. Laruelle, Lanham-Boulder-New York-London 2017, pp. 3-21.

to Uzbekistan in terms of culture and language) with which an attempt was made to forge similarly far-reaching relations to those with Kazakhstan, was Turkey.

### **The new Uzbekistan's global relations – Russia and other partners**

Mirziyoyev also had to regulate its relations with foreign players, above all Russia. At the moment Russia is the most powerful external political actor in Uzbekistan. During the process of taking over Karimov's political system Mirziyoyev tried at least to assure favourable neutrality on the part of Russia. For Moscow however the change of power in Tashkent presented an opportunity to increase its influence in Uzbekistan and was a test (observed carefully by other countries) of its true power in the region. Mirziyoyev's rule therefore opened up areas for Russian activity. Until that point Tashkent had performed a series of pro-Moscow gestures in issues relating to policy relating to historical narrative (mainly concerning positive presentation of their common Soviet past in public; a sentimental view of the Soviet past had been consistently condemned when Karimov was in power). Measures were taken aimed at allowing Russian capital in the hands of Uzbeks living in Russia into the internal market. Uzbek-born oligarch Alisher Usmanov, who has links with the Kremlin, has positioned himself as the key negotiator between the Uzbekistan ruling elite and foreign investors (not only Russian). Binding agreements have been signed regarding construction by Russian investors of nuclear power plants in Uzbekistan. Military cooperation has been revived, for instance for the first time in ten years soldiers in the Uzbekistan army will study and attend courses at military academies in Russia. In the near future Russia can be expected to push for a possible return of Uzbekistan to the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and for it to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

The factors described above also determine relations within the Tashkent-Moscow-Beijing triangle. Until now, in Uzbekistan, these have been formed (as in the entire Central Asia region) based on a joint-rule model – economic influence of China, with Russian retaining influence in international security and foreign policy. China's influence in Uzbekistan has been increasing steadily since 2011, but is still not as strong as in smaller countries in the region and in Turkmenistan. China's influence is also not as strong as Russian influence, and is mainly focused on the economy. Cooperation with China is unavoidable for President Mirziyoyev due to the country's economic problems and there being no alternative to Chinese investment and credit capital. On the other hand, stability in Uzbekistan is a priority for China. Due to its crucial location, problems of any kind in Uzbekistan could pose an indirect threat to the entire region, and a direct threat to gas supplies from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan to China.

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They could also spread to the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang in western China (with cultural ties to Uzbeks). For the moment, schemes have been launched to increase economic cooperation with China under the Belt and Road initiative. This initiative entails among other things modernising the traditional communication routes from Tashkent through the Fergana Valley to western China. This has already helped to revive trade in this area.

Since taking up power, Mirziyoyev has tried to increase the political and economic involvement of the Western countries in Uzbekistan.

This is important because the post-Karimov Uzbekistan, which continues to pursue an independent and multi-vector policy, is located between China and Russia, and countries dependent upon those two countries to varying degrees. The aim of announcing limited liberalisation of the country and of the excellent PR for the reforms is in fact to achieve an easing of dependence on powerful neighbours by forming good relations with the EU countries.

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In the West at the moment, the country most interested in cooperating with Uzbekistan is the United States. This is due, as in previous periods of friendly relations between Washington and Tashkent, to the US' aim of building stable support facilities for military operations in neighbouring Afghanistan. This element, being the main determinant of US policy, was engulfed by the flood of enthusiastic comments in the media describing President Mirziyoyev's first official visit on 15–17 May 2018 visit to Washington and his meeting with President Donald Trump and military and business representatives. In reality, relations with the US at any given time are no guarantee of the US investments that the country so badly needs, especially in the context of its recent history, in which US businessmen incurred losses and hurriedly withdrew capital due to the previous president's political backtracking. It is symptomatic in this context that following Mirziyoyev's symbolically important visit to the US, Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu visited Tashkent, which was a prelude to a visit by President Putin after his inauguration.

## Conclusions and forecasts

As a result of liberal reforms following Karimov's death, in Uzbekistan the political and economic foundations of the all-powerful SNB were shaken up. The new president's determined struggle with the oppressive structure for power indirectly led to an improvement in society's standard of living, elements of a political thaw, economic revitalisation, normalisation of relations with neighbours, openness towards the West, release of political prisoners, and so on. Mirziyoyev's consolidation of power is not however complete. Freeing oneself from the custodianship of the SNB and reforming and transforming its structure are only steps in this process. The country itself has come to a crucial point in its history. A thawing of the problems preserved by Karimov's authoritarian political system could bring about the creation of a stable, more democratic Uzbekistan, but it is also highly likely that there will be social activism and destabilisation of an densely populated country with a society of young people who do not see economic prospects in their home country. A country in which during the times of the repressive regime under the previous president stability of rule and internal peace were guaranteed now faces social and economic problems, and ecological problems on top of that as well.

In Uzbekistan internal regional divisions continue to exist. The history of construction of modern state structures is relatively short, which is typical for countries struggling with a post-colonial legacy<sup>19</sup>. There is a grave danger that conflicts in the ruling elite could lead to social upheaval. To add to this, Uzbekistan shares a border to the south with a country of deterior-

<sup>19</sup> A. Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR*, Ithaca 2015.

rating stability, Afghanistan, and the influence of radical groups<sup>20</sup> among the Uzbek minority in the northern part of that country is growing year by year. These could become a catalyst for the destruction of Uzbekistan in future if the negative prognoses turn out to be correct. Meanwhile, its crucial geopolitical location and

demographic potential mean that Uzbekistan's internal problems could destabilise the whole Central Asia region. At stake in the Uzbekistan reforms is not only the future of a new president as an independent political figure, but the stability and territorial integrity of the country, and more broadly the future of the entire region.

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<sup>20</sup> See among other things: O. Ali, *Non-Pashtun Taleban of the North (2): Case studies of Uzbek Taleban in Faryab and Sar-e Pul*, 17.03.2017, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/non-pashtun-taleban-of-the-north-2-case-studies-of-uzbek-taleban-in-faryab-and-sar-e-pul/>; B. Roggio, *US military kills senior Islamic State commander in Afghan north*, 9.04.2018, <https://www.long-warjournal.org/archives/2018/04/us-military-kills-senior-islamic-state-commander-in-afghan-north.php>

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