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**THE STATE BUILDING OF UZBEKISTAN : NATION STATE, DEMOCRATIC  
STATE, SECULAR STATE, STATE WITH A MARKET ECONOMY,  
INDEPENDENT STATE BUILDING PROCESSES**

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**Summary**

This article analyzes state building process of Uzbekistan in five distinct aspects; nation state building, secular state building, democratic state building, state with market economy and independent state building. One by one, the article focuses on each type of building process in detail and analyzes internal developments of these building processes in the post-independence period of Uzbekistan. While analyzing the state building, the effects of internal and external developments on Uzbek state, international relations and constructing alliance with big powers, secularism, national identity, construction of history, regime type and oppositional movements, religiosity and Islam, and civil society which are significant and influential upon the state building of post-Soviet Uzbekistan Republic are analyzed in detail. In addition, regional policies, economic structures of the regional states and Uzbekistan, the influence of developments in the neighboring regions are reviewed in terms of their effects upon Uzbek state and society in the process of state building.

**Key words:** Nation-state building, secular state building, democratic state building, state with market economy, independent state building, civil society, national identity, secularism, religiosity and Islam, post-Soviet Uzbekistan Republic.

**Introduction**

Uzbekistan is a newly independent state which declared its independence in 1991 after the

dissolution of the USSR. Although Uzbekistan had a strong history and deep cultural background that dates back to Shaybanid and Timurid Dynasties in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and had prominent processor states such as Khiva, Kokand and Bukharan Emirates in history, the Uzbek community and tradition of state was exposed to the Soviet engineering. After the fall of Bukharan Emirate and Khivan Khanate in 1920 by the Red Army, firstly Bukharan People's Soviet Republic and Khorezm People's Soviet Republic were founded so that the Soviet state and society engineering began upon the Uzbek community. The modern Uzbek identity was also produced and engineered by the Soviets during the era of Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic. After the independence in 1991, Uzbekistan Republic emerged as an independent state in Central Asia like other four republics. Then, the state had to reconstruct its own national identity, secular character of the state, preference of the regime type, economic system of the state and had to give a struggle not to be a failed state and sustain in the region together with the difficulties of being a newly independent. Its historical, cultural, natural and economic potentials and capabilities enabled Uzbek state to have opportunity for claiming a regional leadership among the other newly independent ones. In the article, Uzbekistan Republic is reviewed according to the subtitles of nation state building, democratic state building, market economy building, independent state building and secular state building after its independence in the post-Soviet era.

### **Nation State Building of Uzbekistan**

After the dissolution of the USSR, all SSRs got their independence and began implementing policies that enable them to create their nation building process. Uzbekistan is the most prominent country in terms of having the deepest historical and cultural roots in Central Asia among other republics. Uzbekistan has lots of sources and tools in order to create its national identity by deriving from the past legacy and rich cultural heritage. In sum, it is the most capable country in the region to build its own past and create a strong national identity in the region. The creation of modern Uzbek identity mainly began in the early Soviet era. The creation of Uzbek SSR and titular nationality "Uzbek" in 1924 by the Soviet administration upon the lands of previous Turkestan ASSR, and Bukharan People's Republic can be accepted as the reconstruction of Uzbek identity or a modern identical version in the region. While nation building was mainly conducted in the post-independent era, the early practices of the nation building case had been started under the policy of korenizatsia (nativisation) in the early 1920s. Korenizatsia (коренизация) policy mainly created a titular nationality concept, and enabled the formation of national identity. The concept of titular nationhood also strengthened the process of nation building.

*"The origins of the policy of korenizatsia or nativization can be traced back as far as 1923, when the Central Committee of the RCP in Moscow adopted a program of measures to, inter alia, increase the political representation of the non-Russian nationalities and train managers and civil servants from amongst their ranks."*<sup>[1]</sup>

In the years of the 1960s and 1970s, the power of indigenous people in all of the republics began increasing due to the rise of population rate of the Central Asian republics so that titular nations began to gain more significant positions in realm of administration, economy and politics. Russian influence began to be replaced with the influence of indigenous population. Titular nations and non-titular nations were in a competition upon jobs, health care, service, and accelerating influence of titular nations in these realms, on the other side, strengthened their concentration of

power in nation building process.<sup>[2]</sup> After the independence of Central Asian states and Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1991, new Uzbekistan Republic needed to recreate its own identity and reshape its own nation-building without the Soviet engineering. The independence had to be symbolized with a new flag. Uzbekistan tried to shape its new flag by placing crescent moon that means the symbol of Islam in Uzbek nation's identity. Islam was emphasized in the most important symbol of the newly independent republic.

*“The new state flags of the Central Asian states contain carefully selected symbols specific to the titular nation's culture: both the Turkmenistani and Uzbekistani flags display crescent moons-prominent symbols of Islam-while those of the less ethnically homogenous states of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan do not. “ [3]*

The other two states “Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan” did not have clear and obvious symbols emphasizing religiosity and Islamic heritage in their flags like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Uzbekistan was historically more influenced by Islamic culture because of owning lots of cultural and religious heritage in most important cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Namangan. Sedentary population of the region adopted Islamic culture more than other populations. In the creation of nation building, creating national figures, historical heroes and tracing the originality of the nation back to history is also quite significant. Uzbek national elite also gave much importance to this policy.

As the historical-national hero, Temur was chosen in Uzbekistan. Uzbek President Karimov especially decided over this historical figure. Although Uzbek originate of Temur is disputable, the preference of Temur has another reason: Karimov's desire to emphasize his personal similarity with Amir Temur.<sup>[4]</sup> A lot of monuments and museums of Temur were built throughout the country and the year of 1996 was declared as the year of Temur in Uzbekistan.<sup>[5]</sup> Particularly, Uzbekistan gave so much importance to emphasize historical and cultural cult and values throughout the country. For example, Karimov declared a resolution in June 1996 that changed the Sovietic names everywhere such as streets, monuments, administrative or territorial things inside the country into Uzbek names, expressing historical and national meanings and values.<sup>[6]</sup> The language laws, which were adopted by the independent republics, were also important in terms of granting the priority of titular nations. In 1989, all the Central Asian republics adopted language laws, making titular languages inferior upon Russian language.<sup>[7]</sup> Russian language was omitted from “official language” status and accepted as “inter-ethnic communicative” language. Especially in Uzbekistan, Uzbek national elite gave more emphasis on spreading the use of Uzbek language and making national language inferior to Russian language. Nationalization, especially in field of language policy, was more strict than it was in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, because both they were tiny Russian population in Uzbekistan though it was almost half of the Kazakhstani population. In addition, cultural, national and historical bonds of sedentary Uzbek community forced rapid nationalization and Uzbekification in the country. After 1989 language law, Uzbek government adopted another language law in 1995 and abandoned the status of Russian language being “inter-ethnic communicative”.<sup>[8]</sup> Through these policies, Uzbekistan is different than Kazakhstan which had to upgrade the level of Russian language with constitutional amendments owing to high rate of Russian minority.<sup>[9]</sup> In terms of indigenization of power within the state, Uzbek titular national elite fulfilled all the significant positions in the republic. For example, there are some rules within the state system. It is not possible for non-Uzbek people to rise to the top official position in the state. It is difficult for a non-Uzbek citizen to be assigned to a position above deputy minister.<sup>[10]</sup>

*“The squeezing out of non-titular nationals from leading positions to make room for*

*members of the titular nationality was the main device for distributing political and economic power well before the advent of independence.*"<sup>[11]</sup>

The fulfillment of national cadres from the members of titular nationals is one of the prominent key policies in the state building process. The promotion of national cadres policy enabled these 'proto-nation states'<sup>[12]</sup> to construct independent national state systems in the nation-state building process.

On the other side, there has been tolerance for non-Uzbek languages in Uzbekistan in spite of the language laws of 1992 and 1995 regarding the enforcement of speaking Uzbek language. Besides, there is not an Uzbek language test for official appointments in the state such as the implementations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. There is not a law about enforcing officials to learn enough Uzbek in their jobs.<sup>[13]</sup>

In sum, the creation of Uzbek elite is somehow production of Soviet policies. Revival of Islamic symbols, particularly through the Uzbek national elite's policies, is significant in nation-building process. For instance, Karimov put Islamic symbols in the Uzbek flag, restored mosques and religious places, allowed the religious holidays. Besides, he went for pilgrimage to Mecca. Karimov displayed his religious sensitiveness through his behaviors and policies in order for emphasizing his dependency on religiosity. That means keeping the religion under state control and taking precautions against radical religious movements in the post independent period.<sup>[14]</sup> The nation figures reconstructed in nation building process were chosen cautiously. For example, the Jadids were not emphasized. Pan-Turkist and pan-Islamist characters of Jadids were not suitable for Karimov's Uzbekistan. Also, Shaybanid dynasty is not emphasized although Shaybanids were the first known Uzbek dynasty in history. Instead, Temur was emphasized and chosen as national figures, because Temur's era was earlier than Shaybanids. Together with Temur's heritage, the historical heritage of Chaghatay was owned by Uzbekistan especially in field of literature. Ali Shir Navai was accepted as the founder of modern Uzbek literature. This type of historical-writing and construction in Uzbekistan seems to be influenced by the Soviet social engineering. Many of social constructed figures and recreation of historical heritage were, in one aspect, continuation of the practices, produced by the Soviets.<sup>[15]</sup>

In the process of construction of modern national identity and state system, the recreation of national consciousness has great importance. According to Matteo Fugamalli, there are two distinct arguments about the origins of Uzbek national consciousness. One is the modern Uzbek identity which emerged in the Soviet era and the other is ancient Uzbek identity dated back to Shaybanid era.<sup>[16]</sup> In order to analyze post-Soviet independent Uzbekistan Republic, the Soviet engineering in Central Asia is important. In the Soviet era, the national delimitation policy in 1924 which was a program of the Soviets to recognize Central Asia through the recreation of the new republics of each titular nation in the region was implemented.<sup>[17]</sup> The reorganization of Central Asia into the Union Republics continued till 1936 by that time the process was completed.<sup>[18]</sup>

In the Soviet engineering, the recreation of a state was the result of the recreation of the nation. For that reason, the Soviets firstly gave importance to the formation of the nation in modern aspect. In the recreation process of nations in Central Asia, border-making, creation of the territory according to priorities of being in historical homeland, codification of local languages, and construction of national cultures and promotion of national cadres are basic policies pursued by the Soviets. Formation of territory for the nations is priority for the Soviet engineering. Territoriality and nationality was created, and then state-building was completed upon the recreation of the link between these two elements. In brief, the state building, according to the Soviet engineering, is the

result of nation building process in which the parliament, flag, constitution, national cadres and national historical figures exist.<sup>[19]</sup>

### **Secular State Building of Uzbekistan**

In Central Asia and Uzbekistan, there have been three types of Islam. First type is traditional Islam which is a term used for describing the great majority of people who adopt traditional-conservative religious rules and regulations without any political influence.<sup>[20]</sup> The region, especially Uzbekistan, is famous with its religious historical past. In the era of Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva Khanates, traditional Islam was so effective in the region. There were a large number of madrasahs, mosques and religious places in which a large number of students had graduated every year in the past. Therefore, religious legacy have continued to exist in the region since a few centuries. The second type of Islam is called as government sponsored Islam which is a product of post-Soviet Central Asia.<sup>[21]</sup> In other words, it is a continuing policy of coopting Islam to serve the policies of the state ideology that had begun to be used in the late 1980s by the Soviet Union.<sup>[22]</sup> Government-sponsored Islam aimed to create “good Islam” against “bad Islam”, particularly described for radical Islamism. In Uzbekistan, President Islam Karimov is the best implementer of the creation of “good Islam” through the government sponsorship among the practices in Central Asian republics. The history of the government sponsored Islam dates back to the Soviet era. In the Soviet era, religiosity in Central Asia was taken under control and religious directorates were established. The Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in Tashkent was established during the Second World War for the purpose of getting support for Soviet doctrine and reshape the Muslims’ understanding of Islamic issues according to Soviet interests in the region.<sup>[23]</sup> <sup>[24]</sup> Karimov also maintained the same policy and also implemented policies, taking the religion under control and supported “good Islam”. He performed his pilgrimage to seem a devout leader to Uzbek community. On the other hand, he maintained to struggle against radical Islamic movements. The third type of Islam in Central Asia is radical Islamism. While radical Islamism benefits from traditional religious character of folk Islam in the region, especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan; there are also external factors in strengthening of radical-political Islam in the region.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and increase of the Mujahedeen resistance backed by radical Islamic groups towards the late 1980s, the Civil War in Tajikistan between secular regime and Islamic opposition, Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, the ethno-religious situation in Fergana Valley owning potential to influence neighboring regions and countries merged with Uzbekistan’s historical and traditional legacy of folk Islam. As a result, Uzbekistan suddenly emerged as a target of many Islamic organizations and political movements. Therefore, secular Karimov regime took so many precautions and restrictions over Islamism within the country. Radical Islamism in Uzbekistan transformed into secret underground political parties and they have been very active in Fergana Valley and throughout the region. Among these political parties, *Islamic Revival Party*<sup>[25]</sup> is one of the most popular one. Islamic Revival parties are a chain of political formations and there are prominent versions of the IRPs in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The first version of IRP was founded in Astrakhan in June 1990.<sup>[26]</sup> Then, in October 1990, Islamic Revival party of Tajikistan was founded in Dushanbe. Later, Uzbekistan version of the party was founded in January 1991. The leaders of the IRP of Uzbekistan were Abduwali Qari Mirzaev and Abdula Utaev.<sup>[27]</sup> Even though IRP of Tajikistan was so much effective and powerful that it succeeded in making itself registered by the authority, IRP of Uzbekistan was not as influential as Tajikistan version of the party. In Uzbekistan,

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which was founded in 1998 as an underground party by Tahir Yoldashev and Dzhumbai Hojjayev (he is commonly known as Jumabai Khojjiyev), had more popularity and influence in the country. However, the first signs of the movement's emergence dated back to the early 1990s, of that time there was a freedom and stability atmosphere due to the recent demise of the USSR. Islamist parties and religious organizations emerged and spread especially in Central Asia and in the Northern Caucasus in that era. Tahir Yoldashev was the political leader of the movement while Juma Namangani was responsible for military activities. Yoldashev was the leader of Adolat (Justice) Party in Uzbekistan which was the first Islamic party founded in the early 1990s just after the independence. The activities of the party also caused the beginning of the clash between Karimov regime and religious groups in the country. The party was closed, the members were arrested and Yoldashev had to flee. Namangani had an interesting personality, because he had been a Soviet paratroop during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Then, he attended the Party of Islamic Revival of Tajikistan, and then formed the IMU with Tahir Yoldashev in 1998.<sup>[28]</sup> Uzbek government launched so many operations against the fighters of IMU in the late 1990s and many of them had to flee to Afghanistan and Tajikistan.<sup>[29]</sup> The third and one of the most well-known Islamic organizations is Hizb ut Tahrir (Liberation Party). Hizb ut Tahrir is mainly a transnational Islamic organization and its center base is in the United Kingdom. The aim of the organization is to found "the Khilafah State".<sup>[30]</sup> Mainly, the Party did not involve in any armed action, instead, it focused on Islamic propaganda through websites, brochures and documents. Construction of secular state in Uzbekistan was not a legacy of Karimov. It was along continual process inherited from Soviet engineering. Karimov only tried to maintain and strengthen this process while supporting government-sponsored Islam not to damage the internal balance regarding religiosity within the society. In order to strengthen secular state and improve "good Islam", Karimov obtained some chance in the late 1990s and early the 2000s. The first event happened on 16 February 1999. An assassination attempt against President Karimov happened in Tashkent. This was a turning point in the struggle against radical Islam in Uzbekistan. Fundamental Islam was immediately shown as a target and responsible for the incident.<sup>[31]</sup>

*"Within hours of the incident 'Islamic fundamentalists' were being blamed for the outrage. This triggered a renewed onslaught on Muslims who were perceived to be over-zealous in their pious devotions, particularly those who were suspected of belonging to Hizb ut Tahrir. This time, however, accusations of plotting to kill the president were also leveled at the leaders, now living in exile abroad, of Erk (Freedom) and Birlik (Unity), opposition parties espousing democratic platforms that were founded in the late 1980s".<sup>[32]</sup>*

Karimov succeeded in purging all the opposing groups that threatening this regime through this incident. The second important event was the armed clash in the summer of 1999. Official sources stated that armed Islamist fighters tried to cross the border of Uzbekistan. Uzbek troops bombed the suspected border-regions alongside Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Karimov's restrictions increased more after this event. The third event which influenced secular regime in Uzbekistan and its policies against opposition the most is 9/11 event and the US led 'War on Terrorism'. The US operations against Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan were supported by Uzbekistan. The US's War on Terrorism against radical Islam and Islamic terrorism that owned its bases in Afghanistan and threatened secular regimes in Central Asia was a good opportunity for Karimov regime to collaborate with the US and the West.

For the Uzbek secular state, not only Islamic political parties but also external factors played a greater role in the creation of political Islamism in the country. The conditions caused by the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the demise of the USSR, as a result of this, the birth of new and

inexperienced Uzbek state caused the increase of political Islam through the attempt of foreign missionaries flowing to the region, especially into Fergana Valley.<sup>[33]</sup> Just after the independence of Central Asian Republics, some external factors such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries sent their missionaries and funded their organizations to fulfill the gap of religiosity in the post-Soviet era. For example, Wahhabism was sponsored by Saudi Arabia to spread in Uzbekistan. Iran also tried to propagate its own regime but it failed due to the difference between Uzbekistan's belonging to Hanafi School and Iran's Shi'a tradition. Turkey also sent some jamaats and missionaries which opened schools and commercial centers in Uzbekistan. Although these missionaries were welcomed well at first, then they were seen as a threat and expelled from the country.

The construction of secular state in Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet era is essentially based on Islam Karimov's restrictions and harsh policies about institutionalism of secular state. The increase of radical Islam in the region is effective for reshaping the Karimov regime's policies. Although the region has a religious historical past in the Tsarist era, the Soviet period enabled Uzbekistan SSR to adopt secularism in both governmental and societal realms. The dissolution of the USSR and independence of Uzbekistan in the early 1990s caused secular Uzbek state to be caught unprepared against the increasing political Islam. The repressions and restrictions conducted by Karimov regime also provided the installation of a strong secular regime; on the other hand, these policies prevented the formation of democratic state building. In addition, there are basic reasons behind the increase of political Islam as an only strong political opposition. These reasons are the harsh policies of Karimov against unofficial Islam, the demographic explosion and high unemployment problems in the region, no promising future for young people who find the only solution in participating in the radical Islamic organizations and the abandonment of all secular parties in Uzbekistan that caused the increase of political Islam as an only opposition movement.<sup>[34]</sup> According to Nick Megoran, the relation between the ethnic origins of the Uzbek and the construction of national mythology is problematic due to being so politicized, because the ideology of the state produced in the era of Karimov is centered on secular national aspirations and the alternative ideologies can only find place in political Islam.<sup>[35]</sup>

According to Laura Yerekesheva, in the increase of religious identity among Central Asian states just after the demise of the USSR, there are three reasons. First reason is the end of an external control or intervention into the Muslim society with the result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. When there was no control or intervention into the beliefs and traditions of the Muslims, religious identity in Central Asia revived among the masses. Then, the community began changing their attitude towards Islam by building mosques and madrassas again and politicizing on religious basis; the emergence of Islamic opposition parties like Islamic Renaissance in Tajikistan, Adolat in Uzbekistan, and Alash in Kazakhstan.<sup>[36]</sup> Second reason is the given extensive support by external political actors to the region which were seeking their self-political interest. For example, financial support coming from countries like Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia were spent in construction of numerous mosques, madrassas, universities, religious centers and religious publications in the region. To give an example, just after the independence of Uzbekistan, the number of mosques increased to 6000 in 1993 although the number was 300 in 1989.<sup>[37]</sup> The third reason is the influence of globalization and increasing economic inequality between developed and developing countries and the inevitable effects of these advancements towards the early 1990s.<sup>[38]</sup>

*"In the last few years, globalization and its impact on religious identity have become more pronounced. The developing countries' failure to cope with the challenges of globalization due to bad governance, weak political institutions, regionalism, client-patron relations at the decision-*

*making level, corruption and lack of financial resources as well as other factors have resulted in uneven economic growth, as well as instability and social tension. The Central Asian countries are no exception.*"<sup>[39]</sup>

Especially, in Uzbekistan, religious identity emerged as a crucial challenge to the regime constructed upon secular identity. When the effect of Islamic religious identity is compared to the ones in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, it is possible to see important differences. The poly ethnic and poly confessional structure of Kazakh and Kyrgyz societies restricted the impact of religious identity. However, the mono-cultural Uzbek society is quite related to the strong impact of religious identity in Uzbekistan.<sup>[40]</sup>

### **Democratic State Building of Uzbekistan**

Oppositional political society in Uzbekistan has some problems about gaining formal status and registration by the state. Therefore, there is lack of institutionalized political opposition in the country; instead informal organizations emerged as a representative form of political society such as Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb ut Tahrir.<sup>[41]</sup> In addition, there were registered and official oppositional parties in Uzbekistan and they were active in the first years of independence such as Birlik (Unity) and Erk (Freedom) Parties. However, these parties did not have certain ideological differences than Karimov and his regime. The basic difference was about strategy and personality rather than ideology. The oppositional parties only targeted the personality of Karimov rather than developing a counter-ideological discourse. In addition, these parties were restricted after 1993 elections in the country by Karimov.<sup>[42]</sup> On the other side, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has different ideological arguments such as political Islam against the incumbent secular-post Sovietic regime of Karimov.

The development of political society was also restricted by the regime after the break out of revolutions in the post-Soviet space, and Andijon events. President Karimov saw the Rose Revolution in Georgia of November 2003 as a crucial threat against his regime. Since Karimov considered the US and the West's support behind the revolutions in the post-Soviet space; Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan; he restricted Western backed organizations, foundations, charities and TV channels within the country. For instance, Freedom House, the BBC, IREX, the Eurasia Foundation and Internews were forced to leave the country. In addition, Human Rights Watch and USAID were just permitted to stay providing that some restrictions. In addition, the development of civil society, Western support to NGOs and civil society organizations, and Uzbek regime's perception of threat regarding the developing Western backed NGO culture caused the change of the state's foreign and security policy preferences. Karimov broke the military alliance and strategic partnership with the US and shifted to the side of Russia and China.<sup>[43]</sup> The EU countries also retaliated and implemented sanctions to senior Uzbek officials by limiting travel bans.<sup>[44]</sup> Thus, the Western backed civil society development, parallel to rapprochement to the West in each field, ended.

On the other side, the development of civil society was based on international support and influence towards the last 1990s and early 2000s with the entrance of US influence after the US launched War on Terrorism. The two NGOs, the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan and the Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan were registered by the Uzbek government in 2002 on the eve of Karimov's visit to the US.<sup>[45]</sup> Emergence and development of NGOs as a civil society organization were not derived from internal conditions of Uzbekistan; instead, the NGOs were supported by international donor countries.<sup>[46]</sup> However, the real and strong opposition to the

incumbent regime did come from neither formal political society nor civil society. The real opposition emerged from religious movements. The reason of the formation of the serious oppositional movements by religious and nationalist groups in Uzbekistan is due to their characteristics of reaching the local people and linking the communities. But, NGOs, supported by Western donors, and the registered political parties which did not have any difference from the incumbent regime in terms of discourse and ideology were not as effective as Islamist informal parties or groups in the rural part of the society. The restrictions upon political parties such as Birlik and Erk caused them to get away from the grass roots and lose their influence over the society. Civil society and NGOs supported by the US and EU could not improve and spread its influence to rural areas due to socio-historical and economic conditions of the country as NGOs succeeded in Ukraine and Georgia. As a result, informal political society, in other words, radical Islamic parties such as IRP, IMU and Hizb ut Tahrir, improved and strengthened within the society. The political gap was fulfilled by these formations.

According to Karimov and his views about democratization of Uzbekistan, democratic development is also desired in Uzbekistan, but the development of democracy should be in accordance with the intellectual condition of the population and should not be exported or imported from a third actor outside. Karimov also emphasized that a third actor can intervene and try to benefit from the ongoing situation in case the significance of the conditions and the population's level for adopting democracy is ignored. Karimov implied 'radical Islam' and prominent groups such as IMU and Hizb'ut Tahrir and he also tried to imply famous Andijon events which were seen as a democratic uprising by the West as a planned uprising of radical Islamist groups.<sup>[47]</sup>

### **State with Market Economy in Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan has had a dependent economy to Moscow since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, since the era of the Khanates. Uzbek economy had strong links with Tsarist Russia in terms of cotton trade, grain import, railway connections and telegraph links. The situation continued at the time of the USSR by accelerating. Almost all of the industrial structures in Uzbekistan were engineered and established by the Soviets in field of mining, armaments and mechanics. In addition, Uzbek economy was directed through the rules and regulations of command economy.<sup>[48]</sup> In the post-Soviet era, regional economies got difficulty transforming into free market system. The results of transformation into market economy were different in each republic. While Kazakh economy managed to achieve a macroeconomic stability in the late 1990s, Tajik and Kyrgyz economies failed. But, Uzbek economy could not achieve an economic booming as it was expected despite having rich resources in mining, energy and agriculture. Uzbek economy could only double its GDP but private sector growth remained behind its neighbors.<sup>[49]</sup> In the early period, Uzbekistan was expected to provide economic growth, political stability and regional leadership through economic and democratic reforms. On the contrary, the regime could not practice the expectations because of dealing with security threats so that authoritarianism and isolation increased. This prevented the improvement of private sector, too. Karimov regime is careful about keeping the economy under control. Particularly in the sectors of telecommunications, media, energy, oil, gas and mining, there is a strong state control. And, privatization is only implemented in some parts of banking sector, tourism, textile, automotive and small businesses.<sup>[50]</sup> Isolation and authoritarianism also brought poverty and political instability in rural areas. Radical Islamic opposition especially used this situation and propagated upon society in rural places.<sup>[51]</sup> The Karimov regime suppressed any economic or political formation in order to keep

the country under control. For example, the Andijon events had economic reasons in addition to political reasons. In Andijon, the people and the groups in the local area refused to cooperate with the local authorities and refused to share their wealth with administrative units.<sup>[52]</sup> According to the study of Barbara and Azamat Junisbai, growing wealth of business people and entrepreneurs in Andijon began to emerge as a threat to monopoly groups who are close to the regime and the system did not accept their independently growing business potentials.<sup>[53]</sup> And, the local people had to revolt against the regime by collaborating religious political groups. As a result, they were suppressed.

The over state control upon economy and political authoritarianism prevented Uzbek economy to obtain a macroeconomic development like Kazakhstan even though it owns so many resources and opportunities. While the regime's perception of security and threat causes the suppression of society, democratic advance and economic liberalization, the country cannot perform the expectations of owning regional leadership and being economic power in the region.

According to the Marxist rhetoric, the Central Asian republics passed from feudalism to socialism directly, therefore capitalism was not practiced. So, the republics got difficulty to adopt the period of transition to market economy.<sup>[54]</sup> Uzbek economy was under the rule of central planning for 70 years in the Soviet era and it was the least industrialized economy among others because of specialization in agricultural production. Agriculture and service sector formed the main part of the Uzbek economy.<sup>[55]</sup> After the independence of Uzbekistan in 1991, the discussions about Uzbek economy's future started. There are some choices for transition from centralized economy to free market economy.<sup>[56]</sup> Firstly, big bang or shock therapy, already implemented in Eastern European countries, was discussed, but it was rejected due to the structure of Uzbek economy. The Russian model, "*rejecting management of the economy through centralized planning in favor of decentralized management through the use of monetary and fiscal policy tools*"<sup>[57]</sup> was considered, but was rejected due to economic instability in Russian economy. The South Korean model, based on governmental support for free market, the Chinese model based on gradual reforms in a process from agriculture to industry. Each of these choices was rejected because of not being suitable to socio-economic conditions in Uzbekistan.<sup>[58]</sup> The Uzbek economy had its own socio-economic priorities and conditions for its economic development.<sup>[59]</sup> In the transition and development of Uzbek economy, some factors are influential such as a long period of command economy and central planning, geographic conditions, low political contestation, rich natural economic resource.<sup>[60]</sup> The political factors are also so influential upon rapid privatization and macro-economic development in some of the former Soviet republics like Kazakhstan and Russia. If there is a political competition in the country among the elites, or if oppositional actors and political parties are active, it is a necessity for the governing-ruling elite to use the resources more efficiently to stay in power.<sup>[61]</sup> In order to suppress the opposition, the ruling elite has to control the natural resources and use them efficiently, thus the state economy need macro-economic development and rapid privatization. Macro-economic development also helped opposition and rival elites emerge and increase under liberal economic conditions. However, this situation is possible within the countries in which political competition exist. In the countries like Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, there is a low political contestation and lack of political competition, instead, the ruling elite is the only power upon economic-decision making mechanism, so the regions did not get into high privatization and controlling natural resources to defeat legal political opponents. Especially, Uzbek regime sees political opposition as a security issue, so economic development and political competition is not in interaction. As a result, within Uzbekistan economic development is slow and inconsistent by years.<sup>[62]</sup>

## Independent State Building of Uzbekistan

After the independence in 1991, Uzbekistan had the claims of regional leadership in the early 1990s. Karimov regime aimed to be totally independent and get away from Russia Federation's influence area. The close links were established with the US and Western countries. There were approaching policies especially with Turkey in realms of economy, trade, education and culture. Uzbekistan rejected to reconfirm its membership in the Collective Security Treaty led by Russia in 1999. Although there were increasing activities of radical Islam in the region, Karimov regime did not see Russia as an important and sufficient power that could provide sufficient aid in the struggle against Islamic terrorism. Instead, Uzbekistan trusted its own potential. For Uzbekistan, Russia was a state which could not solve its internal Chechen question, so it was not possible to bring stability and security to Central Asia.<sup>[63]</sup> On the other side, Karimov was aware that the regional republics such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan could not solve the problem of the armed radical Islamist opposition inside their own borders and it was an approaching threat for Uzbekistan.<sup>[64]</sup> For Uzbekistan, the West emerged as a real alternative in the post- 9/11. The USA emerged as a powerful partner for Uzbekistan against radical Islamic terrorism. It was known that radical Islamist groups had shelter in Taliban camps in Afghanistan and they fled the borders to pass to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for terrorist activities. They also attempted to pass the Uzbek border in 1999. Because of these reasons, Karimov needed a strategic partner in the region. Uzbekistan allowed the deployment of American troops in Khanabad military base in 2001. This was the sign of strategic partnership between the USA and Uzbekistan. Karimov also visited the USA in 2002 and before the visit; he registered two civil society organizations in Uzbekistan: the Human Rights of Uzbekistan and the Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan.<sup>[65]</sup> However, the relations deteriorated after a while because of US policies supporting democracy and human rights in the regional states.

The basic crash occurred after the Andijon events. While Karimov blamed radical Islamic groups and international terrorism for the events, the USA and the international community attempted to involve in and investigate the events.<sup>[66]</sup> These demands of the West and the US angered Karimov and caused him to suspect of a probable colorful revolution attempt inside the Andijon events. Firstly, Uzbekistan demanded the US troops to leave the Khanabad base in the summer of 2005.<sup>[67]</sup> Then, Uzbekistan's foreign policy of rapprochement to the US and the EU immediately shifted to another axis: The Shanghai Five, founded in 1996 by China and Russia as the prominent leading powers, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Uzbekistan also had already joined the Shanghai Five and the Organization was renamed as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001. But the Uzbek state began cooperating efficiently with the SCO after the fracture of relations with the West in 2005 and 2006, the post Andijon incident period. In addition, the Uzbek state rejoined the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in June 2006 again though it left the Organization in 1999. The new preference was more profitable for Karimov's Uzbekistan. Karimov's regime got irritated at the demands of investigation for Andijon events and necessary democracy calls of the USA. The new partners were not sensitive to human rights and democracy issues.

*"Tashkent even decided to change its policy of cooperation with the U.S. and the West and to reorient it toward Moscow, Beijing and the SCO, which show less concern over human rights."*<sup>[68]</sup>

In addition to less concern for human rights and democratic norms in the SCO, the economic

support by the Organization to the member states was important and profitable for Uzbekistan. Uzbek economy needed regional partners to develop in that era.

*“The four states of Central Asia find themselves in a position of recipients of the SCO’s favors and general political strategy. Modernization, security and stability of the region are the main points on the SCO’s current agenda. This agenda is attractive for national elites in Central Asia because it does not imply radical democratization, overwhelmingly supports them and provides an opportunity for poorer countries (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) to boost their economic development with resources from the more developed states of China, Russia and Kazakhstan.”<sup>[69]</sup>*

In the new era, Russia was strengthening again and Russia’s position was not like it had been in the early 1990s and China was also emerging power in the region. And, the main purposes of the SCO are the same with the perception of threats of Uzbek regime.

*“While the immediate focus of the organization was to combat the so-called three evils- ethnic separatism, religious extremism and international terrorism-the SCO’s long term viability and effectiveness in promoting regional stability and economic development depend how member states build up common identity and cooperate on issues of mutual concern.”<sup>[70]</sup>*

The member states mainly purposed to cooperate and improve their capabilities against terrorism and secessionism in the region. The Shanghai Five, then the SCO was also balancing factor for the US policies in the region. Uzbekistan sought ways to sustain in the region since its independence in 1991. To sustain as an independent state, security and foreign policy of the republic is very significant. Although the country has significant economic resources and sufficient population to claim a regional leadership, Karimov regime’s hesitations to transform the state into liberal economy and democratic system forced the regime into the independent state building upon security based context. While maintaining its independent foreign policy and trying to get out of Russia’s influence in the early post-Soviet period, the regime had to make preferences according to the developments. Firstly it shifted to the US in the early 2000s during US led war on terrorism in order to struggle against the radical Islamic threats then it changed the side and shifted to the side of China and Russia when it was disappointed with the US proposal about the unrest in Andijon and US pressure for democratic norms and human rights issues over Uzbekistan.<sup>[71]</sup>

The fracture in the US-Uzbek relations in the post-Andijon events is basically unrest to the claims and suspicions about the US’s role in supporting dissident civil society which blamed the regime for Andijon uprising. In addition, there is a Soviet legacy about US support and funding for radical Islam of which claims has endured from Cold War years and Soviet –Afghan wartime.<sup>[72]</sup> The alliance with Russia and China provided more profit for Uzbekistan than being ally with the US and West, criticizing of democracy and human rights violations, in the post-colored revolutionary era.<sup>[73]</sup> Russia was a suitable strategic partner sharing same geographical and economic features with Russia; in addition, China was beneficial for Uzbekistan in terms of its growing potential. Both Russia and China are balancing powers within the SCO for Uzbekistan and more preferable rather than being dependent on the single power, the USA. In brief, participation in an organization or staying near a strong power is the pursued policy for Uzbekistan because it is a newly independent country and the region is exposed to so many threats or conflicts. While Uzbek state tries to play a role of regional leadership, it also has to join the security and economic organizations to sustain the regime.

Terrorism has been comprehended as the most important threat targeting the state, and after 9/11 case, the threat of terrorism got so influential that it became a key variable in the nation-building process of the regime, and of course caused the militarization of social life in Uzbekistan.<sup>[74]</sup>

The policy of the Karimov regime in accordance with the regime's perception of threat caused the creation of "culture of war"<sup>[75]</sup> throughout the country. The elements in the installation "culture of war" consist of creating the atmosphere of being under attack of outside forces, fears of international terrorism led by global jihad network, sharing the same border with Afghanistan, being a strategic partner of the US for War on Terrorism in the post 9/11 era. Indeed, the increase of fear targeting independent state building process in Uzbekistan began to reshape state identity not in the post-9/11 era; instead it went back to Tajik War (1992 to 1997). The civil war between secular Tajik regime, similar to Uzbek counterpart, and the pro Islamist opposition "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan", caused secular Uzbek regime to get into militarization of state and national identity formation process.<sup>[76]</sup> The effects of the Tajik War created reasons for Karimov regime to restrict official parties, Birlik (Unity) and Erk (Democracy Party).<sup>[77]</sup> Later, US intervention in Afghanistan and strategic partnership with US, then Andijon events increased the level of the legitimacy of the regime's recreation of "culture of war" in the society.

### Conclusion

As a newly independent state since 1991, Uzbekistan Republic got into the process of reconstruction of its nation state identity by evaluating the background in the pre-Soviet history and benefiting from the constructed figures and arguments during the Soviet period. While the state's general perspective is being reshaped around the incumbent regime and leader of the country, the state's and nation's identity carries the general features of these founder leader and the founder regime. Secularism and secular Uzbek nationalist vision of the state, which benefited from the constructed and produced arguments and tools of the Soviet era, shaped the general characteristics of the state and nation. While maintaining the secular character of the republic, some parts of the society carrying the traditional, religious and rural characteristics transformed into an informal political reaction against the regime. The formation of this reaction is also derived from isolated and closed economic model which caused poverty and instability in the country's economy. While the state is dealing with the difficulties of being a newly independent state with twenty two years since 1991, it has both tried to be a regional leader as it has been expected and has tried to sustain in the region through participants in the unions, axis and international organizations.

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<sup>[1]</sup>Annette Bohr, 'The Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes', Graham Smith et al (ed) *Nation Building in Post Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),p. 143.

<sup>[2]</sup>Ibid, 143.

<sup>[3]</sup>Annette Bohr, 'The Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes', Graham Smith et al (ed) *Nation Building in Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),p.145.

<sup>[4]</sup>Annette Bohr, 'The Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes', Graham Smith et al (ed) *Nation Building in Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),p.146.

[5]Ibid, 146.

[6]Ibid, 147.

[7]Ibid, 150.

[8]Ibid,150.

[9]Ibid, 151.

[10]Martin C. Spechler, 'Authoritarian politics and economic reform in Uzbekistan: past, present and prospects', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol:26, No:2, September 2007, p.192.

[11]Annette Bohr, The Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes, Graham Smith et al (ed) *Nation Building in Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),p.152.

[12]Matteo Fumagalli, 'Ethnicity, state formation and foreign policy: Uzbekistan and 'Uzbeks abroad'', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol:26, No:1, August 2007, p. 110.

[13]Martin C. Spechler, 'Authoritarian politics and economic reform in Uzbekistan: past, present and prospects', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol: 26, No:2, September 2007, p. 190.

[14]Annette Bohr, The Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes, Graham Smith et al (ed) *Nation Building in Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),p.160.

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[16]Matteo Fumagalli, 'Ethnicity, state formation and foreign policy: Uzbekistan and 'Uzbeks abroad'', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol:26, No:1, August 2007, p.109.

[17]Ibid, 110.

[18]Ibid, 110.

[19]Ibid, 110.

[20]Shirin Akiner, "The Politicization of Islam in the Post-Soviet Central Asia", *Religion, State and Society*, Vol: 31, No:2, 2003, p. 101.

[21]Ibid, pp. 101-103.

[22]Ibid, p. 101.

[23]Petra Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia: Reasons, Reality and Prospects", Tom Everett-Heath (ed.). *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 221.

[24]Shirin Akiner, "The Politicization of Islam in the Post-Soviet Central Asia", *Religion, State and Society*, Vol: 31, No:2, 2003, pp. 101-103.

[25]The Party has some different version of names such as Islamic Revival Party, Islamic Rebirth Party and Islamic Renaissance Party.

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[27]Ibid, 220.

[28]Poonam Mann, 'Islamic movement of Uzbekistan: Will it strike back?', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol:26, No:2, April 2008, pp. 295-296.

[29]Shirin Akiner, 'The Politicization of Islam in the Post-Soviet Central Asia', *Religion, State and Society*, Vol: 31, No:2, 2003, p. 105.

[30]Ibid,105.

[31]Ibid,107.

[32]Ibid, 107.

[33]Laura Yereshkeshava, 'Religious identity in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan: Global-local interplay', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol: 28, No: 4, April 2008, p.585.

[34]Poonam Mann, 'Islamic movement of Uzbekistan: Will it strike back?', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol: 26, No:2, April 2008, p.298.

[35]Nick Megoran, 'Framing Andijon narrating the nation: Islam Karimov's account of the events of 13 May 2005', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol: 27, No: 1, August 2008, p.17.

[36]Laura Yereshkeshava, 'Religious identity in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan: Global-local interplay', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol: 28, No: 4, April 2008, p. 584.

[37]Ibid, 584.

[38]Ibid, 585.

[39]Ibid, 585.

[40]Ibid, 585.

[41]Daniel Stevens, 'Political Society and Civil Society in Uzbekistan- Never the Twain Shall Meet?', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No.1, 2007, p. 53.

[42]Daniel Stevens, 'Political Society and Civil Society in Uzbekistan- Never the Twain Shall Meet?', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No.1, 2007, p. 53.

[43]Nick Megoran, 'Framing Andijon narrating the nation: Islam Karimov's account of the events of 13 May 2005, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol: 27, No: 1, August 2008, p. 15.

[44]Nick Megoran, 'Framing Andijon narrating the nation: Islam Karimov's account of the events of 13 May 2005, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol: 27, No: 1, August 2008, pp. 15-16.

[45]Daniel Stevens, 'Political Society and Civil Society in Uzbekistan- Never the Twain Shall Meet?' *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No.1, 2007, p. 54.

[46]Ibid, 54.

[47]Nick Megoran, 'Framing Andijon narrating the nation: Islam Karimov's account of the events of 13 May 2005, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol: 27, No: 1, August 2008, p. 27.

[48]Gul Berna Ozcan , *Building States and Markets: Enterprises and Development in Central Asia*,(Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010),p. 20.

[49]Ibid, 22.

[50]Gul Berna Ozcan, *Building States and Markets: Enterprises and Development in Central Asia*,(Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 29.

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[53]Ibid, 388.

[54]Michael Kaser, 'Economic transition in six Central Asian economies', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol:16, No:1, September 2007,p.11.

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[56]Ibid, 11.

[57]Ibid, 11.

[58]Ibid, 11.

[59]Ibid, 11.

[60]Ibid, 13.

[61]Kobil Ruziev, Dipak Ghosh & Sheila C. Dow, The puzzle revisited: an analysis of economic

performance in Uzbekistan since 1991, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol:26, No:1, August 2007, p.12.

[62] Kobil Ruziev, Dipak Ghosh & Sheila C. Dow, The puzzle revisited: an analysis of economic performance in Uzbekistan since 1991, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol: 26, No:1, August 2007, pp. 12-13.

[63] Irina Zviagelskaia, 'Russia and Central Asia: Problems of Security', Boris Rumer (ed.) *Central Asia at the End of the Transition*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), p.76.

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[65] Daniel Stevens, 'Political Society and Civil Society in Uzbekistan- Never the Twain Shall Meet?', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No.1, 2007, p. 54.

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[68] Alexander Lukin, 'The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: What Next?', *Russia in Global Affairs*, Vol.5, No: 3, 2007, p. 150.

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