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The Power of the Word: Internet Reporting on Terrorism in Uzbekistan

What role does the electronic word play in the framing of terrorist threats? The rise of Internet media sites has allowed access to the electronic word at an unprecedented level. This study examines one aspect of Internet media, electronically published news reports on terrorism, to determine if significant differences exist in reporting on the same topic across political and geographic borders in a realm where few roadblocks to communication exist. I hypothesise that Internet news reports from domestic (and in this case, government-controlled) news agencies are more likely to focus on the personal security implications of terrorism given the potential benefits that the government may accrue by emphasising the threat of terrorism. These benefits include the justification of increased security spending, vigilance against potential enemies, and restrictions on civil liberties. The potential benefits of highlighting the personal security implications of terrorism may be enhanced in part by changes in the post-September 11th security environment. The hypothesis presented in this study is tested through a systematic analysis of domestic, near-abroad and foreign Internet news reports on terrorism in Uzbekistan. These reports were gathered from news agencies that provide English and Russian-language reports online. The results of this study indicate that while domestic Internet news agencies emphasised security in English-language reporting on terrorism, Western European news agencies showed similar tendencies. Russian news agencies were the least likely to emphasise issues of extremism in reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan. This study concludes that media agencies from outside the region are more vocal in their opposition to the government’s official interpretation of terrorism-related events and, therefore, increased regulation of Internet usage in Uzbekistan would jeopardise the currently limited press freedoms and information exchange occurring in that country.

The Power of the Word: Internet Reporting on Terrorism in Uzbekistan

The rise of Internet news and media sites has allowed access to the electronic word at an unprecedented level. Web-based email accounts, on-line forums, Internet chat and telephone services, and the sheer global reach of the Internet facilitate communication between individuals and groups. However, Internet technology has acted as a double-edged sword with regards to security. These same advances in communication have fundamentally changed the nature and operation of terrorist networks. The internet provides more spaces in which terrorist groups can communicate and organize campaigns of political violence.¹ As a result of these developments, the Internet is now an integral part of current discourses on terrorism. Despite this, little research has been done on how the Internet frames the terrorist threat.

In this study, I analyse one aspect of Internet media, electronically published news reports, with the goal of ascertaining whether significant differences exist in the framing of the same topic across political and geographic borders, in a realm where the only roadblock to communication is language. The topic of terrorism in Uzbekistan was chosen because of the broad ramifications that this issue had in terms of regional security during the period 1999 to 2005. In addition, “by 1999, reports on the region indicated that initial attempts to bring Internet technology to countries such as Uzbekistan were taking hold...reports of dial-up service being piloted in regional locations outside the capital contributed to a sense that a growing IT industry and consumer base were present.”²

I hypothesise that the regional affiliation of media agencies (domestic, near-abroad, or foreign) affects their framing of Internet terrorism reporting. Domestic internet news reports would be more likely to focus on the personal security implications of terrorism than foreign news agencies as a result of the close relationship between domestic news agencies and the government, and the potential gains to the government from an emphasis on the personal risks and costs of terrorism. These differences in reporting may in turn shape individuals’ perceptions of terrorism and the threat it poses given a constrained information environment. Such an environment exists in Uzbekistan and foreign reporting that is accessible in this context may play a vital role in challenging official interpretations of domestic terrorism.

I test the hypothesis through a systematic analysis of domestic and foreign electronically-published Internet news reports on terrorism in Uzbekistan. The proposed hypothesis would be affirmed by data indicating that Internet reporting by domestic news agencies emphasises the personal security threat posed by terrorism while foreign news agencies focus on the broader implications of terrorism. These predictions are based on the assumption that foreign news agencies are not as strongly linked to the interests of the domestic government as domestic news agencies. As a result, I anticipate that foreign internet reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan would stress its broader connections to the global War on Terror, international terrorist and perhaps Islamist networks, and human rights abuses.

The events of 11 September 2001 forever changed the way the world reported on terrorism. September 11th affected internet reporting by generating an interest in alternative sources of news, given the high demand placed on traditional sources. It is already claimed that, “this news event affected internet accessibility in a way in which no other had impacted upon it before.”³ Additionally, the level of interaction in both internet and general news reporting increased.

The Internet was significant in the way it was used interactively in the days after the [September 11th attacks], when people posted personal accounts of the tragedy, individual responses, photographic records, and video footage...journalists themselves increasingly participated in Internet chat rooms and online bulletin boards in their quest for new eyewitness accounts.⁴

The effects of September 11th on internet reporting continue to be evidenced by the popularity of first-person “authentic” accounts of contemporary political and social events, such as the “Baghdad Burning” blog by anonymous author “Riverbend.”⁵

September 11th also changed the level of attention that research on terrorism received.

New academic courses dealing with various aspects of terrorism evolved, mostly in American universities, and more disciplines took part analyzing different angles of this phenomenon, thus sharpening its interdisciplinary nature.⁶

Government and academic literature began to frame the internet as a new battleground between terrorists and law-enforcement, emphasising the threat of information warfare and cyber-terrorism. The tightened security environment, both domestically and internationally, that followed September 11th brought stricter controls over the use of the internet with monitoring shifting towards the prevention of broadly defined terrorist activities. Such regulation gave rise to the argument that the use of the internet by terrorists has been exploited to justify the reduction of civil liberties and freedom of speech around the world.

Extensive scholarly interest in terrorism arose as a result of September 11th, but this interest has yet to generate a widely accepted definition of the term “terrorism”. This greatly complicates systematic research. The utility of the term terrorism is a constant subject of debate due to its longstanding negative connotation. While most authors draw on elements of pre-existing definitions, no clear, definitive meaning of the term has emerged in scholarship or reporting. A particularly comprehensive definition is provided by Gibbs.

Terrorism is illegal violence or threatened violence directed against human or nonhuman objects, provided that it:

- 1) was undertaken or ordered with a view to altering or maintaining at least one putative norm in at least one particular territorial unit or population;
- 2) had secretive, furtive, and/or clandestine features that were expected by the participants to conceal their personal identity and/or their future location;
- 3) was not undertaken or ordered to further the permanent defence of some area;
- 4) was not conventional warfare and because of their concealed personal identity, concealment of their future location, their threats, and/or their spatial mobility, the participants perceived themselves as less vulnerable to conventional military action;
- 5) was perceived by the participants as contributing to the normative goal previously described by inculcating fear of violence in persons (perhaps an indefinite category of them) other than the immediate target of the actual or threatened violence and/or by publicising some cause.⁷

While this definition is an important contribution to the conceptualisation of terrorism, its length largely precludes its utility. Nevertheless, Gibb's emphasis on norm or agenda-driven behaviour that is secretive and uses violence to influence a group of persons forms the basis of all definitions of terrorism and is the definition employed in this paper.

Spreading the Word: Terrorism and the Internet

In the absence of a particular discipline or established set of theories, studies of terrorism have varied widely. Some studies focus on generating empirically verifiable theories of terrorism while others focus on providing theoretical models for anti-terrorism responses.⁸ Additionally, authors have concentrated on studying particular forms of terrorism such as biological or chemical terrorism,⁹ environmental terrorism,¹⁰ and suicide terrorism,¹¹ rather than developing widely applicable theories. Studies analysing the internet show similar diversity, with topics ranging from the potential for the internet to serve as a vehicle for social movements to the problems with online gambling.¹² Studies that combine the two issue areas of terrorism and the media, in particular the Internet, can be divided into four distinct categories: 1) studies on the media's presentation of terrorism; 2) on the communicative use of the internet by terrorists; 3) on the use of the internet as a quasi-military tool; and 4) on government regulation and the instrumental use of the internet in response to terrorism. The commonality between all studies of terrorism and the media is the desire to achieve a better understanding of how technology is changing the way terrorism and counter-terrorism operate.

The main goal of studies on the media's framing and depiction of terrorism is to examine how media reporting on terrorism affects individuals. To this end, Slone examines psychological responses affected by Israeli media coverage of terrorism. Her goal is to measure the ability of terrorism-related news coverage to generate anxiety.¹³ Emotional responses to the threat of terrorism are assessed by Konty and Duell who measure shifts in individual's value orientations caused by exposure to terrorism through the media and America's "culture of fear."¹⁴ That individuals are affected by terrorism and reporting on terrorism is hard to deny. What is more difficult to understand is why differences in reporting on the same topic may exist.

Oates' study on the framing of the terrorist threat by the Russian media found that news reports on state-run and commercial television covered terrorism differently during the 2003 election period. State-run television news focused more on international terrorism, while commercial television news featured reports on domestic terrorism related to the breakaway Republic of Chechnya.¹⁵ These results appear to challenge the predictions of this study that domestic news agencies are more likely to focus on the domestic and personal implications of terrorism. However, the attention paid to domestic terrorism by Russian commercial television news reflects the tenuousness of Chechen secession in Russian domestic politics and the state's avoidance of this topic. Therefore, state-run news avoids reporting on domestic terrorism issues because of terrorism's association with secessionist desires. The study presented here expands on these analyses by focusing on Internet news reports rather than more traditional forms of mass media.

The second category of the literature on terrorism and the internet focuses on how the Internet serves the interests of terrorists. Weimann's report, "www.terror.net: How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet," analyses the content and audience of terrorist websites and identifies eight major ways in which terrorists use the Internet. These uses

include psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda, data mining, fund raising, recruitment and mobilization, networking, information sharing, and planning and coordination.¹⁶ Conway offers a competing perspective by identifying five core terrorist uses of the internet.¹⁷ No matter how its functions are divided, the development of Internet technology has fundamentally changed the way terrorism operates, primarily by providing a new, more efficient, and encrypted means of communication. Contemporary terrorists often use the internet like marginalised elements of civil society, to communicate with sympathetic diasporas, disseminate propaganda, and issue statements unfettered by the ideological refractions of the mass media.¹⁸ The covert means of communication provided by the internet is of particular importance in the context of Uzbekistan, where manifestations of terrorism and civil society are often conflated. Overall, the development of the Internet has aided terrorist networks by reducing the cost and the time involved in communication by enabling the sharing of complex information across political and geographic boundaries.

Much of the information communicated by terrorists can be conceptualized as a form of publicity for terrorist activity. There is much debate over whether terrorists have benefited from the increased publicity the internet provides. Anderson contends that, “despite the significance of new media technologies, traditional television and print media are still centrally important as vehicles that potentially fuel public fear and anxiety. The act of political violence itself is still the best way to obtain publicity, not simply the circulation of information via the Internet.”¹⁹ This view, however, fails to acknowledge that the level of censorship applied to traditional forms of mass media is largely absent in Internet reporting.

The Internet thus offers terrorist groups an unprecedented level of direct control over the content of their message(s). It considerably extends their ability to shape how different target audiences perceive them and to manipulate not only their own image, but also the image of their enemies.²⁰

While television news reports, particularly those which continue to air terrorist-made videos, remain essential in bringing the threat and reality of terrorism into every home, the accessibility of the Internet has eliminated the time-lag between the act of violence and its availability to the viewer. Ultimately, terrorists may tailor their attacks to gain maximum media publicity. The “new terrorism” is increasingly dependent upon new media technologies, such as the Internet.²¹ This is manifest in a seemingly unprecedented use of the Internet by terrorists to show their strength, make demands, and publicly display their acts of violence.

The third category of literature on terrorism and the Internet examines the potential for terrorist use of the Internet as a quasi-military instrument of violence. As Furnell and Warren point out, “the real threat in the ‘cyber’ context is when the internet (or the more general technology infrastructure) becomes the medium in which a terrorist-type attack is conducted.”²² Cyber-terrorism is conceptualised as a non-physical challenge to the security of the internet, communications systems, and personal information. A competing conceptualisation of the internet as a quasi-military instrument is that of Arquilla and Ronfeldt who use the term “netwar” to describe an emerging mode of conflict at societal levels, short of traditional military warfare, in which the protagonists use network forms of organisation and related doctrines with strategies and

technologies attuned to the information age.²³ While the potential for a terrorist attack on information systems no doubt exists, it has been repeatedly argued that the threat of cyber-terrorism has been overstated.²⁴ So far, terrorist groups have not yet launched a major cyber-terrorism attack and it is likely that in the future, terrorists will continue to exploit new technological developments only when and if it serves their current goals.²⁵

The final category of the Internet and terrorism literature focuses on government responses to terrorism. Anti-terrorism countermeasures, particularly following September 11th, have included monitoring Internet communications and attempting to restrict information describing the means or materials for a terrorist attack. As one author highlighted, in the aftermath of September 11th considerable efforts have been made by governments to monitor e-mail and Internet traffic, and block terrorist organizations from using the Internet.²⁶

The asserted need to track terrorists, whose primary use of the Internet appears to be the same as us ‘non-terrorists’ – for communication and discussion - increased the apparent urgency of cyberspace tracking. Ultimately, ‘the presumed use of the Internet by members of the terrorist commando to contact each other and prepare the operation handed a victory to advocates of very tough security measures and strict regulation of the Internet’.²⁷

While governments have legitimate concerns in monitoring the internet for potential terrorist activity, their control over internet use has generated concern amongst academics and civil society groups.

Like other past technological innovations...the Internet represents a new type of medium that governments, as always, are keen to control. The popular assertion often made by Internet advocates that the Internet cannot be controlled – that content control, a primary characteristic of the traditional state-media relationship, cannot be as successful or far-reaching when applied to the Internet – is indeed not true.²⁸

Despite this prognosis, the effectiveness of government monitoring of the Internet continues to be debated. The success of such efforts is thus far indeterminate.

The issues raised by those concerned with government control and surveillance of the internet are due to the fact that, “at the grassroots level, the internet is being used to promote international discussion and connections that link struggles challenging dominant policy and ideology in ways that often bypass the nation state.”²⁹ This argument is supported in the context of Uzbekistan where the openness of operators of Internet cafes, “combined with the cafes’ refusal to request IDs from patrons... seems to place Internet cafe activity outside the conventions of mainstream cultural activity in which people may be willing to take more risks.” In many contexts, the internet may be the one avenue individuals have to exercise social and political freedoms.

The Word in Context: Terrorism(s) in Uzbekistan

A case study of the Republic of Uzbekistan provides the opportunity to examine internet reporting on terrorism in a nation where both terrorism and internet usage are new but growing phenomena. These phenomena are on the rise amongst a population with a median age of 23.³⁰ The number of estimated internet users in Uzbekistan has risen from 7500 users in 2000 to 880,000 in 2005.³¹ Given the universal literacy in Uzbekistan³², a

study of internet reporting can focus on written material as an effective means of communication. Additionally, a sizeable portion of the Uzbek population is literate in more than one language, permitting this study to analyse Russian and English language reports on terrorism in Uzbekistan, written in Uzbekistan and abroad.³³ However, it must be noted that there remains a tension between reported government figures regarding Internet accessibility and the realities on the ground in Uzbekistan. Kolko et al. report that for 2002, “our first-hand experience demonstrated that actuality differed from official characterizations—whether with respect to much smaller numbers of Internet service provider (ISP) subscribers or the claims of multiple university students that they did not have access to computers.”³⁴ Even though access to the internet is limited, the internet remains both a network and a forum for NGOs and other societal groups that are restricted by laws limiting public associational life in Uzbekistan.³⁵

A comprehensive study of internet reporting in Uzbekistan is complicated by the government’s control over the .UZ internet country code. Given the restrictive nature of President Karimov’s regime, government internet monitoring has not emerged as a pressing social or political issue in Uzbekistan. It has however attracted considerable attention from international NGOs such as Reporters Sans Frontiers who in 2001 labelled Uzbekistan an “enemy of the internet.”³⁶

Decree 52, which had been established in 1999, officially declared that only the government telecom, UzPak, could operate as an ISP. Although smaller companies could contract connectivity through UzPak and operate as purportedly independent entities, the actual point of connectivity to the outside world would flow through UzPak. In 2000, it was commonly believed by users that this policy would facilitate censorship and, perhaps, monitoring of Internet activity. Approximately 2 weeks before the researchers’ trip to Uzbekistan in November 2002, the government officially announced Decree 352, which repealed Decree 52.³⁷

This raises further concerns regarding the current effectiveness of government censorship of the Internet. Nevertheless, the government’s control over Internet sites limits the domestic Internet reporting data gathered in this study to two official government sites. The accessibility of these internet sites provides a point of comparison with other Internet news sites published abroad but which remain accessible in Uzbekistan.³⁸ It is important to note this constrained social and political environment has played an important role in the development of terrorism in Uzbekistan.

While terrorism in Uzbekistan has important ties to international developments, such as the influence of Al-Qaeda, the rise of terrorism in Uzbekistan has been a result of the country’s constrained social and political opportunity structure, combined with regional developments. The country’s geopolitical position as a doubly land-locked country, bordered by five countries varying greatly in their political stability, has contributed to a desire for stability and strong political control amongst the ruling elite. The adoption of a centralised presidency and the authoritarian form this presidency has developed, combined with the collapse of political power in Afghanistan, and the resurgence of Islam in the former Soviet Union, has created conditions ripe for the adoption of violent tactics by opposition groups. These groups have resorted to terrorism after being denied a voice by a political system that limits public associations and other

freedoms. In this context, government control over the internet has effectively eliminated another peaceful channel for opposition and dissent.

While consensus over the definition of terrorism has proven hard to achieve, finding a clear and comprehensive definition of terrorism is particularly hard in the context of Uzbekistan. The official definition of terrorism is established by Article 155 of the Criminal Code (amended 29 August 2001):

Terrorism, that is, violence, use of force, or other acts, which pose a threat to an individual or property, or the threat to undertake such acts in order to force a state body, international organisation, or officials thereof, or individual or legal entity, to commit or to restrain from some activity in order to complicate international relations, infringe upon sovereignty and territorial integrity, undermine security of a state, provoke war, armed conflict, destabilize the socio-political situation, intimidate the population, as well as activity carried out in order to support the operation of and to finance a terrorist organization, preparation and commission of terrorist acts, direct or indirect provision or collection of any resources and other services to terrorist organizations, or to persons assisting or participating in terrorist activities.³⁹

The definition provided in the Criminal Code refers to the threat and coercion aspects of terrorism and assumes that terrorism is agenda-driven. Terrorism is clearly conceived of as a total threat to security. The government's conceptualisation of terrorism has a strong resonance within a society that values stability, especially given the political instability in the region over the past fifteen years.

The rise of terrorism has largely been linked to the development of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) as a radical opposition to President Karimov's rule. The IMU, also known as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, emerged as an organised group in the late-1990s. In 1999, the IMU executed the first organised terrorist attacks in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The car-bombings that allegedly targeted President Karimov were followed by a declaration of *jihad* with the goal of overthrowing the Karimov regime and establishing an Islamic state. The IMU then altered its tactics, using base camps in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to launch military-style incursions into Uzbek territory over the next several years.

The government of Uzbekistan responded to these first IMU attacks in a variety of ways. The Law on the Combat of Terrorism (14 December 2000, amended 30 April 2004) was introduced to outline the legal parameters for the conduct of anti-terrorism operations. In August 2001, articles in the Criminal Code dealing with terrorism and associated crimes were amended. In addition to these changes, Uzbekistan joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, previously the Shanghai Five, in June 2001 due to increased security concerns.

The threat that terrorism in Uzbekistan posed was a domestic and at best regional concern until the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks and the ensuing coalition invasion of Afghanistan. Military operations in neighbouring Afghanistan allowed the government of Uzbekistan to re-frame its domestic struggle against terrorism as part of the global War on Terror. Uzbekistan was the first Central Asian nation to offer support to the United States, granting permission in October 2001 for the use of its airbases for operations in Afghanistan.⁴⁰ Uzbekistan's participation in the War on Terror changed the way the government responds to terrorism. Hill contends that the overthrow of the Taliban and the

elimination of IMU bases in Afghanistan “had the single greatest effect on Central Asian security since the collapse of the U.S.S.R.”⁴¹ As a result of developments in Afghanistan, including the alleged death of IMU leader Juma Namangani, and increased military aid from the United States⁴², Uzbekistan was able to shift from a defensive to an offensive position vis-à-vis its domestic terrorists.

Terrorist activity in Uzbekistan peaked in 2004 as coalition troops continued to use Uzbekistan as a base for action in Afghanistan. Terrorist attacks in March 2004 were followed by the high-profile trials of those suspected of involvement. In July, the first suicide-bombing attacks were conducted against the General Prosecutor’s Office as well as the American and Israeli embassies in Tashkent. The July attacks were particularly striking as they targeted foreign governments while using the radical tactic of suicide-bombing.

The close relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan that had developed following September 11th rapidly deteriorated in May 2005 as a result of violence in Andijan, Uzbekistan. In the wake of a jail break aided by militants, Uzbek security forces opened fire on allegedly unarmed demonstrators that the government claims were Islamic extremists. This event awakened previously dormant concerns over the Uzbek government’s use of state terror. The United States and several European countries called for an international inquiry, indicating a serious shift in the United States’ relationship with Uzbekistan.⁴³ Although the United States had implemented numerous initiatives including an antiterrorism assistance program, export-control, and border-security programs, following the Andijan events the United States threatened to withhold millions in aid.⁴⁴ In response, the government of Uzbekistan argued that its actions were part of its domestic struggle against terrorism and rejected the possibility of an international inquiry. Nevertheless, the government conducted an internal inquiry and allowed a limited number of foreign observers to travel to the city.

The Andijan events had an important impact on media reporting in Uzbekistan and, in particular, on internet reporting, with the reassertion of the government’s strong control over traditional mass media. Internet reports became the one avenue for those within Uzbekistan to access information that contradicted the government’s description of the violence in Andijan. The Internet also provided a means for those with competing or conflicting descriptions of the events in Andijan to air their views. This took place despite the terror imposed by the government through pressure on and arrests of journalists.⁴⁵

Searching for the Word: Data and Method

Data was gathered from archived, electronically-published, Internet news reports on terrorism in Uzbekistan dating from 1 January 1999 to 31 December 2005. A purposive, not fully representative, sample was collected due to the exploratory nature of this research and the informational restrictions mentioned above. The Republic of Uzbekistan’s Portal of the State Authority (www.gov.uz, GOV) is an official government website which provides government-sponsored press releases in Uzbek, Russian, and English. As a domestic source of news from the government’s perspective, the data provided by this source illustrate the government’s conceptualisation of terrorism. The Uzbekistan National News Agency (www.uza.uz, UZA) is another domestic media agency that provides a wide variety of news in Uzbek, Russian, and English and

promotes itself as “Uzbekistan’s news, first hand.” While it is not entirely distanced from the government, its reports are widely available and contribute to our understanding of how terrorism in Uzbekistan is framed by the local press. Therefore, this agency was chosen to represent Uzbek domestic Internet reporting as both an English and Russian-language source. Both these sources may be subject to government censorship and/or bias. Nevertheless, they are sufficient representations of the quality of Internet news reports available in Uzbekistan.

Data drawn from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the British Broadcasting Corporation are used to represent English-language, European media agencies. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (www.rferl.org, RFE), based in Prague, identifies itself as “your source for news and information from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Southwestern Asia.” RFE’s mission statement refers to its efforts to promote democratic values and institutions, to provide objective news, and to strengthen civil societies. This mission is undoubtedly relevant in the context of reporting on terrorism in an authoritarian country such as Uzbekistan. The British Broadcasting Corporation (news.bbc.co.uk, BBC) provides an English-language data source for international media coverage.⁴⁶ The BBC was constitutionally established by a Royal Charter and had local offices in Uzbekistan until October 2005. The foreign perspective provided by RFE and the BBC provides a counterpoint to domestic reporting and the Russian media’s near-abroad perspective on terrorism in Uzbekistan.

Based in Moscow, ITAR-TASS is the official state news agency for Russia. ITAR-TASS (www.itar-tass.com) provides news reports in both Russian and English but was employed here as an English-language data source. Along with Russian-language reports by Izvestia (www.izvestia.ru) and Rossiiskaia Gazeta (www.rg.ru), ITAR-TASS represents a Russian near-abroad perspective on terrorism in Uzbekistan. Izvestia and Rossiiskaia Gazeta are based in Moscow and are available both online and in print. According to East View Information Services, Izvestia is “remarkable for its serious and balanced treatment of subject matter.”⁴⁷ Rossiiskaia Gazeta is an official daily of the Russian government and is the only publication authorized to publish new laws and executive enactments before they come into force.⁴⁸ These three media sources combine to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Russian perspective, which often varies based on the strength of the political relationship between Moscow and Tashkent.

I gathered information from the above-listed sources through keyword searches of archived Internet news reports from 1 January 1999 to 31 December 2005. For GOV, UZA, RFE, and BBC the keyword searches were executed using the websites’ respective online search engines. ITAR-TASS was accessed through the Universal Database of Russian Newspapers (UDB-COM), provided by East View Information Services. Russian-language keyword searches were conducted using UDB-COM for Izvestia and Rossiiskaia Gazeta. Russian-language keyword searches for UZA were conducted using its online search engine.

Figure 1. Content of Keyword Search Results

Keyword	Report Content
Terror	All reports on terrorism in Uzbekistan not classified under other keywords
Extremist	Violence; Protests; Religious extremism; Joint agreements to combat extremism
Security	Military aid and cooperation; Border restrictions and visas; Joint agreements on security; Shanghai Cooperation Organization
Law	Terrorism trials; Death penalty; Allegations of human rights abuses and torture; Refugees; Extraditions
Fundamentalist	Islamic Fundamentalism

Figure 1 illustrates the content of Internet news reports that were classified under the five independent search keywords of “Uzbekistan” + “terror*,” “extremist,” “security,” “law,” and “fundamentalist.” These searches generated overall lists of keyword search results which were then manually filtered according to their content’s relevance.⁴⁹ Additionally, if a single report appeared in the search results for two or more keywords, the report was classified under the most applicable keyword so that all reports appeared only once in the overall keyword search results for each media agency.

The “terror” search yielded the greatest number of results and covers reports that did not appear in the search results for the other four keywords. The “terror” reports were not framed in any particular way and fall largely outside of the interests of this study. The content of reports that arose from the keyword searches for “extremist” included protests, religious extremism or fanaticism, joint agreements to combat extremism, and reports on terrorist violence. The content of “security” keyword reports dealt mostly with bi- or multilateral security agreements including restrictions on borders and visas. Reports on terrorism trials and allegations of human rights abuses appeared as the results of the “law” keyword searches. The content of “law” reports also included the legality of the death penalty, refugee claims, and extraditions pertaining to alleged Uzbek terrorists.

Figure 2. Framing Predictions for Internet News Sources

	Domestic	Near-Abroad	Foreign
Media Agency	Republic of Uzbekistan’s Portal of the State Authority; Uzbekistan National News Agency	ITAR-TASS; Izvestia; Rossiiskaia Gazeta	British Broadcasting Corporation; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
Prediction	Emphasis on personal security threat posed by terrorism	Emphasis on regional security threat posed by terrorism and the Islamist threat	Emphasis on the broader implications including War on Terror and human rights abuses
Predicted Keywords	Extremist; Security	Extremist; Security; Fundamentalist	Security; Law

Figure 2 illustrates the predictions derived from the above hypothesis. It is predicted that domestic, near-abroad, and foreign Internet reporting will all feature reports categorised under “terror” and therefore I exclude this keyword from the predictions. For domestic Internet reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan, it is predicted that reports will emphasise the personal security threat posed by terrorism. Terrorism erodes our sense of security at individual and community levels. A government may exploit these feelings of insecurity through increased security measures. The government also gains from a popular backlash against terrorist organisations and citizens’ fear of political instability. I predict the keyword “security,” based on the security concerns generated by terrorism, including a threat to personal security and the need for increased security efforts and agreements to combat the threat of terrorism. I also predict the keyword “extremist” because it represents a conceptualisation of terrorism as a deviation from normal behaviour. It is difficult for the Uzbek government to play up the Islamist threat domestically because of the potential alienation that may result. Thus, extremism may serve as a substitute when discussing the potential for terrorism motivated by radical Islamism.

Near-abroad Internet reporting is likely to focus on the regional security threat posed by terrorism in Uzbekistan and may conceptualise it in terms of a broader Islamist threat. Such an understanding of terrorism in Uzbekistan takes into consideration the domestic terrorism issues faced in Russia. I predict use of the keyword “security” as a reflection of Russian concerns over regional security. I additionally predict the keywords “extremist” and “fundamentalist” because of the association between terrorism and an Islamist threat, a view that prevails in Russian domestic and regional security rhetoric. This view is also linked to understandings of the security environments in Chechnya and Afghanistan which deeply affect security in Russia and Russia’s near-abroad.

I predict that foreign Internet reporting will focus on the broader implications of terrorism in Uzbekistan. This includes Uzbekistan’s participation in the War on Terror. Therefore, I predict the keyword “security” to indicate discussions of this aspect of Uzbek government policy. Additionally, I anticipate more critical reports from the foreign Internet press, including stories on alleged human rights abuses resulting from anti-terrorism operations. I predict use of the keyword “law” to reflect a focus on international law and norms in relation to terrorism in Uzbekistan.

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the total number of keyword search results according to each agency and to each keyword. The relevant results obtained by filtering the overall results are shown below the overall number and indicated in bold. Table 1 displays the number of reports obtained for the five English-language media agencies. Table 2 lists the same results for the three Russian-language media agencies. In both sets of results, although a high number of reports were initially obtained, after a manual filtering process, the number of reports was significantly reduced. The sample size of the relevant reports for the five keywords varied according to the keyword, the media agency, and the language of the report.

Table 1. English-Language Keyword Search Results (January 1999 - December 2005)

	Domestic		Near-Abroad	Foreign		Total Reports
	GOV	UZA	ITAR-TASS	BBC ^a	RFE ^b	
Terror*	374 6	90 70	125 ^c 26	710 63	161 29	1460 194
Extremist	2 2	10 2	191 79	333 71	2 1	538 155
Security	32 12	96 64	203 [`] 16	747 [`] 42	57 5	1135 139
Law	36 0	79 9	109 [`] 4	349 [`] 18	13 4	586 35
Fundamentalist	0 0	2 0	14 8	59 11	0 0	75 19
Total Agency Reports	444 20	277 145	642 133	2198 205	233 39	

NOTE: Bold numbers represent the number of relevant reports obtained after a manual filtering process

Table 2. Russian-Language Keyword Search Results (January 1999 - December 2005)

	Domestic	Near-Abroad		Total Reports
	UZA	Izvestia	Rossiiskaia Gazeta	
Terror* Террор	212 179	361 86	213 65	788 330
Extremist Экстремист	50 19	61 16	31 6	142 41
Security Безопасност*	48 30	341 68	216 47	605 145
Law ^d законодательств*	252 83	66 5	69 4	387 92
Fundamentalist фундаменталист	5 1	0 0	0 0	5 1
Total Agency Reports	567 312	829 175	529 122	

^a Search results were presented according to relevance as determined by the search engine. Only those listed by the search engine at 50% relevance or above were displayed.

^b Keyword + Uzbekistan generated more results than Uzbekistan + keyword using the website search engine.

^c ` Indicates that search results were obtained by the addition of “keyword + domestic.”

^d законодательство (legislation) is a more specific term than “law” in Russian, закон, and was favoured because of this specificity.

Understanding the Word: Analysis

The differences in sample size and relevance indicated above suggest that English and Russian data be analysed separately. Tables 3 and 4 provide a distribution of each agency's reports according to keyword. The percentages indicate the proportion of reports by a particular agency classified under each keyword and allow for a controlled comparison across agencies. The analysis that follows is based on a 10% threshold for a keyword to be considered significant, with an important exception that is discussed below. I predicted that domestic reporting would centre on the keywords "extremist" and "security," for the reasons outlined above. This prediction was valid for both GOV and UZA for the keyword "security," but less valid for "extremist" with only 10% of GOV reports classified under this keyword.

Table 3. Proportion of English-Language Keyword Reports by Agency

	Domestic		Near- Abroad	Foreign	
	GOV	UZA	ITAR- TASS	BBC	RFE
Terror*	30%	48.3%	19.6%	30.7%	74.4%
Extremist	10%	1.4%	59.4%	34.6%	2.6%
Security	60%	44.1%	12%	20.5%	12.8%
Law	0%	6.2%	3%	8.8%	10.2%
Fundamentalist	0%	0%	6%	5.4%	0%
Total Agency Reports	100% N=20	100% N=145	100% N=133	100% N=205	100% N=39

Table 4. Proportion of Russian-Language Keyword Reports by Agency

	Domestic	Near-Abroad	
	UZA.UZ	Izvestia	Rossiiskaia Gazeta
Terror* Террор	57.4%	49.1%	53.3%
Extremist Экстремист	6.1%	9.1%	4.9%
Security Безопасност*	9.6%	38.9%	38.5%
Law законодательств*	26.6%	2.9%	3.3%
Fundamentalist фундаменталист	0.3%	0%	0%
Total Agency Reports	100% N=312	100% N=175	100% N=122

As strong evidence supporting the “extremist” prediction for near-abroad Internet reporting, ITAR-TASS conclusively framed terrorism in Uzbekistan in terms of extremism with the highest proportion of relevant reports, at almost 60% of all ITAR-TASS reports. However, the BBC also has a high proportion of reports classified under the keyword “extremist,” almost 35%. This was not predicted and indicates that there may be less differentiation between foreign and near-abroad reporting than anticipated. The prediction that near-abroad reports would focus on “security” is also validated by the data.

As indicated in Table 3, there appears to be relatively equal framing of reporting on terrorism in terms of “law.” My prediction of a foreign emphasis on “law” is supported by RFE and to a lesser degree by BBC reporting. Although both agencies’ “law” reports are near the 10% threshold, the even lesser focus on “law” in the reports of the other three media agencies points to a greater significance than the low proportion obtained represents.

The use of the keyword “fundamentalist” in reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan is seen exclusively in BBC and ITAR-TASS reports. The relationship between “fundamentalist” and BBC was not predicted, and may reflect a turn towards language popularised in North America. However, the ITAR-TASS reports weakly support the predictions made for near-abroad reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan. As the Russian-language results further indicate, use of this term does not characterise Internet reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan. Russian-language “fundamentalist” results did not support the predictions indicated in Figure 2 and demonstrate that this term was not relevant to Russian-language reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan from a domestic or near-abroad perspective.

The Russian-language data indicated in Table 4 show mixed results regarding the predictions made in Figure 2. There is a more even relationship between domestic and near-abroad reporting on extremism in the Russian-language results and this may indicate

greater overall similarities in Russian-language reporting. The prediction of a focus on extremism in domestic and near-abroad reporting on terrorism in Uzbekistan is weakly reflected in the results. With regard to “security” predictions for all three agencies, the near-abroad focus in Russian-language Internet reporting is much stronger than the domestic focus with only 9.6% of UZA reports classified under this keyword. The results for “law” are very surprising as it was anticipated that an insignificant proportion of reports would fall under this keyword for domestic and near-abroad reporting. The 26.6% of UZA reports classified under “law” may reflect differences in English and Russian terminology because a similar result is not obtained in UZA’s English-language reports. The insignificant near-abroad focus on law is not surprising given the traditional neglect of such issues in the Russian media. Overall, Russian-language data did not support domestic predictions and showed mixed results with respect to near-abroad reporting predictions as “security” emerged as an important term while “extremist” did not.

The Power of the Word: Conclusions

A survey of Internet news reports on terrorism in Uzbekistan offers competing perspectives on recent events. The success of my predictions varied based on language but overall, the results supported a differentiation in the framing of terrorism by Internet news reporting. The choice of a variety of representative media agencies proved important as the results illustrated differences in the relative focus on reporting on Uzbekistan, within and across the regional divides. A more in-depth analysis could be gained through the inclusion of Uzbek language sources which remains the primary language of the majority of the population. More elaborate analyses are required to determine whether the accessibility of information in Uzbekistan, combined with these differences, actually shapes public perceptions of the domestic terrorist threat. The results of this study largely support the contention that access to such materials is important for promulgation of diverse opinions on terrorism in Uzbekistan.

The Internet, and the access to competing opinions that it provides, is helping to break the silence that characterises government-controlled media in Uzbekistan. Unfortunately, it is media agencies from outside the region that are most vocal in their opposition to the government’s interpretation of events. It is also these agencies that are being forced from Uzbekistan. Increased government regulation of Internet usage and content in Uzbekistan would further jeopardise the limited press freedoms and information exchange currently operating in the country. It remains unclear to what degree individuals within Uzbekistan have access to the reports and media agencies analysed in this study.

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¹⁸ Reilly, 2

¹⁹ Anderson, 30.

²⁰ Conway, 2.

²¹ Anderson, 25.

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²³ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *The Advent of Netwar*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996)

²⁴ See Weimann.

²⁵ Anderson, 31.

²⁶ Anderson, 25.

²⁷ Gomez, 2.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

²⁹ Cleaver, 637.

³⁰ "Uzbekistan." *World Factbook, 2006*. (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs, 2006) Online. <<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uz.html>> (accessed 5 April 2006).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Although the omission of Uzbek language reports lessens the number of domestic media agencies to be analysed, the absence of a comprehensive Uzbek language media search engine and the limited number of Uzbek language news reports published electronically by media agencies outside of Uzbekistan did not permit the inclusion of Uzbek language news reports on terrorism.

³⁴ Kolko et al., 4-5.

³⁵ The ability of the government to control public life in Uzbekistan under the veil of security measures is based on Article 33 of 1992 Constitution which holds that, "all citizens shall have the right to engage in public life by holding rallies, meetings, and demonstrations in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The bodies of authority shall have the right to suspend or ban such undertakings activities exclusively on the grounds of security." *Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (adopted 8 December 1992)*, Trans. University of Texas at Arlington, Online, <<http://www.uta.edu/cpsees/UZBEKCON.htm>> (accessed 16 December 2005).

³⁶ Reporters Without Borders, "Uzbekistan," *Internet Under Surveillance, 2004*, Online, <http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=10687&Valider=OK> Accessed 22 October 2006.

³⁷ Kolko et al., 7.

³⁸ Reporters Sans Frontiers claims that, "the state security police (NSS) sometimes order ISPs to temporarily block access to opposition sites such as www.birlik.net and political or religious ones such as www.centrasia.ru, www.uzbekistanerk.org, www.muslimuzbekistan.com and www.uzbekistanerk.org. They have also blocked www.hushmail.com, which offers encrypted e-mail service." See Reporters Sans Frontiers "Internet Under Surveillance" Reports available through www.rsf.org for more details. This author has no way of verifying this information but notes that if this is true, the censorship capabilities of the government extend beyond its control over the .UZ internet country code.

³⁹ *The Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan*, Trans. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Online, 7 September 2005, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/>> Article 155.

⁴⁰ "Timeline: Uzbekistan," *BBC News Online*, 27 December 2004, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1295881.stm>> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁴¹ Fiona Hill, "Central Asia and the Caucasus: The Impact of the War on Terror," *Nations in Transit: Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia*, (Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2003), 41

⁴² While overall support totals later declined, from 2002 to 2005 Uzbekistan received an average of almost \$70 million in security assistance per year.

⁴³ "US Confirms Uzbek Base Departure," *BBC News Online*, 27 September 2005, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4288280.stm>> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁴⁴ For further details on US-Uzbek cooperation see *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2002*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. State Department, 2003) Online, <<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2002/>> 36; Jonathan Beale, "US Threat to Withhold Uzbek Aid," *BBC News Online*, 14 July 2005, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4681479.stm>> (accessed 30 April 2006).

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⁴⁶ The BBC also provides news reports in Russian and Uzbek. However, this material has not been included in the present study.

⁴⁷ *Eastview Universal Database of Russian Newspapers (UDB-COM)* Online Product Details for Izvestia, accessed via <<http://dlib.eastview.com.content.lib.utexas.edu:2048/sources/publication.jsp?id=518>>

⁴⁸ Ibid., Online Product Details for Rossiiskaia Gazeta accessed via <<http://dlib.eastview.com.content.lib.utexas.edu:2048/sources/publication.jsp?id=617>>

⁴⁹ For all five keywords, reports that involved references to the IMU were eliminated if they discussed events outside of the territory of Uzbekistan. Although IMU attacks in Kyrgyzstan affected the security situation in Uzbekistan, the attacks largely fell outside of the Uzbek government's purview. Included, however, were reports on the Uzbek government's military activities in neighbouring countries as these activities were conceived of as part of Uzbekistan's struggle against terrorism. All references to drugs and drug trafficking that did not include additional references to terrorism were excluded from analysis. While drug trafficking has important links with trans-national terrorism in Central Asia, particularly with regard to the financing of terrorist organisations, efforts to reduce drug trafficking have addressed it as an

independent phenomenon and I also take this position. References to elections were also excluded as they largely pertained to OSCE electoral monitoring missions in Uzbekistan and no terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan have occurred directly prior to or following parliamentary or presidential elections.