Alignments and Realignments in Central Asia: The Rationale and Implications of Uzbekistan's Rapprochement with Russia

Matteo Fumagalli

International Political Science Review 2007 28: 253
DOI: 10.1177/0192512107077098

International Political Science Review (2007), Vol. 28, No. 3, 253–271

Alignments and Realignments in Central Asia: The Rationale and Implications of Uzbekistan's Rapprochement with Russia

Matteo Fumagalli

Abstract. The eviction of the USA from the military base at Khanabad-Qarshi and the signing of an alliance treaty between Uzbekistan and Russia in November 2005 marked one of the most dramatic turnarounds in international alliances in the post-cold-war era. This article shows that regime survival is a driving force behind Uzbekistan's realignment. It also argues that a full account of Uzbekistan's turnaround needs to take into consideration systemic factors, namely, an external environment in which Russia provided a viable strategic and economic alternative. The article concludes by suggesting how the "normative competition" in the region between Russia (and China) and the USA helps account for the timing of Uzbekistan's realignment.

Keywords: • Alliances • Alignment • Realignment • Russia • Uzbekistan

---

O'zbek xalqi hech qachon, hech kimga qaram bo'lmaydi.
(The Uzbek people will never be dependent on anyone.)
(Islam A. Karimov, May 25, 2005)[1]

In November 2005, Uzbekistan completed a dramatic, though not unexpected, shift in its international alignments. After a brief and controversial strategic partnership with the USA,[2] Uzbekistan has moved steadily closer to Russia, particularly since 2004. This shift was initiated with the signing of a strategic partnership in June of that year and completed on November 14, 2005, when the two countries signed a Treaty of Allied Relations (*soyuznicheskie otnosheniya*) (UzA, 2005). Ironically, that was also the day that the US personnel of the Khanabad-Qarshi base (K2) finally left Uzbek territory. This signaled not only the lowest point in US–Uzbek relations for years, but also the coziest that Moscow and Tashkent's relations have been since the Soviet demise ("unprecedented" in Uzbek President Karimov's own words) (*Novosti Uzbekistana*, 2005). What accounts for the recent

DOI: 10.1177/0192512107077098
Sage Publications (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore)

Russian–Uzbek rapprochement? What does this tell us about international alignments and realignments?

This article seeks to answer the questions above by looking for explanations of the formation of and changes in international alliances. It finds that Steven David's (1991a, 1991b) omnibalancing theory provides an insightful and parsimonious explanation of Tashkent's recent turnaround owing to its focus on domestic factors.[3] State weakness, erosion of regime legitimacy, and growing domestic unrest all contribute to establishing regime survival as a main motive behind Uzbekistan's decision to turn from Washington to Moscow in search of security guarantees.

While it acknowledges the centrality of domestic factors in accounting for the recent realignment, this article also calls for integration of systemic factors into an adequate explanation of Uzbekistan's turnaround. A change in the international environment, with Russia's energy richness (due to high oil prices) providing critical resources to promote its foreign policy agenda and the conflict in US policy between continuing support for an ally in the war on terror on the one hand and showing concern for human rights and the promotion of democracy on the other, shape the context within which the change has occurred.[4]

In this article, I seek to understand the rationale of Uzbekistan's rapprochement with Russia, look at the implications thereof, and locate this discussion within the theoretical debates on international realignments. In the process, I endeavor to make a threefold contribution. First, I integrate domestic and systemic factors in the explanation of changes in international alliances, and Uzbekistan's international realignment in particular. While attention has been paid to changes in international alliances before,[5] alignments and realignments in non-western states still await closer scrutiny. Second, I suggest that the "normative competition" between the US emphasis on democracy promotion and the status quo orientation of powers such as Uzbekistan, Russia, and China contributes to accounting for the timing of the change. Finally, I seek to shed light on a topic of significant policy relevance which has so far received little scholarly attention.[6]

A caveat is necessary here: this article does not directly discuss Russian foreign policy,[7] but uses the case study of Russian–Uzbek relations to investigate the causes behind Uzbekistan's international realignment. The article is structured as follows. First, I briefly summarize Uzbekistan's path to independence, paying particular attention to its international alignment. Second, the theoretical debate over alliance formation and (re)alignments is introduced. This section reviews and discusses relevant theories of alliance formation and change; it also looks at attempts to make sense of Uzbekistan's foreign policy by considering the domestic sources thereof. Next, I turn to examine recent developments in Russian–Uzbek relations. Since they are the areas where the rapprochement between the two states has manifested itself, two key dimensions of the relationship are explored here: energy and security. While attention to these two dimensions of Russian–Uzbek relations provides an adequate explanation of Uzbekistan's realignment, it is only by taking into account the normative convergence of Moscow and Tashkent (and Beijing) that the timing of the change can be fully understood. I conclude with remarks on the implications of Uzbekistan's rapprochement with Russia.

Uzbekistan's Path to Independence

The breakup of the Soviet Union did not lead to the democratization of post-independence Uzbekistan, but to the consolidation of a new authoritarian regime

under the elite structure inherited from the Soviet period. During a short-lived phase (1991–92) Uzbekistan experimented with limited pluralism which prompted the formation of a nascent party system and a degree of electoral competition (Bohr, 1998; Melvin, 2000). Rising challenges from both the secular opposition and especially from the Islamic opposition based in the Ferghana Valley in the east of the country rapidly turned multipartyism into a multiparty "facade" and paved the way to the consolidation of the ruling elites' position and the marginalization or repression of any form of opposition.

It is impossible to understand the evolution of Uzbekistan's international alignments and commitments without briefly referring to the country's post-independence trajectory, its relationship with Russia, and the state-building process. As Kazemi (2003) notes, sovereignty and political stability have been two of the three pillars (the third being economic reform) supporting the current regime's efforts to legitimize its rule. However, two obstacles soon appeared on the way to achieving these goals. First, since the early independence era the Uzbek regime has insisted on the construction of an external (Islamist) threat (external in the sense that its origins were construed as coming from the outside, as opposed to home-grown) to the stability of the state (and the regime). I am not suggesting here that the threat was artificial. Certainly, the intensification of episodes of insurgency, bombings, and attacks since 1998 point to a real security threat to the Uzbek state and particularly Islam Karimov's regime. However, what matters here is less the actuality of the threat and more the perception thereof by the Uzbek ruling elites. The elevation of this perceived threat to the level of an existential one (its securitization[8]) has been used by the regime to legitimize its restriction of outlets for political participation and its crackdown on the opposition. Second was the issue of attaining "real" independence from Russia. Distancing from Russia manifested itself in a variety of ways. Culturally, Karimov has led Uzbekistan along a path of swift de-Russification, elevating Uzbek to the state language and depriving the Russian language of any official recognition. Russian signs and even Cyrillic script have disappeared from public view, replaced with Uzbek-only signs and the introduction of the Latin script in 1993. Economically, Uzbekistan has striven to achieve energy independence from Russia and has attempted to make itself an export-led economy, the main resources being gas, oil, and cotton. One should not, however, neglect the fact that Russian media (TV and some newspapers) have remained popular with the Uzbek population and that Russian continues to be the unofficial language of inter-ethnic communication. Similarly, Russia has remained the main commercial partner throughout the post-independence period.

Nevertheless, it is in the political realm that Uzbekistan decisively undertook a progressive distancing from Russia and Russia-dominated structures (that is, the multilateral organizations of the Commonwealth of Independent States). Following Moscow's initial retreat from the Central Asian region, Karimov guided Uzbekistan toward national independence, thereby ensuring the reduction of Russian influence on the country. This also involved some "toying" with western institutions and powers. Hence, although it joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and even the Collective Security Treaty in 1992, Uzbekistan also sought to develop parallel relations with the USA and NATO. Uzbekistan joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program in July 1994, its troops adhered to the Central Asian Battalion (Centrasbat) in December 1995, and in April 1999 the country became a member of GUUAM (the multilateral forum gathering countries eager to distance themselves from Russia's "suffocating embrace," that is, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine,

and Moldova).[9] Though this seemed to point to a steady improvement in relations with the West,[10] this was also part of a strategy to play the various powers against each other in order to retain political autonomy. In fact, especially in the early years (1992–94) Russia and Uzbekistan cooperated closely to find a solution to the Tajik civil war (1992–97).[11] It was only in 1994, when the new power-distribution arrangement was clearly not to Tashkent's satisfaction, that Uzbekistan came to view Russia as a competitor in the region (Horsman, 1999). Again, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, following the rise of the Islamist threat, Uzbekistan appeared to realize that it may well have benefited from external help (regardless of where that help came from) in countering that threat.

This practice of playing one actor against the other without tying itself to any one too closely was reflected in Uzbekistan's decision of April 1999 not to renew its membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization,[12] while joining the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (the multilateral organization of which both Russia and China were founding members) in 2001.[13] More generally, this points to retaining political autonomy and stability in order to avoid entrapment as a crucial element of continuity in Uzbekistan's international posture. Rather than any ideological orientation, pragmatism, so as to ensure Uzbekistan's autonomy and stability, has guided Uzbekistan's choice of allies.

The War on Terror and Post-9/11 Developments

The war on terror was a "blessing" for the Uzbek regime as it allowed it to consolidate its grip on power and at the same time benefit from external legitimacy through its new ties with the USA (Akbarzadeh, 2004: 2). On October 5, 2001 Uzbekistan's President Karimov allowed the USA to open a military base on its territory at Khanabad, near the southwestern city of Qarshi. This occurred against a backdrop whereby the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Hizb-ut Tahrir had repeatedly called for the ousting of the Karimov regime and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in its place for a number of years and particularly since the late 1990s (Karagiannis, 2006).

The apex in bilateral relations came with the signing of a strategic partnership in Washington in March 2002. While US–Uzbek relations seemed at their peak then (Karimov referred to the partnership with the USA as a "long-term strategic choice"[14]), the relationship was in fact entering its declining phase. The reason was essentially twofold. The rationale behind the partnership was certainly strategic and Uzbekistan's location bordering Afghanistan and its contribution as a logistical base for the operations there was invaluable. At the same time, the USA also attached importance to Uzbekistan's commitment to introducing political and economic reforms. However, the two parties viewed the relationship in very different terms. If the USA sought to benefit strategically and also push for reforms, Uzbekistan saw in US support a security guarantor against the terrorist and Islamist threat to the regime. In fact, Karimov emphasized that "Americans should not leave our region until peace and stability is [*sic*] established throughout Central Asia ... they should stay as long as needed."[15]

Tensions began to surface in the early spring of 2004 when, along with criticism over the lagging pace of reforms and rising concern over the country's human rights record, Uzbekistan was rocked by bombings and faced mounting unrest (Crisis Group, 2005, 2006). As a strategic partner, the USA began to appear more

of a liability than an asset. While before the 2002 strategic partnership Uzbekistan faced one main external threat (embodied by Islamist militancy),[16] entering a close relationship with Washington presented Karimov with a second, distinct, but convergent, threat to the survival of the regime: US pressure for introducing democratic reforms and opening up the political system. In order to understand the reason why this threat was felt so strongly in Tashkent it is important to set it in the wider context of developments taking place in former Soviet territory, in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005). Regardless of whether these were in fact democratic revolutions (or revolutions at all), they were certainly viewed as part of a western-backed strategy (operating through foreign nongovernmental organizations) of regime change and democracy promotion. I am not suggesting that at any point the USA was adopting a strategy of regime change in Uzbekistan. However, what matters here is not that the threat was real, but how it was perceived by the regime and constructed in the public discourse. The examples of Georgia, Ukraine, and later Kyrgyzstan, where the incumbent regimes were ousted following electoral frauds and massive popular protests, did not pass unnoticed by the Karimov regime: "I hope we do not get to this [overturning of power] and that in Uzbekistan there will be no repetition of events in Georgia and Ukraine ... People should understand what is being prepared for them and resist such plans. Otherwise, they will regret it" (Panfilova, 2005).

Indeed, the lesson drawn was that any sign of weakness (reform or negotiation with the opposition) would be a first step toward the end of the regime. It is as part of this understanding that the government's repression of the 2005 Andijan revolt should be interpreted. On the night of May 12, 2005 a group of insurgents stormed the local prison, freeing hundreds of inmates, including 23 businessmen whom the government had accused of being linked to the alleged Islamist organization Akromiya.[17] The next day Uzbekistan's security forces fired at a large crowd of protesters who had gathered to demonstrate against the government. Uzbekistan had a record of periodic outbursts of protest and popular resistance to encroachment by the state, but the government's clampdown on May 13 was particularly ruthless. It was a message that further challenges to state authority would not be tolerated.

It must be noted that the government's response did not mark a shift from previous patterns of handling popular dissent, but was simply the latest episode. The "Andijan events," as they came to be publicly known, did not represent the cause of the strain in Uzbek–US relations either, but rather the last straw in the souring of bilateral relations. Western reaction, demanding an international investigation, was viewed as an illegitimate interference in the country's sovereignty and thus rejected.[18] Relations between Uzbekistan and the USA and the EU deteriorated and the Uzbek media began to raise their anti-western tone by referring to US-backed plans to oust the government with the help of civil society groups (Egamkulov and Boronov, 2005; Kim, 2005; McDermott, 2005).

Rather than propelling the nation into international isolation, Uzbekistan's handling of the events received immediate backing from Moscow and Beijing (Buckley, 2005). Initial calls for discussions over the time frame of the K2 base agreement, voiced at a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in July 2005, were followed by a precise request for the USA to vacate the base within 180 days (*RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 2005). In November 2005, the last US soldiers left Uzbekistan.

International Alignments and Realignments

Understanding why alliances form and change has been a key concern in the field of international relations. Alliances are defined here as "formal or informal relationships of security cooperation between two or more states" (Barnett and Levy, 1991: 370). Realist approaches to alliance formation view them as a response to a greater power or a greater threat (see Walt, 1987, 1998; Waltz, 1979). In other words, states seek balance against what they perceive as the actor posing the greatest threat to their survival. The balance of power (or balance of threat, in Walt's version) has traditionally been the dominant approach to the study of international alliances and at first glance seems to provide a convincing, although extremely parsimonious, explanation of Uzbekistan's recent realignment. Uzbekistan has sided with Russia, perceived as a major threat to its sovereignty throughout the whole post-independence period, because of a shift in perception such that, along with the terrorist and Islamist threat,[19] the USA and its campaign of democracy promotion were seen as posing an even greater threat to the survival of the regime of Islam Karimov. Alternative approaches include "bandwagoning" and ideological affinity. According to the former approach (Schweller, 1994), states would not seek balance against the most threatening state, but would instead bandwagon or align with it. This explanation, however, does not explain why Uzbekistan spent more than a decade distancing itself from the former regional hegemon (Russia) only to realign itself swiftly to it. Similarly, ideological affinity (Liska, 1962; Morgenthau, 1985; Osgood, 1968) cannot account for the changing behavior of Uzbekistan, whose ideological outlook and authoritarian regime have not varied since independence, while its international alignments have.[20]

At first glance, Walt's argument seems to account for the trajectory of Uzbekistan's realignment. Feeling mounting pressure from both an Islamist threat and western concern for democracy and human rights, Uzbekistan has turned on the power that it perceived to be the weaker. In fact, Tashkent had previously contributed to Russia's marginalization in the region. Although Walt examined the alliance behavior of Western Asian and Middle Eastern states, his study was firmly grounded in the cold-war period and the stability that derived from the bipolar system. A more fundamental problem derived from the quintessentially systemic nature of Walt's theory. Like Waltz, Walt had very little time for domestic factors, such as the political and institutional environment, ideology, and political culture.

Unlike balance of power or balance of threat theories, Steven R. David's omni-balancing theory has proved to be an enlightening prism through which to look at and account for the external alignments of states in the Middle East (David, 1991b; Olson, 2000) and more recently in the former Soviet Union (Miller and Torytsin, 2005). David (1991a, 1991b) has crucially posed the question as to whether Third World states follow a different logic of alliance formation from western states (suggesting that they do).

According to David, balance of threat (let alone power) provides an inadequate account of Third World alignments for a number of reasons. First, the logic of the balance of power is grounded on the experience of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European states, whereas the behavior of non-western states has been by and large neglected in international relations. Second, balance of power and balance of threat theories seem to neglect the domestic processes *tout court*. According to David (1991b), states do not seek to counter the major threat only, but all threats. The reason for this is not systemic, David maintains, but is to be

found within the domestic political context, namely, in the weakness of non-western states and particularly in the lack of legitimacy of the elites ruling those states. Hence, the weakness is not of the state itself, but of the regime. Finally, the very unit of analysis should be redefined. Rather than looking at states as if they were cohesive unitary actors, attention should focus on the leadership and elite structure of the state under consideration. This is particularly useful in countries such as Uzbekistan, and indeed other postcolonial countries, where the interests (and the very persona) of the regime and the state have become closely intertwined.[21]

David's omnibalancing theory shares the essence of balance of power and balance of threat theories: "Third World leaders ... will seek to resist the principal threats they face" (1991a: x). Nevertheless, because of the nature of Third World states, David departs from balance of power and balance of threat accounts in two significant ways. First, the most powerful determinant of Third World states is "the calculation of Third World leaders as to which outside state is most likely to do what is necessary to keep them in power" (David, 1991a: xi). The focus here is on the political survival of the leaders and, by extension, of the broader elite structure of the state. Second, "internal as well as external threats to the leadership (as opposed to external threats alone)" contribute to explaining changes in international alignments (David, 1991a: xi).

Omnibalancing theory provides a helpful framework to make sense of alignments and realignments in the post-Soviet space. Building on the insights coming from David's theory, Miller and Torytsin have shifted the focus from the state and even the regime to the very persona of the leader. These authors explain Uzbekistan's and Ukraine's external alignments as a function of the rational calculation of their leaders, Islam Karimov and Leonid Kuchma, respectively. While Uzbekistan considered both Russia and the USA a threat, it viewed Russia as a lesser one, and hence sided with it, balancing against the USA.

What is interesting in David's and Miller and Torytsin's accounts is the emphasis on the leader, his agency and strategies. A primarily domestic focus seems to be common to most research on Uzbek foreign policy. From a critical geopolitical perspective Nick Megoran (2004, 2005) has looked at the 1999–2000 Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan border conflict not simply as a place of territorial conflict, but as a site of discursive and political battles within each of the two states over what the post-Soviet state should be like. Megoran sees this in the way the border conflict manifested itself and was represented as a site of domestic struggles. Domestic reasons therefore lay at the heart of the conflict which was in essence ideational and discursive rather than material-territorial. Stuart Horsman (1999) also emphasized the salience of domestic factors in his study of Uzbekistan's intervention in the Tajik civil war of 1992–97, during which Tashkent was more preoccupied with containing the spillover of instability within its borders than aspiring to territorial conquest or exerting regional hegemony.

This primarily domestic focus is also a major limitation of the analysis as it de facto neglects any sort of structural constraint or opportunity created by systemic factors. Here Russian–Uzbek relations seem to be explained by reference to Uzbek domestic factors only, leaving to Russia a merely passive role as the recipient of Uzbek policy choices.[22] In addition, if the costs of alliances mattered for the whole of the 1990s (and Karimov showed an evident "allergy" to entrapment), how does omnibalancing account for the Uzbek leader's sudden carelessness regarding loss

of autonomy which seems to emerge from most accounts of recent Russian–Uzbek political and economic relationships? Because David's omnibalancing theory operates from within a realist paradigm, his theory seems to neglect some important points. David's theory was articulated when the bipolar system, although apparently cracking, was still in place. This obviously raises questions as to its suitability to explain the current trends in a post-bipolar system that is very much in flux. David's approach made sense in a highly stable and hence predictable world. The main unit of analysis seemed to be the state. If anything has changed since the Soviet collapse, it is the greater role played (and greater attention received within the discipline) by non-state actors, such as radical Islamist networks and nongovernmental organizations. It is hard to understand how this question could be accommodated within David's theoretical framework.

While domestic political considerations certainly play a crucial role in shaping Uzbekistan's foreign policy choices, I argue that a full account of Uzbekistan's realignment needs to take into account systemic factors as well. Such an approach (combining domestic and systemic factors) has been developed by Barnett (1990; Barnett and Levy, 1991).[23] Similar to David and other scholarly work on Uzbekistan, Barnett has sought to analyze domestic events to explain external alignments. In particular, Barnett pointed to the question of "regime stability or survival" which, unlike state survival, is frequently at stake (Barnett and Levy, 1991: 373). However, in his study of Egyptian alliance politics and Israeli security policies Barnett (1990) has sought to integrate systemic and domestic variables to make sense of these countries' foreign policies. According to Barnett, alliance formation is a function both of an external threat and domestic objectives. The two, according to Barnett, are closely intertwined: "Third World states often form external alliances as a means of confronting internal threats" (1990: 378). Unlike analyses that trace alliances to either systemic or domestic causes, Barnett (1990) shows in his comparative research on Egypt's alliance behavior (1962–73) that "a general model of international alliance formation must include both systemic and domestic variables."

This section has shown that Uzbekistan's international behavior has been traditionally explained by reference to domestic factors, rather than through systemic causes. In this article, I attempt to provide an explanation which combines both domestic and systemic explanations. In the following section, I discuss recent developments in Russian–Uzbek relations, paying particular attention to two key dimensions in the alliance: energy and security.

Changes and Continuities in Russian–Uzbek Relations

Growing domestic unrest and dramatic foreign policy shifts have shaken Uzbekistan in recent years. The above-mentioned revolt and subsequent repression in the Ferghana Valley town of Andijan follow a pattern of domestic upheavals that has intensified in recent years, marked by the bombings of March and July 2004 in Tashkent and elsewhere in the country. Far from being isolated internationally following the Andijan events, Uzbekistan swiftly moved to complete its foreign policy turnaround by signing a Treaty of Allied Relations with Russia on November 14, 2005, thereby signaling the dawn of a new era in Uzbekistan's international posture. While it is certainly not the intention of this article to dispute the extent of Uzbekistan's dramatic alliance turnaround, a closer examination shows an

underlying continuity in the driving forces behind Uzbekistan's international alignments, namely, ensuring regime survival. This continuity lies in the persistent emphasis on a conceptualization of security built around the existence of an existential threat and a subsequent necessity to adopt any means necessary to preserve political stability and the survival of Islam Karimov's regime.

Russian Foreign Policy from Yeltsin to Putin

Before proceeding with a discussion of the specific dimensions of the Russian–Uzbek relationship, it is necessary to mention the key changes in the policy discourse and practice of Russian foreign policy. Although this article, for reasons of space, cannot include a detailed discussion of Russia's foreign policy, it is nevertheless important to refer to the Russian leadership's political agency in the relationship, since it would otherwise appear as a passive recipient of Uzbek foreign policy.[24] The most apparent alteration consists of the change from the Yeltsin to the Putin administration (Jonson, 2004; Lo, 2003). However, the change goes well beyond the persona of the leader and indeed involves the overall style of leadership and, more crucially, the overall strategy of Russian foreign policy.

Under Yeltsin, Russian foreign policy often appeared erratic, without a clear sense of direction, let alone the means to follow up bold official statements. Russia soon retreated from Central Asia following the Soviet collapse, as the region did not occupy a key place in Moscow's West-oriented strategy (Jonson, 2001: 96–7). As already noted, economic relations continued, but Central Asia and Uzbekistan in particular did not represent a policy priority for the Kremlin. It is only with Vladimir Putin's ascent as prime minister first and president later that Uzbekistan and Central Asia became key strands in the Kremlin's broader strategic revolution. Under Putin energy (oil and gas) has become a central tool in the Kremlin's policy (Jonson, 2004). Now Central Asia matters more, because the region is a key exporter of raw materials and control of export routes (and possibly ownership of individual gas or oil fields) gives Russia a prominent international role as well as political leverage. The cases of Ukraine and Georgia (with sudden energy shortages and dramatic increases in the cost of energy imports from Russia) have also hinted at the use of energy dependency as a way of rewarding pro-Russianness (or alternatively punishing a country's western orientation). If at the start of Putin's first term in power Russian–Uzbek relations were at a historical low, as the Russian president nears the end of his second term, bilateral ties have never been closer. Understanding why this is the case is the focus of the following sections.

Energy Interests

While bilateral security relations have only recently deepened (see next section), economic ties between the two countries have never experienced analogous moments of tension. The Soviet demise broke up the existing patterns of production and trade between core and periphery. This notwithstanding, and despite Uzbek efforts to achieve energy independence from Russia (today Uzbekistan even manages to export a fraction of its gas to Russia [*Interfax*, 2006]), the ties between the two countries never ceased. Russia remained the main source of Uzbek imports and the major destination for exports, Russian companies operated in Uzbekistan, and Russia remained the destination of choice for Uzbek migrant workers. The rupture of economic relations with Moscow would have been not just unthinkable

for Uzbekistan, but also devastating for the Uzbek economy. It is only with Vladimir Putin's ascent to the Kremlin, however, that energy has become a strong tool driving the Kremlin's foreign policy toward Central Asia (Jonson, 2004). Uzbek official data report the presence of 400 Russian joint ventures operating in Uzbekistan as of 2005, whereas there were 267 such Uzbek ventures operating in Russia (*Jahon*, 2005). At US$1.642 billion in 2004, mutual trade turnover is on the rise, showing an increase of 42.9 percent over the previous year, with an expected turnover of about US$2 billion for 2005 (*Jahon*, 2005). At US$500 million, Uzbekistan's debt to Russia is considerable, and the recent developments have made it possible that this may be converted into a Russian stake in the Chkalovsk Ilyushin Military Aircraft Production Center (Kimmage, 2005c). Russian investment or ventures in the gold refineries of Olmaliq have also been explored.

In the areas of oil and gas, Russia and Uzbekistan appear particularly close. The investment of the Russian energy giants Gazprom and Lukoil in Uzbekistan is expected to amount to about US$2.5 billion (*Jahon*, 2005), a figure that would dwarf any US investment so far.[25] Of the agreements already signed (June 2004), Lukoil's US$1 billion investment for a 35-year production sharing agreement to develop Uzbekistan's natural gas deposits appears particularly notable. This would result in a 90 percent Russian share in the Kandym, Khauzak, and Shady field, with a remaining 10 percent from Uzbekneftegaz (Blagov, 2006). In April 2004, Gazprom pledged US$200 million for a 44 percent share in a pipeline which would allow it to develop and transport Uzbek gas (Blagov, 2006).

The benefits of the intensification of economic relations between Moscow and Tashkent are many. From a Russian perspective the signing of a series of accords from 2004 onward has allowed Moscow to re-establish strong ties between the Uzbek and Russian economies, eventually sanctioned by Uzbekistan's accession to the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc, formerly the CIS Customs Union) in January 2006.[26] While these ties never disappeared, even during periods of cool political relations, the current situation appears particularly favorable to Putin's Russia, to the point that Blank (2005) has referred to Moscow's Central Asian position in the gas sector as a "cartel."[27] Gazprom has in fact effectively managed to monopolize gas supplies from Central Asia through a series of accords not just with Uzbekistan, but with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan as well (*Kommersant*, 2005a). This is in line with Putin's emphasis on the economic dimension of foreign policy (Jonson, 2004). Putin has brought energy to the foreground of Russia's foreign policy and has made the transport of energy resources a key geostrategic issue and instrument of political pressure. Russia's economic investment in Uzbekistan is undoubtedly appealing to a state that is in desperate need of cash inflows. One interesting question that arises from the new security–energy, Russian–Uzbek nexus concerns the appeal that a less resourceful Russia would have had to Uzbekistan, given this need of cash. What kind of impact would a Russian economy enduring oil prices well below US$60 a barrel have had on Uzbekistan? Karimov's post-Andijan trip to Beijing in May 2005 (gaining him a deal of about US$600 million [Jize, 2005]) seems to confirm the impression of a country in desperate need of financial support.

Security Threats

The signing of the Treaty of Allied Relations between Russia and Uzbekistan in Moscow on November 14, 2005 completed the gradual, but not unexpected,

realignment of Uzbekistan's international position (Blagov, 2006). As noted earlier, Uzbekistan oscillated between moments of marked autonomy from Moscow (especially after 1994 and until 1999) and closer relations (cooperation over Tajikistan in 1992–94, membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization since 2001, and concerns over the western presence and role in the region). Uzbekistan's oscillation reflected a refusal to be tied to one hegemon only and hence to enter a situation of dependency or a patron–client relationship. Although at times it appeared that Uzbekistan was moving closer to one power, in practice Tashkent was leaving all options open: what it was doing was to balance all powers at the same time by playing one against the other in a bid to retain political autonomy.

This does not detract from the fact that Uzbekistan's international alignment decisions are driven by security concerns, and its support for one power or another is derived from its perceptions of which is the better positioned to contribute to its own struggle against terrorism (and its awareness of not being able to fight this battle alone). In that sense, the 9/11 attacks and the following war on terror were a blessing for Uzbekistan (Akbarzadeh, 2004), as they allowed it to reduce its ties with Russia further and balance this with a growing US engagement and presence. In fact, the opening of military bases at Khanabad-Qarshi (and Manas in Kyrgyzstan) constituted a serious political and symbolic blow to Russian influence in Central Asia. However, soon after the signing of a declaration of strategic partnership with the USA in 2002, Uzbekistan began its steady rapprochement with Russia. This accelerated in 2004, when Russia and Uzbekistan signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement in June 2004, and was completed with the signing of the Treaty of Allied Relations in Moscow on November 14, 2005.

The origin of this turnaround is twofold. On the one hand is the continued perception of the threat from Islamic terrorism to Uzbekistan, a threat which Karimov views (with some degree of truth) as not having decreased despite the ongoing war on terror and close cooperation with the USA. On the other is the pressure on the Uzbek regime by the USA and EU on issues of human rights and democratic reforms, which intensified after the Andijan revolt and repression in May 2005. In light of the overall inefficacy of the USA as a security provider, Karimov has become convinced that Russia would be a more "trusted ally" because it shares a common understanding of the threat without being excessively concerned about how domestic unrest is dealt with.

The 2005 Treaty of Allied Relations is noteworthy for the extent of mutual support involved. As Article 2 reads, an act of aggression against one of the parties would be considered as an aggression against the other as well. While it appears unrealistic to see Uzbek troops coming to the aid of Russia, this article clearly suggests that the opposite would not be inconceivable, so long as both parties take the treaty equally seriously. In addition, the use of military facilities on each other's territory has been mentioned as a possibility (Article 4). While there has been some speculation in the Russian media and by Uzbek officials that the Russians might replace the Americans in the same K2 infrastructure (*Kommersant*, 2005b), Russian officials have thus far denied that any decision has been taken in this regard. Should this occur, it would be the first time that Russian troops and personnel have been stationed on Uzbek territory since the end of the Soviet Union, with the exception of a joint military exercise on Uzbek territory in 2004 that was of minor military importance, but of high symbolic value.

The alliance treaty has been welcomed with particular warmth by Uzbekistan. President Karimov saluted the alliance as a long-term strategic choice for Uzbekistan that reflected the long historical ties that have united the two countries (*Pravda Vostoka*, 2005): "Today, we are reaching an unprecedented level in our relationship ... I understand and we all understand in Uzbekistan that it is unprecedented that Russia signs such a partnership agreement with Uzbekistan" (*RFE/RL*, 2005).

After the signing of the treaty, Russia intensified its pressure on Uzbekistan to rejoin the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which it had abandoned in 1999. After intense lobbying from Moscow, Tashkent finally rejoined the organization in August 2006 (*Vesti Uzbekistana*, 2006). Its initial reluctance to do so (Blagov, 2006) seemed to suggest that there were limits to the amount of influence that Karimov was ready to concede to Russia. At the same time, China's growing influence in the Uzbek economy as well as its equally strong backing following the Andijan events has meant that Uzbekistan does not fall exclusively within Russia's sphere of influence; Karimov has managed to preserve margins of autonomy for Uzbekistan. The consolidation of an *idem sentire* between those Eurasian states opposed to western influence, as discussed in the next section, has enabled the Uzbek authorities to benefit from the formation of a group of like-minded powers eager to protect their sovereignty from western interference.

Time for Change? "Allergy" to Regime Change and Democracy Promotion

Energy and security issues constitute the two lenses through which Uzbekistan's international realignment has been analyzed in this article. While both contribute to explain the rationale behind Uzbekistan's realignment (Russia was perceived as a more reliable security provider and a more generous economic partner than the USA), it is important not to underestimate the facilitating role that the new normative political context that emerged in Central Eurasia in the early 2000s has played in the process. The essence of this context involves opposition to any change to the status quo, framed under the rubric of stability, and protection of state sovereignty from international (that is, US) interference. The implications of regime change in Georgia and Ukraine (less so in Kyrgyzstan, as this did not involve a foreign policy shift) went far beyond the borders of these two post-Soviet countries.

As Kimmage (2005a) has noted, Russia and Uzbekistan have emerged as leading "conservationist" (that is, status-quo-oriented) powers in Eurasia. Uzbekistan's foreign policy and security concerns have been conceptualized and subsequently crafted as a function of the consolidation of the stability and survival of the regime. Until recently (2004), this has proved a relatively effective strategy and has in fact apparently strengthened the position of the ruling elites. Following the so-called color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, Russia's standing in the former Soviet Union suffered serious blows in terms of influence and prestige. Fearing that a greater US engagement in the region would lead to Russia's further marginalization, Putin has responded to this and been aided in doing so by greater resource revenues. Russia's comeback in Uzbekistan, along with greater investments in Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, represents the most vivid example thereof.

In their efforts to counter US engagement in Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Russia have been drawing on the support of a third "conservationist" power: China. While this is not a discussion of the sources and implications of China's Central

Asian policy (Lo, 2003; Swanström, 2005), it is inevitable that reference should be made to China as a player that has encouraged and benefited from Uzbekistan's recent shift. Chinese economic ties with the region, and Uzbekistan in particular, are expanding (Jize, 2005). In the security sphere, interests are also converging, as all three powers have identified the US presence and international terrorism (with an Islamist face) as the main threats to their own positions. Similar to Moscow, Beijing also immediately backed Uzbekistan's handling of the Andijan events (Jize, 2005). What is noteworthy here is that Uzbekistan has maintained close relations with both Russia and China, following a pattern of avoiding alignment to one hegemon too closely, while also exploiting the differences between them. While the differences between the US on the one hand and Russia and China on the other are more immediately identifiable, Swanström (2005) and Lo (2004) have pointed to the short-term convergence, but long-term divergence, of Russia and China vis-a-vis the Central Asian region. Should such tensions actually surface, Karimov's Uzbekistan would be the immediate beneficiary, once again, of a fractured international environment that could be exploited in a bid to retain autonomy. With the US decline and Russia and China's reassertion, as well as Uzbekistan's own political agency, Central Asia is becoming increasingly multipolar, arguably a reflection of a very different international system from the one that inspired David's omnibalancing theory.

Consolidation of authoritarianism and frequent waves of unrest and crackdown have made Uzbekistan one of the weakest links in Central Asia. A possible collapse of the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan would have far-reaching consequences, not only for the country's domestic political and social order and that of the region, but, given Putin's conservationist stance, for Russia too. That is why this article does not question the rationale of the relationship, in which security and energy interests clearly converge, but the implications, particularly for Russia. If Russia takes the alliance treaty seriously, it essentially risks being drawn into any future domestic quagmire that may emerge in Uzbekistan. Would Russia send its troops to prop up an Uzbek regime desperately striving to retain its grip on power? Uzbekistan has evolved as an exporter of insecurity because of the societal tensions that have emerged in recent years and that have failed to find proper channels of expression and participation. While the speed of Uzbekistan's international realignment came as a surprise to many observers, it has in fact developed against a background of underlying continuities (regime stability and survival as well as alignment with whoever is perceived to guarantee them) which make Tashkent's recent shift understandable. In fact, we may not yet have seen the last of Uzbekistan's realignments: should the current domestic conditions persist, Uzbekistan may seek to exploit any future Russian–Chinese competition in the same way as it did with the USA and Russia. The game over Uzbekistan may be far from over.[28]

Conclusion

This article has argued that in order to account for Uzbekistan's recent rapprochement with Russia, it is necessary to bring both domestic and systemic factors into the analysis. Domestic factors can help explain the continuities in Uzbek political behavior, namely, the regime's effort to retain political autonomy and avoid entrapment. Understanding the role of systemic factors, however, is important

to make sense of the timing of the realignment. This seems to confirm the view put forward, among others, by Robert Putnam, according to whom "domestic politics and international relations are often somehow entangled" (1998: 427). As Putnam correctly notes, the key question here is therefore not *if* the two are intertwined, but *when* and *how*. However, while Putnam's two-level game sought to explain the behavior of democratic states (that of the USA, Germany, and Japan, specifically), this study contributes to the enhancing of our understanding of the behavior of non-western and nondemocratic ones.

Let us now summarize the main arguments advanced in these pages. First, the article has argued that David's omnibalancing theory is a useful starting point for making sense of international alignments and realignments. Domestic factors contribute to the shaping of a country's international alignments. However, this is not owing, as Putnam suggested, to the salience of a domestic constituency that ruling elites are accountable to, but rather to the very nature of authoritarian states, whose ruling elites are preoccupied with their own survival. It is regime insecurity, and the attempt to survive, that have driven Uzbekistan's choice of allies over the years. David's omnibalancing theory was firmly (and inevitably) rooted in the cold-war period and the bipolar certainties of the time. The entering of a third major player in the Central Asian region (China) could not be accounted for by David's theory. Understanding the emergence of a seemingly multipolar system in the region and the dynamics between regional and external actors opens new avenues for research on international alliances.

Second, the case under consideration demands that systemic factors also be taken into consideration. While domestic factors account for the long-standing continuities in Uzbek foreign policy behavior, it is only by looking at the changes in the international environment that we can make sense of the timing of Uzbekistan's realignment. Without the sudden availability of Russia's energy revenues (and the same point applies to the expansion of the Chinese economy) Uzbekistan could not have afforded the "falling-out" with the USA. In addition, the perception that a new type of threat, alongside the Islamist one, was emerging in the form of US-sponsored regime change (as events in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan were interpreted by the Uzbek regime), finally tilted the country's geostrategic orientation back toward Moscow. It was perceptions that mattered, then, not the actuality of such a threat.

In conclusion, it is only by paying attention to how domestic and systemic factors are entangled that we can gain a full understanding of how countries seek to escape entrapment.

Notes

1. This is the title of Uzbek President Karimov's latest book, published in 2005. The volume articulates Karimov's reaction to the Andijan events that year and the international and western criticism of the Uzbek government's handling of the events. The comment was originally made on May 25, 2005 at Tashkent airport during an interview preceding the president's official visit to China. The Uzbek-language text is available at http://www.press-service.uz/uz/book_content.scm?sectionId=9702&contentId=9893.
2. The strategic partnership agreement was signed in March 2002, though close collaboration between the USA and Uzbekistan had already intensified after October 2001, when Uzbek air space was opened to US military flights and a US military base was allowed at Khanabad-Qarshi in the southwest of the country. For a discussion of the US–Uzbek relationship, see Akbarzadeh (2004) and Daly et al. (2006).

3. Miller and Torytsin (2005) have recently adopted David's framework to explain the evolution of Russian–Ukrainian and Russian–Uzbek relations.
4. For an insightful discussion of the role played by international "democracy advocates" in nondemocratic contexts, see Schatz (2006).
5. See later in this article for a brief review of how changes in international alliances have been accounted for in international relations theory.
6. Notable exceptions are Hill and Jones (2006), Naumkin (2006), Rumer (2006), and Weitz (2006), all from a US perspective.
7. For studies on this topic, see, for example, Jonson (2004), Lo (2003), and MacFarlane (2006).
8. Securitization is a central concept in the Copenhagen School of security studies. According to Buzan et al. (1998), securitization is the move which takes an issue beyond the normal rules of the political struggle, requiring emergency measures and assuming priority over other issues. Should the given issue be successfully elevated from the political to the security realm, then the issue will have been securitized.
9. Uzbekistan later quit GUUAM in May 2005.
10. Jonson (2003: 88) argues that by 2002 Russia had lost any means to influence Uzbekistan.
11. For a discussion of Uzbekistan's role in the Tajik civil war, see Stuart Horsman (1999).
12. As noted later, Uzbekistan joined what has now become the Collective Security Treaty Organization in August 2006 (*Vesti Uzbekistana*, 2006).
13. At the beginning the Shanghai Cooperation Organization seemed yet another ineffective post-Soviet multilateral forum. It has, however, evolved into perhaps the most effective regional organization which comprises all the main regional states (bar Turkmenistan), plus Russia and China. It has also emerged as a key instrument for voicing opposition to regime change and support for the status quo in the region (Kimmage, 2005a).
14. The partnership was portrayed as offering "unlimited opportunities and inexhaustible potential." See the Uzbek army newspaper *Watanparvar* of March 23, 2002 (cited in Akbarzadeh, 2004: 75).
15. See *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* of October 8, 2002 (cited in Akbarzadeh, 2004: 85 fn. 35).
16. I share the dominant view that the sources of discontent and unrest are primarily domestic, though the Uzbek government has traditionally construed this threat as external. This was the rationale for creating the image of Uzbekistan as a "fortress under siege" or an island of stability in the region.
17. For a discussion of the context behind and the implications of the 2005 Andijan events, see Fumagalli (2006). On Akromiya, see Ilkhamov (2006).
18. The Andijan events are still wrapped in mystery, both in terms of their sequence and the number of victims. For opposing views, see Akiner (2005) and Human Rights Watch (2005).
19. Neither Uzbekistan nor Russia has ever made a distinction between the two.
20. As David (1991b: 206 fn. 13) himself acknowledges, none of these authors ascribes a central role to ideology in shaping international alignments.
21. Though he refers to David's omnibalancing theory only marginally, Clapham's (1996) discussion of alliance changes in Africa begins from similar assumptions.
22. I am grateful to Luke March for making me aware of this point.
23. A similar argument, that domestic and international politics are entangled, although with reference to western states, has been made by Putnam (1998).
24. For more comprehensive analyses of Russian foreign policy, see Jackson (2003), Jonson (2004), and Lo (2003).
25. US assistance (military, economic and other) to Uzbekistan peaked at US$219.8 million in 2002 and declined to an estimated US$91.6 million in 2005 (US Department of State, 2005). In the period 1991–2006, US investment in Uzbekistan totalled 500 million dollars (see US Department of state, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm).

26. Economic cooperation was further deepened in August 2006, when the members of EurAsEc (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) proceeded to create a customs union to remove tariffs and barriers between member countries (*Kommersant*, 2006).
27. For a similar view, see Zygar and Butrin (2006).
28. I am using the term "game" loosely here and I am not suggesting any reference to "great game" imagery, which, as Kimmage (2005b) suggests, conceals more than it reveals when looking at the complexity of Central Asian politics.

References

Akbarzadeh, Shahram (2004). *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism & Washington's Security Agenda*. London: Zed Books.

Akiner, Shirin (2005). "Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment," Silk Road Paper, URL (consulted September 20, 2006): http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/publications/0507Akiner.pdf. Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute.

Barnett, Michael N. (1990). "High Politics is Low Politics: The Domestic and Systemic Sources of Israeli Security Policy, 1967–1977," *World Politics* 42: 529–62.

Barnett, Michael N. and Levy, J.S. (1991). "Domestic Sources of Alliances and Alignments: The Case of Egypt, 1962–1973," *International Organization* 45: 369–95.

Blagov, Sergei (2006). "Uzbekistan Sets Limits for Cooperation with Russia." *Eurasianet*, February 24.

Blank, Stephen (2005). "Russia Realizes Its Cartel." *Central Asia and the Caucasus Analyst*, November 30.

Bohr, Annette (1998). *Uzbekistan: Domestic and Foreign Policy*. London: RIIA.

Buckley, Chris (2005). "China 'Honors' Uzbekistan Crackdown." *International Herald Tribune*, May 27.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O. and De Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner.

Clapham, Christopher (1996). *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crisis Group (2005). "Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising." *Asia Briefing* 38, May 25.

Crisis Group (2006). "Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul." *Asia Briefing* 45, February 16.

Daly, John C.K. et al. (2006). "Anatomy of a Crisis: US-Uzbek Relations 2001–2005," Silk Road Paper, URL (consulted September 20, 2006): http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/publications/0602Uzbek.pdf. Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute.

David, Stephen R. (1991a). "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43: 233–56.

David, Stephen R. (1991b). *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Egamkulov, Bekqul and Boronov, Yunus (2005). "Interests Hitting Democracy," Uzreport.com, October 26, URL (consulted September 20, 2006): http://news.uzreport.com/andijan.cgi?lan=e&id=284.

Fumagalli, Matteo (2006). "The Andijan Events: State Violence, Popular Resistance and the Rhetoric of Terrorism in Uzbekistan," *ISIM Review* 18: 28–9.

Hill, Fiona and Jones, Kevin (2006). "Fear of Democracy or Revolution: The Reaction to Andijan," *Washington Quarterly* 29(3): 111–25.

Horsman, Stuart (1999). "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992–1997: Domestic Considerations," *Central Asian Survey* 18: 37–48.

Human Rights Watch (2005).: "Burying the Truth: Uzbekistan Rewrites the Story of the Andijan Massacre," 17, 6(D), September 19.

Ilkhamov, Alisher (2006). "The Phenomenology of 'Akromiya': Separating Facts from Fiction," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4: 39–48.
Interfax (2006). "Uzbek Gas Exports to Russia up 14.5% in 2005," January 23, URL (consulted September 4, 2006): http://www.rusnet.nl/news/2006/01/23/businesseconomics03.shtml.
Jackson, Nicole J. (2003). *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, Debates, and Actions*. London: Routledge.
Jahon (Uzbek news agency) (2005). "Uzbekistan and Russia in an alliance agreement." November 16.
Jize, Qin (2005). "China, Uzbekistan Sign $600m Oil Agreement," *China Daily*, May 26, URL (consulted September 25, 2006): http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005–05/26/content_445707.htm.
Jonson, Lena (2001). "Russia and Central Asia," in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (eds), *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*. London: RIIA.
Jonson, Lena (2003). "Russia and Central Asia: Post-11 September, 2001," *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal* 19: 83–94.
Jonson, Lena (2004). *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*. London: IB Tauris.
Karagiannis, Emmanuel (2006). "Political Islam in Uzbekistan: Hizb-ut Tahrir al-Islami," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58: 261–80.
Karimov, Islam A. (2005). *O'zbek xalqi hech qachon, hech kimga qaram bo'lmaydi* (The Uzbek People Will Never Be Dependent On Anyone). Toshkent: O'zbekiston.
Kazemi, Leila (2003). "Domestic Sources of Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy, 1991 to the Present," *Journal of International Affairs* 56: 205–16.
Kim, Aleksander (2005). "Eksport demokratii po-amerikanski." *Narodnoe Slovo* 207, October 26.
Kimmage, Daniel (2005a). "SCO: Shoring Up the Post-Soviet Status Quo." *RFE/RL*, July 8.
Kimmage, Daniel (2005b). "Central Asia: Is Regional Turbulence the Return of the Great Game?" *RFE/RL*, July 19.
Kimmage, Daniel (2005c). "Uzbekistan: Between East and West." *RFE/RL*, November 17.
Kommersant (2005a). "Smena Karaulov." November 14.
Kommersant (2005b). November 24.
Kommersant (2006). August 17.
Liska, George (1962). *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press.
Lo, Bobo (2003). *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Lo, Bobo (2004). "The Long Sunset of Strategic Partnership: Russia's Evolving China Policy," *International Affairs* 80: 295–309.
McDermott, Roger (2005). "Putin Pledges to Back Up Karimov in a Crisis," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 2(214).
MacFarlane, Neil S. (2006). "The 'R' in BRICs: Is Russia an Emerging Power?" *International Affairs* 82: 41–57.
Megoran, Nick (2004). "The Critical Geopolitics of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary Dispute 1999–2000," *Political Geography* 23: 731–64.
Megoran, Nick (2005). "The Critical Geopolitics of Danger in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23: 555–80.
Melvin, Neil J. (2000). *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Press.
Miller, Eric A. and Torytsin, Arkady (2005). "Bringing the Leader Back In: Internal Threats and Alignment Theory in the Commonwealth of Independent States," *Security Studies* 14: 325–63.
Morgenthau, Hans J. (1985). *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Naumkin, Vitaly V. (2006). "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," *Washington Quarterly* 29(3): 127–40.
Novosti Uzbekistana (2005). "Uzbekistan, Rossiya: Nachinaet Novaya Epokha." November 24.
Olson, Robert (2000). "Turkey-Iran Relations, 1997 to 2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions," *Third World Quarterly* 21: 871–90.
Osgood, Robert E. (1968). *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press.
Panfilova, Victoria (2005). "Interview: Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan." *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 14.
Pravda Vostoka (2005). "Tashkent sdelal strategicheskii vybor." November 23.
Putnam, Robert D. (1998). "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42: 427–60.
RFE/RL (2005). November 14.
RFE/RL Central Asia Report (2005). 5, 29, August 3.
Rumer, Eugene (2006). "The US Interests and Role in Central Asia after K2," *Washington Quarterly* 29(3): 141–54.
Schatz, Edward (2006). "Access by Accident: Legitimacy Claims and Democracy Promotion in Authoritarian Central Asia," *International Political Science Review* 27(3): 263–84.
Schweller, Randall L. (1994). "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19: 72–107.
Swanström, Niklas (2005). "China and Central Asia: A New Great Game or Traditional Vassal Relations?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 14: 569–84.
US Department of State (2005). "Background Note: Uzbekistan," July, URL (consulted September 25, 2006): http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm.
UzA (Uzbek News Agency) (2005). "Agreement on Allied Relations Between Uzbekistan and Russia Signed." November 14.
Vesti Uzbekistana (2006). "Uzbekistan stal pol'nopravnym chlenom ODKB." August 18.
Walt, Stephen M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Walt, Stephen M. (1998). "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization* 42: 275–316.
Waltz, Kenneth N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
Weitz, Richard (2006). "Averting a New Great Game in Central Asia," *Washington Quarterly* 29(3): 155–67.
Zygar, Mikhail and Butrin, Dmitry (2006). "Goryuchii Storonnik Islama Karimova." *Kommersant*, January 19.

Biographical Note

Matteo Fumagalli is Lecturer in nationalism and ethno-communal conflict at the School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin. His research interests focus on comparative and identity politics, particularly on the process of political mobilization of ethnic minorities in post-Soviet Central Asia. His publications include "Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilization in Central Asia: The Case of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan" in *Europe-Asia Studies* (2007), "Informal (Ethno-)Politics and Local Authority Figures in Osh, Kyrgyzstan" in *Ethnopolitics* (2007), and "The Andijan Events: State Violence, Popular Resistance and the Rhetoric of Terrorism in Uzbekistan" in *ISIM Review* (2006). Current projects include research on informal activism among ethnic minorities and small traders in authoritarian systems. address: School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland, Newman Building, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland [email: matteo.fumagalli@ucd.ie].

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to Roland Dannreuther, Luke March, and Craig Wilkie and to the editors and anonymous reviewers of *International Political Science Review* for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.