

OP #279: UZBEKISTAN AND THE CHALLENGES OF CREATING A REGIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM WITHIN CENTRAL ASIA

By: Nazokat A. Kasymova

A New World Order is rapidly emerging. But what kind of world order—a uni-polar or multi-polar world? A world in which there is peaceful co-existence and global cooperation among all nations and states or “The Clash of Civilizations”?

Modern political processes, both in Central Asian countries and all over the world, differ in dynamism and internal contradiction. In many regions of the CIS there is a tendency toward decentralization that is at odds with the ever-growing need for integration. A common view among scholars nowadays is that interdependence among nation-states will increase during the 21st century, and isolationist tendencies will diminish. This trend toward integration is more noticeable in Central Asian countries, where it results from a rejection of the absolutism of Soviet-era imposed ideological, political, and cultural values. Central Asian integration is based upon a new philosophy of mutual cooperation among Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, which will ensure political, economic, and social stability within the region.

Central Asia is not only a geographical notion. The states lying within this region of the world are dependent upon each other for solving problems related to peace and security, the economy, and ecological issues. Despite their interdependence, each of these newly sovereign states nonetheless seeks to pursue its own geopolitical strategies and goals, its national political agendas, and each seeks to meet regional security needs in the way it sees fit. Meanwhile, security in Central Asia cannot be separated from the problem of peace and stability in

other regions of the world, such as the Caucasus, CIS, Middle and Near East, and South Asia.

“The unity of diversity” is a term which refers to the similar, yet diversified, geo-political and economic changes which Central Asian states have undergone throughout their existence. These include:

- the common post-Soviet, post-totalitarian, and post-colonial histories of these countries, and their present transition to different political and economic systems;
- common problems of developing a free-market and socialist economy, a stronger legal system, and a democratic society with a functioning multi-party system (which includes the opposition).

But the varied experiences of each of these countries do not prevent them from cooperating with each other on issues that matter to them most:

- despite their unique histories and experiences, these countries historically have been united spiritually, culturally, and ethnically, which encourages further regional cooperation and creates greater security;
- military conflicts in Afghanistan and Tajikistan generate common concern about the defense of regional and national borders.

With mutual understanding, patience, and interaction, the countries of Central Asia can continue to strengthen their efforts to resolve regional problems. It is also in the common interest of the United States, Europe, and the Far East, as well as of Russia, for Central Asia to have a stable political and economic situation.

Central Asia's Geopolitical Situation at the Beginning of the 21st Century

During the mid-19th century Russia and Great Britain engaged in a struggle to create their own spheres of influence in the Middle East. This so-called "big game" shaped the destiny of the Central Asian region. The conquered territory was subsumed into the Russian Empire, under the name of Turkestan, and was subordinated to the powerful military minister. Some other territories like Kokand Khanate and Bukhara Emirate were annexed and a czarist protectorate was established.

For a brief time after the fall of tsarist Russia in 1917 there was hope of national freedom for the territory of Central Asia, but this quickly evaporated. Subsequently, neo-imperialist Soviet forces invaded Central Asia, and in 1924–25 the region was divided into five republics. The Soviets did this because they feared an uprising by Central Asians as a whole. These peoples shared common historical, religious, and cultural roots, which might serve as justification for a movement to separate Central Asia from the Soviet Union. One could say that the division of Central Asia into five states spurred growing tensions and distrust among these states, in spite of their common origins. At the same time, it stimulated the development of nationalist sentiments and unity within the borders of the individual states. It gave them the strength to fight for the preservation of their culture, which eventually helped them gain their independence from the Soviet Union at the end of the 20th century. The move toward independence began as a peaceful national liberation movement, led by intellectuals who held positions within the government. These leaders waged a

silent war with Moscow for a fairer share of economic resources, the development of infrastructure, the building of new cities, and funding for higher education. To achieve these goals, they were obliged to pay a very high price—subordination to Moscow in the spheres of spiritualism and culture.

Central Asia today is a region of the world where the interests of the West and the East (Russia, China, and India) collide. Furthermore, the region continues to hold geopolitical significance for the powerful countries of the Islamic world, such as Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran. It lies at the crossroads of developing and potentially very powerful Eurasian countries (such as China and India), which undoubtedly will define and re-shape international relations during the 21st century. Now, on the threshold of the 21st century, the Central Asian states are involved in a similar game; but this time, as active participants, rather than puppets of a foreign regime. The rebirth of a "big game" in the region signals the potential transformation of Central Asia by growing external influences. Given the current situation, what kinds of actions should be taken by the Central Asian states to guard against these growing influences? Establishing a system of strategic partnerships, for the purposes of maintaining a balance of power, is something which sovereign states must do in order to maintain their sovereignty. Unfortunately, a collective defense system does not yet exist in Central Asia. The region's unique geo-strategic position further underlines its need to maintain peaceful relations with its neighbors and the international community as a whole.

One can observe the impact that the break-up of the former Soviet Union has had on Central Asia's current geopolitical situation. The

common political, economic, and social transformations of the newly sovereign Central Asian states are driven by a process of “action—counteraction,” “contradiction—cooperation.” When a new balance of power is established, stable cooperation under new conditions and terms will be achieved. A new balance of power also encourages further attempts by opposing sides to find new ways to initiate confrontation, which can be transformed from ideological differences into “cool” interstate relations. If there is then confrontation in Central Asia, who will interfere—the USA, Western Europe? The fundamentalist Islamic states, or China?

An active response on the part of the region’s states to external challenges stimulates independence and will lead to domestic consolidation around the national core and to inter-governmental economic integration. As the countries of Central Asia seek long-term economic and political stability, they struggle gradually to transform their political and economic systems into Western-like models of democracy and capitalism. At the same time, however, they are searching for ways to mold economic, social, and political development goals to the needs of their own people, traditions and culture. Indeed, the independence of Central Asian states has opened up enormous prospects for economic development, along with the possibility for these countries to find a worthy and equal position within the international community, and to establish mutually beneficial partnerships with all nations, based on common geo-strategic, economic, and scientific ambitions.

The prospects for future security of the Central Asian states depend upon each state’s readiness to push toward deeper integration, by putting

common security goals before national strategic interests. At the same time, it is to be hoped that major political powers centers such as the United States, Europe, Russia and the Far East as a whole will take an interest in helping Central Asia to create some kind of security alliance which would:

- protect the region against the growing influence of Islamic extremism and the terrorist acts associated with it;
- limit multi-national corporations’ exploration for and exportation of Central Asia’s vast non-renewable resources (oil and gas), and prevent oil pipelines from being built in enemy territory;
- put an end to arms and narcotics trafficking. It has been demonstrated throughout history that regional alliances need to be created in order to maintain peace and stability within a region.

In most cases, one country cannot ward off all security threats without the help of an alliance. The ongoing process of meetings, information exchanges, and rapprochement among Central Asian countries in the sphere of regional security will promote the creation of a security system within Central Asia. The United States—and its western partners though on a differing scale—have shown an ongoing interest in strengthening the independence of the Central Asian republics.

When analyzing Uzbekistan’s geopolitical situation, it should be noted that the country lies at the center of Central Asia, flanked by Turkmenistan to the southwest, Kazakhstan to the northwest, and the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to the southeast. With the exception of Uzbekistan, all of these countries are ethnically heterogeneous; but at the same time, each country is a nation-

state. Ethnic Uzbeks make up 74.5 percent of the total population of Uzbekistan, which makes it the most ethnically homogeneous nation-state in Central Asia. Furthermore, throughout Central Asia there is an Uzbek diaspora totaling six million people. These Uzbeks are not internationally displaced persons—they have been living in other Central Asia countries for centuries (the diaspora is similar to those of Kazakhs, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen in Uzbekistan). The loyalty of ethnic Uzbek citizens is a factor in the stability of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and is what prevents Tajikistan from falling under the complete control of rebels. In the same way, citizens of Uzbekistan from the above-mentioned ethnic groups express loyalty to Uzbekistan. This situation necessitates further development of interstate coordination in the region.

Uzbekistan is playing a leading role in fostering this integration among Central Asian states, by helping maintain regional as well as national stability. It attaches great importance to the issue of how to ensure regional security and stability and thus sees its activities as an effort to resolve regional crises (both economic and political). Some Central Asian countries fear that Uzbekistan, as a largely ethnically homogeneous state, might try to subordinate the less ethnically homogeneous Central Asian republics to its power. For its part, Uzbekistan has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to foster regional security by calling upon other Central Asian states to participate in conferences at which common security issues can be discussed. Through growing dialogue and rapprochement among these countries, each republic has gradually realized the inadequacy of relying upon its own national security system

to solve growing security threats, and the need for more frequent and deeper cooperation with its neighbors, in order to create a regional security system.

Transboundary Security Threats: Afghanistan and Tajikistan

Uzbekistan is surrounded by countries that are burdened with various security threats, including ethnic tension, conflict, and political instability. In addition to actual fighting, the situations in these countries are increasingly being blamed for the rise in terrorism, drug trafficking, and the illegal trade of weapons, increasing human rights violations, and other transboundary security threats. One such country is Afghanistan. In September 1996, the ruling members of the Afghan Government were driven from power by the Islamic Taliban movement. Since that time, Afghanistan has had no functioning government, and the country remains divided among fighting factions. Tajikistan is also experiencing political instability. Civil war erupted in Tajikistan in June 1992, threatening the security of the entire Central Asian region. For many years, Uzbekistan has feared a spillover of the civil war from neighboring Tajikistan. Both Tajikistan and Afghanistan are home to Uzbek ethnic minorities. There are also so-called cross-border ethnic groups, which, if rallied to a cause, have the potential to undermine stability within and between countries and in the region as a whole. Moreover, there is a fear that fundamentalist groups and ideologies will penetrate into Central Asia. The subtle aspect of religious fanaticism is its ability to appear under the guise of a return to traditional Islamic values, which causes the Muslim community to split into so-called traditionalist and non-traditionalist camps. The “tradi-

tionalists” are those responsible for the politicization of Islam. They receive financing from other radical Islamic groups to carry out terrorist acts, in the name of defending the true values of Islam. All forms of religious fanaticism are seen as a security threat for Central Asia. Uzbekistan is extremely wary of fundamentalist-sponsored terrorism, in any form, and is constantly on the look out for the spread of radical politicized Islam. At the same time, it must be emphasized that Uzbekistan does not view Islam or Muslims per se as a security threat—only the politicization of Islam is seen in this light.

Uzbekistan seeks to establish mutual understanding with all its sister Islamic states which are engaged in fighting against the rise in radical Islamic fundamentalist groups.

Given their growing concern for possible terrorist attacks within the region, the countries of Central Asia will participate this year in a Regional Conference on Terrorism in Washington, D.C.

Uzbekistan has already taken the leading role in helping to find an appropriate resolution to the war in Afghanistan, by bringing this conflict to the attention of the international community. International organizations such as the UN, OSCE, and European Parliament have examined the political instability in Afghanistan on various occasions. During the 16 January–24 October 1996 session of the European Parliament, resolutions were passed containing an appeal to foreign states to cease any interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The Parliament also called for an embargo on the exportation of weapons to Afghanistan. On 22 October 1996, the UN Security Council voted in favor of a special resolution on Afghanistan, which was based on the recommendations of Uzbekistan and those countries supporting its position.

In November 1996, President Islam Karimov’s initiative was unanimously supported by the heads of the CEU (Commission of the European Union) and NATO during his official visit to Belgium. At the OSCE summit of 3–4 December 1996 in Lisbon, the declaration was endorsed, and the OSCE added its intention to implement efforts to support political stability and prevent further conflicts from taking root within Central Asia.¹ On 17 December 1996, during the annual meeting of the Council of Ministers of the European Union, “The common position of member-countries of the EU on the embargo on delivering weapons to Afghanistan” was accepted. In July 1997 the International Council of the Republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan met in Cholponata (Kyrgyzstan). The Council reemphasized that the successful social and economic development of Central Asia depends to a great degree on establishing and maintaining peace and stability in the region. The presidents of these Central Asian states recognized the need to help end the war in Afghanistan through peaceful negotiations.²

As for the civil war in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan was the country most directly threatened by the potential spillover effects of the war, and has hence played an active role in attempts to resolve that conflict. President Islam Karimov proposed the establishment of an “Asian Defense Alliance”, in order to maintain stability in the region in the event of this and future conflicts. However, Turkmenistan opposed the proposal, and the idea of creating a regional Asian alliance went no further. In a further effort to prevent the conflict from spreading, Uzbekistan’s government assisted Tajik refugees in their return to Tajikistan from Afghanistan

by allowing them to pass through Uzbekistan's territory. Uzbekistan also provides humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan and has signed a protocol on international guarantees for assisting in the peace process in Tajikistan, believing it imperative to do everything in its power to help reduce tensions in that country.

Despite the cool relations existing between the two countries at present, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan occasionally agree to cooperate on specific matters, above all in opposing the alleged spread of radical Islamic extremism, both within Central Asia and from outside its borders (from Afghanistan).⁴ In 1998, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Russia agreed to cooperate to prevent Islamic extremists from destabilizing the region.

On a number of occasions Uzbekistan has been successful in persuading the other Central Asian states that in order to maintain peace and stability in countries such as Afghanistan and Tajikistan, it is necessary to move step-by-step, by gradually advancing from one level of cooperation to another. Conflict resolution and peace building in the region is contingent upon all interested parties concentrating on the search for mutual concessions and sensible compromises.

Building a Regional Security System in Central Asia

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the disarmament process plays an important role in peace building. Every step toward nuclear disarmament at the present time can be regarded as an important international action. The achievement of nuclear safety in Central Asia and in neighboring countries—Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India—will be an especially long and difficult process. Simple treaties among all

interested sides will not suffice. What is needed is an ongoing monitoring process by the international community, especially if military (particularly the use of weapons of mass destruction) or political confrontation is involved.

On the regional level, Uzbekistan took some concrete steps toward strengthening military cooperation among Central Asian states when it adopted the Military Doctrine (in 1995), in which it pledged not to initiate military operations against any country unless it or its allies were attacked. This doctrine reiterated its commitment to uphold its own non-nuclear status, its support for a global ban on nuclear weapons testing, and the elimination of bacteriological and chemical weapons.

Regional military alliances were forged in 1995, when Uzbekistan joined Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as members of the newly-created UN-supported Central Asian peacekeeping battalion "Centrozbat." Since that time, Uzbekistan has participated in military exercises "Cooperative Osprey-96" (North Carolina) and "Cooperative Osprey-98", as well as in a series of other military exercises within Central Asia.

As for nuclear defense, the Republic of Uzbekistan considered this issue early on in its foreign policy, after it became a member of the UN. One of the first international agreements it signed was a promise to help strengthen international peace and security, based on the provisions set forth in the UN Charter. In this way, the country confirmed its desire to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. On 7 May 1992, Uzbekistan became the first country in Central Asia to sign the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty). Like the NPT's other signatory countries, Uzbekistan regards the

prohibition of nuclear weapons testing as one of the necessary conditions for the eventual destruction of all nuclear weapons throughout the world and the creation of a universal system of international security.

In addition to the above agreements, Uzbekistan signed an accord with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 8 October 1994. An Uzbek delegation participated in the next session of the managers' summit of the IAEA, held in Vienna in June 1997. This delegation presented the official positions of Uzbekistan and the other countries of the region on creating a Central Asian nuclear-free zone.

Uzbekistan took a further step to enhance regional security in 1996, when the country announced its intention to join the Partnership for Peace Program, under NATO.

In July 1997, at the 52nd session of the UN General Assembly, the ministers of foreign affairs of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan exchanged opinions on Kyrgyzstan's offer on the joint initiative for creating a nuclear-free zone. Based on this discussion, they considered committing IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) experts, and the permanent representatives of Central Asian countries under the UN, to begin work on creating a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia. Another notable outcome of the 52nd session was the decision by UN countries represented at the meeting to support proposals by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to hold conferences on "non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" and "the creation of a Central Asian nuclear-free zone" in Almaty and Tashkent.

The Almaty and Tashkent Conferences

In Almaty, 8–11 September 1995 and in Tashkent, 14–16 September

1995, conferences took place on nuclear non-proliferation and security and cooperation in Central Asia. These forums provided an opportunity for both regional and international participants, as well as citizens of the host countries, to discuss the security issues relevant to this important region.

Participants included representatives not only from the region, but also from Turkey, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Iran. Also represented were permanent member-states of the UN Security Council, the UN special organizations, the UN Drug Control Program, the UN High Commission for Refugees, the OSCE, CIS, and OIC.⁴

At the forum the Republic of Uzbekistan, along with other Central Asian states, enthusiastically supported future UN plans to establish peace in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and nuclear security in Central Asia. The geopolitical importance of Central Asia is such that a negative flow of events in the region could trigger instability throughout the entire world. As was emphasized earlier, the tense situations in Afghanistan and Tajikistan are among Central Asia's most serious concerns. Another idea expressed during the seminar in Tashkent was that the concept of security should no longer be thought of in narrowly military terms. Modern day security issues were acknowledged to encompass political, economic, ecological (including the increase in the unsafe disposal of nuclear waste⁵), and humanitarian dimensions.

The Tashkent conference determined the boundaries of a nuclear-free zone in the region. Although there is no concrete definition of a nuclear-free zone, some guiding principles and requirements do exist for the creation of such a zone. The main problem is the range of nuclear-strike capability

from areas outside the zone. Discussion about the creation of nuclear-free zones is a direct response to the spread of nuclear weapons. In the case of Central Asia, the issue arises because the region is surrounded by nuclear powers, including, most recently, India and Pakistan. The rules of a nuclear-free zone prohibit nuclear weapons from being placed within its boundaries. For this to be a realistic option, nuclear states must provide guarantees to nuclear-free states that no nuclear weapons will be used against the latter. If a nuclear-free zone is to exist in Central Asia, it is imperative that the countries of the surrounding region support Uzbekistan's proposals for its creation. The member states of the Security Council, in addition to neighboring and interested countries, must unquestioningly abide by the generally accepted standards and principles of international law.

The creation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia supports similar kinds of processes in other regions of the world, such as the Middle East and South Asia. The resolutions agreed upon at these conferences are of great significance for all humanity. According to high-ranking authorities in international organizations such as the UN, OSCE, and IAEA, peaceful initiatives in this sphere may become one of the most important stabilizing factors for countries located in the region and those bordering it. The widening of nuclear-free zones should, however, be carried out under the aegis of the UN, which makes every effort to encourage the involvement of all non-nuclear states in this process. Nowadays there is little doubt that the increasing number of countries possessing the means to wage nuclear warfare can be a security threat for the entire international community. International experts on weapons proliferation predict that by the end of

2000 more than forty countries will possess a nuclear weapon. Hence, Central Asia's turn toward the creation of a nuclear-free zone, and international support for this process is in the vital interests of the region.

Uzbekistan, along with other Central Asian states, continues to exert a growing positive influence on the peaceful resolution of nuclear-security issues. It plans shortly to sign a treaty on the immediate cessation of nuclear weapons testing. In a brief speech to the OSCE Conference held in Lisbon, President Karimov emphasized his country's position on questions of indivisible security, and the importance of resolving Central Asia's pressing problems.⁶ Declaring Central Asia a nuclear-free zone is one of Uzbekistan's most significant initiatives in the field of regional security.

Central Asian Security in the 21st Century

Conditions for peace and security within Central Asia are being formed at four geopolitical levels:

- national;
- regional (stability in the development of all states of the region);
- sub-regional (interaction of Central Asia's states with its closest geostrategic environment); and
- global (fostering the development of a multi-polar world during a new stage of scientific and technological progress).

Thus, security of the region is the result of targeted and various movement of the region's countries into global economic interrelations, as well as interaction with international structures that contribute significantly to the formation of intercontinental security systems.

The countries of Central Asia are becoming increasingly active in their

attempts to find immediate solutions to the problems affecting their regional stability and security. This is due to the belief that deeper economic integration among Central Asian countries cannot take place until regional security problems are resolved, or there at least exists some framework for controlling present and emerging security threats. The Central Asian states now recognize the need to form partnerships with other countries in order to meet their security goals. Of course, it is possible to envisage the creation of a strategic partnership with Russia, a major world power that is seeking deeper economic integration within and outside the CIS. But the CIS is inefficient because it attempts to create supranational power structures under the guise of deep economic and humanitarian integration, to bring about, in effect, a restoration of former unequal economic ties. Uzbekistan sees this absence of a commonly adopted idea about the perspectives and mechanisms of CIS integration as a temporary phenomenon. Uzbekistan's relations with "CIS countries and the CIS as a whole, in general meet and should meet the interests of these countries and Uzbekistan."⁷

However, Central Asian countries need not just one, but several strategic partners sharing some common security goals. Countries that uphold the Central Asian states' political sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency are considered to be the region's strategic partners. At the same time, just because these countries are strategic partners, does not imply that they will have common national interests at all times, in all situations. Strategic partnerships can be based on one common goal for a certain issue. These partnerships are especially important for Central Asian states as they undergo their period of economic and political transition.

The collective security goals for Central Asia in the 21st Century include:

- maintaining peace and stability in the region through preventive conflict resolution;
- creation of stable economic ties through greater humanitarian and economic assistance from development agencies, which in turn will help create the foundation for political and social stability; and
- combating inter-ethnic strife, terrorism, drug-trafficking, forced migration, and the illegal sale of weapons.

In order for these goals to be met, it will be necessary to develop appropriate common institutional mechanisms for cooperation (such as a strong legal framework). In addition to creating bilateral strategic partnerships, the countries of Central Asia are seeking to establish multilateral strategic partnerships. In March 1998, when the heads of state of the Central Asian countries (excluding Turkmenistan) held a meeting to discuss various political and economic issues, Uzbekistan's nuclear non-proliferation initiatives generated the most discussion.

Each country in the region undoubtedly has its own national security interests. Each newly sovereign state must nevertheless place common security goals above narrow national interests. Successful strategies that promote stabilization and national self-sufficiency in regional development, economic integration, and regional security must take into consideration the circumstances of all countries of the region. One of the main purposes of creating a regional security alliance is to have the capacity to maintain peace and prevent armed conflict in that region of the world. In order to achieve these goals, all the Central

Asian states must use all existing possibilities, both in the framework of their sub-regional, regional, and national policies and through the mechanisms of international organizations.

But the formal creation of a framework for regional security is just the first step in fostering future regional cooperation. In order for Central Asia to build a strong regional security system and internationally respected nuclear-free zone, Central Asian states must continue to cooperate with one another, by making common security issues a higher priority than purely nationalistic foreign defense goals.

Stability in Central Asia is dependent not only upon military alliances. The following factors also play a role:

- Effectiveness of economic and democratic reforms, peace, social stability, and international agreements within and between the region's states;
- Successful integration of Central Asian countries into the international community;
- The international donor community's interest in and

support for the modernization of infrastructure, transportation and communication, and the growth of foreign investments;

- Strengthening of the self-sufficiency of these states, the coordination of their actions on regional integration and security; Demonstrated strategic interests of the United States, Western Europe, Japan and certain neighboring countries;
- Normalization of the situation in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and the internal political situations in China, Iran, Pakistan, India, and in neighboring countries.

Successful strategies that promote stabilization and national self-sufficiency in regional development, economic integration, and regional security must take into consideration the circumstances of all countries of the region. By continuing to look for common interests and overcoming distrust, Central Asian states will be able to maintain economic growth, implement further democratic reforms, and truly develop a "conflict-free" zone within the region.

Notes

1. "On Initiatives for Regulating the Afghan Conflict" *Narodnoye Slovo*, 11 January 1997.
2. "Central Asia: Integration Will Deepen" *Narodnoye Slovo*, 26 July 1997.
3. At example about 1000 fighters of so-called terrorist organization the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan invaded Kyrgyzstan via Tajikistan in summer of 2000 and tried to cross the border with Uzbekistan.
4. Organization of Islamic Conference.
5. At a 1997 conference in Tashkent, on the transport of radioactive waste, the safe disposal of radioactive waste was also discussed.
6. Presentation by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. Karimov at the meeting of the heads of states-members of OSCE in *Tashkentskaya Pravda*, 7 December 1997.
7. Responses of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, L. Karimov, to questions posed at the briefing, *Narodnoye slovo*, 13 July 1996.