CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES:
THE CASE OF ANDIJAN TRAGEDY IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Behzod A. Mamadiev: Crisis Communication in Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of Andjan Tragedy in Uzbekistan

(Under the direction of Napoleon Byars, Queenie Byars and Odil Ruzaliev)

On May 13, 2005, Andijan, eastern city of Uzbekistan, a former Soviet republic of Central Asia, attracted the world’s attention. News ran through the channels of mass media from BBC to CNN reporting that the Uzbek government crushed a civilian demonstration and killed several hundreds of people.

The international community, including the U.S. and the EU, harshly condemned the acts of the government. The crisis communication strategies applied by the government to justify its actions and to diminish the damages of the tragedy as well as to repair its broken image failed.

In this thesis project, I analyzed the Uzbek government’s crisis communication strategies through the lens of Benoit’s Image Restoration Theory. By identifying the factors responsible for the failure, I proposed that the government could have reduced the damage of the crisis if the communication strategies had been carried out properly in accordance with the Image Restoration theory principles.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On May 13, 2005, Andijan, the most densely populated city in eastern Uzbekistan, a former Soviet republic of Central Asia, attracted the world’s attention. News ran through the channels of mass media from BBC to CNN reporting that the Uzbek government crushed a civilian demonstration and killed thousands of people. Various sources reported that the number of those killed ranged from between 500 and 5,000 (IWPR, 2005).

The demonstration had started several days before the tragedy. The protesters were asking for the release of 23 local businessmen who were arrested on June 23, 2004, and charged with extremism, fundamentalism and separatism. They were also charged with membership in Akromiya, allegedly a parted division of “Hizb-ut-tahrir,” a banned Islamist organization in Uzbekistan.

On the night of May 12, 2005, around 50 unidentified armed men attacked a military base in Andijan and seized automatic rifles. They then broke in to the prison where the 23 businessmen were held and, in an action that resulted in the deaths of dozens of prison guards, the self-appointed liberators freed the 23 target captives together with hundreds of other prisoners (Human Rights Watch, 2005). The next day, the insurgents who freed the jailed men attacked the regional government building and took it under their control. Hearing the news, thousands of people gathered in the square where the insurgents were reportedly entrenched. The people assembled to protest the unjust detention of the illegally liberated businessman, to
complain about their nation’s economic conditions, and to demand the president’s resignation (Human Rights Watch, 2006).

The government troops blocked the streets to the square to flush out the insurgents. Around 5 or 6 p.m., the army launched a major offensive on the square to make the insurgents surrender. In the ensuing battle, hundreds of civilians including women and children were killed (OSCE & ODIHR, 2005).

In defense of the dramatic and deadly military action, the Uzbek government said the insurgents were terrorists who refused to negotiate and cynically used civilians as human shields. The armed men who broke the jail and occupied the regional government building were declared as members of a banned terrorist organization in Uzbekistan (Embassy of Uzbekistan to the United States, 2005). The version of the story produced by the government did not convince the international community. Other than Russia, China and some neighboring Asian countries, most of the world, including the United States and the EU, harshly condemned the acts of the government. The crisis communication strategies applied by the government to justify its actions and to diminish the damages of the tragedy as well as to repair its broken image failed almost in their entirety. Even though the lengthy videotape released by the government, which depicted the day of demonstration, confirmed the government’s version of events, the government failed to escape from the world’s harsh condemnation and international isolation. This was mainly because Uzbekistan already had a bad reputation with regard to human rights protection and the condition of democracy. The government’s refusal for the calls to establish an independent international investigation also contributed to the failure of its crisis communication.

I contend that this failure can be explained using western crisis communication literature and theory. To address this contention, I will first give an account of the events chronologically.
I will then explore the scholarly literature in order to identify theoretical and practical framework, through which this case will be analyzed. I will then compare the government responses with the strategies proposed by the theory of Image Restoration. In all strategies, the government completely failed except in efforts directed to local population inside the country. This limited success can be largely attributed to the fact that people within Uzbekistan did not have access to information from independent sources but only censored local news media of the country. On the other hand, Akromiya, the group, which was allegedly responsible for the uprising, did not have a popular support from the Muslim majority population of the country. The attempts of the insurgents, who thought the insurgency would make the Muslim population join them, failed.

In conclusion, I propose that the government could have reduced the international impact of the crisis if the communication strategies had been carried out carefully in accordance with the principles of Image Restoration theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory. There are factors associated with the tragedy, such as, involvement of terrorists in the escalation of crisis, which government could have successfully used to reduce the crisis damages.
CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND

Uzbekistan:

Communist Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is the most populous country in Central Asia with 28 million people and is the third largest territory (447,400 km²) in the region after Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The country is divided into 12 regions and one autonomic republic, Karakalpakstan. The capital of Uzbekistan is Tashkent.

Once the center of great Timurid Empire in the 14th and 15th centuries, which spread its rule to three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa, the region was later conquered by Russians in the late 19th century. After the Bolshevik revolution of Russia in 1917, Turkistan, a unified territory that included all current countries of Central Asia and a part of western China, declared its autonomy. This autonomous government was soon violently overthrown by Bolsheviks, resulting in the death of thousands of civilians. As a result, Turkistan was forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union (Chokayev, 1926).

In the early 1920s, the territory of Central Asia was redrawn based on ethnic nationalities, which resulted in the creation of five new Soviet Socialist Republics, namely, Uzbekistan SSR, Kazakhstan SSR, Turkmenistan SSR, Tajikistan SSR and Kyrgyzstan SSR (Country studies, 1991).

For 70 years, Uzbekistan was part of the Soviet Union. During that time, the republic did not have its own independent government. It was ruled by Moscow through appointed apparatus
of the Communist Party. The country served mainly as the source of cotton production and other raw materials. Technically, every member state had the right to leave the Union, according to the Constitution of the Soviet Union, but practically no country exercised this right until the policy of Perestroika (Reformation) and Glasnost (Transparency) was initiated by Gorbachev, the last Secretary and the leader of Communist Party of the Soviet Union (A Dictionary of World History, 2000).

**Post-Communist Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan declared its independence on August 31, 1991, amid the collapse of the Soviet Union in early 1990s. Uzbekistan SSR was renamed Republic of Uzbekistan, and the country announced that it would pursue open market economy with a democratic system of the government.

Uzbekistan is a presidential republic, where the president is both head of state and government. The president is also chief of the military forces and holds the power to appoint the governors of the regions and all ministers, including heads of Interior Affairs Ministry (Police) and National Security Service (NSS), the government’s two main security forces. Executive power is exercised by the government, while legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of Parliament, the Legislative Chamber and Senate.

Although the Uzbek government claims that democracy is fully recognized and endorsed in the country, in practice the authoritarian legacy of Soviet rule widely prevails in all levels of the government. The country is infamous for records of human rights violations, corruption, and suppression of freedom of speech and religious practice (U.S. Department of State, 2009). The government has justified its restraint of public assembly, opposition parties, and the media by emphasizing the need for stability and a gradual approach to change during the transitional
period, citing the conflict and chaos in other former Soviet republics (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

**Democracy in Uzbekistan**

With a bad record of corruption, human rights violations and systematic abuse of human rights activists, as well as religious groups, Uzbekistan’s rating, with respect to democracy, is one of the worst in the world. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan declares that "Democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be based upon common human principles, according to which the highest value shall be the human being, his life, freedom, honor, dignity and other inalienable rights." (The Constitution of Uzbekistan, 1992).

However, human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, as well as government bodies like United States Department of State and Council of the European Union define Uzbekistan as "an authoritarian state with limited civil rights" and document "wide-scale violation of basic human rights" (U.S. Department of State, 2009). According to these reports, the most widespread violations are torture, arbitrary arrests, and various restrictions of freedoms of religion, speech and press (OMCT-Europe and the Legal Aid Society report, 2005).

On February 16, 1999, a failed attempt to kill Islam Karimov, the first and the only president of Uzbekistan since 1991, was allegedly organized by Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). This incident caused a shift in internal politics of Uzbekistan towards oppositional forces. The government felt a rise of terrorism in the region and sought immediate action to prevent further escalation. As a result, remnants of democracy, which existed in pre-1999 period, were rooted out altogether, and a new policy was implemented to suppress human rights defenders and practicing Muslims.
Since then, the reputation of the country in terms of democracy has been further eroding gradually every year. Reported violations of human rights are most often committed against members of religious organizations, independent journalists, human rights activists and political activists, including members of banned opposition parties.


**Andijan tragedy:**

**Andijan**

Andijan city is the capital of Andijan province, one of the three regions situated in a famous Ferghana valley in the east of Uzbekistan. It is the fourth largest city in Uzbekistan with half a million population and the most densely populated city in the country (Usmonov, 2008).

Local population in Ferghana valley is regarded more religious than people of other regions (Human Rights Watch, 2005). Both Tahir Yuldash and Juma Namangani, founders of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a terrorist organization banned in Uzbekistan, are from Ferghana valley. The government fears that underground terrorist organizations such as Hizb-ut-tahrir and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan are still active in the valley (Olcot & Ziyayeva, 2008; Beehner, 2006).

**Situation in Andijan on the Eve of the Tragedy**

The events of Andijan on May 13, 2005, are linked to the trial of a group of 23 local businessmen, arrested in June and July, 2004. These businessmen were accused of having
connections with an extremist group called Akromiya. Akromiya was allegedly founded by Akrom Yuldoshev, a former member of “Hizb-ut-tahrir”, another banned religious organization in Uzbekistan. According to the government sources, Yuldoshev instructed his supporters from prison and was the mastermind behind the Andijan uprising (Embassy of Uzbekistan to the United States, 2005). He was arrested in the mid-1990s, and then re-arrested in the crackdown on religious activists that followed the February 16, 1999, bombings in Tashkent. He is still in prison on a weapons charge, and the Uzbek State Committee for Religious Affairs has branded his religious activities extremist. (International Crisis Group, 2005).

Yuldoshev has published a 12-page booklet entitled “Iymonga yo’l” (The Path to Faith), which reportedly defines what steps one should take to lead life as a pure Muslim. He also wrote about running businesses, setting up community centers as well as humanitarian and social projects that would benefit the whole community. For some observers, the portrayal of Akromiya as a violent organization is highly suspect and may have been invented by members of the Uzbek government and propagated by members of the international scholarly community (Kendzior, 2006). The scarcity of information available on Akromiya raises serious concerns about the reliability of the group’s public profile. Nearly every piece of information about Akromiya prior to May 2005 has its origin in books written by Uzbek officials or in documents presented in Uzbek courts. Therefore, Kendzior (2006) thinks that the current public perception of Akromiya as a violent and extremist group is based almost entirely on propagandistic works issued by the government that were then reiterated by both Uzbek and international scholars. She doubts the group’s very existence and finds that Akromiya appears to have operated far more effectively as a myth than as a movement.
The arrested 23 local businessmen were popular among the local community. They are said to have created many jobs in the community and to have treated their employees well. They were also engaged in social activities and charities, donating money to schools, orphanages and the poor in their communities.

Their trial started on February 10, 2005, in Andijan and lasted for three months (five days a week). At each court session relatives, employees and friends of the defendants gathered outside the court building. They peacefully demonstrated against the arrest and trial of the businessmen and demanded their release.

The verdict was to be announced on May 11; however the large crowd that had gathered outside the court on that day learnt that the announcement of the verdict would be postponed to an unknown date. On May 11 and 12, a number of male relatives of the defendants were detained and questioned by the National Security Service (NSS). Another group of 13 Andijan businessmen were also in detention on similar charges in early 2005, but their trial had not yet started at the time of the incident.

**Andijan on May 13, 2005**

According to a number of different sources, it appears that during the night of May 12, an unidentified armed group attacked a military unit based in the city of Andijan and seized a number of automatic rifles (International Crisis Group, 2005). Later the same night this group stormed Andijan Prison where the 23 businessmen were held and freed them along with other hundreds of prisoners (BBC News, 2005). In the attack, dozens of guards and several prisoners who refused to leave their cells were killed (Akiner, 2005). The attackers informed the detainees that a meeting was being organized on Babur Square. Many freed detainees proceeded to the square. In the morning of May 13, the Hokimiyat (Regional Administration) building on one side
of the square and regional branch building of the Ministry of Interior Affairs were seized by the same armed men, who were also seen at the square throughout the day. In the course of the day, they took a number of hostages and held them inside the Hokimiyat building. Among the hostages were the Head of the Prosecutors Office and the Chief of the Tax Inspection Authority of Andijan region.

In the morning, the whole city quickly learned about the meeting at Babur Square by word of mouth. During the day, more and more people joined the meeting, and by the afternoon there was a large crowd at Babur Square.

President Karimov flew to Andijan on May 13 and spent some hours in the town. Talks between the government and the insurgents continued throughout the day but the groups failed to reach a consensus (Akiner, 2005). A video later released by the government also includes excerpts from the phone conversation held between insurgents and the Interior Minister. In this conversation, insurgents apparently reject the proposed plan that would allow them to leave the country, but does not give account of what the insurgents’ demands were.

According to some reports, later that day, government security forces fired into the crowd indiscriminately and without warning several times throughout the day, leading to the death of civilians including women and children (Human Rights Watch, 2005; International Crisis Group, 2005; OSCE and ODIHR, 2005). Other reports claimed that government forces warned the crowd to leave the square before starting the massive military operation (Akiner, 2005). Insurgents were reported to be hiding among the crowd and using civilians as shields (UzA, 2005). Several foreign news sources estimated the death toll in Andijan between 400 to 600 (IWPR, 2005), while the official estimate of death toll was 187 (UzA, 2005).
According OSCE report (2005), towards the evening people fled the square in several groups. Allegedly, the first group used hostages seized earlier in the day as human shields. A group of more than 600 survivors fled to the Kyrgyzistan, which had a border with Andijan city. Several people were killed on the way to Kyrgyz border too. Ultimately, after negotiating safe passage into Kyrgyzstan, the group managed to cross the border safely. A camp was set up for the refugees on the border inside the Kyrgyz province of Jalal-Abad. In early June, the refugees’ camp was moved deeper into Kyrgyzstan. In late July, all but 15 of the asylum seekers were evacuated to Romania. Another 11 were evacuated to the United Kingdom in mid-September.

**What is it: Terrorist Act or Civilian Uprising?**

The day after the tragedy, the Uzbek government rejected claims that this was a peaceful demonstration. Instead, government framed the incident as a terrorist act committed by armed extremists. The government said that insurgents killed around 50 people in the attack on the military unit and the prison, and during the meeting on the square. The government also claimed that the insurgents drew a crowd to the square by purporting that the president was coming to talk to them. Civilians were used as a shield in the armed clash between the insurgents and government security forces (UzA, 2005). The western countries and international NGOs called the incident a massacre conducted by the government against its own unarmed citizens (HRW, 2005).

The government continuously reiterated that the events of Andijan were a planned act prepared in advance by terrorists, and the very fact that unknown armed men freed hundreds of jailed men proved the involvement of extremist groups in the events. On the other hand, some reports released by international NGOs and independent observers questioned the very existence of Akromiya and pointed to civilian unrest as a main reason behind the uprising, not religious
extremism (Helsinki Commission hearing, 2005; Kendzior, 2006). While others did not exclude the participation of terrorists in the events (Akiner, 2005; Beehner, 2006), the main emphasis in all reports was given to brutal suppression of the demonstration by the government.

It is difficult to find unbiased reports on the nature of Andijan tragedy. The report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), based on 44 interviews conducted by the ODIHR team with refugees in the Suzak Camp, near the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border, between May 26 and June 2, 2005, concluded that the government security forces fired into the crowd indiscriminately, killing hundreds of people including women, children and the elderly. However, the detailed report did not investigate or try to ascertain the identity of those who attacked the military unit and seized the automatic rifles. The report mentioned these events once in the beginning and did not give any further information about it but focused instead on the details of demonstration and killings.

Without undermining the severity of the incident that hundreds of civilians were killed by the security forces, it is important to know the identity of unknown armed men in order to assess the government’s crisis communication objectively. Galima Bukharbaeva, then a country director of Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in Uzbekistan, who was present in the crowd when the tragedy happened, testified to the US Helsinki Commission that the demonstration was a peaceful uprising organized by the civilians, tired of injustices and economic problems in the society, and was not religious in nature (Helsinki Commission hearing, 2005). She also said that she did not hear any “Allahu Akbar” (Allah is Great) chants in the crowd. In a videotape released by the government after the events, however, it can clearly be heard that people were shouting saying “Allahu akbar” in many places (Video recording of the events in Andijan, 2006). Even though these voices do not provide any solid proof about the involvement of religious elements
in the uprising, it gives one reason to doubt how a high-profile witness, who was present in the demonstration during the whole day, could have missed hearing these religious chants. Contrary to this, another report prepared by an independent observer, Shirin Akiner, who visited Andijan after the tragedy and held conversations with witnesses confirmed the government’s position that terrorists were involved in the uprising (Akiner, 2005). According to this report, the witnesses testified that some of the armed men were not locals of Andijan, and some people even heard two of them speaking in Russian, which support the government’s profile of the armed men as foreign insurgents. Akiner also said that government forces warned the crowd before they started firing and the exit for unarmed civilians was not blocked. It is important to note that Akiner met the witnesses in Uzbekistan after the tragedy, and those who talked with her probably had instructions from the government officers on how to answer sensitive questions. The author of the report, who often writes about Uzbekistan, is also known for her pro-government position in her reports about Uzbekistan.

After analyzing both pro-government and anti-government reports on Andijan tragedy, I came to conclusion that signs of bias are present in both sides’ reports. The government blamed terrorists for everything in the tragedy, undermining the fact that hundreds of civilians were killed in the incident due to poorly planned military operation of the government. On the other hand, anti-government NGOs and international observers harshly condemned the act, even calling it a massacre, but paid little attention to who-abouts of the armed men that participated in the incident. The government, while being incapable of protecting its civilians, was responsible for the deaths of many citizens during the tragedy.
CHAPTER III
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORIES

Crisis

Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) defined crisis as a “disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core” (p. 15). For Faulkner (2001), a crisis is “any action or failure to act that interferes with an organization’s ongoing functions, the acceptable attainment of its objectives, its viability or survival, or that has a detrimental personal effect as perceived by the majority of its employees, clients or constituents.” According to Coombs (2007), a crisis is a perception of an unpredictable event that threatens the interests of stakeholders and can negatively impact on organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes. He suggests that a crisis is unpredictable but not unexpected.

The threat is the damage that a crisis can inflict on an organization, its stakeholders, and an industry. Threats created by crisis can be of three types: (1) public safety, (2) financial loss, and (3) reputation loss (Coombs, 2007). Some crises, such as industrial accidents and product harm, can result in injuries and even loss of lives. Others can cause financial loss by negatively affecting operations of the organization.

Crisis Communication

One of the many challenges during a crisis is determining how the individual or organization communicates with its employees, customers, stakeholders, and the general public. Communication during a crisis is a critical step (Woodyard, 1998). In crisis situations, the pace
of the conflict accelerates dramatically. This means that the affected parties have to react very quickly to protect their interests. In such situations, effective crisis communication is needed in order to reduce the damages inflicted by a crisis as much as possible.

Crisis communication is a process of communication designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholders. Some authors use the terms crisis communication and crisis management interchangeably (González-Herrero & Smith, 2008; Lukaszewski, 1999). Lukaszewski (1999) prefers the term crisis communication management, which includes the whole process related to both crisis communication and crisis management. According to Roos (2009), crisis communication is part of an overall crisis management plan designed by upper-level management and public relations professionals to reduce the potential damage caused by a crisis. Specifically, crisis communication refers to the flow of information during a crisis among an organization, its employees, the media, the government, law enforcement, and the general public.

Various scholars (Coombs, 2007; González-Herrero & Pratt, 1995) have divided crisis communication into several stages. According to the model proposed by González-Herrero and Pratt (1995), there are four phases of crisis management, namely, issues management, planning-prevention, the crisis, and the post-crisis situation. Making it simpler, Coombs (2007) divides the crisis communication into three stages: pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis. The pre-crisis phase is concerned with prevention and preparation. The crisis response phase includes actions taken to respond to a crisis. The post-crisis phase looks for ways to better prepare for the next crisis and fulfills commitments made during the crisis phase including providing follow-up information.
**Situational Crisis Communication Theory**

Situational Crisis Communication Theory explains that identifying crisis types, performance histories, and level of reputational threat is important in order to launch a successful crisis communication plan (Coombs, 2007). SCCT owes its theoretical background to Attribution theory. Attribution Theory provides the rationale for the relationship between many of the variables used in the SCCT, provides a useful framework for conceptualizing crisis management, and serves as the basis for explaining the relationships between crisis response strategies and crisis situations (Coombs, 1995, 2007). Because stakeholders make attributions about the cause of a crisis, attributions are important in determining reputational threat.

SCCT consists of three core elements: (1) the crisis situation, (2) crisis response strategies, and (3) a system for matching the crisis situations and crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2006). The belief is that the effectiveness of communication strategies is dependent on characteristics of the crisis situation. By understanding the crisis situation, a crisis manager can choose the most-appropriate response. SCCT is an attempt to understand, explain, and provide prescriptive actions for crisis communication (Heath & Coombs, 2006). SCCT explains how perceptions of the crisis situation can affect the crisis response and the effects of crisis responses on outcomes such as reputation, emotions, and purchase intention.

**Image Restoration Theory**

Another important theory that has necessary tools to analyze crisis communication strategies is Benoit’s Image Repair or Image Restoration theory. Rather than describing the kinds of crisis situations or the stages in a crisis, the theory of Image Restoration Discourse focuses on message options (Benoit, 1997). In other words, this theory teaches what an organization can say when faced with a crisis. Image Restoration Theory suggests that the key to understanding image
repair strategies is to consider the nature of attacks or complaints that prompt such responses or instigate a crisis.

Identifying whether the corporation or the government is responsible for the crisis is important to design a proper message in order to have effective crisis communication strategies. Benoit (1997) argues that for both conditions, perceptions of the crisis are more important than reality. Coombs (1998) found in an experimental research study that the level of crisis responsibility and crisis type affect the reputation of an organization, and as such, they should be taken into account when image repair strategies are considered.

Image Restoration Theory offers five broad categories of image repair strategies, namely, denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event, corrective actions, and mortification or apology for the act (Benoit, 1997). When using denial, an organization or a government can either use simple denial by claiming that it did not perform the act, or shift the blame by saying someone else is responsible. In evasion of responsibility, the organization or the government can argue it was provoked and responded to the act of another, argue that the incident happened due to a lack of information or ability, or claim that the event was an accident or that it had good intentions. Organizations or governments can also try to reduce the offensiveness of an act through bolstering (stressing its own good traits), minimization (the act is not as serious as presented), differentiation (the act is not as offensive as other similar ones), transcendence (there are more important considerations), attacking the accuser, or compensating the victim. When using corrective action as an image repair strategy, the organization or the government offers a plan to solve or prevent the problem from occurring again. The last strategy in Image Repair Theory is mortification. When the communicative entity practices mortification, the action usually includes apology.
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<th><strong>Strategy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Possible Manifestations of the Strategy</strong></th>
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| Denial                    | • Deny that an undesirable act occurred  
                           • Shift blame for the crisis                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Evasion of Responsibility | • Claim that the organization was provoked into causing the crisis  
                           • Claim that the organization lacked sufficient information or ability to prevent the crisis  
                           • Cite an uncontrollable accident as the cause of the crisis  
                           • Argue that the organization had the best of intentions (despite the undesirable outcome)                                                                                                                                 |
| Reducing the offensiveness of the event | • Cite the organization’s past good deeds  
                           • Minimize the perceived magnitude of the negative feelings attributed to the transgression  
                           • Attack the accuser and discredit the accuser’s claims of injury  
                           • Offer remuneration to the victims of the crisis in an effort to reduce the perceived severity of the injury                                                                 |
| Corrective action         | • Fix the root cause of the crisis  
                           • Take steps to prevent a similar crisis from occurring in the future                                                                                                                                                                  |
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<th>Mortification or Apology</th>
<th>Accept responsibility for the transgression</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide a genuine apology</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express regret</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Request forgiveness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 – Selected image restoration strategies as described by Benoit (1995).*

**Crisis Communication in Authoritarian Regimes**

Scholars debate whether a uniform public relations theory could be established for global public relations. Some researchers (Grunig, 2006; Lim, Goh & Sriramesh, 2005; Rhee, 2002; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003) proposed that the Excellence theory of public relations is the most-effective and ethical practice to use globally. However, Kent and Taylor (2007) argued that the culture is too complex in various parts of the world, and it is impossible to have one set of principles for every public relations practice in the world.

Kent and Taylor (2007) claimed that the notion that there is a normative model of public relations for understanding American and international public relations actually limits public relations theory development. For them, whether or not an organization practices a two-way symmetrical model of public relations is not essential to understanding the public relations choices made by organizations in other countries or cultures. Because, they argued, in many Eastern cultures, the way organizations communicate with their publics is different from the practices in the United States.

Within a broad context of debates about global public relations scholarship, there are some attempts to study if crisis communication theory and strategies, which are of western product, could work in non-western societies too. Falkheimer and Heide (2009) argued that the current multicultural context makes it difficult for traditional mass communication strategies and
messages to work, and, thus, crisis communication theory should now move closer to cultural theory by focusing on publics as interpretive communities. They claimed that cultural theory provides necessary tools to explain publics better than current crisis communication theories do in a homogeneous western society.

There are some experimental studies (Chen, 2009; Landry & Stockmann, 2009; Lee, 2007; Xu, 2006) that tested the working of western crisis communication strategies in non-western societies. For example, Xu (2006) analyzed how western multinational corporations in China applied modern crisis communication strategies when they faced a crisis arising from unhealthy ingredients found in their products. This study found that while some strategies yielded a desired result, some others did not. The reason was due to differences in Chinese culture. However, the author argued that because China is undergoing a rapid social change, it is too early to deduct a conclusion based on these recent case studies about the relevancy of western crisis communication strategies in China. That is why, he said, international public relations research needs to be updated consistently by throwing away outdated knowledge and perceptions to adapt to new developments.

Landry and Stockmann (2009) studied media effects during the Sichuan Earthquake of China to see how crisis management works in an authoritarian regime. Even though the authors did not directly refer to a western type of crisis communication as a comparison in their analyses, they found that when the government followed the policy of information transparency, which is an important variable in a crisis communication, it achieved the support of the public. The study also acknowledged the importance of cultural factors in an overall government crisis communication in China.
Similarly, Chen (2009) studied the Chinese government’s crisis communication during the Sichuan earthquake to see how institutionalization of public relations could help the government achieve its objectives. He found that Chinese government was successful in its communication due to institutionalized public relations efforts. Unprecedented emphasis placed on open, timely, and direct communication with the publics helped the government preserve and enhance its image and reputation amid the crisis. The study also found that the Chinese government adopted two-way asymmetrical model in its communication with the media and publics, aiming to take control over the agenda building and issue framing. The Chinese government employed different strategies and tactics that conform to western crisis communication norms, and the communication was both persuasive and manipulative in nature.

The case studies that analyzed Chinese government’s crisis communication during Sichuan earthquake seem to show that even authoritarian regimes like China can benefit from the application of western crisis communication strategies. However, this case needs further exploration in order to conclude whether western crisis communication strategies work in authoritarian regimes without any modification. Whether rejection of western crisis communication strategies by authoritarian governments would worsen the situation also needs further evidence-based studies. These issues will be explored more in the next section of the paper. What would be the case when western crisis strategies are ignored will be explained with an example of another authoritarian regime, that is, Uzbekistan.

Andijan tragedy of 2005, even though much has been written and spoken about it, has never been analyzed through the lens of western crisis communication strategies. So far, the Uzbek government’s use of crisis communication plan and strategies were mainly discussed within the framework of lack of democracy and brutal nature of Karimov’s dictatorial regime.
The focus of all works on this topic was based on descriptive approach giving only the accounts of what happened. There is no scholarly study that analyzed Uzbek government’s crisis communication during and after the tragedy. Whether such regime could have launched a successful crisis communication if western crisis communication strategies were applied, or whether lack of accountability and transparency, which are core principles of modern crisis communication theories, accounts for the failure of the government’s crisis communication has not been studied. Such study is needed in order to broaden the current scholarly understanding of crisis communication in authoritarian regimes. As briefly explained above, most literature that analyzed authoritarian regimes’ crisis communication strategies mainly dealt with the crises that were caused by natural disasters. Crisis escalated by the government involvement, which could be an ideal example to test the working of western crisis communication theories in authoritarian regimes and to deduce more generalizable conclusion to frame broader theoretical frameworks, was never researched in crisis communication studies of authoritarian regimes. As such, this study is important in that the analysis of the Uzbek government’s crisis communication during and after the Andijan tragedy will contribute a valuable knowledge to crisis communication scholarship in terms of both theoretical and practical applications of western crisis communication in authoritarian regimes.
CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHOD

Research questions

Based on the review of literature and theories of crisis communication and image restoration, the following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What crisis communication strategies did the Uzbek government take during Andijan tragedy of 2005?
2. What are the factors responsible for the failure of the government’s crisis communication?
3. What opportunities for future research about crisis communication and image restoration in authoritarian regimes are suggested by the case analysis of Uzbekistan?

Method

In this project, case study will be employed as a research method to assess internal and external crisis communication efforts of Uzbek government during and after the Andijan tragedy. The case analysis will be conducted on the basis of primary and secondary data sources (See Table 2).

As a research endeavor, the case study contributes uniquely to our understanding of individual, organizational, social and political phenomena. The case study has been a common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science, business, social work and public relations. The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex
social phenomena. In brief, the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 1994).

The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (Schramm, 1971). A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The case study inquiry relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. In other words, the case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method – with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis. In this sense, the case study is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature alone (Stoecker, 1991) but a comprehensive research strategy.

For the purpose of this study, the case study method is the most suitable and relevant because the case of Andijan tragedy is contemporary real-life event with complex nature that requires analysis of multiple sources of evidence in a comparative manner in order to produce a thorough assessment. As explained above, the case study as a comprehensive research method can explain motives and context of any event beyond a mere exploratory purpose.

Data collected throughout the course of this case analysis include primary and secondary materials (See Table 2). For primary sources, I analyzed the news releases of the government distributed during the tragedy. These news releases were retrieved from the archive of the government news agency portal http://www.uza.uz. News releases issues by the Embassy of Uzbekistan to the U.S. were also included among the primary materials because these news
releases reflect the Uzbek government’s immediate response and position towards the criticism expressed by the U.S. and international human rights organizations. Textual content analysis was conducted over the news stories of the government’s daily newspaper Khalq Suzi (People’s word). Three-months archive of the newspaper was thoroughly scanned reviewing every story that had mentioned Anijan tragedy. These materials were collected from the archive library of Khalq Suzi during the author’s trip to Uzbekistan in 2010. Government’s crisis communication strategies were identified and framed mainly on the basis of the analysis of news releases and newspaper stories.

Two videos depicting the tragic events were also reviewed in order to understand the real picture of the tragedy. Even though they were edited versions released by the government, they are relevant and valuable images that speak about, and explain, what really happened on that day.

I categorized all information released by the government as a primary source because they are the only and the most useful material, through the analysis of which, the government’s crisis communication strategies could be defined. To assess these strategies through the lens of western crisis communication strategies, I relied on the secondary data, which comprise, first, scholarly literature on crisis communication and image restoration theories, and then, NGOs’, foreign governments’, independent observers’ and news media’s reports about the tragedy. By analyzing and comparing both types of data, I critically assessed the Uzbek government’s crisis communication and deducted conclusion summarizing the factors responsible for the failure of the strategies employed by the government. At the end, I suggested several recommendations, if properly followed, they could have been of practical help to reduce the reputational damage the government incurred due to its ill-planned crisis communication plan.
### Primary and Secondary Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Data Sources</th>
<th>Secondary Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publications of the government daily newspaper <em>Khalq Suzi</em></td>
<td>Crisis communication and image restoration literature;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government news releases published on government website;</td>
<td>News stories reported by international media;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News releases issued by the Embassies of Uzbekistan to foreign nations;</td>
<td>Official reports of international NGOs;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government-controlled national newspapers;</td>
<td>Reports of independent observers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw video released by the government depicting Andijan events;</td>
<td>News releases and reports of foreign governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video documentary released by the government</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 – A summary of primary and secondary data sources used in the construction of this case analysis and crisis communication assessment.*
CHAPTER V: CRISIS COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT

Textual content analysis of the three-months archive of the daily newspaper *Khalq Suzi*, the main mouthpiece of the government, revealed that the government persistently used the local media to disseminate its side of story on Andijan tragedy. During the period from May 14 to August 23, *Khalq Suzi* published 111 stories related to Andijan events. By the type of the story, these stories were placed under the following categories (Table 3):

1. News releases: 27 stories;
2. President’s speeches: 3 stories;
3. President’s decrees: 3 stories;
4. Opinions: 47 stories;
5. International experts’ articles: 12 stories

All articles and news stories blamed terrorists for killings. Not even was a singly story found that attributed some level of responsibility to government forces. Based on the content, the materials were further placed under the following six categories (Table 4):

1. Accounts of happenings: 22 stories;
2. Response of the local population: 45 stories
3. Response of the government to international criticism: 16 stories
4. Anti-American and anti-western stories: 10 stories;
5. Pro-Russian stories: 5 stories;
6. Pro-Chinese stories: 3 stories.
The stories published at *Khalq Suzi* targeted mainly the local population. In order to give an idea that foreign experts are also supporting the position of the government, articles written by foreign nationals were also often published in the newspaper. Along with these stories, there were anti-American and anti-western articles that condemned the critical positions of the U.S. and the members of the EU as countries of double standard and hypocrisy. Also, the newspaper published several articles that reflected the change in the country’s foreign policy. The stories that reported about the support Russia and China showed towards the Uzbek government amid Andijan tragedy explained why Uzbekistan had turned to Russia and China as its new strategic allies. On the other hand, several stories reflected new tensions between Uzbekistan and the U.S. and the EU, which meant that Uzbekistan had distanced itself from its traditional allies in “war on terror”.

It is important to note that none of these stories are written independently by journalists on their own initiatives. Since the media in the country are under a tight control of the government, journalists cannot write about sensitive political issues and about foreign policy of the country without the approval and guidance of the government. Especially, after Andijan tragedy, every single piece about Andijan events that appeared on the local media came from the editors’ desk of the government.

This was the case with all media outlets in the country. While local media like *Khalq Suzi* published the government’s response to international criticisms, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassies of Uzbekistan to foreign nations, particularly the Embassy of Uzbekistan to the U.S. issued special press releases against the critical reports of international human rights organizations and governments. These reports intended for foreign audiences did not differ much in content from the stories published in local media within Uzbekistan. The main message the
government produced and disseminated was that certain extremist elements, among which there were foreign citizens, manipulated the local population of Andijan for their own political agenda in order to create unrest in the region so that they could achieve their political goals in Ferghana valley. The terrorists, as government reports said, were behind all killings that happened on that day in Andijan.

As the government blamed terrorists for the tragedy in Andijan, the national mass media was effectively used to disseminate government’s version of stories. The immediate actions taken by the government after the tragedy to diminish the damages of the crisis can be summarized under the following points:

- After the site of the tragedy was cleaned, several tours to Andijan were organized for journalists as well as foreign groups, which included representatives of diplomatic corps and international journalists.

- An independent parliamentary commission was set up to investigate the events. As the government claims, the international community declined to participate in the work of this commission.

- Under the direction of the government, national mass media continuously condemned the events as terrorist acts. Several TV shows, documentaries and special programs were aired, which depicted members of Akromiya as terrorists and the responsible group for Andijan events.

- The president and General Prosecutor of Uzbekistan held several press conferences, where international journalists participated and were presented with the government’s view on the happenings.
The trial of Andijan events was held in public to convince the world that there was nothing to hide from the public.

The government republished, retransmitted and re-disseminated through all available means the news and reports of international journalists and observers, whose views were in accordance with the government’s position.

A documentary movie about Andijan events was produced and presented in many countries abroad.

In international meetings, the Andijan events were repeatedly characterized as the work of terrorists.

The Internet was widely used to disseminate the government reports. Government information portals such as Uza.uz, press-uz.info, jahon.mfa.uz continuously published government press releases and reports on Andijan events.

National Islamic scholars were quoted on mass media blaming terrorists for the tragedy and labeling the Akromiya group outside the fold of Islam.

These strategies failed in general. Using Image Restoration theory as a lens, I will now elaborate the government’s response strategies in detail. In sum, the image restoration strategies applied with varying degrees of effect by the government include denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event, and lastly, corrective action.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Definition of categories</th>
<th>Number of stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News releases</td>
<td>After the tragedy, the government regularly issued news releases about new developments with regard to Andijan events. These included the initial accounts of what happened in Andijan and the results of government investigation over the tragedy.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President’s speeches</td>
<td>It is a common feature of Uzbek media that the full text of president’s official speeches is published in all national newspapers. This category includes the president’s speeches that are wholly or partly devoted to Andijan events.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President’s decrees</td>
<td>These are official decrees issued by the President that are related to Andijan events.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions</td>
<td>The most published works on Andijan tragedy were opinions written by citizens of various professions in Uzbekistan These are usually the stories written in</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
accordance with the order and initiative of the government.

| International experts’ articles | The newspaper often published stories written by foreigners who also supported the government’s position on Andijan tragedy. The authors of such articles include, but not limited to, international journalists, scholars of political science, representatives of foreign governments and famous scholars of Islam abroad. The credibility of the profile of such authors and the content of their stories are highly doubtful. | 12 |

| Analytical articles | There were also some analytical stories, in which, authors scientifically attempted to analyze the Andijan uprising. Such articles tried to link the Andijan insurgents to the networks of international terrorism. | 9 |

*Table 3 – Classification of publications at Khalq Suzi based on story types.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Definition of categories</th>
<th>Number of stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts of happenings</td>
<td>All stories that gave only accounts of what happened in Andijan tragedy were placed under this category. They mainly included the government press releases and news releases issued by the government information portal <em>UzA</em>.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response of the local population</td>
<td>The most published works on Andijan tragedy were responses of the citizens of Uzbekistan in the form of opinions. These are usually the stories written in accordance with the order and initiative of the government.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response of the government to international criticism</td>
<td>There were stories written under the name of certain individuals, which reflected the position and response of the government towards international criticism of the Uzbek government.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-American and anti-western stories</td>
<td>After the U.S. and the EU harshly condemned the Uzbek government for the tragedy, the Uzbek</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
government started severing all its ties with these nations, which were reflected in the media campaign against these western nations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-Russian stories</th>
<th>After relations with the West were severed, Uzbekistan started a new strategic relationship with Russia. The newspaper stories covered this new relationship in the light of Andijan tragedy.</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Chinese stories</td>
<td>Uzbekistan also moved closer to China because China also supported Uzbekistan in its fight against terrorism in Andijan. The local media positively covered this new development in special reports.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 – Classification of publications at *Khalq Suzi* based on story content.

**The Government’s Image Repair Strategies**

Image restoration theory is the main theoretical ground upon which this case study is based. The strategies such as denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event and corrective actions applied by the Uzbek government are some of the principles that will be elaborated in this theory. Image restoration theory offers five broad categories of image repair strategies, namely, denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event, corrective actions and mortification or apology for act (Benoit, 1997). In this case study, the crisis response of the Uzbek government was found to be fitting to the first four strategies, which are denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event and corrective actions. The
government did not use any strategy of mortification or compensation; however we also included a sub-section to analyze apology because, in our opinion, not using mortification was in itself a strategy.

Image Restoration theory suggests that the key to understanding image repair strategies is to consider the nature of attacks or complaints that prompt such responses or instigate a crisis (Benoit, 1997). An attack has two components:

1. The accused is held responsible for an action.
2. That act is considered offensive.

Identifying whether the corporation or the government is responsible for the crisis is important to design a proper message in order to have effective crisis communication strategies. The offensiveness degree of the act is also another important factor to consider. Benoit (1997) argued that for both conditions, perceptions on the crisis are more important than reality. In the example of Andijan tragedy, the perception most of the public held was that the government was responsible for the tragedy, and offensiveness of the act was unprecedentedly high. That is why Andijan tragedy was such a case in which positive image restoration was hardly possible to achieve unless well-designed proper strategies were applied. In this situation, using the strategies of denial and evasion of responsibility would not definitely bring any positive change other than making the image of the government even worse. Since it appears that the government knew it could not escape from the responsibility for the act, the government should have at least used some strategies of mortification such as seeking apology from the victims. However, the Uzbek government did not employ any of the aforementioned mortification strategies. Instead, it continuously reiterated its innocence in the act denying and evading the responsibility for the tragedy.
Denial

One general approach to image repair, with two variants, is denial. An organization or a government may deny that the act occurred, or that the act was harmful to anyone. In the case of Andijan tragedy, the government completely denied the fact that its forces killed civilians.

A second form of denial is shifting the blame, arguing that another person or organization is actually responsible for the offensive act. In Andijan case, the government has characterized the Andijan events as an attempt by terrorists, motivated by an Islamist agenda and supported by foreigners, to seize power in Andijan. (BBC News, 2005) It has attributed all the deaths to the gunmen and in public has not explicitly acknowledged any casualties caused by government forces.

The government rejects characterizing the gathering on Bobur Square as a protest. In his statement to the press on May 19, President Karimov said that after gunmen seized the weapons and conducted the prison break, they gathered people at the hokimiyat “and used them as human shields.” (Uzbek Television First Channel in Uzbek, 2005). President Karimov also said that people were promised up to $3,000 US dollars to go Bobur Square (BBC News, 2005).

President Karimov said that he personally went to Andijan to set up headquarters, consulted with local leaders, and sought to establish contact with the gunmen. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Zokirjon Almatov, was then tasked with negotiating with the gunmen (Uzbek Television First Channel in Uzbek, 2005). As Karimov said at the press conference, the negotiations continued for the whole day until 5:00 p.m. when the gunmen rejected the last government proposal that would allow them to leave the country. They left the Hokimiyat building after they realized that the military were surrounding them, he said. President Karimov
said that after the gunmen left the Hokimiyat building, at about 7:40 p.m., government forces “pursued” them, and indicated that government forces fired only in response to gunfire from the gunmen. (Uzbek Television First Channel in Uzbek, 2005).

**Evasion of responsibility**

Evasion of responsibility has four versions. An organization or a government can say that its act was merely a response to another’s offensive act, and that the behavior can be seen as a reasonable reaction to that provocation. For example, a company might claim that it moved its plant to another state because the first state passed a new law reducing its profit margin. The Uzbek government claimed that its forces started shooting only after the alleged terrorists fired against them using the civilians as a shield.

Another specific form of evading responsibility is defeasibility. In such case, the organization or the government alleges there was a lack of information about or control over important elements of the situation. For instance, a busy executive who missed an important meeting could claim that he was never told that the meeting had been moved up a day. If true, the lack of information excuses the absence. In Andijan case, the government said that after all attempts to negotiate failed, unexpectedly, insurgents started shooting, after which the government had to exchange fires.

A third option is to claim that the offensive action occurred by accident. If the company or the government can convince the audience that the act in question happened accidentally, it should be held less accountable, and the damage to that business or organization’s image should be reduced. For the Uzbek government, Andijan tragedy was an incident, for which terrorists were responsible. According to official reports, the government did its best to stop the killings;
yet insurgents wanted the bloodshed to happen because they wanted the scene to be seen as if the Uzbek government was killing its citizens.

Fourth, the organization or the government can suggest that the offensive behavior was performed with good intentions. In the case of Andijan tragedy, we could not find any information for this specific type of evasion of responsibility.

After the Andijan tragedy, in several public statements, President Karimov blamed the violence on Islamic extremist groups and particularly “Hizb-ut-Tahrir”. In his press conference on May 14, 2005, he said that the unrest was led by “fanatic and extremist groups” who were trying to repeat in Uzbekistan the political upheaval that had taken place in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. Regarding the participation of foreigners, the president said that some of the gunmen and their weapons came from abroad. He also said “. . . Without help from outside, without foreign sponsors, they would not be able to commit such a crime. And without the funds they would not have been able to organize their action.” (BBC News, 2005).

The government denied that military or internal affairs troops shot at fleeing protesters, and attributed most of the deaths to the gunmen. Minister Almatov told diplomats and journalists visiting Andijan on May 18 that “the extremists . . . forced their way through the ring of law enforcement bodies using women and children as a cover. The terrorists shot down dozens of peaceful people, including three ambulance doctors going by.” (UzReport.com, 2005). As such, the government, in its every official statement, evaded the responsibility for the tragedy.

Reducing offensiveness of event

A government that is accused of wrongful actions usually tries to reduce the perceived offensiveness of that act. This type of image repair strategy has six versions (Benoit, 1997).
First, a government may use bolstering to strengthen the audience's positive feelings towards itself, in order to offset the negative feelings connected with the wrongful act. An organization or a government may describe positive characteristics they have or positive acts they have done in the past. These sentiments, if accepted, should bolster its image and offset damage to its reputation. With its bad record of human right violations, the Uzbek government could not reduce the offensiveness of Andijan tragedy on the basis of this version of strategy.

A second possibility is to try to minimize the negative feelings associated with the wrongful act. This statement works to minimize the apparent problem. This is exactly what the Uzbek government did in its crisis communication. While independent observers and reports of international NGOs counted the number of dead bodies near 1000, the government’s death toll was only 187.

Third, a government can employ differentiation, in which the act is distinguished from other similar but more offensive actions. The Uzbek government tried to label the tragedy as a terrorist act and never called the gathering as a peaceful demonstration of the local population.

A fourth way of reducing offensiveness is transcendence, which attempts to place the act in a more favorable context. A company or a government could claim that the benefits in an offensive act might be more than harms.

Fifth, those accused of wrongdoing may decide to attack their accusers. This was the most-used strategy of the Uzbek government against the accusers. It attacked everyone who criticized the government’s handling of the Andijan uprising.

Compensation is the final form of reducing offensiveness. If it is acceptable to the victim, the organization or the government's image will be improved. The Uzbek government never
apologized nor offered any compensation to the victims of the tragedy. It was persistent in its position that it was terrorists who were responsible for everything that happened on that day.

Every fact the Uzbek government used to argue against what happened in Andijan served to reduce the offensiveness of the tragedy. According to the Uzbek government estimate, the Andijan tragedy resulted in the death of 187 people, which is much less than the number estimated by international reports. Among the dead were 60 civilians, and 31 law enforcement personnel and military servicemen. The government also reported that terrorists took 70 people as hostages and, in the end, brutally killed 15 of them.

According to the government sources, the tragedy was an action, not a demonstration, undertaken by armed men with proper military training. The argument government used to reduce the offensiveness of the event was the saying that most of the reaction by Western countries to the events was largely shaped by sensational media reports which greatly exaggerated the use of force by the Government and made very little mention of the fact that the insurgents were armed, killed innocent people, took hostages, set fire on the main theatre of the city and civilian cars, attacked administrative buildings, and clearly planned the event as a military operation.

The Government said that it did all that it could to avoid casualties among civilians in its actions to neutralize the terrorists. In an official statement released in response to the EU Resolution on Human Rights Situation in Uzbekistan, it was mentioned that the Uzbek government even agreed to release six extremists from prison as demanded by terrorists (Embassy of Uzbekistan to the United States, 2005). After terrorists continued to produce more and more demands thus leading all the negotiations to deadlock, the government forces
surrounded the Regional Administration building that was seized by terrorists. The report also maintained that while leaving the building, terrorists used civilians as a human shield.

On May 16, 2006, Embassy of Uzbekistan in the U.S. showed a video documentary, titled “Andijan Tragedy: The Course of Investigation” at the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC, to a group of scholars, policy experts, and journalists (Kendzior, 2006). The documentary condemned the tragedy as an event organized by terrorists and the extremist group “Akromiya” was depicted responsible for the act.

A group of foreign diplomats accredited in Uzbekistan including those from Russia, China, Iran, India, Pakistan, and the four other Central Asian nations, were taken to Andijan on May 18 (Saidazimova, 2005). Also, on July 11, 2005, the government organized an official tour of Andijan for representatives of diplomatic corps accompanied by a group of journalists of leading foreign TV companies and information agencies (Griffiths, 2005). These tours were organized by the government to show the world that Andijan is back to normal life and the situation is not so tragic as continuously described by the western media.

**Corrective actions**

Another general image restoration strategy is corrective action, in which the company promises to correct the problem. This action can take the form of restoring the state of affairs existing before the offensive action, and/or promising to prevent the recurrence of the offensive act.

The Uzbek government tried to take certain corrective actions, but it did not conduct them in a way proposed by international community. The government rejected an international investigation, suggesting that it would be inconsistent with Uzbekistan’s sovereignty, that it would cause further upheaval, and that it would be biased. (UzA, 2005). Instead, on May 23,
2005, the Parliament of Uzbekistan created an Independent Parliamentary Commission for the investigation of the events in Andijan (The Government portal of Uzbekistan, 2005). The commission was entrusted to conduct careful investigation of all the circumstances surrounding the Andijan events including an analysis of the reasons and conditions that led to tragic events on May 13, the basic relationships of causes and effects of these events, and also those forces which were behind these criminal acts that led to human casualties. The deputies also charged the commission to carry out the all-around analysis of actions of the government and the law enforcement agencies, to give their legal assessment, and also regularly inform the parliament and the public on the course of investigation, including through mass media. (The Government portal of Uzbekistan, 2005). Representatives of various factions of the political parties as well as senators were included in the Commission. The government alleged that despite the invitation on the part of Uzbekistan, the western countries declined to participate in the work of the investigation commission (UzA, 2005).

After finishing the investigation, the commission announced that the acts in Andijan were a carefully planned action, organized by outside destructive forces and aimed against Uzbekistan’s independent policy and national interests. The commission found that the purpose of the attacks was to change present constitutional order and create an Islamic state meeting the attackers’ geopolitical demands (UzA, 2005). The investigation found that starting from August 2004, the destructive forces, with the support of international terrorist and religious extremist organizations like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, “Hizb-ut-Tahrir” and one of its branches, Akromiya, organized terrorist actions in Uzbekistan in May 2005 with the purpose of seizing power and overthrowing the constitutional order.
On November 15, 2005, the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan found 12 Uzbek citizens and three Kyrgyz citizens guilty of organizing the May uprising in Andijan, Uzbekistan, after two months of court hearings. Highly criticized as an unfair trial, the court charged the defendants with terrorism, murder, taking hostages, trying to organize an anticonstitutional coup, and receiving $200,000 from Islamists to organize an armed uprising. They were sentenced to lengthy prison terms from 14 to 20 years (Irinnews.org, 2005).

There are other actions not directly related to Andijan events, but taken by the government in order to improve the image of Uzbekistan after it was dramatically worsened amid the Andijan tragedy. For example, from January 1, 2008, the death penalty was abolished in Uzbekistan (Amnesty International, 2008). This act was used as an example that the protection of human rights was improving in the country. The government also created jobs and launched various social programs to appease the population in Andijan. According to official statistics, during years 2005 and 2006 around 100,000 new jobs were created in the region (UzReport.com, 2006). The government allocated preferential credits totaling 2.5 billion soums from the employment fund to support craftsmanship and develop cattle breeding and poultry farms in Andijan (UzReport.com, 2006).

**Mortification**

The final general strategy for image restoration is to confess and beg forgiveness, which Burke labels mortification. (Kenneth Burke, The Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).) A potential drawback to this strategy is that it might invite lawsuits from victims.

Several studies illustrate the potential of this strategy. Benoit applied this theory to the Exxon Valdez oil spill, to Union Carbide's response to the Bhopal gas leak, and to a series of
advertisements by Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola in Nation's Restaurant News. (Benoit, op. cit.) The Uzbek government never intended to use mortification. Even though it was undeniably stressed again and again in international reports that many civilians died because of the shootings initiated by the government forces, the government denied all these allegations and did not apologize for any wrongdoing that government forces committed. As a result, the government not only failed in its crisis communication strategies, but also faced a harsh criticism and international isolation. The following sections will elaborate the world’s response to the Andijan tragedy. They will also illustrate whether the Uzbek government framed its crisis communication strategies properly based on this international criticism.

The World’s Reaction:

The strategies used by the Uzbek government to defend its actions and to diminish the damage of the tragedy did not work. The U.S., which was a close ally of Uzbekistan at that time, condemned the use of force by the government. The EU imposed embargo on arms export to Uzbekistan and several other sanctions including the ban of visa to Uzbek government officials (RFE/RL, 2005). As a result of these worsened relationships, Uzbekistan started looking for new strategic allies moving close to Russia and China.

Severe criticism from the United States and the EU

Initially, the US was careful about condemning the incident. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the US government has been "very consistently critical of the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, we are very concerned about the outbreak of violence in Andijan, in particular, the escape of prisoners, including possibly members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an organization we consider a terrorist organization”. (Saidazimova, 2006) George Soros, chairman of the Open Society Institute, which actively promoted the color
revolutions in Central Asia, called the Andijan massacre "one of the worst political crimes committed in the 21st century.” (Wikipedia, 2009). The U.S. senators criticized the State Department's reaction and called for a United Nation’s investigation: "We believe that the United States must be careful about being too closely associated with a government that has killed hundreds of demonstrators and refused international calls for a transparent investigation.” (Sevastopulo, 2005).

After the Andijan massacre, the United States State Department officials argued in favor of ending all U.S. ties to Uzbekistan, whereas the United States Defense Department argued the U.S. should take a look at each program and decide on a case-by-case basis. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld allegedly opposed an international investigation into the incident. (Smith & Kessler, 2005).

Members of the European Union were among the first who harshly criticized the actions of the Uzbek government in the tragedy. On October 3, 2005, the European Union approved an arms embargo on Uzbekistan and decided to deny visas to top Uzbek officials, in response to an "excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force" and because of the Uzbek government's opposition to an international investigation into the events (BBC News, 2005). In November 2006, the EU renewed the sanctions but agreed to resume low-level talks (HRW, 2005).

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that "there had been a clear abuse of human rights" in Uzbekistan (BBC News, 2005). German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met with Uzbek Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov on March 2007. He told the foreign ministers of the governments of European Union member nations in Brussels on March 5 that the government of Uzbekistan may be willing to let the International Committee of the Red Cross
visit prisons in Uzbekistan, hold talks on the Andijan massacre with EU officials, and let EU officials reexamine human rights cases in return for an end to the sanctions imposed by the EU following the incidents in Andijan. (BBC News, 2005).

In recent years, the U.S. and the EU again started renewing their relationship with Uzbekistan. After a warm relationship took a fresh start in 2009, Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake made his fourth visit to Tashkent. It is probably Obama’s New Afghanistan Strategy that necessitated forming a new partnership with Tashkent. As mentioned in his remarks for this strategy, Obama wanted to see Central Asian states in a new Contact Group to be forged for Afghanistan.

Even the E.U., which was the harshest in criticizing the Uzbek government for the killings in Andijan, recently invited Islam Karimov, president of Uzbekistan, to Brussels for discussions with NATO. In Andijan tragedy, condemning the government and severing all ties did not work for both sides because Uzbekistan, instead of conceding to the demands of international community, moved closer to Russia and China, which is probably the worst scenario for the U.S. and the EU.

**Support from Russia, China and neighboring countries**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), composed of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, characterized the Andijan massacre as a terrorist plot (Scheineson, 2009). The SCO passed resolutions in July 2005 calling for nations to deny asylum to Uzbek refugees from Andijan in Kyrgyzstan (HRW, 2006).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov backed Karimov's version of events, saying: "Although the data is yet to be verified, an armed grouping that included militants from fundamentalist organizations and Talibs, among others, had long been planning an invasion of
Uzbekistan's territory". He accused the attackers of using innocent people as a "live shield" (Itar-Tass, 2005.) Andijan protestors had called for help from Vladimir Putin, but Sergei Lavrov said at a press conference with the foreign ministers of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member nations after the meeting that, "Uzbekistan is not a CSTO member, and we don't interfere in the internal affairs of other countries." (Xinhua News Agency, 2005) A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said Beijing was "delighted" that the situation was again under control (International Crisis Group, 2005).

After facing a harsh criticism from western countries, a dramatic shift was seen in the strategic foreign policy of Uzbekistan. The country distanced itself from the U.S., its traditional ally in “the War on Terror” and moved closer towards Russia and China. The Russia-Uzbekistan Treaty of Alliance Relations, which was signed on November 14, 2005, signified the Central Asian Republic's return to the Russian orbit (Bakshi, 2005). A more practical step in this direction was taken when the Uzbek government dared to order the U.S. to vacate its military base in Khanabad district of Uzbekistan within 180 days. Accordingly, the US had to close its military base in Uzbekistan, which was basically used for delivering humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. This was the price the US government had to pay for its criticism of Andijan events.

**Factors Responsible for the Failure of the Crisis Communication**

The crisis communication employed by the Uzbek government following Andijan tragedy failed. There are several explanations for the failure.

First and foremost, the country’s image was already bad among the world community. Long before the Andijan tragedy, human rights organizations, such as IHF, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, as well as United States Department of State and Council of the
European Union used to define Uzbekistan as "an authoritarian state with limited civil rights" and documented "wide-scale violation of basic human rights" within the country (U.S. Department of State, 2009). The Uzbek government was famous for the violation of human rights in the country, committing torture, enforcing arbitrary arrests, and implementing various restrictions of freedoms of religion, speech and press (OMCT-Europe and the Legal Aid Society Report, 2005). The country’s bad reputation prior to the tragedy played an important role in the assessment of Andijan events by the western countries and NGOs. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) suggests that an organization that has a bad reputational history is likely to have higher level of crisis or reputational threat (Coombs, 2007). As such, ill-planned crisis communication plan of the Uzbek government, which did not take a bad reputational history into account, completely failed.

Second, the government refused the requests to establish an independent inquiry commission under the international supervision (Donovan, 2005). This is one of the important factors that advanced the assumption that the government was hiding the truth.

Third, the government lacked transparency in its crisis communication strategies. Authoritarian and hardcore bureaucratic way of communication, which used to work well within the country, proved to be useless when it was applied to international communication. During and after the crisis, foreign and independent journalists and representatives of NGOs were not allowed to visit the site of the tragedy in Andijan. All information came out through the official channels of the government. Local mass media had nothing new to report, but did not get tired of singing the same song that terrorists were responsible for the horrible Andijan tragedy.

Transparency is of utmost importance in order for the crisis communication to be successful. Information-controlling strategies of the Uzbek government failed because there was
no transparency. In its information subsidies, the government characterized the Andijan events as a handiwork of terrorists, motivated by an Islamist agenda and supported by foreigners, to seize power in Andijan. It attributed all deaths to the gunmen and in public did not explicitly acknowledge any casualties caused by government forces.

The government rejected characterizing the gathering on Bobur Square as a “protest.” In his statement to the press, President Karimov said that after gunmen seized the weapons and conducted the prison break, they gathered people at the hokimiyat and used them as human shields.

According to the Uzbek government estimate, the Andijan tragedy resulted in the death of 187 people, which is much less than the number estimated by international reports. Among the dead were 60 civilians, and 31 law enforcement personnel and military servicemen. The government also reported that terrorists took 70 people as hostages and, in the end, brutally killed 15 of them.

According to the government sources, the tragedy was a planned action, not a demonstration, undertaken by armed men with proper military training. The argument government used to reduce the offensiveness of the event was the saying that most of the reaction by Western countries to the events was largely shaped by sensational media reports which greatly exaggerated the use of force by the government and made very little mention of the fact that the insurgents were armed, killed innocent people, took hostages, set fire on the main theatre of the city and civilian cars, attacked administrative buildings, and clearly planned the event as a military operation.

Two months after the tragedy, the government organized an official tour of Andijan for representatives of diplomatic corps accompanied by a group of journalists of leading foreign TV
companies and information agencies. These tours were organized by the government to show the international community that Andijan is back to normal life and the situation is not so tragic as continuously described by the western media.

Because attempts to censor and control information resulted in the lack of transparency, the strategies used by the Uzbek government to defend its actions and diminish the damage of the tragedy did not work. As such, international community was highly critical about the way Uzbek government handled the crisis. The U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the U.S. government has been very consistently critical of the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, and very concerned about the outbreak of violence in Andijan. George Soros, chairman of the Open Society Institute, which actively promoted the color revolutions in Central Asia, called the Andijan massacre one of the worst political crimes committed in the 21st century. The U.S. senators criticized the State Department's reaction and called for a United Nations investigation.

Overall, the government never allowed transparency in its crisis communication strategies. Authoritarian and hardcore bureaucratic model of one-way communication, which used to work well within the country, proved to be useless when it was applied to international communication.

Also, the lack of reliable information paved the way for the breeding of negative views of the government. The government did not allow international journalists to have access to witnesses on the eve and after the events. This naturally increased the doubt on the sincerity of the government in its redress of grievances. All the information that the international mass media and governments received were from the interviews taken with refugees who fled the country and few journalists who were present in Andijan on that day. These witnesses expressed only
negative views on the government actions, which added fuel to the deterioration of the post-crisis situation.

Not adopting strategies that are relevant to the nature of the Internet also contributed to the failure of the communication. Immediately after the tragedy, the Internet was full of negative news reports that harshly condemned the way the government handled the situation. The government’s allegation about the presence of terrorists among the crowd was not even mentioned in many online stories. None of the strategies the government applied to defend itself against the massive international criticism worked because the strategies selected and applied were not suitable to the transparent nature of the Internet. The government failed in its communication not seriously considering the role of the Internet and the social media in further development of the events. Instead, the government blindly stuck to its old-bureaucratic model of crisis communication, which was based on the notion of closed one-way communication.

Fast-paced information flow on the Internet dictates that in order to manage the crisis successfully, crisis managers need to consider rumors, negative blog comments, and other types of Internet based problems in their crisis communication plans and also provide instructions and guidance to deal with these situations. They should do this in advance because crisis situations involving new media problems cannot be halted unless immediate and well-planned strategies are carried out. None of these were considered in Uzbek government’s international crisis communication strategies.

Speed of response is one of the most important opportunities of social media. It is, in fact, the most critical aspect in crisis communication. By providing an immediate means of response through various channels on the Internet, the government could at least decrease the rise of criticism abroad.
Implications of This Case for Authoritarian Regimes

Application of western crisis communication strategies to the context of authoritarian regimes is a new topic in crisis communication scholarship. Most literature on this field is in preliminary stage, and generalizable results are yet to be deducted. Majority of scholarly works that analyzed authoritarian regimes’ crisis communication strategies studied the cases with a general approach without a particular look at the strategies proposed by western crisis communication scholarship. Types of crisis that were studied were also not perfect cases to test the working of western crisis communication strategies. Most of these studies dealt with the crises that were caused by natural disasters. Crisis escalated by the government involvement, which could be an ideal example to test the working of western crisis communication theories in authoritarian regimes and to deduct more generalizable conclusion to frame broader theoretical frameworks, was never researched.

This case study attempted to fill this gap. As a typical authoritarian regime, Uzbekistan is a good case to test the application of the western crisis communication in authoritarian regimes. Andijan tragedy was a typical crisis caused by the government. As such, this case study is very important because the analysis of the Uzbek government’s crisis communication during and after the Andijan tragedy has a potential to contribute a valuable knowledge to crisis communication scholarship in terms of both theoretical and practical applications of western crisis communication in authoritarian regimes.

This study found that the biggest hurdle for authoritarian governments to have a successful crisis communication is countries’ bad reputational history. Whether bad reputational history can be overcome if authoritarian regimes apply certain crisis communication strategies
such as mortification and compensation could not be proved in this study because Uzbekistan did not use any of these methods, which highly contributed to the failure of communication.

By analysis, we also found that international community expects and wants the authoritarian governments to follow the guidelines that are applied in democratic settings. Even though the country is notorious for systematic violations of human rights, in crisis communication, foreign stakeholders demand transparency and access to reliable information, which are core principles of western crisis communication scholarship, be provided throughout the communication.

As we witnessed in recent Arab world uprisings, access to information and transparency can shake and even overthrow authoritarian regimes. The same uprisings brought forward new cases, which need to be studied in order to enrich the scholarship of crisis communication in authoritarian regimes in new conditions and circumstances. Such studies should fill the further gaps that arose from this study and produce more generalizable theoretical and practical frameworks for further studies of the field.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

The success of crisis communication is highly dependent on the prior reputational history of the organization. If an organization has a bad reputational history, the crisis communication is likely to fail or be unsuccessful (Coombs, 2000). The same applies to governments. As scholarship on government crisis communication suggests, the failure of crisis communication is likely to occur if the case involves an authoritarian government. Interestingly, authoritarian governments, which are usually infamous for their systematic violation of basic human rights and suppression of democratic voices, usually fail to make the world believe in their cause even in cases that do not involve government responsibility. Although the case of Andijan tragedy does not place the government in the category of victims, the case is still a good illustration to explain the assumption that the government was unsuccessful in convincing the world with its main defense allegation that it was terrorists who caused the tragedy to escalate. In such cases, the main reason for the failure of the government’s crisis communication is not usually the crime the government commits; rather it is the government’s prior bad reputational history, which plays the most important role in the evolution of the crisis. The Uzbek government was also victim of its bad reputational history in Andijan tragedy. Not taking this into account, and not framing its crisis communication strategies based on this reality, the Uzbek government totally failed in its image repair and damage-reducing efforts. Regardless of total condemnation of the international community, the government continued its ill-planned crisis communication carrying out strategies of denial and evasion of responsibility, which did not bear any desired result other than accelerating the crisis.
Recommendations

There are factors like involvement of terrorists, violent and bloody attacks on military unit, prison and the regional government building by the insurgents, which could have been used by the government to produce more favorable position towards the government if these factors had been framed properly in accordance with the principles of Image Restoration theory. None of these factors were considered by those who criticized the Uzbek government’s handling of the crisis probably because the government blatantly ignored the principles of Image Repair strategies.

I contend that if the following recommendations had been considered by the Uzbek government, the international condemnation and criticism would have been less severe than it was due to improper application of crisis communication strategies.

First, blindly denying everything that could make one guilty does not work especially when there are clear signs for one’s involvement in the crisis. In Andijan tragedy, it was undeniably clear that it was government forces that fired into the crowd indiscriminately, which resulted in the death of hundreds of civilians including women, children and the elderly. Instead of accepting its part in this horrible tragedy, the government persistently denied responsibility for the killings and characterized the Andijan events as an attempt by terrorists, motivated by an Islamist agenda and supported by foreigners, to seize power in Andijan (BBC News, 2005). It attributed all the deaths to the gunmen and in public did not explicitly acknowledge any casualties caused by government forces.

The government should not have denied everything. Accepting certain faults would have made the government look sincere and regretful for the happenings, and this could have made the publics believe that the government was sincere and true in its sayings. Denying clear evidence
that the government forces fired at the demonstrators makes publics think that the government is lying even when it speaks the truth in other matters.

Another important principle that is clearly outlined in Benoit’s Image Repair Theory (1997) is evasion of responsibility. Evasion of responsibility works only if the publics have a perception that the organization is not guilty for the crisis. When there are clear evidences that one cannot escape from facing them, application of the principle of evasion of responsibility will only worsen the crisis. In Andijan case, it was clearly a wrong decision to apply evasion of responsibility.

The Uzbek government attributed all responsibility for the killings to terrorists. Interior Minister Almatov told diplomats and journalists visiting Andijan after the tragedy that the extremists forced their way through the ring of law enforcement bodies using women and children as a cover, which, according to him, was the cause of killings of civilians. As everyone knew that hundreds of people were killed in the shootings initiated by the government forces, to evade responsibility completely would look nonsense to every reasonable human being.

The Uzbek government also tried to reduce the offensiveness of the tragedy, but it did not conform to the reality that the cost of the tragedy was so huge to hide easily. According to the Uzbek government estimates, the Andijan tragedy resulted in the death of 187 people, which is much less than the number estimated by international reports.

According to the government sources, the tragedy was an action, not a demonstration, undertaken by armed men with proper military training. The argument government employed to reduce the offensiveness of the event was the saying that most of the reaction by Western countries to the events was largely shaped by sensational media reports which greatly exaggerated the use of force by the Government and made very little mention of the fact that the
insurgents were armed, killed innocent people, took hostages, set fire on the main theatre of the city and civilian cars, attacked administrative buildings, and clearly planned the event as a military operation. If the government had been more open and transparent towards the media, the media could have told the government’s side of the story too, which could be more favorable to government’s interests.

The government should have taken proper corrective actions to diminish the damages of the tragedy. When an international community called for an independent investigation, the government rejected it suggesting that it would be inconsistent with Uzbekistan’s sovereignty, that it would cause further upheaval, and that it would be biased. If the government was true and sincere in its reports and sayings, it should have allowed the formation of international investigation to prove that it had nothing to hide from the international community.

Instead, the Parliament of Uzbekistan created its own Independent Parliamentary Commission for the investigation of events in Andijan. The government claimed that the U.S. and the EU rejected to participate in the work of this commission when invited. After finishing the investigation, the commission found that the acts in Andijan were a carefully planned action, organized by outside destructive forces and aimed against Uzbekistan’s independent policy and national interests. The commission found that the purpose of the attacks was to change present constitutional order and create an Islamic state meeting the attackers’ geopolitical demands.

Also, the Uzbek government could have used certain level of apology in order to win the hearts of those who lost their dear ones in the tragedy. Benoit (1997) suggests that apology should be used if there is no way to escape from responsibility. Even though apology usually means taking responsibility for the crisis, it may diminish the damages because of sincere expression of regret for the happenings.
The Uzbek government never expressed any sort of apology or regrets for the death of civilians. It should have at least expressed its regrets for its deceased citizens in order to appease the criticism both internally as well as externally. Paying compensation for the victims of the tragedy could have been another useful strategy to win the hearts of those who suffered from the tragedy most. However, the government never resorted to this strategy because for the arrogant government, to accept apology would mean to accept responsibility for the killings.

The government also lacked transparency in its crisis communication strategies. Authoritarian and hardcore bureaucratic way of communication, which used to work well within the country, proved to be useless when it was applied to international communication. During and after the crisis, foreign and independent journalists and representatives of NGOs were not allowed to visit the site of the tragedy in Andijan. All information came out through the official channels of the government. Local mass media had nothing new to report, but did not get tired of singing the same song that terrorists were responsible for the horrible Andijan tragedy.

The government should have been more transparent in its communication with international publics. Censorship and controlled information never convinces western public. Transparency is very important because it creates an understanding among the public that the government is willing to be sincere and open in its communication, which is of utmost importance to convince the audiences.

Advising governments on crisis communication strategies in the wake of the death of civilians poses serious ethical questions. Is it ethical to teach an authoritarian government, which systematically violates human rights and torture its civilians, how to diminish the criticism and save its reputation amid the crisis created due largely to its own mistakes? Is not it like
participating in the crime, since some observers demanded that members of the government responsible for the massacre should be punished under the international law?

Particularly, in Andijan case, it is well evidenced that government was responsible for the death of hundreds of the civilians. Although the government evaded responsibility for the tragedy and made the terrorists responsible for it, it did not ignore the fact that at least 186 people died in the shootings. However, the controversy is that there is also enough evidence to establish the involvement of terrorists in the incident, and critics tried underestimate this fact by focusing on the condemnation of the excessive use of force by the government.

In order to escape from unprecedented amount of criticism and secure more sympathizers not only in Asia, but in western countries too, the Uzbek government should have acknowledged some of the mistakes it committed while being more transparent in communication so that the world would believe that terrorists were the main factor in the development of the tragedy. In addition to acknowledging the mistakes, the strategies of compensation and certain methods of apology would be of great help too.

A Dilemma in Authoritarian Regimes’ Crisis Communication Strategies

In initial stages of the crisis communication, winning the favorable positions of some regional powers such as Russia and China was probably the only success the government of Uzbekistan achieved in its international image repair strategies. This achievement rescued Uzbekistan from a total isolation in the world. Because Russia and China openly promotes and seeks a foreign policy that does not care about human rights and democracy issues but solely serves their own self interests, they did not hesitate to defend Uzbekistan amid Andijan tragedy in order to turn the current situation to their own benefit so that Uzbekistan would come to their door to seek help and refuge.
On the contrary, promoting freedom and democracy and protecting human rights around the world have always been central to the U.S. and EU’s foreign policy. Amid Andijan tragedy, these foreign policy principles put the U.S. and the EU in tough position in their dealings with Uzbekistan, and because of the harsh criticism of Andijan events, the U.S. and the EU almost lost all their advantageous positions in the region, which turned to be detrimental for their mission in Afghanistan. As the target date for completing the mission in Afghanistan is set to 2014, which is approaching fast, the U.S. and NATO forces are in need of Uzbekistan’s support. Under these circumstances, the U.S. and the EU are again initiating new constructive talks with the government of Uzbekistan. This can be seen as a success of the Uzbek government’s long-term image repair strategies. However, I would call it a real-politics game, not truly success of crisis communication strategies that are applied in corporate crisis communication world.

When analyzed through the lens of Coomb’s SCCT (2000) and Benoit’s Image Repair theory (1997), the Uzbek government’s crisis communication strategies are doomed to fail in every aspect of the crisis communication principles; yet in long-term plan, within just few years after the tragedy, the Uzbek government won and could retain warm relationship even with the countries who were the harshest in criticism. Because Uzbekistan is located in strategically important region, and it serves as an important hub for the U.S. and NATO forces to lift supplies to Afghanistan, the U.S. and the EU are again improving their relationship with Uzbekistan.

In 2009, the U.S. started afresh talks with the government of Uzbekistan, whereas recently the EU invited the president Karimov to Brussels to discuss the issues related to Afghanistan (Uzbekistan: Karimov’s Visit to Brussels, 2011). The political necessities of the region and the situation and the strategic interests of the U.S. and the EU in this case imply that in crisis communication cases that involve governments, particularly, authoritarian regimes, the
success of the communication are not always determined by the principles of crisis communication strategies, rather strategic interests of stakeholder nations will also have much influence in determining the success and fate of these regimes’ international image repair efforts.

The case of Uzbekistan can be a good example for this proposal. If we look at the current situation in Uzbekistan, the government is even in more advantageous position in its relationship with western nations that it was before the Andijan tragedy. After the tragedy, the government expelled all foreign NGO and organizations that addressed the issues of human rights and democracy; yet it did not face any real threat to its authority other than temporary isolation and criticism. Today, the government has a good relationship with the U.S. and the EU. The U.S. is currently holding talks with the government about opening new supply routes to Afghanistan, whereas the EU, after uplifting sanctions that were imposed amid Andijan tragedy, received the head of Uzbekistan, Karimov, in Brussels, to discuss further cooperation with NATO in the region.

It is only independent human rights organizations that are still raising their voices reminding the need to initiate international and independent investigation over Andijan tragedy; but these calls do not have any practical effect because no foreign nation is calling to enforce these calls into action.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Press conference by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov on events in Andijan Tashkent (May 14, 2005).

I.Karimov: Let’s start our press-conference. All of you are interested and worried about the events that took place yesterday in Andijan.

Therefore I should stress that in the night from 12 to 13 May at about 00:30 hrs the group of armed criminals and I think that this naming is more adequate came to the military unit.

Exact number of guerillas will be determined soon and it consisted of some 30 people. They were armed with guns, and they had also submachine guns as well as pistols.

Then the Uzbekistan President said that a group of armed felons attacked the guards on duty of the patrol-sentry service in Andijan city at 00:30 and shot four people, having seized weapons.

Later the group attacked the military unit No 34 at 13:30 and killed about five people. The group seized additional weapons, including machine guns, pistols and grenades. The guerillas also captured military lorry ZIL-130, President said.

Using this lorry they attacked remand prison and released almost all inmates, total number of them was some 600, Karimov said.

Afterwards they started robbery and took over all cars on their way. They directed to three buildings, including buildings of regional departments of Interior Ministry and National Security Service and regional administration, Uzbekistan President said.

The group seized the regional administration of Andijan as the guards were not armed, while staff of regional departments of Interior Ministry and National Security Service resisted. Uzbek leader said the group was not able to detain them.

Islam Karimov noted that on their way the group took hostages and on preliminary calculation there were some 20 hostages. Felons kept the hostages at the administration’s building, tied and taunt them.

After the group captured the building, they started to call their relatives, families and wives and demanded from them to arrive to building of administration and to stay around the building, Karimov underlined. Uzbek leader added that the guerillas used these people, including children, women and elder people, as live shield. Altogether there were about 300 of these people around the building.
This was situation at around 6:30, he said. President said that he faced this situation when he arrived to Andijan at 7:30. Karimov said that Uzbek Interior Minister informed him on events in Andijan at 1:45 and he was in Andijan at 7:30.

Uzbek leader said: First thing we did was the organization of small headquarters to neutralize criminals and free hostages, as well as to take on the guarding of all the major establishments where they could produce some explosives, including petrol stations and other such establishments that could be used to create chaos in the city.

Criminals, by the way, step up to the regional administration building, it just located at the cross of the three roads, blocked all three roads with burnt cars. Near this three-storied building, another one seven-storied administrative building, which is the part of the regional administration building. They put the snipers on the roofs of the administration buildings and neighboring ones, obviously, they were well prepared. Law enforcement and other forces, as well as no one soldier, which were mobilized, did not approach to the building of regional administration till 18:00.

Why?

It was my order which was directed to create maximum favorable conditions to hold negotiations and to protect staff of law enforcement bodies from snipers and I would like to underline again, to create all conditions and not to create to them any fear at what they could fire somebody. No soldier approached to the regional administration building till 18:00 and all of them were enough far in order to provide favorable conditions for negotiation process.

Interior Minister Zokir Almatov and head of regional administration Saydullo Begaliyev represented the Uzbek authorities during negotiations. Some other people joined the process later but mainly the two mentioned officials carried negotiations. First, we determined who is the formal, I would like to underline again, formal leader of the band.

Afterwards, negotiations started to find out of their terms. We put only one request: it was my request - we are ready to provide buses and where you could set with weapons and go out of town. We said if you would like that show to us route and we was ready accompany them and guaranteed law enforcement bodies would not touch them and demanded release hostages. Leader of group, who held talks, at first agreed to leave town but demanded only release of six inmates and to give back them. We agreed to release. But when we agreed, later during the next phone conversation they changed their demand and asked to release all their counterparts or those ideologists, who jailed in Tashkent, Navoi provinces and other different parts of Uzbekistan.
I would like to explain to you, journalists - in order to you will not do insinuations, why we could not agreed with such demands. If we agreed to this demand, this incident would result tens such captures throughout of the territory of Uzbekistan, tomorrow they will capture kindergarten, school and hospital as it was in Chechnya and Budyonovsk and will demand such terms on release and than will demand announcement of Uzbekistan as Islamic Republic as well as renunciation of some constitutional demands.

Agreement with such demands means that we are creating precedent, which will not accept by any one country in the world. That is the political terms never will not acceptable for us.

Group of criminals captures the administration building as well as hostages and than put political demands. I would like to say you such fact, especially for foreign journalists, that we had opportunity to tap telephone conversations that persons who were inside of the building. When we agreed to the preliminary demands, there was another call from the city where father orders his son to upraise people saying that Uzbek authorities ?back down?.

The group held telephone conversations with neighboring Kyrgyz Republic and even Afghanistan. Nevertheless, when authorities approximately 13:00 categorically refused to satisfy their impudent demand, our mobilized forces and soldiers did not approach to the building and we gave time to them think and leave town.

We put another one request - if you would like please give up weapons and go back home.

Tell me, what kind another requests we have to put them?

Of course, we will investigate cause and effects of this matter, who, what and where allowed infringement of law and if you have any legal demands, for instance, that in Andijan judged a few fanatics, who preached slogans of ?Hizb ut Tahrir?, we are ready to examine these issues, if somewhere was infringement of law and somewhere their were arrested unduly.

That is I am declaring categorically: they were told to give up the weapon, they were guaranteed that the case will be consider on the legal basis.

As a president I declare categorically and declared some times. It is many times told. Just imagine, at 13:00 and 18:00 we touched nobody and did not move closer to building, but when night began to come nearer, we decided to go closer to building and to block it more densely. Somewhere approximately at 19:30 they understood that serious forces coming close to building, from above one helicopter patrolled to show snipers on the roof do not fall outside the limits - the helicopter will always manage to get you. We did not shoot from the helicopter to anybody. That
was a purpose that the helicopter flew through above of building twice and showed them, that you, guys, do not pass bounds, and otherwise we have forces to reach you. When they had understood, what serious forces blocked them, they made a decision on advancing what means an advancing? - They have decided to break from a building Khokimiyat (mayor office) ?divided to three groups they decided to break through main ways and exits and left to three directions outside of city, outside of city boundaries. Naturally, pursuit was organized ? what was a number of victims as a result, I could not tell now for certain.

By our calculations, more than ten persons died from law enforcement bodies, from their side, certainly, it is much more.

Pursuit practically was stopped somewhere at 11 pm. In the morning it was renewed. Actually, if asked, they cannot leave anywhere, they can be dissolved on territory of area - simply to be dissolved, that is the first.

Secondly, they could percolate through border to the territory of Kyrgyzstan. It is, people say, easier. I repeat, to be dissolved in territory of area, and territory is boundary, you know, well enough cross-country terrain and, naturally, we have dense border with Kyrgyzstan. They could percolate to the territory of Jalal-abad or Osh regions. They are only two areas which border with Andijan region. That is all events took place for the expired day in Andijan city.

Now if you are interested in, I would like to tell you some versions or my comments on these events. And then, if somebody has questions, I am ready to answer them.

The first, I would like to tell as conclusions. In tragically events, which have happened in Andijan, the first there was an attempt to repeat all that happened in Kyrgyzstan for last years and last time. Nowadays it is no need to prove anybody and life precisely confirms this, no long proceeding confrontation as boiling events can long time happens only within the limits of one country.

On example of Afghanistan we were convinced, that long time confrontation or civil war or something like this, connected with infringement of stability that was long time on territory of one country, it is for sure will gush over border and will pass to territory of neighboring countries. Sooner or later these events can repeat and happen in neighboring countries at support of those countries where these events took place.

Concerning the events in Kyrgyzstan, the reasons for this, what factors, connections, reasons for what happened, I will not speak now. But I can tell you that in Kyrgyzstan the discontent of the population accumulated for a long time and protest potential and this discontent was combined first of all with deafness of the government and personally president whose policy consisted only
in one conjecture and only conjecture. And there was no principle, and once again no principle. Now I will not repeat, all that today is written in Kirghiz and foreign press, corruption and other. I will not pretend to take commitments on what is true, lie and about family Akaev, it is not a matter of today’s conversation.

But the most important - the second reason of events in Kyrgyzstan, was weakness or absence of authority. And this all has led to that long time, you know, in Jalal-abad, Osh, long time also in Bishkek there were events which inevitably had to lead to explosion. That’s a law of physics. Therefore everything, that took place in Kyrgyzstan, it is quite natural, and I would tell, it is explainable from the point of view of logic, causal relationships. I repeat, from the point of view of logic, causal relationships.

I once again tell you that I said many times concerning Georgia, Ukraine. So-called external intervention is effective, when first two reasons are present. Namely, discontent of the population of its social lawlessness, I would tell a hopelessness of people. People already understand, that there is already no place to address and it is useless to address. Secondly, it was no understanding, or due policy of government, only promises, but nothing has been implemented. Besides, the government was full of corruption. That’s all two reasons, there is no third one.

Absence of strong reforms, social policy, which would suit people and population can see the light at the end of tunnel as we speak. When people see this, then pairs leave from a boiler. And only after this moment comes, external forces can use these conditions to reach their objectives. They can direct pairs and this discontent to necessary channel and define those leaders who should take possession tomorrow and as though to enter new government. And elite will be changed - old elite leaves, new comes.

And external forces, certainly, take part in it. They are training these leaders for long time. Therefore my personal opinion, I am saying my personal comment, I think that it is absolutely inappropriate to connect today’s events with Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan together. Each country has it’s own destiny, situation, the mentality of people and these attempts to name one revolution - pink, another - orange, third - tulip.

Allow to declare in this regard: these are tense for ears, so called version or attempt to unite all of them to some kind of interconnected purpose. Certainly, there is connection between them, but at each country, I repeat, events happen proceeding from that conditions, that situation which takes place in this country, mentality of these people absolutely different, reasons which became for this, means so-called revolutions, certainly, different.

Therefore, when Kyrgyzstan tries to tie up under events of Georgia and Ukraine, I think that it is an artificial stretch, and in this I do not see any serious connection in it.
Furthermore I am familiar with Kyrgyzstan and aware of the situation in this country, I know it for a long time and I can compare the conditions of Transcaucasia, and conditions in Ukraine, especially in Ukraine.

And secondly, I personally had already mentioned several times, and once again I think, that you will agree with me, I am categorically against the revolutions, I am for evolution. All events should develop in view of those objective laws, which exist in the world. Is anybody ignore these laws, they will say, yes, there is objective reality and laws, if someone thinks, that it is possible to jump through one order to the next stage of social development, so in this regard it is possible to jump from a stage slaveholding order to the stage of developed bourgeois order.

How it is possible with feudal state order where all the same prosper patriarchal, patrimonial, clan interests, the clan interests solve the issue. One clan struggles with other clan for a piece of the state pie - so this takes place in Kyrgyzstan. What kind of revolutions should we speak about there? And the patrimonial relations this is attribute of feudalism and how it is possible to pass from this period or from regime which calls the developed democracy or transitive democracy.

Mr. Akaev could not converge one with another. On one hand, he himself maintained these clan, patrimonial relations, for example, his village, area of origin, where he was born and where he has supporters, his son also was elected as deputy from the area of Keminsky, well as a matter of fact I do not know my district, I know the city of Samarkand where I was born.

Tell me, when, as I am head of state for a long time, did I supported someone from Samarkand or created here in Tashkent Samarkand clan. How it is possible to rely on patrimonial relations on one hand, use these relations, and from the other side - to speak that I am the liberal, democrat and I have much made for development of democracy in my country.

You see, these are not similar concepts. Therefore I do not want to continue this idea further, and I want to tell only one thing, external intervention about which many speaks about, it certainly exists but, I repeat, it could do nothing if there is a consent between the state and the people in the country and mutual direct relations. If the government feels the mood of people and their expectations and aspiration, and knows, that what people wants today, what are their plans for tomorrow, what decisions people like, and he supports them, and what decisions should be rejected. And if these relations exist, no external influences can make anything in one country.

Therefore, from this point of view, I think, that situation here is the result of many factors where one fact to tear off from another. It is necessary to consider all these factors in unity, to examine influence of each factor and then the whole picture will appear which will be clear for everybody. But the most important, which extremely dangerous for us is that when the situation
is building and when different people would like to use this situation and when the elements of crowd, element of chaos want to take advantage over this situation and if the mass of people without control it is impossible to control such situation. Look, nobody could control the situation.

Events on March 24 in Bishkek as a matter of fact showed that this was absolutely unexpected both for opposition and for authority, and for those who very attentively looking at these events they wanted programmed people. Therefore if all this to apply to our conditions, and I wish to tell, that example when provoke people to go out to streets and to use elements of crowd, syndrome of crowd then through crowd to lead the process, and it happened in Andijan. If to examine through this prism, events in Andijan did not happened spontaneously. Today we already have all information to say that it took minimum three-six months in order to prepare these actions in Andijan, because synchronism of what happened in the streets of Andijan and, especially, the capture of municipality building shows that these were planed in advance.

What goal did those who organized all this pursue? Who are they? What current force do they represent?

I declare that according to information we have, they are a branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir. We know practically everyone by name. They are a branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which in Andijan is called Akramiya. Their ideas and goals, in fact, do not differ from HT?s goals. Their final goal is to unite Muslims and set up a so-called Muslim caliphate, with all shariáh laws, which they preach. The first task was to bring down (overthrew) the existing constitutional order, bring down the local authorities and then to establish the order, which we on the whole consider to be already established in neighboring states, which has particularly strengthened in Central Asian states. This is HT branch which has set itself the task of creating a so-called caliphate, which would unite all Muslims but would be categorically opposed to any constitutional order and secular path of development. These were their goals.

Another point I would like to draw your attention to is that they hoped that the people of Andijan would support them. Throughout the night, which they spent in the administration building, they were trying to stir up those who were outside the building, in Andijan and neighboring districts in order to persuade them to come to the square of Andijan so that they left the building as winners, walked to the square hiding behind women and children. Here is the situation, the picture that they generally had in their minds. This was not only a plan in their minds; this was a plan which had been worked out beforehand. This plan was supported by those who committed this kind of thing in Dzhalal-Abad and Osh. They wanted to repeat this scenario exactly, and then to move from there to Tashkent, which is exactly what happened in Kyrgyzstan.

However, life is not developing according to their plans. The situation in Uzbekistan is
absolutely, I repeat, absolutely different from situation in Kyrgyzstan. People’s spirit, their will is absolutely different from those in Kyrgyzstan. We absolutely do not come under any epithets or descriptions which could put the people living in Ferghana valley and those who live in Kyrgyzstan’s southern regions. That is why those who drew up these plans. I reiterate that these plans were drawn up not by those who led this attack or criminal act, they were drawn up by those who committed this kind of act or organized this kind of process in Kyrgyzstan’s southern regions.

That is why the last conclusion I would draw your attention is that attempts to develop democracy, attempts to speed up the process of democracy on countries, which are still far from the ideals or standards of democracy, or attempts to implant these processes artificially, may lead to a situation, which can be used by the third force. I call this third force radical Islam. In the conditions of the Muslim world, in the conditions when Muslims account for over 80 per cent of Central Asia’s population, I appeal to you, western journalists. I ask you, look at the place where you are working. Just look at the mentality of these people. It sharply differs even from the mentality in Georgia or Ukraine. Quite different people with different views live here. Yes, we must strive for what the West is preaching, developed democracy. However, let me say that even Zbigniew Bzezinsky admits that democracy should not be exported or imported. This may have serious tragic consequences.

I respect Zbigniew Bzezinsky as very clever, sagacious politician, thinking man, if you want, the prognosis of whom come true as a rule. Even he says that one cannot export these processes, everything should go by evolutionary way, as maturing of conditions, as maturing that is called consciousness of the person. As the person’s thinking is changing.

You live in Tashkent. Yes, Tashkent in terms of its development, particularly in terms of European development, has left our regions far behind, very far behind. Look at Qashqadarya, Surhondarya and other regions. Both Qashqadarya and Surhondarya will reach Tashkent’s level, but this will happen a little later. The process is underway. One cannot stop it. Not a single president or leader can stop the development of democracy, the expansion of democracy, democratic processes, people’s democratic views or awareness. Anyone who stands in their path will be overturned. This is an objective process.

We would like to build the same society, which exists in France, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and in the United States. We do not want nothing new. We would like to create thy system similar as in Japan, South Korea, president of Korea was recently visiting Uzbekistan. I would like to tell that democracy is the same everywhere. Its main principles are clear: this is a governance by the people, the will of the people, the free and open elections, which are the inalienable part of democracy.
This is, first of all, the civil society, which is finally is the highest level of the development of any democracy. This process is never stops, and if you ask those countries, who achieved these marks, they also would tell that they are continuing to work and deepen these processes. The democracy does not accept the ideas of caliphate.

What is Caliphate? Caliphate existed 300 years in days of Prophet Mohammed. And even our Prophet Mohammed said that sometime it would not be a necessity of Caliphate. And so, at different periods of time the idea of Caliphate had been appeared again, arose. Last stage is the end of XX Century. Those who preaches Hizbut-Takhrir which native land is Jordan, have considerably strengthened the positions, strangely enough, in Central Asia in 80th of the last Century. It has rooted deeply, especially at the beginning of our independence when all of us considered that now we had become free and we had everything. We considered that we were a member of UN and, in general, we moved toward democracy. We got free from the Soviet ideology, from the communist ideology. A vacuum which was appeared then has began to be filled by these who came abroad and wanted to build mosques everywhere. It continues today in our region. For example, in Southern Kazakhstan there are 1500 mosques, 500 of which are not registered. Everyone offers loans and free of charge contractions of mosques. We also are offered, especially in Ferghana Valley. And so, from this point of view, I want to tell that Hizbut-Takhrir, we have a clear understanding what it is, has taken the deep roots in Central Asian countries, in Ferghana Valley. There are manifestations of Hizbut-Takhrir here in Tashkent as well. And so, these people are certainly known for us. They were known before they have headed this action, the criminal act that they have perpetrated. We know their names. Regarding the question whether they are in the lists of criminals, I will say you - they are not so far. But we will investigate yet. For this we have evidences, which will to answer your questions more specifically later. They are criminals who proceeding from the criminal purposes have perpetrated this action, and according to the law they must account. We have not found that with whom we were negotiating. He has disappeared, hided from. In other words he has substituted youth, and disappeared. That is all their ideology, which is to substitute innocent young men who cannot orient in this situation, and to be disappeared and to be showed up somewhere tomorrow. Once Afghanistan was such a place for these who had disappeared, where all murderers and terrorists had found a roof. I do not know what country will give them a shelter but I think, that still there are such countries around us.

Q: Yury Chernogaev, DW: Islam Abduganievich, you have told, that there were arguments to think that a serious preparation has been conducted during 3-6 months. Can we say today in the territory of which country this preparation has been conducted? You have also said phone calls had been tracked from the territory of Uzbekistan to Kirghiziya and to Afghanistan. For example, whether there was a call to Kirghiziya, for instance, to Batken or somewhere? In other words can we track the geography of these calls in more details? And if it is possible, how many bandits
have gone away?

A: I.Karimov: Well, I will start with last question. Today have been informed that about ten or rather more have disappeared. It is now specified. And those corpses, which were found, should be identified. Therefore all my information in this regard is not reliable unless we identify those who found there.

With regard to particular phone call - we have tracked one phone call to Afghanistan, another to Osh, and the third to Jalal-Abad.

And with regard to what is going on here or yesterday's events in Andijan, I want to say that the main center where it formed is South Kyrgyzstan and the territory of Ferghana Valley. I repeat, it is our preliminary data. All plans have been formed in the south Kyrgyzstan and in the territory of Ferghana Valley. However, it is not excluded, that many of international criminals which have become skilled on these things, of course, could take part in it. By the way, among the wounded today we have one Kirghiz, the citizen of Kyrgyzstan, let alone about those Uzbeks who live in the south of Kyrgyzstan. So such facts are trustworthy and authentic.

Q: Nik. Colman, France Press - Mister President can you answer a question who has given the order, or has started to shoot yesterday the first. And one more question - today there are reports that in Andijan people have gathered again. What measures will be undertaken?

A: I.Karimov - On your first question ? who has ordered to shoot at military personnel who bore service in patrol battalion and has killed five innocent military men - I do not know, who has ordered to shoot at them. Who ordered to shoot at military unit, at a brigade and kill including officers I do not know as well. But I know, that what are your interested in. You are interested in knowing who has ordered to shoot at them. You journalists are anxious about this, because it is in fact it disturbs you, because it is ?a fried fact?. And on this fact you can earn points and dividends. Again and again, I repeat, why you have not asked who gave an order to shoot at military men. If you put a question in this contest I would say that you are objective person.

And now I want to answer your question, I never leave from the answer. Nobody has ordered to shoot at them. I have told you all epopee. The negotiations have begun at eight in the mornings, Minister of Internal Affairs Almatov and Governor Begaliev carried the negotiations, also other representatives of the public took part. The negotiations continued until 17.00, - nine hours. Nobody did shoot at them.

I would like you to emphasize properly that seeing that law enforcement bodies arriving and blocking them, the group decided to burst from the building. Around at 19.40 three groups left the building in three directions out of town. Law enforcement bodies organized pursuit. When
pursue, they were shooting certainly and there was what had happened. You probably will agree that if felons step back and shoot the law enforcement bodies have to open fire to protect themselves. Here is the answer to this question. Have I answered all questions? One more. Yes, indeed, today about 200 persons has gathered nearby regional administrative building, mainly old men, women, they were relatives of those felons who yesterday seized that building and, in general, they supported them. In spite of they are felons, but they supported them. That is quite clear, that is quite natural. And they stated their points of view, their indignations. But there is a rigid, concrete instruction from the Minister for Internal Affairs, who commands the staff, not apply the force over them. Earlier today the representatives of the public society, Mayor of the city and others, have had negotiations with them. I repeat once again, today by phone I have categorically forbidden using both physical force and military of course. It is categorically forbidden. Nobody is fighting with women, old men and children. I will be appreciating if you write down these words. In Uzbekistan nobody is fighting with women, old men and children.

Q: Igor Riskin from ORT? Mr. President, please let as know, is it possible to say that a tragic event in Andijan in some sense is a fault or shortage of Uzbek law enforcement structures. And will it be any conclusions, any punishments or any rigid decisions with respect to these structures in Uzbekistan?

A: Karimov: - Please, understand my position, I by myself have stayed for the whole day there, have taken part in decision-making in many questions. Certainly, unexpected attack on patrol-sentry duty, a battalion, and police office has been occurred and there is a fault of those victims including officers, who were at the service. Those, who could foresee that event and prevent it. Secondly, they will respond who were on guard, especially in prison, who had no put concrete obstacles and it has allowed the track to overturn a gate, etc. and to capture the prison. And, I already yesterday have taken some measures about which in a case of need you would be informed. First of all, the head of regional police department will be released and also some regional and city officials will be released. And, the most important thing, on my opinion, taking some position in the city, they should know people?s moods; they should know what would be tomorrow in the city. If the security service and police office do not know about it, I think, they are poor workmen. Here is answer on your question.

Q. Peter Kom, German newspaper - How many people gathered yesterday at the Central Square of the city? Can we now visit the city?

A: I.Karimov - Firstly, nobody gathered at the Square, they gathered in three different places, I have already told about it. The first place was the building of regional administration where they have used the women, old men and children as a shield. The second place was before the building of regional police department, which was later stormed by.
There were about 200-300 persons there. And the last one was the building of National Security Service. And nobody gathered at other squares. Concerning the visit to Andijan, I hope this issue will be resolved in due course by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which gives for all of you accreditation and will give an opportunity to visit and estimate the situation. My personal view is no one country when there is a military collision, I do not know such countries, which would allow the journalists to demonstrate their bravery, etc. I think that tomorrow or day after tomorrow these opportunities will be given to you. In any case we cannot hide anything and it is useless. In any case, all the facts will be known. I do not doubt of it. If the question consists what interpretation, what comments would be done, it is clear. But today you have heard my comment. You will go to Andijan, meet people and collect their comments. Certainly, relatives of those who was lost and, I mean duped young men, etc., no one mother would say her son was a felon.

Have you heard before in any developed European country that any mother had admitted her son as a gangster? Could you try to answer on this question? Such is no possible, especially in the Central Asian family or east family never the child happens is guilty.

Q: Akhborot TV (Uzbekistan) - Many chatterers among politicians have started to predict the same events in Uzbekistan as it recently had been occurred in Kyrgyzstan and other CIS countries. You, as the Head of Security Council and High commander of Armed Forces of Uzbekistan, could you estimate the activity of law enforcement structures - the Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Security Service?

A: I.Karimov - Answering to your question I would like to say that if estimate the work of law enforcement bodies - Ministry of Internal Affairs and National security service of Uzbekistan, so it will be wrong to that I am for 100% satisfied from their work. I can say to you that during past days we implemented very huge training works with them and recent events in Andijan was a big test for them from which they should draw a conclusions. The events in Andijan is a big tragedy for the whole Uzbekistan. The real patriots are not happy with these events. Western journalists could not understand this, but Uzbek journalists must understand this tragedy. We must do everything in order that this kind of tragedies could not happen again. I can say that in the middle of June there will be wide-scale military trainings in Tashkent. Decree on it was signed two weeks ago. The purpose of these trainings will be prevention of any terrorist acts which occurred in 2004 in Tashkent. Military trainings will be held with the participation of representatives of Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Security Service and other law enforcement bodies.

BBC: I would like to clarify the fact, who are gathering today in the square of Andijan, who are they?

A: I.Karimov - I already answered this question, that is not some public is gathering in the
square, they are, relatives of those who took part in this action, first of all, the people who are concerned about their relatives. And that is why, I would like once again to assure you that strict order has been given not to use force against anyone. As far as your early reaction to the events in Andijan from yesterday that all law-enforcement agencies run away, I think that you are not right. This is most likely the journalist’s method. Let’s count like that. Because you have not seen that. Somebody from your acquaintances called you and let you in these affairs. Russian people say: Fear takes molehills for mountains. In these cases, as usual, the hyperbola is working and increasing what does not exist in reality. Nobody was scared and did not run away, policemen and security of the city of Andijan behaved bravely. Therefore some rumors spreaded by the some journalists that there was panic and anarchy in the city like in Osh and Jalalabad are not true. Therefore I should say that in Uzbekistan this was not the case and will never happen because everyone will execute his responsibilities, and will not run away.

Q: Agency Reuter ? please, tell us, yesterdays events without any doubt created big impressions for your people, disturbed them and it’s possible new unrests. What measures will you take in order to prevent?

A: I.Karimov - Firstly, I would like to answer question with question. What sign of unrest you see in Tashkent? Where you drive all roads are open. I think there is no logic in your discourse. If you drive easily today and yesterday, you see no element of unrest, and I think that the far we will be from this date, the more people will have information, the calmer it will be. But you see no sign of unrests in Tashkent, where you know and meet people. And I also have not received any information. Of course, there is unrest in Andijan-city and region. That’s emotional experience and empathy of people. I tell you again that those who prepared this action have own supporters among the population. We assess sensible enough and it is objective. That’s why, we will undertake measures to prevent this, emotional experience of people or unrest of them, I will answer and want you to publish. I respect your agency, and have enough information, and personally making sure, Reuter is objective agency. I would like you to pass to your governing people, not only here but also outside.

As a President I consider Reuter as an objective agency on the background of others. And I would like to tell you what measures we undertake. We will strengthen the democracy. I will not open our plans but on the way to democracy, liberalization our society that statements, plans, programs which I stated during the joint session of our parliament will be developed and strengthen. This is not a PR act, as some began to copy, state with their statements to the people and so on. I am far from this. My every idea, I have there five directions. On which directions the working group is working today. Very soon I will work with each separate group in order to raise this proposals on the decree level, projects of the law, which will be introduced to the parliament. This will be implemented step by step. In the nearest future the group of people will visit USA. This group also will visit Germany. The main purpose of their visit is to learn the skills and
experience of USA and Germany in the liberalization of judiciary system. 13 people from law enforcement bodies will visit these countries.

In the sphere of TV and in the sphere of mass-media all that is mentioned there will be realized. The funds will be created in order to support first of all foreign and non-governmental mass-media. The special TV channel - public channel will be created as well as other such measures, like the establishment of civil society and its development. But the most important thing that we have to develop the democratic perception of the people. Because this is the most efficient antidote for religious extremism. This is the main problem of today and I would like to stress that, said President Karimov. If we will reach this goal with the support of the developed democratic states this would be the best result we are looking for, he added. Therefore, President also stressed, that the measures against such events should include the deepening and development of democratic processes and to approach to standards of civil society. Yes there are some obstacles and problems, maybe measures that we adopted are not enough, but there is one saying I want to remind: ?Everyone think that he is commander while he is watching the fight from aside?, President said. Therefore, when you are looking from outside to the processes in Uzbekistan you can provide a lot of advice, he added. But it is easy to give an advise, then to realize them, because there are always a lot of problems that needed to be solved, Uzbek President said. At the end of his press-conference President repeated that the people behind the Andijan events knew very well how it is disgusting and a very serious damage to our image, therefore the events of Andijan should be analyzed and the proper conclusions provided.
Appendix B: Press release on the situation in Andijan

THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PRESS RELEASE 23 May, 2005

ON THE SITUATION IN ANDIJAN

1. On May 23, 2005 the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan (Parliament) adopted a resolution on the creation of Independent Parliamentary Commission for the investigation of the events in Andijan. Representatives of various factions of political parties as well as senators were included in the Commission. The aims of the Commission is to conduct thorough and comprehensive analysis of reasons and circumstances that led to tragic events on May 13, 2005. The Commission was tasked with conducting a comprehensive analysis of the activities of the Government and law enforcement agencies and to assess them from a legal point.

2. At the same time available information indicates that the events in Andijan represent a planned and well-prepared terrorist act organized by international radical-extremist groups, first and foremost, by Hizb ut-Tahrir.

3. The character and intent of the events in Andijan unequivocally confirm that they are the results of subversive activity of extremist groups and certain external powers:

- the use of arms and the sites of the attack; -criminals’ release from the prison; -hostage-taking and the seizure of the local administration’s building; -nature of the attackers’ demands (release of inmates convicted for terrorist acts).

4. The tactics, methods and hidden means of carrying out the armed attack in Andijan resemble activities of notorious terrorist groups in the Middle East, South and South-East Asia.

5. Attackers used civilians as a human shield. The organizers of the terrorist act in Andijan placed their armed fighters in the midst of an emotionally charged crowd made up of elderly citizens, women and children - a tactic employed by Hezbollah in Lebanon.

6. With more than 300 automatic weapons attackers first opened fire from behind the human shield. Thirty-seven representatives of law enforcement agencies died and dozens were injured. This refutes any assertions about so called “peaceful act”, which involved civilians’ participation.

7. The aims of the Andijan events were to destabilize the situation in the Ferghana Region and
Central Asia as a whole. The ultimate task - to create so called Caliphate and destroy the secular state. A caliphate’s symbol was painted on May 17, 2005 by a group of extremists on the building of the Embassy of Uzbekistan in London, where the headquarters of Hizb ut-Tahrir is located.

8. The events in Andijan have once again confirm that one of the main aims of international extremist and terrorist centers - to impose a regressive ideology and the way of life which is alien to the history, mentality and traditions of the people of the region.

9. The realization of strategic plans by international extremist and terrorist structures would have long-term consequences for international and regional security. The center of Eurasia could give rise to a more dangerous source of terrorism, narcotics trafficking and other menace to the civilized world, than in Afghanistan and Iraq.

10. Andijan and the territories in its vicinity are neither zones of disaster nor political genocide. The border with Kyrgyzstan was opened by the Uzbek authorities themselves. The Kyrgyz border guards took 74 automatic rifles from so called refugees and handed them over to the Uzbek authorities. The Kyrgyz border guards also identified among refugees dozens of criminals released from the Andijan’s prison. Out of 500 refugees more than 400 were males who took part in unlawful activities.

11. An initiative calling for an international investigation does not conform with the requirements of established political and international-legal practice. Such investigations are conducted: a) at the invitation of the state authorities, when they deem it necessary; b) in case of inability of the authorities or the collapse of the state. Obviously, the second prerequisite can not be applied to Uzbekistan. The first prerequisite is the sovereign right of Uzbek State and is not deemed necessary at this time. Currently law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan are actively conducting their own investigation.
Appendix C: Comments of Uzbekistan on EU Draft Resolution on Human Rights Situation in Uzbekistan Tabled in the Third Committee (November 15, 2005)

EU concerns

Operative Paragraph (OP) 2 (a) Eyewitness reports of indiscriminate and disproportionate force used by government troops to quell demonstrations in Andijan in May 2005 resulting in the death of many civilians;

Comments by Uzbekistan

On May 12-13, 2005 several groups of armed men carried out a number of terrorist acts in the city of Andijan including:

- attacked military unit and seized guns and ammunition;

- released more than 500 prisoners from the city prison and armed them; attacked administration and civil service infrastructures;

- took hostage government officials, law enforcement personnel and civilians; organized an armed attempt to seize power in Andijan province and destabilize the situation in Uzbekistan.

The terrorist acts resulted in death of 187 people. Among them 60 civilians, 31 law enforcement personnel and military servicemen. The criminals took 70 people as hostage and, in the end, brutally killed 15 of them.

The events in Andijan represent a well planned and prepared terrorist act organized by radical-extremist groups supported by external forces whose aim was to destabilize the situation in Uzbekistan. It was an action, not a demonstration, undertaken by armed men with proper military training.

Most of the reaction by Western countries to the events was largely shaped by sensational media reports which extremely exaggerated the use of force by the Government.

Very little mention was made of the fact that the insurgents were armed, killed innocent people, took hostages, set fire on the main theatre of the city and civilian cars, attacked administrative buildings, and also that the organizers had clearly planned the event as a military operation. The armed criminals were the driving force of what happened in Andijan.

The organizers of the terrorist acts placed their armed fighters in the midst of crowd - a tactic employed by some notorious terrorist organizations.

The Government employed all possible options to avoid casualties among civilians in its actions.
to neutralize the terrorists. The Government officials held long negotiations with terrorists. The Government even agreed to release 6 extremists from prison as it was demanded by terrorists. But terrorists continued to produce more and more demands thus leading all the negotiations to deadlock. After that the Government forces started to surround the Regional Administration building that was seized by terrorists. Having realized the hopelessness of their situation terrorists decided to leave the building disorderly firing from fire arms. While leaving the building terrorists used civilians as human shield.

EU concerns

OP 2 (b) The pressure applied to prevent citizens of Uzbekistan with refugee status granted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from traveling to a third country;

Comments by Uzbekistan

On 28-29 July 2005, UNHCR, in violation of all procedures and norms of international law and decisions of the UN, carried out a so-called humanitarian evacuation from the territory of Kyrgyzstan of some 440 citizens of Uzbekistan, who crossed the border during the tragic events in Andijan on 12-13 May and stayed on the territory of Kyrgyzstan.

There was no ground for carrying out such an action since, first of all, the number of moved citizens of Uzbekistan to the territory of Kyrgyzstan did not pose any threat to the security or destabilization of the situation in the border regions of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan requested to return only 25 Uzbek citizens who escaped from prison or committed crimes, which are punishable all over the world, including premeditated murder, terrorism, unlawful possession of weapon and ammunition, infringement of constitutional system and hostage taking.

Concerning other Uzbek citizens who were not involved in committing crime in the territory of Uzbekistan and wanted to travel to a third country the Uzbek side had not had any objection.

In the process of the so-called humanitarian evacuation of the citizens of Uzbekistan, basic principles and conditions of the well-known international norms, namely the UN Convention of 1951 on the Status of Refugees and the Protocol to it of 1967 were breached. UNHCR violated the principles of the Convention and also disregarded the article 4 of UN Security Council Resolution 1269 from 19 October 1999 and article 3 of the SC Resolution 1373 from 28 September 2001, and also the provisions of the SC Resolution 1624 of 2005 by granting participants of terrorist acts in Andijan City with refugee status.
EU concerns

OP 2 (e) Continued refusal to permit the registration of opposition political parties, and their consequent inability to participate in the electoral process;

Comments by Uzbekistan

Registration of political parties is carried out in accordance with the Law on Political Parties adopted on 26 December 1996.

As it was outlined by the law the Ministry of Justice registers a political party within one month after the submission of application for registration.

According to the Article 5 of the Law the State fully guarantees protection of rights and legal interests political parties, equal legal conditions for the parties in realization of goals and objectives outlined in their Statutes.

Article 9 of the Law provides full explanation on what conditions the application for registration of a political party could be rejected. In case of the rejection of the registration of a political party the Ministry of Justice informs the representative of the chief body of the concerned party with full explanation referring to provisions of the Law about the reasons of the refusal.

The concerned party has right to appeal to the Supreme Court against the decision of the Ministry of Justice on refusal of registration.

At present 5 political parties (People’s Democratic Party, Fidokorlar Party, Milliy Tiklanish Party, Adolat Party and Liberal-Democratic Party) have been registered by the Ministry of Justice and functioning in Uzbekistan.

EU concerns

OP 2 (f) A continued pattern of discrimination, harassment and prosecution with regard to the exercise of freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

Comments by Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is home for representatives of 16 religious confessions. The Article 18 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan ensures the equality of all citizens’ rights regardless of differences in gender, race, nationality, language, religion, belief, social origin and status.
Adoption of the Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” in 1991 resulted in qualitative changes of the role and judicial status of religious organizations. New edition of the Law in 1998 clearly defined the role and status of religious organizations as well as their interaction with state agencies. The Law fully grants the citizens with the right to practice their religion, make devotions and rituals, and pilgrimage to the holy places either individually or collectively.

The State promotes an establishment of the relations of mutual tolerance and respect among citizens in practicing different religions. Religious or any kind of fanaticism and extremism, causing interreligious confrontation and enmity between different confessions and sects are banned by the law.

In 1990 there were only 211 religious organizations in Uzbekistan. Today this number is 2202. Among them 2016 Muslim, 170 Christian and 8 Jewish organizations.

Every year believers make pilgrimages to holy places with comprehensive assistance of the government - Muslims to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umra, Christians - to Russia, Greece and Israel, Jews - to Israel. For the last decade more than 45 thousand citizens of Uzbekistan have been able to make pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, to Russia, Greece and Israel with the support of the Government. Pilgrims receive a wide-ranging assistance including charter flights, medical care, lowered prices on air tickets, rapid and unhindered issuing of visas.

The system of religious education of Uzbekistan includes Tashkent Islamic Institute, Tashkent Islamic University, 10 madrasahs, Orthodox and Protestant seminaries.

EU concerns

OP 2 (g) Serious constraints on, and harassment and detention of, the members of non-governmental organizations and civil society, including human rights defenders;

Comments by Uzbekistan

At present more than 5 thousands NGOs, including about 500 international or foreign NGOs are working in Uzbekistan. Among them sizeable number of human rights organizations.

The activity of NGOs, including those dealing with human rights issues, are regulated by existing national legal norms including the laws on Public Associations, on Non-Commercial Organizations and on Public Funds.
At present a new law on Guarantees of the activities of non-governmental and non-commercial organizations, and also revised version of law on Public Associations are being prepared.

The State fully protects the rights and legal interests of the NGOs, creates for them equal legal conditions for their participation in the public life without interfering into their activities.

EU concerns

OP 3. Deeply regrets the decision of the Government of Uzbekistan to reject both the repeated calls of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry into the events that occurred in Andijan on 13 May 2005, and the request of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to visit Uzbekistan soon afterwards;

Comments by Uzbekistan

Andijan and territories in its vicinity are not the zones of armed conflict, humanitarian disaster or political genocide. Thus, the idea of conducting international investigation of Andijan events is irrelevant and contradicts the established political and international legal practice.

Under the existing international legal instruments similar procedure is exercised when states request such an investigation, or in case of inability of authorities or collapse of a state, and when the situation directly concerns maintaining international peace and security.

The first prerequisite, application of which is entirely sovereign right of the Uzbekistan, is not deemed necessary. The rest cannot be applied to Uzbekistan.

The law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan have conducted full-scale investigation and their work was closely monitored by the Independent Parliamentary Commission and also International Working Group represented by officials of foreign diplomatic missions accredited in Uzbekistan.

Despite the invitation by the Uzbek side the EU countries rejected to participate in the work of the International Monitoring Group. By this Western countries clearly showed their unwillingness for cooperation and dialogue. Their call for international investigation is politically charged and highly violates the international norms in respecting the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and stability of the states and not interfering into their internal affairs.

Since September 20, 2005 the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan has been hearing the cases of those
involved in terrorist acts committed in Andijan. The court process is open to all interested
parties. The representatives of the diplomatic corps and international organizations, including the
United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Shanghai Cooperation
Organization are observing the court proceedings.

Calls to conduct international investigation on Andijan events are viewed by the Uzbek side as a
method of exerting political pressure on the country with the aim of certain strategic goals and
interfering into internal affairs of Uzbekistan.

The issue is an exclusively domestic affair of Uzbekistan. In its actions to deal with the matter
Uzbekistan has been guided by both the national and international legal norms.

EU concerns

OP 4. (a) To implement fully without any delay the recommendations contained in the report of
the mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to
Kyrgyzstan in June 2005, most notably with respect to granting permission for the establishment
of an international commission of inquiry into the events in Andijan;

Comments by Uzbekistan

For the first, harshly prepared and distibuted report of the mission of OHCHR distorts the real
situation, since it was based on the statements of persons who took part in terrorist acts and
escaped from prison. Surprising is the fact that while referring to the lack of information about
criminal and terrorist acts which took place in Andijan on May 13, 2005 OHCHR claims
objectivity of its conclusions and recommendations.

For the second, OHCHR mission’s assessment, legitimacy of which is doubtful, coarsely breaks
the sovereignty of Uzbekistan.

For the third, statements of the OHCHR on behalf of mandates of conventional agencies and
special process is violation of fundamental principles of High Commissioner’s mandate, which
were designated by Resolution 48/141 GA UN, interpretation norms and mechanisms of
international law by office in this case is arbitrary, calling to apply against Uzbekistan so called
?public mechanism of UN? seems to be provocative.

For the fourth, in its activity OHCHR disregarded UN Security Council Resolutions 1269 of
October 19, 1999 and 1373 of September 28, 2001 which require not allowing the status of
refugee to be a granted to terrorists.
It is natural to ask:

- OHCHR is protecting whom? The terrorists?...

The results of investigation presented to international community by the law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan, as well as testimony of eyewitnesses proved that Andijan event was not a protest of peaceful demonstrators, but thoroughly planned act of terrorism.

EU concerns

OP 4. (b) To accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto;

Comments by Uzbekistan

Dictating to a sovereign state to accede to any international agreement is legally wrong and absolutely inappropriate. It is a sovereign rights of every country to which agreements they should accede and when.

In the meantime, the Uzbek side deems it necessary to note that Uzbekistan is drafting a national legislature on migration, which will be fully in accordance with the international norms and standards. Consideration of accession of Uzbekistan to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol will be possible after the Uzbekistan’s legislation on migration is adopted. Such an approach fully complies with international practice.

EU concerns

OP 4. (g) To implement fully the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the question of torture prepared following his visit to Uzbekistan from 24 November to 6 December 2002;

Comments by Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is the first and only country among the CIS states who invited the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit Uzbekistan. The invitation of the Special Rapporteur and the subsequent adoption of the National Action Plan to fully comply with the UN Convention against Torture manifest our strong political will to prevent and eradicate such phenomena.

The Uzbek Government submitted detailed information to the Human Rights Committee on implementation of 22 recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and it has been
issued as a UN document Ref.#CCPR/C/UZB/2004/2/Add.1 and also UN document A/59/675 (January 18, 2005). To this date 20 recommendations of the Special Rapporteur have been fully realized and the rest 2 recommendations are in the phase of implementation.

EU concerns

OP 4. (h) To work closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with regard to the areas of concern and to cooperate fully with all the mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights and all the relevant United Nations treaty bodies;

Comments by Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is actively cooperating with the UN Regional Adviser under the four-year Regional Project of the OHCHR on cooperation in the field of human rights. For the last two years we submitted 6 national reports to the UN treaty bodies. In cooperation with UNDP Uzbekistan adopted the National Action Plan to fully implement the recommendations of the UN treaty bodies.

Last year Uzbekistan invited the Independent expert of the CHR to assess the situation on human rights in Uzbekistan. After the consideration of his report on Uzbekistan the CHR Working Group on Situations welcomed in its consensus decision adopted on February 11, 2005 in Geneva the achievements of Uzbekistan in the field of human rights.

EU concerns

OP 4. (i) To allow, in line with Uzbek commitments, access of representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross to detainees;

Comments by Uzbekistan

The Agreement between the Government of Uzbekistan and ICRC on Humanitarian Activity in relation with detained and those under arrest were signed on 17 January, 2001.

In accordance to the Agreement all law enforcement agencies provide ICRC representatives with timely and unrestricted access to detention places. Such cooperation was also established with Diplomatic Corps in Tashkent and other international and non-governmental organizations.

For the past four years representatives of ICRC have been freely visiting every penitentiary establishment they wanted to visit. For instance, only in 2004 the representatives of ICRC visited more than 30 prisons.
Uzbekistan has always been open for cooperation with ICRC on all issues concerning the monitoring the rights of the arrested and convicted.
REFERENCES


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