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# Uzbekistan: The Senate adopts constitutional amendments

On 25 March, the upper chamber of the Uzbek Parliament adopted a package of amendments to the constitution, which implemented the principles contained in a paper by President Islam Karimov entitled 'A concept for further deepening democratisation and constructing a civil society' (published on 12 November last year). The most important changes are strengthening the role of parliament and of political parties. These amendments do not limit the prerogatives of the President, who retains full authority over the country; however, they will probably have a significant impact on the balance of power within the ruling elite, who are jockeying for position in light of the growing problem of who will succeed Karimov, who is 73 years old.

The changes to the constitution establish the formation of a government on the basis of a parliamentary majority, the introduction of a mechanism for a vote of no confidence, and periodic reports from the government to parliament. They also oblige the government to ensure that the legal acts adopted by parliament are implemented smoothly. These amendments will come into force upon receiving the president's signature. Compared to the current state of affairs, these constitutional amendments will undermine the position of the prime minister (who has hitherto been nominated by the president, and only approved by parliament), and increase parliament's role as an arena of political rivalry.

The constitutional reform which the president has initiated seems to have three main objectives: improving the external image of Uzbekistan, weakening the position of the prime minister (the current head of government, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has held office for the last eight years), and above all, transferring the intensifying rivalries within the ruling elite to parliament. This will allow the president to control and manage the struggle among the various cliques, and may also be the start of a settlement to the increasingly problematic issue of the succession in Uzbekistan. <mmat>