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## **Module 6. Central Asia**

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# Module 6. Central Asia

## Overview

### Central Asia

#### **Five independent republics**

There are OSCE missions in each of these five independent republics of Central Asia:

- Kazakhstan
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Tajikistan

All these republics are modern creations. Soviet officials brought them into existence as union republics of the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s, drawing the boundaries between them to correspond roughly with the pattern of ethnic settlement. These boundaries do not correspond either to natural or to traditional cultural divisions, nor do they correspond to the borders of states that existed before the Soviet period.

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES OF CENTRAL ASIA



#### **Natural**

Central Asia has four basic types of natural landscape:

**divisions**

- Northern Kazakhstan is steppe-- that is, open grassland. Further south, the steppe gradually turns into semi-desert scrub and finally into desert.
- Desert covers most of Turkmenistan and much of Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan.
- The fertile areas of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and southern Kazakhstan are saved from the desert by being close to a big river (the Syr Darya, the Amu Darya, or the Zeravshan) or a big canal (the Kara Kum Canal in southern Turkmenistan). One such area is the Ferghana Valley, which extends from eastern Uzbekistan into northern Tajikistan and southwestern Kyrgyzstan.
- To the east and southeast, mountains occupy most of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as the southeastern fringes of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

**LANDSCAPES OF CENTRAL ASIA**



**Cultural divisions**

**Nomadic or Settled Cultures**

The oldest division was that between the nomadic herders of the steppe and desert and the settled farmers and city-dwellers of the river valleys and oases. Nomads traveled with their livestock—sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and camels—in search of water and new pasture. (In addition, there was a third intermediate way of life. Many mountain dwellers migrated between high summer pastures and protected winter pastures at lower altitudes.)

Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen were traditionally nomadic, while Tajiks were settled. Uzbeks

too were originally nomadic, but have been settled since the 16th century.

#### **Turkic and Persian influences**

A second old division is that between people of Turkic origin and language and people belonging to Persian culture. All the languages of Central Asia belong to the Turkic family except for Tajik, which is close to Persian.

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#### ***Russian and European***

The 19th and 20th centuries brought Russian and European cultural influences into Central Asia. This gave rise to new divisions within each ethnic group. Those who have been deeply affected by European culture are divided from those who remain loyal to tradition, while those attached to European culture in its Russian-Soviet form are divided from those more influenced by the West. So far the Russian language has retained its position as the main common language used in inter-ethnic communication.

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## **States Before the Soviet Period**

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#### ***Transoxiana***

The nomadic peoples had tribal leaders, but they did not have states in the modern sense. However, the core area of Central Asia-- that is, the land along and between the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya Rivers that used to be called Transoxiana—is home to an ancient civilization that has known many kingdoms and empires. These states were generally based on dynastic loyalty, not ethnic identity.

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#### ***Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand***

In the period preceding the Russian conquest, there were three states, ruled from the cities of Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand. Although all these cities are situated in present-day Uzbekistan, the territories controlled by the states straddled the borders of neighboring states.

When Czarist Russia conquered these parts of Central Asia in the 19th century, the Khivan Khanate and the Bukharan Emirate were left in place as Russian protectorates. Only the Kokand Khanate was destroyed (in 1876). The Khivan Khanate and the Bukharan Emirate were abolished in the early 1920s, when the Soviet regime redrew the map of Central Asia to the pattern it still has today.

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#### ***The impact of "national delimitation"***

This Soviet redrawing of the map, known as the process of "national delimitation," involved two kinds of decisions. First, it had to be decided which ethnic groups would receive their own union republic, and which would get only an autonomous republic.

At the initial stage, only the Kazakhs, Turkmen, and Uzbeks had union republics, while the other Central Asian peoples had to make do with autonomous republics: the Kyrgyz within the RSFSR (Russia), the Tajiks within Uzbekistan, and the Karakalpaks within Kazakhstan and later Uzbekistan. The Tajik autonomous republic was upgraded to a union republic in 1929, followed by the Kyrgyz autonomous republic in 1936, while the Karakalpaks never got a union republic of their own.

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***Borders roughly fixed along ethnic settlement lines***

Second, the borders between the new republics had to be fixed. This was done in a way that corresponded roughly with the pattern of ethnic settlement. It was impossible to make the correspondence exact, because many areas were ethnically mixed. For example, the mixed Uzbek-Tajik areas in south-central and southeastern Uzbekistan remained within Uzbekistan even though they included Bukhara and Samarkand, the traditional centers of Tajik culture. Many Tajiks argue that this is why the Tajiks failed to develop a cohesive national identity, which might have saved them from the tragedy of civil war.

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***Inter-ethnic tensions***

In several other places—southern Kazakhstan, eastern Turkmenistan, northern Tajikistan, and southwestern Kyrgyzstan—substantial Uzbek populations remained outside Uzbekistan. In southwestern Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz-Uzbek tensions exploded in 1990 into large-scale ethnic violence. By establishing political units on a mono-ethnic basis in a region where various ethnic groups often live side by side, the Soviet process of national delimitation sowed the seeds of today's inter-ethnic tensions.

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## International Organizations

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***Central Asian states belong to many international organizations***

Central Asian states belong to many international organizations that promote cooperation in the economic, security, and other spheres. These organizations provide them with international links pointing in many different directions:

- The United Nations provides links with all countries.
- The OSCE provides links with European countries and with the U.S. and Canada.
- The Partnership for Peace provides links with NATO.
- The CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and its associated groupings—in particular, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty—provide links with Russia and other post-Soviet states.
- The GUUAM grouping (Georgia--Ukraine--Uzbekistan--Azerbaijan--Moldova) links CIS member states opposed to Russia's domination of the post-Soviet region.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization links all the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan with China and Russia.
- The Turkic Union links all the states except Tajikistan with Turkey.
- The Economic Cooperation Organization provides links with Turkey and Iran.
- Some organizations link the Central Asian states only with one another—for example, the Inter-State Coordinating Commission for Water Resources and the Central Asian Economic Community (all states except Turkmenistan).

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***Ties to both Russia and NATO***

Central Asian states have security ties both with Russia and with NATO.

They rely (to varying degrees) on Russian assistance in border defense, and participate in the CIS air defense system.

At the same time, they receive assistance from NATO in reforming, equipping, and training their armed forces. For example, a joint Kazakh-Uzbek-Kyrgyz peacekeeping battalion, known as

Centrasbat, has been trained within the framework of NATO's Partnership for Peace program. They also provided use of their airspace and facilities for the deployment of U.S. forces during the post-September 11, 2001 war in Afghanistan.

A few Central Asian countries have security ties with China.

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## Caspian Oil

### Oil in the Caspian Sea

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#### ***Oil deposits***

In the 1990s, substantial oil deposits were discovered under the Caspian Sea.

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#### ***Oil extraction***

Oil extraction is most advanced in two parts of the sea:

- The area near the port of Atyrau, Kazakhstan in the northeastern part of the Caspian
- The area east of Baku, Azerbaijan, in the southwestern part of the Caspian

Oil extraction is also being developed off the Caspian coasts of Russia and Turkmenistan-- although for Turkmenistan gas is more important.

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#### ***Two disputes***

Disputes of two kinds have arisen among the countries involved in developing Caspian oil.

- One concerns whether and how the Caspian seabed should be divided up among the five coastal states-- Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran.
  - The other concerns the routes to be used to get the oil out for sale on the world market.
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#### ***Disputes over the southern seabed***

The main dispute is between Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Iran over division of the southern part of the seabed. Both Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan lay claim to some oilfields situated midway between their coasts, while Iran wants a bigger share than its neighbors are willing to let it have. In July 2001, an Iranian gunboat challenged two Azerbaijani vessels surveying for oil in the contested area.

In May 2003, Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the division of the northern and central parts of the seabed. The agreement was criticized strongly by Turkmenistan and Iran. An agreement between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan is reportedly close.

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## Getting the Oil Out

### **Existing oil pipeline routes**

In the Soviet period, oil from Azerbaijan was pumped to Russia via Chechnya (Baku to Grozny, then further northwest). A section of pipeline bypassing Chechnya has been added, so that Russia's oil supply should no longer be hostage to what happens in Chechnya. A new section west to the port of Novorossiisk on the Black Sea coast has also been completed, enabling Russia to export oil from Azerbaijan. A connecting east-west link is under construction that will enable Russia to export Tengiz oil from Atyrau (Kazakhstan) out of Novorossiisk as well. From Novorossiisk tankers can ship the oil across the Black Sea, through the straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles) into the Mediterranean Sea, and then either through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean or through the Suez Canal to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

CASPIAN OIL; GETTING IT OUT



### **Development of southern alternative export routes**

Meanwhile, the West is promoting the development of alternative export routes further to the south that do not go through Russia. A pipeline from Baku through Tbilisi to Supsa, a port on Georgia's Black Sea coast, is already in use. But exporting oil out of Supsa is only a temporary expedient. Agreement has been reached on the construction of a pipeline from Tbilisi directly to Turkey's Mediterranean coast at Ceyhan, and construction began in September 2002. There has also been talk of an underwater pipeline from Atyrau to Baku to provide access to the southern route for Kazakh oil.

### **Alternative export route**

A third alternative exists to routes through Russia and through Georgia. A pipeline could be built even further south to connect the oil fields in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to Turkey through Iran. This might make sense from the economic point of view but reliance on Iran has been

**farther south** strongly opposed by the United States.

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**Economic and geopolitical rivalry**

The choice between the northern export route through Novorossiisk and the southern route through Supsa and eventually Ceyhan has been the object of a certain economic and geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West.

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## Over-fishing and Pollution

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**Depletion of fish, pollution from oil development**

Long before oil or gas was found beneath the seabed, the sea was a rich source of fish and caviar. These resources have been severely depleted by over-fishing. Pollution from oil development poses new risks. Leaks from underwater pipelines would be especially harmful to the Caspian ecosystem.

In November 2003, all five coastal states concluded the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment, the purpose of which is to prevent, reduce, and control pollution of the Caspian Sea.

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## Central Asia's Water

### The drying up of the Aral Sea

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**Water: A source of competition and conflict**

Central Asia needs water even more than it needs oil. Water, like oil, is an important source of competition and conflict.

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**Why is the Aral Sea is drying up?**

The largest body of water in Central Asia used to be the Aral Sea. But the Aral Sea is almost gone. It is drying up. Why?

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Some scientists say a major water source in Central Asia, the Aral Sea, probably has less than 10 years of life left.

OSCE

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**Water source**

Central Asia gets almost all its water from the mountains on the region's eastern flank. In Kyrgyzstan, southeastern Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan abundant rainfall, thawing snowfields, and huge glaciers feed the streams that flow into the two great rivers, the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya. These rivers and their tributaries flow west across southern Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, and previously emptied into the Aral Sea. Now the inflow from the Syr Darya is much reduced, while the Amu Darya no longer reaches the sea at all.

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**Vast network of irrigation canals supporting cotton monoculture**

The Aral Sea receives only whatever water is left after evaporation, seepage, and human consumption have taken their share. The biggest consumer of water is the vast network of irrigation canals required for the cultivation of cotton. For decades Soviet central planners demanded more and more cotton, leading to the neglect of other branches of agriculture.

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**Dam to preserve northern section of the sea**

Kazakhstan is now building a seven-mile-long dam to enclose a northern section of the sea, which it is hoped will be preserved by the inflow from the Syr Darya. The rest of the sea will then dry up completely.

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**Aral Sea lost 80% of its volume since**

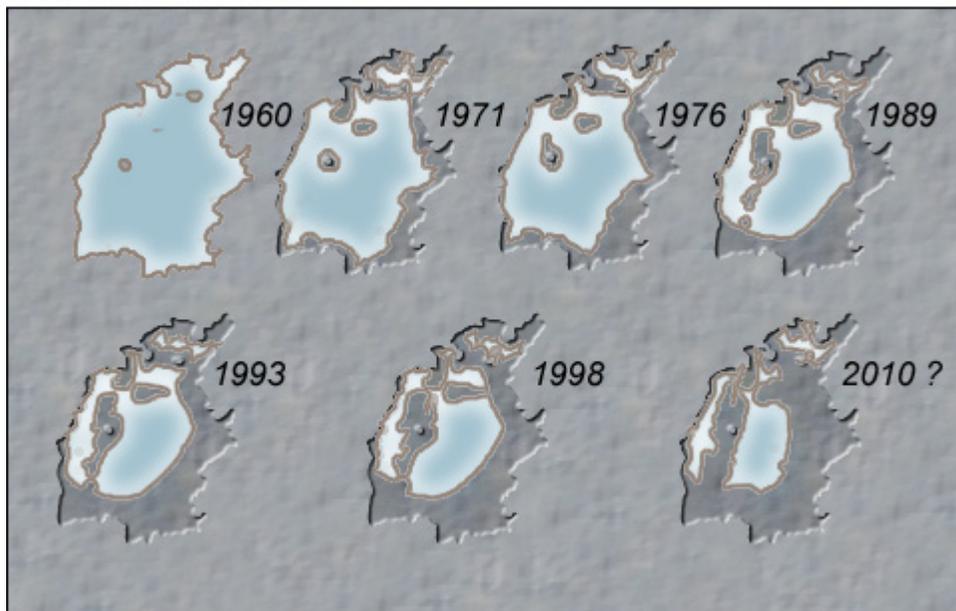
This cotton monoculture used up so much water that the rivers almost dried up before reaching the Aral Sea. Since 1960, the Aral Sea has received so little water that it has lost 80% of its volume. All that remains of the original sea are a few shallow stretches, surrounded by the exposed seabed. The wind lifts the dry dust of the seabed—which contains poisonous fertilizer

**1960**

and pesticide residue—and carries it in immense quantities over long distances, ruining the health and livelihood of people living in its path.

At various places on the exposed seabed the explorer comes across "ship graveyards" of what were once the fishing fleets of bustling ports.

THE SHRINKING ARAL SEA



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***Mountain glaciers melting as a result of global warming***

In the years since the Central Asian states became independent, the river flow has increased a little. This is partly because the area under cotton has been somewhat reduced, but the main reason appears to be that the mountain glaciers have begun to melt as a result of global warming. That means that the relief is temporary. When the glaciers melt away, less water than ever will be flowing along the rivers of Central Asia.

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***The anthrax threat***

The drying up of the Aral Sea poses the threat of the spread of spores from anthrax buried on an island in the sea where the Soviet military tested biological weapons.

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## Conflicts over Water

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***Inter-State***

Efforts have been made to improve the joint management of the region's water. In 1992 the five

**Coordinating Commission for Water Resources**

Central Asian countries set up the Interstate Coordinating Commission for Water Resources. The World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the European Union have also provided assistance.

**Disputes over water use**

Nevertheless, disputes over the use of water have already caused tensions both between and within the various countries:

- Kazakhstan has complained that Uzbekistan is not leaving enough water in the Syr Darya River to meet the needs of southern Kazakhstan.
- Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are in dispute over when water should be released from Kyrgyzstan's Toktogul reservoir. Kyrgyzstan wants to release water in the winter to provide hydroelectric power for heating, while Uzbekistan wants water in the summer for irrigation.
- Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are in dispute over a plan of Turkmenistan to divert Amu Darya waters to a large artificial lake outside its capital Ashgabat.
- The Karakalpaks of western Uzbekistan, who live closest to the Aral seabed and have been affected the worst by the drying up of the sea, resent the upstream users who deprive them of the water they need.

**Mini-Quiz**

**Which statement about Central Asia is correct?**

- boundaries correspond to natural or traditional cultural settlement
- water is not a source of conflict between states
- these states have security ties with Russia and NATO
- the development of Caspian Sea oil and export pipelines are not of international economical interest

**Kazakhstan**

**Kazakhstan at a glance**

<b>Area</b>	1,050,000 square miles
<b>Location</b>	Kazakhstan is located in the middle of the Eurasian land mass. It borders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Russia to the north and northwest</li> <li>· The Caspian Sea and Turkmenistan to the southwest</li> <li>· Uzbekistan to the south</li> <li>· Kyrgyzstan to the southeast</li> <li>· China's Xinjiang Province and Mongolia to the east</li> </ul>
<b>Climate, terrain, and natural</b>	<b>Climate</b> Northern Kazakhstan has a continental climate, with warm summers and cold winters. Temperatures rise in the south

<p><b>resources</b></p>	<p>Temperatures rise in the south.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b> Most of northern Kazakhstan is steppe, which gradually gives way as one goes south to semi-desert and then-- toward the middle part of the border with Uzbekistan—the Kyzyl Kum Desert. But in the far south are the fertile lands of the Syr Darya basin.</p> <p>As one goes east, the land rises and becomes hilly, but real mountains are found only in Kazakhstan's northeastern and southeastern corners. In the northeast are the Altai Mountains, most of which are across the border in Russia. In the southeast are the Tian Shan Mountains, most of which are across the border in China and Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>Besides the Caspian Sea and what remains of the Aral Sea in the west, a third large body of water lies wholly within Kazakhstan—the freshwater Lake Balkhash in the southeast.</p> <p><b>Natural Resources</b> Kazakhstan is rich in mineral resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Oil in the west around Atyrau</li> <li>· Coal in the north around Qaraghandy and Pavlodar</li> <li>· Deposits of many metal ores: iron, copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, uranium, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Capital</b></p>	<p>In the early years of independence the capital of Kazakhstan was its largest city, Almaty, situated in the far southeast of the country. In 1997 the capital was transferred to the more northerly city of Akmola, which in 1998 was renamed Astana. However, <a href="#">Almaty</a> has remained the commercial, intellectual, and cultural center of Kazakhstan.</p>
<p><b>Population</b></p>	<p>Just under 15 million.</p>
<p><b>Ethnic composition of the population</b></p>	<p>The ethnic composition of the population is very complex and has been changing rapidly. There are three main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Indigenous Kazakhs</li> <li>· Russian-speakers including Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, and others, concentrated in the north and northeast and in Almaty</li> <li>· Other non-European groups, including Tatars, Koreans, Uzbeks (near the border with Uzbekistan in the south), and Uighurs (near the border with the Chinese province of Xinjiang)</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Photographs of Kazakh life</a></p>
<p><b>Changing ethnic composition</b></p>	<p>In 1991, Russian-speakers accounted for 50 percent of the population, Kazakhs 40 percent, and other non-Europeans the remaining 10 percent.</p> <p>Russian-speakers are now down to 35 percent and Kazakhs up to 55 percent. The main reason for the shift is the emigration of Russian-speakers. This is also the reason why the population of Kazakhstan has fallen by over a million in the last ten years.</p>
<p><b>Kazakhs divided into Senior, Middle, and Junior Juz</b></p>	<p>Kazakhs themselves are divided into sub-groups on the basis of descent. First, they are divided into the Senior, Middle, and Junior Juz. Each Juz consists of a number of tribes, and the larger tribes are divided into clans. These identities still matter today to most Kazakhs, though they are somewhat weakened among long-urbanized Russified Kazakhs.</p> <p>Many Kazakhs live outside Kazakhstan, especially in China, Mongolia, and Turkey.</p>
<p><b>Languages</b></p>	<p>The state language is Kazakh, which belongs to the Turkic family. Russian is recognized as the language of inter-ethnic communication and may be officially used in local government.</p>
<p><b>Religion</b></p>	<p>Muslim - 47%, Russian Orthodox - 44%, Other - 9%</p>
<p><b>System of government</b></p>	<p>In form, Kazakhstan is a presidential democracy, but real power has increasingly been concentrated in the hands of the president.</p>
<p><b>President</b></p>	<p>The president of Kazakhstan since independence has been <a href="#">Nursultan Nazarbayev</a>.</p>

<b>Currency</b>	The currency of Kazakhstan is the Tenge.
<b>Standard of living</b>	GDP per capita in Kazakhstan in 2002 was about \$1,600, which is about 5 percent of the U.S. level. After a period of decline, the standard of living in Kazakhstan has started to recover.

## Basic Geography of Kazakhstan

**16 administrative units** Kazakhstan comprises 16 administrative units-- 14 provinces and the cities of Almaty and Astana.



**5 broad regions** Kazakhstan can be divided into five broad regions, although the boundaries between them are not very sharp:

- The arid semi-desert west between the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea which is sparsely populated and overwhelmingly Kazakh. The oilfields are here.
  - The steppe and uplands of the north and northeast which contain substantial industry and agriculture. Most of the Russian-speaking population is concentrated here.
  - The hilly southeast. The population in the hilly southeast is ethnically mixed.
  - The south is comprised of the Kyzyl Kum Desert and the Syr Darya basin. Climatic, economic, and social conditions here resemble those across the border in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek minority is concentrated in the south.
  - The arid semi-desert expanses of the center of Kazakhstan. Mining is the main economic activity in the center of Kazakhstan and the population is ethnically mixed.
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## Historical Background of Kazakhstan

### Kazakhstan before Russian rule

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#### ***Nomadic tribes in the 15th century***

Nomadic tribes calling themselves Kazakhs first appeared on the steppes of present-day Kazakhstan during the 15th century. According to their own folk tradition, the Kazakhs descend from a legendary founding father called Alash.

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#### ***Islamic Missionaries***

Over the centuries, missionaries from the Muslim civilization of Transoxiana brought Islam to the steppe nomads. By the time the Kazakhs took shape as an ethnic group, they were nominally Muslim, though still under the influence of their old animistic beliefs, centered on the cult of the sky god Tengri.

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#### ***Kazakh tribes were ruled by Khans***

A loose network of tribal leaders called khans and nobles or sultans, who claimed descent from Genghis Khan, ruled the Kazakh tribes. In the 16th century the tribes split up into the three juz, each led by its own khans. Each juz moved within a distinct geographical zone—the Senior Juz in the southeast, the Junior Juz in the northwest, and between the two the Middle Juz.

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#### ***Jungar raids***

In the mid-17th century, a nomadic Mongol people from the east called Jungars began raiding Kazakh lands. In the early 18th century, the Jungars occupied much of the Syr Darya basin. Rent by internal divisions, the Kazakh khans failed to repel the invasion, and appealed to Russia for protection. Although it was not Russian but Chinese armies that defeated the Jungars in the 1750s, bringing southeastern Kazakh lands for a few years under the Chinese empire, the Kazakhs were exposed to increasing Russian pressure. In the first half of the 19th century, Russia annexed the Kazakhs' lands and did away with their khans.

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## Kazakhstan Under Russian and Soviet Rule

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### ***Russian and European cultural influence***

The inflow of settlers from other parts of the Russian Empire deprived the Kazakhs of much pastureland, causing great suffering and making it increasingly difficult to sustain the nomadic way of life. Industry, and especially mining, developed. Russian and European culture began to influence Kazakh society. A new Kazakh literature and intelligentsia appeared. The first Kazakh writer of modern times was the jadid or "enlightener" Shokan Valikhanov (1835-65).

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### ***1916-1920***

During World War I, an uprising against conscription in 1916 was put down by Czarist forces, and thousands of Kazakhs fled with their livestock to China. In the wake of the Russian Revolution, a Kazakh nationalist movement called Alash Orda (named after Alash) proclaimed a short-lived independent republic. Civil war continued until 1920, when the Kazakh lands were firmly tied to Soviet Russia.

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### ***Kazakh SSR***

The Soviet regime at first gave the Kazakhs an autonomous republic within Russia. It was not until 1936 that the Kazakh Autonomous Republic became the Kazakh SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic.)

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### ***Over 40% of Kazakhs died from starvation, epidemics, and execution in the 1930s***

Between 1929 and 1932, Stalin forced the Kazakhs to give up the nomadic life and join collective farms. Many resisted and were imprisoned or shot. Famine ensued. Many more refugees fled to China. In the course of the 1930s, over 40 percent of Kazakhs died from starvation, epidemics, and executions.

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### ***Inflow of Non-Kazakhs***

In their place there came millions of non-Kazakhs. Stalin used Kazakhstan as the destination for deported Russian and Ukrainian kulaks (well-to-do peasants) as well as for peoples he deported during the Second World War—Chechens, ethnic Germans from the Volga region, and Koreans from the Russian Far East. Later, at the time of Khrushchev's Virgin Lands campaign, a new wave of Russian-speaking migrants came to cultivate the Kazakh steppe. The share of Kazakhs in the population fell from 57 percent in 1926 to 30 percent in 1959.

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### ***Kazakhstan lands used for***

A nuclear weapons test site was set up near Semipalatinsk, with dire effects on the health of the local inhabitants. Chemical weapons were tested near the River Emba in western Kazakhstan. One of the Soviet Union's two space centers (cosmodromes) was built at Baikonur in southern

***military purposes***

One of the Soviet Union's two space centers (cosmodromes) was built at Baikonur in southern Kazakhstan.

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## **Kazakhstan: from Perestroika to Independence**

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***Perestroika got off to a bad start in Kazakhstan***

In December 1986, Gorbachev replaced Dinmukhamed Kunayev, party boss in Kazakhstan throughout the Brezhnev period, with Gennady Kolbin. While Gorbachev was right in viewing him as corrupt, Kunayev was popular among Kazakhs as a Kazakh leader who cautiously promoted Kazakh culture and placed Kazakhs in many important posts. The appointment of Kolbin, an ethnic Russian with no previous connection to Kazakhstan, angered Kazakhs and set off demonstrations and riots in Almaty and other cities. The unrest was suppressed, with at least 200 deaths, and political liberalization in Kazakhstan was halted.

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***Nursultan Nazarbayev***

The situation began to change in 1989. In June, Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's Prime Minister since 1984 and a Kazakh, replaced Kolbin.

In August, a law was passed making Kazakh the state language. There appeared independent political organizations. The largest was the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement for nuclear disarmament, initiated by the Kazakh writer Olzhas Suleimenov. This movement achieved its goal of closing down the Semipalatinsk testing site.

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***Kazakhstan declared itself independent December 1991***

Unlike other Soviet republics, Kazakhstan did not declare independence immediately after the collapse of the hard-line coup in Moscow in August 1991. Nazarbayev hoped that the Soviet Union might still be saved. Only when Gorbachev resigned in December did Kazakhstan declare itself independent. In presidential elections held the same month, Nazarbayev stood unopposed and was elected by an overwhelming majority.

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## **Domestic Politics in Kazakhstan**

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***Evolved toward a presidential dictatorship***

While there remains some scope for independent political activity in Kazakhstan, the country has gradually evolved toward a presidential dictatorship. The first post-independence parliament was dissolved in 1993, and for the next two years Nazarbayev held unlimited power.

Only after the adoption by referendum in 1995 of a new constitution that greatly increased the president's powers was a new parliament elected. The same referendum extended Nazarbayev's term in office to 2000.

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***Media acquired by President's daughter***

In 1997, government control over the media was tightened. The popular newspaper Karavan was bought by supporters of the President. Much of the country's media now belongs to Dariga Nazarbayeva, the President's daughter. Remaining independent media suffer harassment and intimidation. Journalists who exposed top-level corruption involving oil money have been arrested on doubtful charges. Restrictive provisions in a draft media law currently before parliament have aroused international concern.

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***Political opposition***

Opposition parties that are considered incapable of winning power, such as the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK), are tolerated. However, action is taken to block the activity of parties that are thought to pose a serious challenge to Nazarbayev, such as the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan and the Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan (RPPK) of former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin. Unknown assailants have beaten opposition leaders. The law on political parties passed in 2002 sets such high requirements for parties' participation in elections that only 3 out of 19 parties are likely to satisfy them.

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***Presidential elections in January, 1999***

Presidential elections finally took place in January 1999. Nazarbayev won with 81 percent of the vote. His sole opponent, Serikbolsyn Abdildin of the CPK, got 12 percent. Kazhegeldin was not allowed to run, and was later charged with corruption during his time as Prime Minister. Although he took refuge abroad, he was tried in his absence in September 2001 and found guilty. The OSCE expressed doubts concerning the fairness of the trial and the impartiality of the court.

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***Parliamentary elections of October 1999***

The most recent parliamentary elections were those of October 1999. The pro-presidential Otan (Fatherland) Republican Party came in first, with 31 percent of the vote, and the CPK second with 18 percent.

Only two non-communist opposition parties were allowed to take part: the Azamat Democratic Party, which received 5 percent, and the Kazakh nationalist party Alash, which received 3 percent. Neither was able to enter parliament, for which a minimum of 7 percent is required.

There were serious irregularities in the conduct of the poll. The OSCE, which opened a center in Almaty in January 1999, commented that the election was far from meeting international standards but was nonetheless "a step toward democracy."

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***Rakhat Aliev and Dariga Nazarbayeva***

Nazarbayev's term ends in 2007. Many believed he was grooming Rakhat Aliev, head of the National Security Committee and husband of his daughter Dariga, as his successor. However, in 2001 Aliev came under criticism in parliament and was removed from his position. It is thought that the affair reflected a power struggle between the post-Soviet "old guard" and a rising generation of politicians and businessmen.

Dariga is now turning the Asar (Mutual Aid) charity that she heads into a political party with a view to contesting the forthcoming parliamentary elections. There is speculation that she may be positioning herself to succeed her father.

## Ethnic Relations in Kazakhstan

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### ***Real power is concentrated in Kazakh hands***

Kazakhstan is officially viewed both as the homeland of the ethnic Kazakhs (including those living abroad, who are encouraged to return) and as a state of all "Kazakhstanis" regardless of ethnic origin.

In fact, while members of other ethnic groups still occupy some important government positions, real power is concentrated in Kazakh hands.

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### ***Ethnic balance***

Time is working against the Russians in Kazakhstan. The ethnic balance is shifting in favor of the Kazakhs as more and more Russians leave the country.

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### ***Kazakh-Uzbek tensions are a potential problem***

Kazakh-Uzbek tensions are a potential problem in southern Kazakhstan, especially in connection with tense relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

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### ***Juz, tribal, and clan divisions a significant source of tension***

There have been local political confrontations along clan lines, and party politics interacts with juz rivalry. The ruling regime is widely perceived as a form of Senior Juz domination, while the opposition is seen as representing Middle Juz interests.

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## Foreign Relations in Kazakhstan

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### ***Actively involved in integration efforts***

Of all the post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan was the one that least wanted full independence. Nazarbayev feared that without the supporting framework of the Soviet Union a country as diverse as Kazakhstan might not be able to hold together. Once the USSR had disappeared, he campaigned to transform the CIS into an effective "Eurasian Union" of post-Soviet states. While this idea was eventually abandoned, Kazakhstan was actively involved in founding the Union of the Four, the precursor of the Eurasian Economic Community created in 2000 (the founding members being Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan). At the same time, Kazakhstan has tried to build a Central Asian Union with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

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***Kazakhstan cooperation with Russia***

Most important for Kazakhstan is cooperation with Russia, still the country's main trading partner. Kazakhstan has agreed to extend the Russian lease on the Baikonur Space Center up to 2050 despite Russia's reluctance to pay rent. In February 2003 Nazarbayev announced that Kazakhstan would continue to route its oil exports through Russian territory and in January 2004 Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to pursue joint exploration and development of Caspian Sea resources.

However, tensions remain beneath the surface. Kazakhstan has tried to reduce its dependence on Russia—for example, by constructing an independent energy supply system. Kazakhstan seeks to withdraw from the joint CIS air defense system.

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***Penetration of extremist Islamic organizations into southern Kazakhstan***

One goal that the governments of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan share is stopping the growth of Islamic extremism in Central Asia. Although Islamic extremism poses a smaller threat to Kazakhstan than to Uzbekistan, extremist Islamist organizations have penetrated from Uzbekistan into southern Kazakhstan. But this common interest has not prevented tensions between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan over border, water, and other issues. Their relations were especially strained by an incursion of Uzbekistan troops across the disputed border in February 2000. In 2002 a compromise was reached on the border issue.

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***Kazakhstan maintains correct relations with China***

Kazakhstan has taken care to maintain correct relations with China. There is considerable trade between the two countries, and border issues have been resolved in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (including China, Russia, and the Central Asian states bordering on China). Nevertheless, Kazakhstan has various grievances against China, such as the nuclear testing at the Lop Nor site not far across the border in Xinjiang Province.

China is to finance an \$800 million oil pipeline to connect the oilfields in western Kazakhstan to northwestern China. Construction is to begin in mid-2004.

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***Cross-border ethnic ties***

Cross-border ethnic ties are a source of potential conflict. A million Kazakhs live in Xinjiang, while 200,000 Uighurs live in eastern Kazakhstan. In order to placate China, the Kazakhstan government remains silent about the mistreatment of ethnic kin in Xinjiang, and does not allow Uighurs in Kazakhstan to assist the separatist movement of Uighurs in Xinjiang.

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***Kazakhstan and the West***

Kazakhstan's relations with the West got off to a good start. Unlike Ukraine, Kazakhstan agreed early on to give up the Soviet nuclear weapons on its territory. Kazakhstan and the West share the strategic goals of reducing the country's dependence on Russia and warding off the threat of Islamic extremism.

Exploitation of Kazakhstan's oil wealth requires cooperation with Western oil companies. But there are problems in the relationship. Western concern about the human rights situation in Kazakhstan irritates the Nazarbayev government.

There have also been disputes between the Kazakhstan government and Western companies managing local enterprises and utilities, stemming from disappointment with the performance of these companies and their lack of investment in Kazakhstan. Companies are now required to

rely on local products, labor, and contractors.

Kazakhstan has considered following the example of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in offering the US military bases on its territory, but is anxious about the harm that this may do to its relations with Russia and China.

Recently Kazakhstan has begun to reorient its military ties toward NATO and the US, from which it receives military aid. Equipment to modernize its air defenses is likely to be purchased in the West. Kazakhstan sent a small contingent of troops to Iraq.

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## **OSCE**

An OSCE Center was opened in Almaty in 1999 to promote OSCE principles and commitments in all three dimensions, and promote regional cooperation.

[OSCE Centre in Almaty.](#)

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## **Kazakhstan Culture**

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### ***Capital cities***

Since 1997 the capital of Kazakhstan has been Astana (formerly Akmola), a medium-sized town on the windswept plains in the north of the country. However, the former capital Almaty remains Kazakhstan's main commercial and cultural center and its only city with a population over one million. Most foreign embassies have remained in Almaty so far.

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### ***Almaty***

Almaty is located in the country's southeastern corner. Towering over the city are the snow-topped Mountains of Heaven (Tienshan), over which lie neighboring Kyrgyzstan and China. Unfortunately, the mountains trap the traffic smog, so you may not be able to see them clearly through the haze. To get a better view, climb the foothills to the new suburb of Medeu, where Almaty's wealthy live. Medeu hosts the Voice of Asia Rock Festival every August and is home to the world's largest ice skating rink.

Most of Almaty was developed in the late Soviet period. The city is divided into rectangular blocks by two sets of long parallel streets running east-west and north-south. There are many tree-lined boulevards and parks, one of which hosts the Great National Kazakh Circus. The recently created business centers, luxury hotels, restaurants, night clubs, and big stores like the Sum supermarket cluster in the city center. The outlying residential areas consist mainly of five-story cement buildings built around large yards, often with trees and children's playgrounds. Among the few historical buildings are the small wooden Zenkov Cathedral in Panfilov Park and the nearby Arasan Baths.

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### ***Bazaars***

Besides the ordinary stores, local goods as well as those from China and the West are sold from thousands of street kiosks and a number of open-air bazaars. The biggest outdoor market is the huge Chinese Bazaar (also called Barakholka), which occupies several fields on the city outskirts. One field is devoted solely to selling used cars.

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## Geography

Kazakhstan is large but sparsely populated with many different landscapes and ways of life. The countryside around Almaty is fertile, but northwest into the middle of the country lies a vast and monotonous expanse of semi-desert scrub, interrupted only by metal-ore and coal mining settlements.

Beyond lie the decaying industrial cities of northern Kazakhstan and the open plains. In the south, near the border with Uzbekistan, is the Kyzyl Kum (Red Sand) Desert and the irrigated lands along the banks of the Syr Darya River. And in the west of the country, arid semi-desert pastureland -- and the booming oilfields on the Caspian Sea coast.

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## Nomads

The Kazakhs used to live as nomads, migrating with the seasons in family groups (auls) from one pasture to another. The auls joined together to form clans, tribes, and hordes (juz), all based on common descent. Most Kazakhs are still aware of belonging to these groups, though how important they are in everyday life is unclear. But people in Kazakhstan -- not only ethnic Kazakhs -- do very much rely on informal support networks of friends and relatives to survive under conditions of economic disarray and near-universal corruption.

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## Muslim holidays

Important Muslim holy days include Eid-ul-Fitr, the celebration marking the end of Ramadan, and Eid-ul-Azha, the feast of sacrifice. But the spring festival of Nauruz (New Days) is by far the biggest holiday, with traditional games and sports, music and drama festivals. Some of the sports are played on horseback. *Kökpar* is a kind of polo using a headless goat carcass instead of a ball, while *qyz quu* is a boy-girl horse chase.

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## Cuisine

Traditional Kazakh cuisine relies mainly on animal products that the Kazakh nomads kept as livestock -- cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and camels. All parts are consumed. Meat is boiled to make a broth or -- together with rice and apples, apricots, raisins or prunes -- the dish called *plov*. Popular dishes are *qazy* (smoked horsemeat sausage served sliced with cold noodles) and *chebureks* (pastries stuffed with lamb and onion). There are many kinds of milk -- for example, *kumys* (fermented mare's milk), *shubat* (fermented camel's milk), *katyk* (baked sour clotted milk), and *irkit* (fermented sour milk). Tea is also drunk. Bread is eaten as flat cakes such as *boursak* (fried unleavened dough with eggs and sugar).

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## Mini-Quiz

**Continuing issues for the OSCE in Kazakhstan include all of the following except for:**

- democratization, especially respect for human rights
- elections
- pipeline politics

- implementation of OSCE principles and commitments

## Turkmenistan

### Turkmenistan at a glance

<b>Area</b>	190,000 square miles
<b>Location</b>	Turkmenistan borders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Kazakhstan to the northwest</li> <li>· The Caspian Sea to the west</li> <li>· Iran and Afghanistan to the south</li> <li>· Uzbekistan to the east and northeast</li> </ul>
<b>Climate, terrain, and natural resources</b>	<p><b>Climate</b> The climate of Turkmenistan is hot and dry.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b> Over 80 percent of the land area is taken up by the Kara Kum Desert. To the south, along the border with Iran, rise the low Kopet Mountains. Cultivation of cotton, fruit, vegetables, and grains is limited to areas irrigated by the Amu Darya River (along the northeastern border with Uzbekistan) and by the Kara Kum Canal in the south (also fed by the AMU Darya).</p> <p><b>Natural Resources</b> Turkmenistan possesses the largest deposits of natural gas in the Central Asian region, in addition to substantial deposits of oil.</p>
<b>Capital</b>	The capital of Turkmenistan is Ashgabat (sometimes spelled Ashgabad).
<b>Population</b>	About 5 million
<b>Ethnic composition of the population</b>	<p>About 78 percent of the population is Turkmen. The Turkmen are divided into 31 tribal groups, the three largest being the Teke, the Yomud, and the Ersari .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Millions of Turkmen live outside Turkmenistan, mainly in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan.</li> <li>· Russian-speakers now make up only about 6 percent of the population, concentrated mostly in Ashgabat.</li> <li>· Uzbeks, who are concentrated in the east of the country, are 9 percent of the population.</li> </ul> <p>Kazakhs, who are concentrated in the northwest near the border with Kazakhstan, make up 2 percent.</p>
<b>Language</b>	Turkmen belongs to the Turkic family of languages.
<b>Religion</b>	Muslim - 89%, Eastern Orthodox - 9%, Unknown 2%
<b>System of government</b>	Turkmenistan is a presidential dictatorship with a one party system
<b>President</b>	The president of Turkmenistan since independence has been Saparmurad Niyazov, also called Turkmenbashi, Father of the Turkmen. In December 1999, the parliament unanimously affirmed Niyazov as president for life.
<b>Currency</b>	The currency of Turkmenistan is the Manat.
<b>Standard of living</b>	GDP per capita in Turkmenistan in 2002 was about \$1,100, which is about 3 percent of the U.S. level. The standard of living in Turkmenistan has been increasing in recent years.

## Basic Geography of Turkmenistan

### Five provinces of Turkmenistan

- The five provinces of Turkmenistan coincide with economic and ecological zones, and also with the main Turkmen tribal groups. Akhal Province is in the south of the country. It includes the capital and the western section of the Kara Kum Canal, and has more industry and better infrastructure than any other province. Fertile valleys in the southern part of the province give way to semi-desert pasture further north. Most inhabitants belong to the Teke tribal group.
- Mary Province is in the southeast. It includes the fertile areas along the eastern section of the Kara Kum Canal. Most inhabitants belong to the Teke tribal group.
- Lebap Province is in the northeast, around Chardzhou. The lands along the Amu Darya River are fertile. The main tribal group is Ersari. It is here that the Uzbek minority lives.
- Tashauz Province is in the north of the country, around Tashauz. It includes fertile lands along the Amu Darya River. Most inhabitants belong to the Yomud tribal group.
- Balkan Province is situated in the west of Turkmenistan, along the Caspian Sea coast. It is mostly desert, inhabited mainly by herders of the Yomud tribal group. The Kazakh minority lives in the north of the province.



## Historical Background of Turkmenistan

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### ***Ancestry***

The Turkmen trace their ancestry to the legendary figure of Oguz-Khan, who in the distant past migrated with his lineage from Lake Issyk-Kul, far off to the east in what is now Kyrgyzstan. In fact, today's Turkmen are partly descended from mainly Persian local populations that were absorbed by the original Turkmen.

In the 11th century, the Turkmen founded the Seljuk Empire at the oasis of Merv (now Mary). From the 14th century, following the Mongol conquest, Turkmen lands came under the control of the non-Turkmen Khivan Khanate. The Turkmen nobility entered into the khans' military service.

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### ***Turkmen the last Central Asian people to be incorporated into the Russian Empire***

The Western Turkmen, who opposed the Khivan Khanate, first sought Russian protection in the mid-18th century, but only in the late 19th century did Russia conquer the area, taking Khiva in 1873 and finally defeating the Turkmen in 1881 with the storming of the great fortress at Geok-Tepe (near Ashgabat).

In 1916, the Turkmen rose up in revolt against an attempt to conscript them to fight in World War One.

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### ***Turkmen SSR established in 1924***

Under the leadership of Junayd Khan, the Turkmen expelled the Bolsheviks from Ashgabat and took over the Khivan Khanate during the weak early years of Soviet Russia. The Turkmen were independent—for the first time in several hundred years—from 1918 until 1920, when the Red Army retook Khiva. The Turkmen SSR was established in 1924.

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### ***The nomadic way of life***

When the Turkmen were forced to give up the nomadic way of life and join collective farms, there was widespread resistance. Many continued to fight the Soviet regime into the 1930s.

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### ***Industrial and cultural development***

Industrial and cultural development during the Soviet period was limited in Turkmenia (as it was then called). The country remained impoverished, backward, and dependent—a condition aggravated by imposition of the cotton monoculture.

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***Independence came as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union***

Independence to Turkmenistan came not through the action of any local political movement, but as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The apparatus of the Communist Party, renamed the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), remained in place, and the Communist Party First Secretary, Saparmurad Niyazov, became president of the new state in May 1992.

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## **Domestic Politics of Turkmenistan**

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***Power concentrated in the hands of President Niyazov***

President Niyazov appoints all ministers, provincial governors, and judges, and the general prosecutor. He heads the cabinet of ministers and chairs the Council of Defense and National Security and the Council of Elders. He has, however, entrusted leadership of the DPT to Onzhik Musayev, former director of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

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***The parliament***

The parliament has been reduced in size from 125 to 50 deputies, four-fifths of whom are members of the DPT. Niyazov has the power to disband parliament if it expresses lack of confidence in the cabinet. Moreover, the supreme representative body is not parliament but the People's Council, a very large body headed by Niyazov.

A constitution was adopted in May 1992 and amended in 1995, 1999, and 2003. There is no constitutional court.

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***Media are subject to strict state censorship and control***

There is no freedom of expression in Turkmenistan. Although freedom of speech and of the press are guaranteed in the constitution, all media are subject to strict state censorship and control. There were a few independent periodicals in the early post-independence period, but by 1994 all had been closed down. Newspapers are filled mainly with official announcements and advertising.

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***Media and human rights***

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In November 2003, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution expressing concern over the human rights situation in Turkmenistan.

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***No organized opposition inside the country***

There is no apparent organized opposition inside the country. The four major opposition groups that operate abroad united in September 2003 to form the Union of Democratic Forces of Turkmenistan. The leaders of the opposition in exile include several former government officials. Niyazov accused them of masterminding an alleged assassination attempt against him on November 25, 2002. Numerous arrests followed. There have also been sporadic spontaneous protests. In July 1995, a thousand people marched in the streets of Ashgabat to complain of shortages of bread, water, and electricity. There were two similar demonstrations in August 2002.

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## **Ethnic Relations in Turkmenistan**

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***Current and potential tensions***

A rise in discrimination against Russians has increased ethnic tensions. Most parts of the country have no significant ethnic minorities. The pressure of population on land and water may in the future give rise to tension between Turkmen and Uzbeks in Lebap Province.

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***Russians had the option of dual citizenship, but most have left***

The government made a few conciliatory gestures toward Russian-speakers, whose skills it did not want to lose too quickly. Turkmenistan was the only Central Asian country that for some years offered its Russians the option of dual citizenship. Nevertheless, by 2002 two-thirds of the Russian-speakers living in Turkmenistan at independence had left.

In April 2003 the right to dual citizenship was revoked. Russians in Turkmenistan had to decide which citizenship to opt for by June 22. While it is unclear how strictly the new rule is being enforced, the departure of the remaining Russians is likely to accelerate.

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***Tensions between different tribal groups of Turkmen***

Much more dangerous are tensions between different tribal groups of Turkmen. There have been reports of Teke officers in the army providing food only to soldiers who are fellow Teke. A struggle for power between the main tribal groups may destabilize the country in the future.

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## Foreign Relations in Turkmenistan

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### ***Declaration of the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan***

The basic principle of Niyazov's foreign policy was embodied in the Declaration of the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan, adopted by the People's Council in 1995. Turkmenistan is nominally a member of the CIS, but keeps its distance both from those member states that cooperate closely with Russia and from those that oppose Russian domination.

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### ***Bilateral ties with Russia in the economic and military spheres***

Turkmenistan retains some bilateral ties with Russia in the economic and military spheres. Above all, it still has to export its oil and gas to and through Russia -- a crucial form of dependence that it seeks eventually to overcome.

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### ***Getting the gas out***

Turkmenistan's relations with its neighbor Uzbekistan have been poor. It has a more cooperative relationship with Iran, especially in the economic field.

Turkmenistan has sought the building of a pipeline through Iran in order to export its gas without depending on Russia. This is very unlikely to happen unless normal relations are established between Iran and the United States. The U.S. has encouraged Turkmenistan to explore the alternative of building a gas pipeline across the floor of the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan. It has also supported plans to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan--the subject of a preliminary agreement concluded between the three countries in May 2002.

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### ***Impact of alleged assassination attempt***

Turkmenistan's relations with Russia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan were affected by the alleged attempt on Niyazov's life in November 2002. Turkmenistan officials have accused politicians in all three countries of supporting the "terrorists" -- that is, the Turkmen opposition.

It was reported that Niyazov offered Russia concessions on Caspian Sea issues in exchange for stronger support for his regime. Such support does not seem to have been forthcoming. The UN resolution of November 2003 criticizing Turkmenistan was backed by Russia as well as Western countries.

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### ***Growing international isolation***

Niyazov finds himself increasingly isolated and insecure on the international scene. In response, he has fortified Turkmenistan's borders and coastal defenses and embarked on a troop buildup and rapid modernization of the army and air force.

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## **OSCE**

An OSCE Centre was opened in [Ashgabad](#) in 1999 to promote the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in all dimensions.

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## **Turkmenistan Culture**

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### ***Ashgabad***

Ashgabad, the capital, means City of Love. About ten percent of Turkmenistan's population live there. The city was destroyed in an earthquake in 1948 and has been completely rebuilt. The wide Kara Kum Canal passes through the middle of Ashgabad and keeps the desert at bay.

The huge Tolkuchka bazaar is held every Sunday on the city outskirts. Amid trucks, camels, and goats, traders offer for sale everything from jewelry and car parts to pistachios and the traditional Turkmen dark red carpets. At the Carpet Museum, the world's largest hand-woven rug is on display.

Along the canal there is a strip of cultivated and irrigated land, but if you go north from the canal you soon hit the desert. The Kara Kum (Black Sand) Desert fills over four-fifths of the country with great crescent-shaped sand dunes and cracked, baked-clay surfaces. The air temperature soars over 120 degrees F., while the sand surface may reach 160 degrees F. As the desert's name suggests, the predominant colors are ochre, gray, and black -- except in April, when the spring rain makes the desert bloom briefly in an explosion of red, orange, and yellow.

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### ***Geography***

South of the capital the land rises toward the Kopet Dag mountain range. On the lower slopes there is an underground hot water mineral lake. If you don't mind the smell of sulphur, you may like to take a dip. West lie the turquoise waters of the Caspian Sea. Along the pocked desert shoreline the sand is gray and frosted with salt. There is a dusty port town of single-story, pastel-painted buildings named Turkmenbashi (Father of the Turkmen), in honor of the president.

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### ***Interesting sites***

Although there are no ancient buildings or archeological ruins in the vicinity of Ashgabad, there are plenty of them in other parts of Turkmenistan. Old Urgench boasts two mausoleums and the tallest minaret in Central Asia (220 feet). (A minaret is the mosque tower from which the faithful are called to prayer.) The oldest ruins are those at the site of the ancient oasis of Merv.

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### ***Nature reserve***

If you are interested in cobras, scorpions, and tarantulas, the Repetek desert nature reserve in eastern Turkmenistan is the place for you. In the extreme eastern corner of the country is the beautiful mountainous landscape of the Gaurdak region with caves, gorges, and waterfalls. The Kugitang reserve, right on the Uzbek border, is a geological research center, the pride of which is a rock plateau imprinted with hundreds of dinosaur footprints.

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## **Nomads**

Turkmenistan's people are only a couple of generations removed from the nomadic life. They love horses and pride themselves on their hospitality. Tribal identities remain very important. You can tell which tribe people belong to by their dialect and the style of their clothing and carpets. Traditional dress is still often worn -- baggy blue pants, cherry-red and gold-striped silk jackets, and shaggy wool hats for men, ankle-length silk dresses of wine red and maroon over striped pants for women. A woman's hair is always tied back and concealed under a kerchief or scarf.

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## **Holidays**

Important Muslim holy days include Eid-ul-Fitr, the celebration marking the end of Ramadan, and Eid-ul-Azha, the feast of sacrifice. The spring festival of Nauryz (New Days) is also a big holiday.

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## **Economy**

Turkmenistan is potentially a rich country, having enormous reserves of oil and natural gas. However, the average person is very poor. Cotton, fruit, vegetables, and grains are grown on the lands irrigated by the Kara Kum Canal and by the Amu Darya River (along the northeastern border).

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## **Cuisine**

Many common dishes are vegetarian, such as herb-filled pastries, cornmeal pancakes, and dried fruit plov (pilaf). A porridge of mung beans, cornmeal and pumpkin, or rice, milk, and yoghurt, can make a meal.

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## **Mini-Quiz**

**What issue is of concern to the OSCE in Turkmenistan?**

- Turkmenistan's bilateral ties with the Russian Federation
- the lack of freedom of expression
- ethnic tensions between Tajiks and JUZ
- none of the above

## **Uzbekistan**

### **Uzbekistan at a glance**

<b>Area</b>	175,000 square miles
<b>Location</b>	Uzbekistan borders: · Kazakhstan to the north and northwest

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Turkmenistan to the west and southwest</li> <li>· Afghanistan to the south</li> <li>· Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the east</li> </ul>
<b>Climate, terrain, and natural resources</b>	<p><b>Climate</b> The climate of Uzbekistan is hot and dry.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b> Much of its territory is taken up by the rocky Kyzyl Kum Desert in the northwest, and by the arid plains of the Turan Lowland. Mountainous terrain is found only in the far southeast.</p> <p>Most of the country's population lives in the intensively cultivated and irrigated river valleys, which occupy only one-tenth of the land area. The three main river valleys are those of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya, which flow into the Aral Sea, and of the Zeravshan, which flows into the AMU Darya. Especially densely populated is the Ferghana Valley in eastern Uzbekistan.</p> <p><b>Natural Resources</b> Uzbekistan is rich in natural resources, including oil and natural gas, coal, minerals, uranium, gold, silver, copper and other metals.</p>
<b>Capital</b>	The capital of Uzbekistan is Tashkent.
<b>Population</b>	26 million
<b>Ethnic composition of the population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Uzbeks 70--80%</li> <li>· Russian-speakers 7%</li> <li>· Tajiks 5--15%</li> <li>· Karakalpaks 2%</li> <li>· Kazakh 4%</li> <li>· Kyrgyz 1%</li> <li>· Turkmen 1%</li> </ul>
<b>Religion</b>	Muslim (Sunni) - 88%, Eastern Orthodox - 9%, Other 3%
<b>Languages</b>	Uzbek, which belongs to the Turkic family, is the state language. Since 1993 it has been written in the Latin script.
<b>System of government</b>	Uzbekistan is formally a democracy with a strong presidency. In reality it is a presidential dictatorship.
<b>President</b>	Since independence the President of Uzbekistan has been Islam Karimov.
<b>Currency</b>	The currency of Uzbekistan is the Sum.
<b>Standard of living</b>	GDP per capita in Uzbekistan in 2002 was about \$400, which is not much over 1 percent of the U.S. level. The standard of living in Uzbekistan has declined in the last two or three years.

## Basic Geography of Uzbekistan

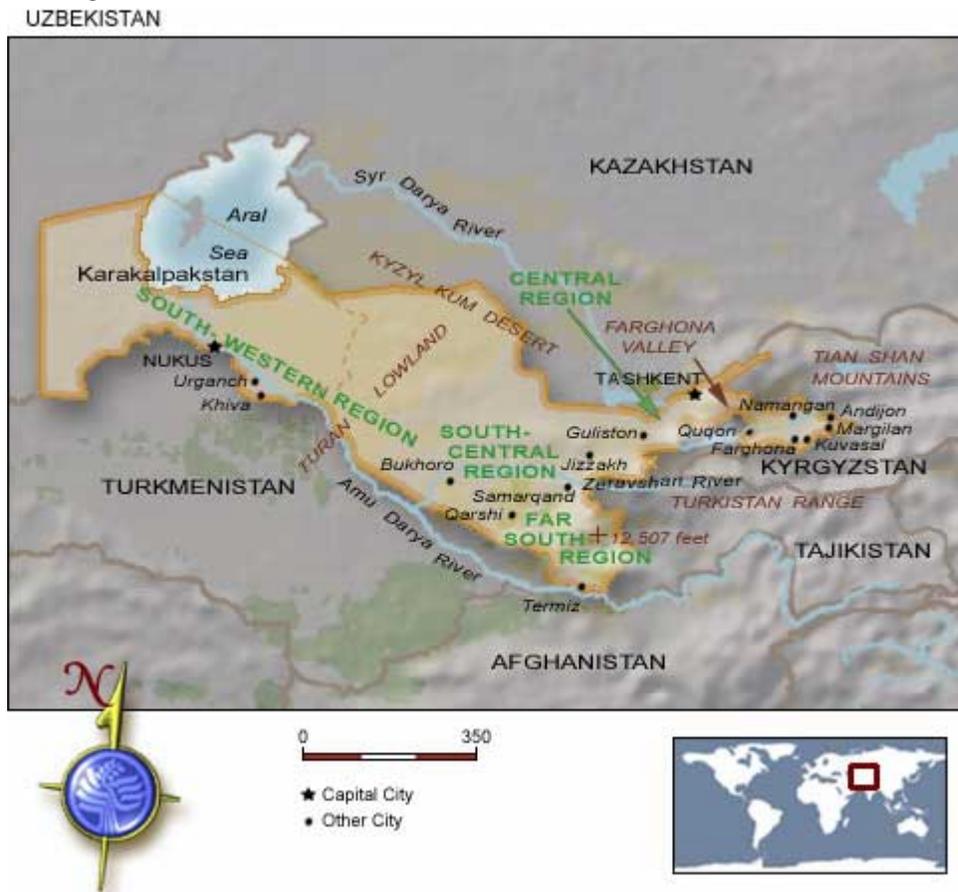
### **12 provinces, Tashkent, and Karakalpakstan**

The Republic of Uzbekistan is divided administratively into 12 provinces, the capital city of Tashkent, and the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic (Karakalpakstan). It is convenient to distinguish 6 broad regions:

- Starting in the east is Uzbekistan's section of the Ferghana Valley, watered by the Syr

Darya River .

- West from the Ferghana Valley, is the central region around the capital Tashkent, also watered by the Syr Darya River.
- Further west, is the region of the Kyzyl Kum Desert, including much of Karakalpakstan.
- Next is the southwestern region along the border with Turkmenistan, watered by the Amu Darya River. This region includes part of Karakalpakstan. Together with the neighboring area across the border in Turkmenistan, it comprised the core area of the old Khivan Khanate .
- The south-central region comprises the areas around the ancient cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, which are on the River Zeravshan.
- Uzbekistan's mountainous far southeast is near the borders with Tajikistan and Afghanistan.



## Historical Background of Uzbekistan

### **Mid-seventh century Arab invasion**

In the mid-seventh century, the Arab invasion brought Islam and the Arabic script. In the ensuing centuries, there grew up a flourishing Muslim civilization with its centers in Bukhara and Samarkand.

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## The Muslim Civilization of Bukhara and Samarkand

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### ***Bukhara and Samarkand***

The Muslim civilization of medieval Bukhara and Samarkand prospered from camel-borne trade along the famous "Silk Road" that linked China with Europe. Its scholars researched and taught history, geography, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. Poetry, music, and architecture were also highly developed, while agriculture benefited from an extensive irrigation system.

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### ***Ghengis Khan***

The Mongol conqueror Ghengis Khan captured and razed Bukhara and Samarkand about 1225, but his descendants rebuilt them.

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### ***13th century***

In the 13th century, Turkic tribes first arrived in Transoxiana.

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### ***Timur: a "just Uzbek ruler"***

The government of present-day Uzbekistan has built a cult around the figure of Timur, who ruled in Samarkand in the late 14th century. In the rest of the world, Timur is remembered as a bloodthirsty conqueror, but in Uzbekistan he is praised as a "just Uzbek ruler" and parallels are drawn between him and President Karimov.

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### ***Ulug-Bek***

A lesser cult surrounds Timur's grandson Ulug-Bek, who patronized scholarship and the arts and sciences and was himself a great astronomer. In fact, Timur and Ulug-Bek were not Uzbeks but Mongols, descendants of Ghengis Khan.

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## The Turko-Persian Civilization

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### ***Abul Khayr Khan***

During the reign of Ulug-Bek, the Uzbeks were advancing into the region from the north. In 1431, the Uzbek tribal leader Abul Khayr Khan took Khwarazm (Khiva). In 1450 he married a granddaughter of Timur, thereby forming an alliance with the Mongol nobility. His grandson

Abdal-Latif Khan was the first Uzbek khan to rule in Samarkand, in the first half of the 16th century.

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***Uzbek tribes settle and mix with peoples of Transoxiana***

As their khans rose to power, the previously nomadic Uzbek tribes began to settle and to mix with the other peoples of Transoxiana. The result was a Turko-Persian civilization that combined Turkic and Persian elements. Court politics were conducted in the Turkic language called Chagatai, while Persian was the language of literature and scholarship .

It was in this period that there lived Alisher Navoi (1441-1501), who is considered the father of Uzbek literature.

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***1860s - 1870s conquered by Czarist Russia***

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Uzbek khanate was in decline, fragmenting into the smaller kingdoms of the Bukharan Emirate, the Khivan Khanate, and the Kokand Khanate. In the 1860s and 1870s, Czarist Russia conquered the region.

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## **Uzbekistan Under Russian and Soviet Rule**

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***Russian policy***

The policy of Russian administrators was to leave local government in the hands of traditional institutions and not to interfere with native religion and customs. There were few Russian settlers in the countryside, but large Russian populations did appear in the cities, especially in Tashkent, the administrative center of Russian rule. The main changes were the building of railroads and a great expansion of cotton cultivation.

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***1916-1918***

In 1916, there was an uprising throughout Central Asia against the conscription of young men to fight in World War I.

Following the Russian Revolution, a Congress of Central Asian Muslims, held in December 1917 in Kokand, elected a national council and declared autonomy. In February 1918, Soviet troops from Tashkent seized Kokand. Further armed resistance to Soviet rule continued into the 1930s.

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***Uzbek SSR in 1924***

Initially, Soviet rule in the region took the forms of a Turkestan ASSR and nominally independent "people's republics" at Bukhara and Khwarazm. These were replaced by the Uzbek SSR in 1924.

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***Industrialization during the Soviet period***

Uzbekistan underwent considerable industrialization during the Soviet period, although the new industries relied heavily on workers and engineers brought in from other parts of the USSR. There were also big cultural changes, such as the spread of literacy, the weakening of Islam, and the abolition of the veil for women, although many customary practices survived under the surface. At the same time, the economy was distorted and the environment harmed by the imposition of the cotton monoculture.

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## **Uzbekistan: Perestroika and Independence**

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***Perestroika brought political freedom***

In 1988, an umbrella movement for democracy and independence was formed under the name of Birlik [Unity]. Birlik rapidly won popular support. Its October 1989 demonstration in Tashkent to demand that Uzbek be made the state language attracted 50,000 people—and soon thereafter Uzbek was indeed made the state language. There also appeared an offshoot of Birlik called Erk (freedom).

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***Path to power blocked***

When elections were held in February 1990 to a new Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR, neither Birlik nor Erk were permitted to participate, with the result that most of those elected were loyal to the Communist Party leadership.

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***Ethnic and political disturbances***

In June 1989, Uzbeks in Ferghana (in the Ferghana Valley) attacked the Meskhetian Turks, an ethnic minority that had been deported from southern Georgia by Stalin. It was after this that Islam Karimov was named party boss. In March 1990, the loyal Supreme Soviet duly appointed Karimov President of Uzbekistan. After the collapse of the hard-line coup in Moscow in August 1991, the Supreme Soviet declared Uzbekistan independent.

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## **Domestic Politics in Uzbekistan**

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***The crushing of opposition***

In the immediate post-independence period, there was still some room for opposition politics. In December 1991, Erk chairman Muhammad Salih was allowed to stand against Karimov in the first presidential election, winning 14 percent of the vote. Birlik was refused official registration, but was able to continue public activity. Karimov's own vice-president, Shakrulla Mirsaidov, adopted a critical stance.

The crackdown began in 1992. Mirsaidov and his associates were removed. Opposition figures were beaten up by anonymous assailants or imprisoned or just disappeared. By late 1993 Birlik and Erk were banned and their leaders in exile.

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**1995-96 human rights improved**

In 1995-96 the human rights situation improved somewhat. The OSCE was allowed to establish a regional office in Tashkent in 1995 and even to sponsor a human rights seminar in which opposition activists took part. In 1997 Karimov, alarmed by the rise of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan, returned to a more repressive policy.

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**New civil society institutions**

At the same time, a façade of concern for human rights was created. A government supporter was appointed to a new position of human rights ombudsman, and a National Human Rights Center was opened, likewise staffed by loyalists. In October 1997, the Foreign Minister concluded an agreement with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE to implement programs "to promote democracy and civil society."

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**Opposition**

Open opposition disappeared in 1998 when the Democratic Opposition Coordinating Council shut down.

Another tentative swing toward liberalization began in 2002. Although arrests of opposition activists have continued, Birlik has been allowed to resume public activity under police supervision and in October 2003 Erk was permitted to hold a congress in Tashkent.

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## The Political System in Uzbekistan

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**Presidency**

In the presidential election of January 2000, Karimov was re-elected with 92 percent of the vote. The other handpicked candidate, PDPU leader Abdulkhafiz Jalolov, received four percent. In January 2002 the president's term of office was extended by referendum from 5 to 7 years. Health permitting, Karimov will be able to stand in 2007 for a further 7-year term.

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**Five legal parties**

Initially the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, renamed in November 1991 the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), remained the ruling party under Karimov's leadership. Later the presidency became the dominant institution, and the PDPU lost its central role. In 1996, Karimov himself gave up membership in the party. Karimov has constructed an imitation multi-party system by creating four "pocket parties." In November 2003 three new "pocket parties" were established. So Uzbekistan has eight legal parties, but they all support the government.

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**Parliament**

In 1994, the Supreme Soviet was replaced by a new rubber-stamp parliament consisting of a single 250-seat chamber. Deputies were elected on a competitive basis, although all competing candidates had to support the government. The most recent parliamentary elections were held in December 1999. The OSCE called them "far from democratic."

The January 2002 referendum also approved the creation of a new parliament consisting of two chambers: a 94-member upper chamber (Senate) representing the regions and a 120-member lower house (Majlis).

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**Almost all media state-owned**

Almost all media are state-owned. State censorship, though banned by the 1992 constitution, continued to operate until May 2002. Independent publications have been outlawed since the end of 1993. Journalists investigating sensitive subjects are harassed and arrested.

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**All ministers and provincial governors appointed by Karimov**

All ministers and provincial governors, and in practice even the president of the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic, are appointed by Karimov. Officials are often moved to new positions or fired to ensure that nuclei of opposition cannot form. Local government is entrusted to the traditional neighborhood institution of the *mahalla*, which provides an effective means of social control.

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**Concentration of power in Karimov's hands**

Government power is concentrated in Karimov's own hands to an extreme degree. All ministers and provincial governors, and in practice even the president of the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic, are appointed by Karimov. Officials are often moved to new positions or fired to ensure that nuclei of opposition cannot form. Local government is entrusted to the traditional neighborhood institution of the *mahalla*, which provides an effective means of social control.

In December 2003, Karimov promised to take a less active part in the day-to-day running of the government and transfer some of his powers to the prime minister. It is speculated that he may be preparing the ground for his retirement.

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**Economy remains in state hands**

Much of the economy remains in state hands. The state retains control over land and water. A move was taken toward economic liberalization in October 2003 when the national currency, the som, was made fully convertible.

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## Islam and Politics in Uzbekistan

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### ***"Freedom of conscience"***

Although Uzbekistan is officially a secular state, the government makes great efforts to co-opt and control Islam. Control is exercised through the same institutions as in Soviet times—the Muslim Spiritual Directorate or Muftiate and the government Committee for Religious Affairs. Clerics who assert their independence of these institutions are removed, arrested, or assassinated. A law on "freedom of conscience" passed in May 1998 made it illegal to establish a religious organization, to build a mosque, or to teach theology without official permission. It also made it illegal to wear religious clothing, including veils, in public.

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### ***Islamists are believed responsible for numerous terrorist acts***

Despite strict state control, Islamist extremists are believed responsible for numerous terrorist acts committed since 1997, including the assassination of police officials in the Ferghana Valley and bomb explosions that rocked the center of Tashkent in February 1999. The Karimov regime responded with mass arrests, fueling a vicious cycle of escalating terror and repression. Thousands of people have been jailed for participation in banned Islamist groups, particularly the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation).

The OSCE has urged the government of Uzbekistan to release political prisoners, arguing that it is counterproductive to use the fight against terrorism as a justification for suppressing all opposition.

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## Ethnic Relations in Uzbekistan

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### ***Uzbekistan as the state of the Uzbeks***

While non-Uzbeks living in Uzbekistan were not denied citizenship, the official concept of Uzbekistan as the state of the Uzbeks leaves little scope for ethnic minorities to express their separate identities.

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### ***Uzbek-Tajik conflict a possibility***

It is hard to gauge the potential for unrest of the largest minority, the Tajiks. A great deal of assimilation has occurred. However, protest demonstrations of Tajiks in Bukhara and Samarkand in 1988 suggest that many Tajiks do have deeply felt grievances, even if they have been much more cautious about voicing them in the 1990s.

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### ***Conflict among regionally based sub-groups of Uzbeks***

Perhaps more important than inter-ethnic tension is the potential for conflict among regionally based sub-groups of Uzbeks. Politics in Uzbekistan as a struggle between three groups of politicians:

- The eastern group, from the Ferghana Valley
- The western group, from Bukhara or Samarkand
- The Tashkent group

- The Tashkent group
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## Foreign Relations in Uzbekistan

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### ***Goal to establish Uzbekistan as independent regional power***

Uzbekistan's long-term goal is to break away from Russia and establish Uzbekistan as an independent regional power. But for the time being some Russian assistance is still needed. The external and internal threat posed by Islamist extremism has impelled Uzbekistan toward security cooperation with Russia.

Uzbekistan is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which provides a forum for security cooperation for Russia, China and four Central Asian states.

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### ***Attitudes toward the West are mixed***

Attitudes toward the West are likewise mixed. Western investment is welcome, provided that the Uzbek government remains in control of economic development. The West is also seen as an ally against Islamism. However, Western concern with democracy and human rights is disliked.

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### ***Shifts between pro-Western and pro-Russian orientations***

Following a more pro-Russian orientation in the early 1990s, in 1995-96 Uzbekistan turned toward the West. However, arguments over human rights, a breakdown in Uzbekistan's relations with the IMF, and the capture of Kabul by the Taliban in Afghanistan led to a return to the pro-Russian orientation.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has again been distancing itself from Russia and turning toward the West. This shift accelerated in the wake of September 11, 2001.

In 1999, Uzbekistan withdrew from the CIS Collective Security Treaty and joined GUAM, the grouping of post-Soviet states opposed to Russian domination. In June 2002, however, Uzbekistan left GUAM.

Uzbekistan remains willing to cooperate with Russia in the economic sphere and accept Russian arms and military advisers, but is unwilling to have Russian troops deployed on its territory or to participate in the new CIS Rapid Reaction Force.

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### ***Alliance with the United States against terrorism***

Uzbekistan has allowed U.S. Forces to use its military facilities during the war and since in Afghanistan that followed the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Uzbekistan's cooperation was vital to the success of the military operation that led to the speedy defeat of the Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

In March 2002 Presidents Bush and Karimov signed a declaration of strategic partnership. Uzbekistan now receives substantial military and economic aid from the U.S. and international financial organizations.

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***Influence of Iran and Saudi Arabia not welcome***

Uzbekistan's relations with the Muslim world are influenced by the conflict between the Karimov regime and its domestic Islamist opposition. The influence of Iran and Saudi Arabia, strongholds of politicized forms of Islam, is not welcome. Turkey offers a more acceptable secular model of development.

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***Anti-government IMU bases removed***

The collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has removed bases used by antigovernment IMU fighters. IMU incursions through Tajikistan in 1999 and 2000 were intercepted in Kyrgyzstan with military assistance from Uzbekistan.

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***Tense relations with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan***

Uzbekistan has tense relations with its Central Asian neighbors. Tensions were heightened in August 2002 when Uzbekistan disrupted cross-border trade by imposing very heavy customs duties on imports.

Uzbekistan is the most populous and centrally located of the Central Asian states and has the strongest army. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are much weaker than Uzbekistan in all these respects. They view Uzbekistan's quest for regional dominance as a threat to their own independence. Between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan there is a rivalry for the leading role in the region.

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***OSCE***

An OSCE Liaison Office was established in Tashkent in 1995 with the goal of linking the five Central Asian participating states with OSCE activities. The OSCE PC changed the name of the OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia to OSCE Center in Tashkent following the decision to open OSCE centers (missions) in the other Central Asian countries. The Center in Tashkent promotes OSCE principles and commitments in Uzbekistan.

[OSCE Centre in Tashkent](#)

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## **Uzbekistan Culture**

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***Tashkent***

The capital Tashkent, situated in the east of the country, is home to about one-tenth of Uzbekistan's inhabitants. The old town is a maze of narrow dusty streets lined by low mud-brick houses, mosques, and medressas (Islamic colleges), a few dating from the 15th or 16th century. Here also is the huge Chorsu Bazaar, which draws crowds of people from the countryside, many in traditional dress. However, the city's architecture is predominantly late Soviet in style. This is largely the result of reconstruction after the destructive 1966 earthquake. A variety of ancient artifacts have been preserved in the museums, especially the Museum of Fine Arts.

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## **Monuments**

Most of Uzbekistan's historic monuments are not in Tashkent but in other places, and especially in the three ancient cities of the Silk Road -- Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva. Here are the great mosques with their majestic shining turquoise domes, elegant minarets, intricate tile mosaics, and geometrically proportioned spaces, as well as medressas, mausoleums, palaces, fortresses, and ancient public baths. Other famous sights include Shahi-Zinda, the street of decorated tombs in Samarkand, and the plaza of Labi-hauz in Bukhara, built around a pool.

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## **Geography**

Over two-thirds of Uzbekistan is taken up by arid plains and the rocky Kyzyl Kum (Red Sand) Desert. Most of the country's people live in three intensively cultivated and irrigated valleys that occupy only one-tenth of the land area -- the valleys of the Amu Darya, Syr Darya, and Zeravshan Rivers.

Uzbekistan is flat except in the far southeast, where the terrain rises toward the mountains of neighboring Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In the west are some stretches of shallow water, surrounded by an expanse of loose sand swirling in the wind -- all that remains of the inland Aral Sea. The drying-up of the sea has ruined the health and livelihood of the local people who used to fish in it. The fishing boats of the once thriving port of Moynaq lie rusting in the sand beside depressions marking the town's futile efforts to keep channels open to the receding water.

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## **Attire**

Uzbek men usually wear somber colors, except for the bright-colored sash that older men use to close their long quilted coats. Nearly all wear the *dopy*, a square black skullcap embroidered in white. Most women wear knee-length cloth dresses over cloth trousers.

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## **Holidays**

The usual Muslim holy days are observed. The most popular holiday is the spring festival of *Navruz* (New Days) on March 21-22. A wedding or circumcision is likely to be celebrated by the whole *mahalla* -- the neighborhood unit that serves as the basis of community and local government. In some places, local harvest festivals take place in December.

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## **Cuisine**

Typical Uzbek dishes include plov (pilafs), kebabs, noodles and pasta, stews, and elaborate breads, sweets, and pastries. Most Uzbeks are too poor to afford meat, except on special occasions. Tea is ubiquitous, usually served without milk. The local teahouse is always a gathering place for Uzbek men. But most Uzbeks drink alcohol as well, even vodka, at least when they entertain guests, despite their Muslim heritage.

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## **Mini-Quiz**

***Uzbekistan faces which of the following challenges?***

- Islamist terrorism
- poor relations with its neighbors
- an authoritarian political system
- all of the above

## Kyrgyzstan

### Kyrgyzstan at a glance

<b>Area</b>	77,000 square miles
<b>Location</b>	Kyrgyzstan borders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Kazakhstan to the north and northwest</li> <li>· Uzbekistan to the west</li> <li>· Tajikistan to the south</li> <li>· China's Xinjiang Province to the southeast and east</li> </ul>
<b>Climate, terrain, and natural resources</b>	<p><b>Climate</b> Temperatures vary with altitude and season, from the ice and snow of the high peaks to the milder winter weather of the mountain valleys and the summer heat of the Ferghana Valley. There is abundant rainfall.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b> Almost nine-tenths of Kyrgyzstan's land area is covered by high mountains, topped by snowfields and glaciers. The lowland areas are the valleys of the Talas River (in the northwest) and of the Chu River (in the north), and the fertile region around Jalalabad and Osh in the southwest, which is the easternmost section of the Ferghana Valley.</p> <p>The third important river, besides the Talas and Chu, is the Naryn, which joins with other streams to form one of Central Asia's two great rivers, the Syr Darya. Kyrgyzstan also has 3,000 lakes, the largest being Lake Ysyk-Kol in the northeast.</p> <p><b>Natural Resources</b> Hydroelectric power provides electricity for both domestic needs and export. There are deposits of coal, gold, mercury, and antimony. Grains, sugar beet, and cotton are grown in the valleys, while the mountain areas depend on livestock breeding.</p>
<b>Capital</b>	The capital of Kyrgyzstan is Bishkek.
<b>Population</b>	The population of Kyrgyzstan is a little over 5 million, somewhat greater than that of Alabama. It is growing rapidly due to a high birth rate.
<b>Ethnic composition of the population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Kyrgyz 66%</li> <li>· Russian-speaking 13%</li> <li>· Uzbeks 14%</li> </ul>
<b>Religion</b>	Muslim (Sunni) - 75%, Russian Orthodox - 20%, Other - 5%.
<b>Languages</b>	Kyrgyz belongs to the Turkic family of languages. Kyrgyz and Russian enjoy equal standing as state languages. Uzbek has no official status.
<b>System of government</b>	Kyrgyzstan's political conditions are the most democratic of the Central Asian region. Kyrgyzstan had a fairly well functioning system of democratic government through the 1990s. The 1993 constitution provided for an even distribution of prerogatives between parliament and president. In recent years, standards of democratic governance have deteriorated.
<b>President</b>	The President of Kyrgyzstan since October 1991 has been Askar Akayev.
<b>Currency</b>	The currency of Kyrgyzstan is the Som.
<b>Standard of living</b>	GDP per capita in Kyrgyzstan in 2002 was about \$250, below 1 percent of the U.S. level. The standard of living in Kyrgyzstan has been in sharp decline in recent years.

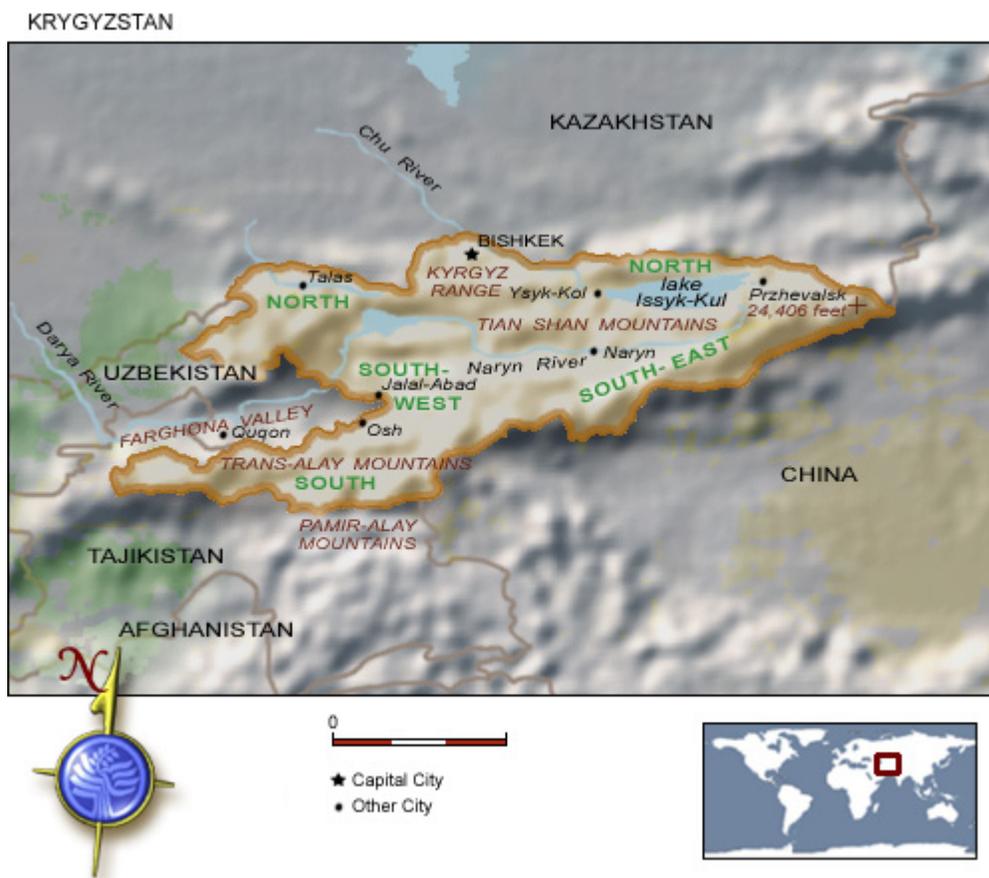
## Basic Geography of Kyrgyzstan

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### Regions

Kyrgyzstan is divided administratively into seven provinces plus the capital, which is treated as a separate unit. It is useful to distinguish three broad regions:

- The north contains the capital, most of the country's industry, and most of the remaining Russian-speaking population.
- The mountainous south and southeast, along the borders with Tajikistan and China, are undeveloped. The population is overwhelmingly Kyrgyz.
- The southwest, along the border with Uzbekistan, includes Kyrgyzstan's section of the Ferghana Valley. Here is Osh, the country's second largest city. About one-third of the region's population belongs to the Uzbek minority.



## Historical Background of Kyrgyzstan

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### **Kyrgyz**

The Kyrgyz are probably descended from indigenous people and Turkic and Mongol migrants. The Manas epic tells of the early struggle of the Kyrgyz against conquerors who were probably the Mongol Oirats.

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### **Subjugated in the early 19th century by the Kokand Khanate**

After a brief period under Chinese rule in the late 18th century, the Kyrgyz were subjugated in the early 19th century by the Kokand Khanate. It was under Kokand domination that Islam took root among the Kyrgyz, though their old beliefs and customs were not erased.

The heavy tax burden led the Kyrgyz to rebel against Kokand in 1845 and again in 1870-71. The Russian army captured the fortress at Pishpek (now Bishkek) in 1862, and finally defeated the Kokand Khanate in 1876.

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### **Under the Czars**

Under the Czars, the Kyrgyz lost much of their best land to Russian and Ukrainian settlers. In 1916, they also rose up against conscription during World War One. Many fled to China to escape the ensuing repression.

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### **Kyrgyz under the Soviets**

The Soviet authorities created a Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic within the RSFSR (Russia) in 1926. It was upgraded to the Kyrgyz SSR in 1936. It was in the 1930s that the Kyrgyz were forced to give up the nomadic way of life and join collective farms, from which many again fled to China.

The 1930s also saw industrialization on a large scale, mainly in the north of the republic and especially around the capital. It was accompanied by a massive influx of Russian-speaking people from other parts of the USSR. Frunze (as Bishkek was then named) developed as a mainly Russian city.

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### **New public organizations and independent political groups allowed in 1989**

Despite the onset of Perestroika, permission to register as an independent political group was reluctantly granted by the communist authorities to Ashar, a pressure group concerned with housing problems. Over the next year, many new public organizations appeared, the largest being the Democratic Movement Kyrgyzstan, formed in May 1990 by Kyrgyz groups seeking democracy and national revival.

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## The Osh Conflict and the "Silk Revolution"

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### ***Sudden political freedom generated turbulence***

The sudden political freedom coming with the collapse of the Soviet Union generated turbulence with which the Kyrgyz communist leaders, used to working within a strictly regimented system, were unable to cope. The activity of the new public organizations, most of which had memberships drawn from a single ethnic group, fuelled ethnic confrontation.

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### ***Violent conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks***

The results were especially tragic in the mixed Kyrgyz-Uzbek areas of Osh Province in the southwest, where a local dispute in June 1990 over the allocation of land for housing triggered a violent conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in which hundreds died. Order was restored only by the intervention of Soviet troops from outside the republic.

Uzbeks and Kyrgyz both nursed grievances. Uzbeks resented the lack of official recognition of their language and the Kyrgyz near-monopoly of government employment in the province. The Kyrgyz resented Uzbek control of trade. These resentments were aggravated by land hunger and youth unemployment.

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### ***Askar Akayev***

In October 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Kyrgyz SSR created the position of president and chose a democratically inclined non-party figure, Askar Akayev, a physicist who had worked in Leningrad for twenty years and was then chairman of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences.

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### ***Akayev confirmed by popular election as the first president of the Kyrgyz Republic***

In what became known as Kyrgyzstan's "silk revolution," Akayev peacefully dismantled the communist power structure. During the attempted hard-line coup in Moscow in August 1991, Akayev supported Yeltsin. Following the collapse of the coup, Kyrgyzstan's parliament declared independence.

In October 1991, Akayev was confirmed by popular election as the first president of the Kyrgyz Republic. Unlike the other Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan had a president who was not a former Communist Party leader.

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## Ethnic Relations in Kyrgyzstan

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### ***Tension between Kyravz and***

The most serious ethnic problem remains the tension between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southwestern Kyrgyzstan. Little has changed in the social conditions that lay behind the Osh conflict of 1990.

## **Uzbeks in south-western Kyrgyzstan**

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### **Kyrgyz and Russians in the north**

There has also been tension between Kyrgyz and Russians in the north of the country, especially in connection with the language issue. In September 1989, Kyrgyz was made the sole state language, with Russian relegated to the status of "language of inter-ethnic communication." In 2001, however, Russian was given equal standing with Kyrgyz. Akayev has made other conciliatory gestures toward Russian-speakers, such as the opening of the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University in Bishkek.

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### **Tension between regional groups of Kyrgyz**

Besides tensions between Kyrgyz and other ethnic groups, there are also tensions between different regional groups of Kyrgyz, especially between those living in the north and those living in the south of the country. Political developments in 2002 greatly exacerbated these tensions.

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## **Domestic Politics in Kyrgyzstan**

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### **Many political parties, most weak and unstable**

Several of the parties that played important roles in the early 1990s have lost most of their support or disappeared completely, while the party that won the largest number of seats in the 1995 elections—the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan—is not represented at all in the current parliament. The various pro-presidential parties set up since 1991 have likewise received substantial support, but none of them has held together for long. Over half the deputies elected in successive parliamentary elections have lacked any party affiliation.

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### **Parties that contested the parliamentary elections of February-March 2000**

The following parties won seats in the parliamentary elections of February-March 2000:

- ? The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan won 15 seats in the Legislative Assembly, and remains the largest and most stable of the country's parties.
  - ? Two pro-presidential parties—"Union of Democratic Forces" and My Country-- won 5 seats between them.
  - ? The Democratic Party of Women of Kyrgyzstan won 2 seats.
  - ? The Party of War Veterans won 2 seats.
  - ? Ata Meken (Fatherland), a centrist party, won 1 seat.
  - ? Three radical Kyrgyz nationalist parties—Erkin Kyrgyzstan (Free Kyrgyzstan), Asaba, and Manas—took part in the elections, but failed to enter parliament..
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***Reputation as an oasis of democracy has been tarnished***

Kyrgyzstan used to enjoy the reputation as an oasis of democracy in Central Asia. Since early 2000, however, this reputation has been badly tarnished. Media outlets too critical of the government have been harassed. OSCE observers noted serious abuses in the conduct of both the parliamentary elections of February-March 2000 and the presidential elections of October 2000, in which Akayev was re-elected president with 74 percent of the vote.

In November 2003, an independent printing press was established in Bishkek by Freedom House with sponsorship from the US Bureau of Democracy. It will enable Kyrgyz publications to avoid pressure from government-controlled printers.

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***Persecution of prominent politicians***

Some prominent politicians with the stature to pose an effective challenge to Akayev have been persecuted, together with their supporters, associates, and relatives.

Felix Kulov, leader of the Ar-Namys (meaning Honor or Dignity) Party, who in the 1990s was successively vice-president, a provincial governor, interior minister, and mayor of Bishkek, has been repeatedly prosecuted and imprisoned, preventing him from running against Akayev.

In March 2002, the arrest of Azimbek Beknazarov, an opposition parliamentarian from southern Kyrgyzstan, sparked demonstrations in Kerben, his home district, which were fired on by security forces. Six were killed and over sixty injured.

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***First ethnic Russian prime minister***

The violence in Kerben led to the resignation of the government. A new government was formed in May 2002 with Nikolai Tanayev as prime minister.

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***Confrontation defused***

As protests continued, confrontation between the government and the opposition escalated. It was also a confrontation between the north and the south of the country fraught with the danger of inter-regional civil war. This outcome was prevented by dialogue between President Akayev and the opposition, who reached agreement in September 2002. Beknazarov was freed while provincial officials responsible for the shootings were tried and convicted (though released on appeal in May 2003). Akayev decided not to seek re-election in 2005.

However, relations between the Akayev regime and the main opposition, united under an umbrella organization called the Movement for the Resignation of Akayev and Reforms for the People, remain tense.

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***Constitutional referendum***

On Akayev's initiative, a constitutional referendum was held in February 2003. As a result, the upper chamber of the parliament (the Assembly of People's Representatives) was abolished, while the remaining chamber of 75 deputies acquired enhanced powers of oversight of the executive, including the right to votes of no confidence.

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***Islamists  
banned***

In November 2003 the Supreme Court banned a number of Islamist organizations. It is believed that this step was connected with the arrest of three young Kyrgyz on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack on the recently established US airbase.

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## **Foreign Relations in Kyrgyzstan**

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***Close  
cooperation  
with Russia in  
both the  
economic and  
security  
spheres***

Kyrgyzstan is one of the post-Soviet states that have been willing to cooperate closely with Russia in both the economic and security spheres. Together with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, it was a founding member of the Union of the Four, the precursor of the Eurasian Economic Community created in 2000 (which also includes Tajikistan). Kyrgyzstan has ceded Russia a substantial share in its industry in exchange for debt relief.

Kyrgyzstan also depends on Russian border guards, training, and equipment for the defense of its southern border, especially in the wake of clashes in 1999 and 2000 with armed Uzbek Islamists who crossed over into Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan on their way to Uzbekistan from Afghanistan. In December 2002, it was agreed that a Russian military airbase would be established at Kant near Bishkek. The base was officially opened in October 2003.

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***Kyrgyzstan  
relations with  
the West and  
China***

Kyrgyzstan seeks to balance relations with Russia, China, and the West. The U.S. has been allowed to use Bishkek's Manas International Airport during and after the September 11, 2001 war in Afghanistan. Thus Russian and American airbases will exist in close proximity.

Agreement on Kyrgyzstan's border with China was reached in 2001. In October 2002, joint Kyrgyz-Chinese military exercises were held.

The West has expressed concern regarding the human rights situation in the country.

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***Kyrgyzstan has  
close relations  
with  
Kazakhstan***

Kyrgyzstan's leaders have close relations with those of neighboring Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has a house on Lake Issyk-Kul, and Nazarbayev's daughter is married to Akayev's son.

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***Close relations  
with  
Kazakhstan  
under strain***

Kyrgyzstan's leaders have had close relations with those of neighboring Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has a house on Lake Issyk-Kul, and Nazarbayev's daughter is married to Akayev's son.

Recently relations between the two countries have come under strain. They are in dispute over the ownership of five sanatoriums and hotels on Lake Issyk-Kul and Kyrgyzstan is upset at a decision by Kazakhstan to introduce immigration controls and deport Kyrgyz migrant workers.

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**Kyrgyzstan's relations with Uzbekistan are strained**

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been in dispute over borders, the supply of gas from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, and the flow of water from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan. A compromise settlement on the border between the two countries was reached in 2001.

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**Security relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are ambiguous**

Security relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are ambiguous. On the one hand, Kyrgyz understand the need to cooperate with Uzbekistan against the threat of Islamist extremism. Military cooperation between the two states takes place on the basis of a treaty concluded in 1996. On the other hand, Kyrgyz suspect Uzbekistan's long-term intentions and resent incursions that Uzbek security police have made to arrest suspects inside Kyrgyzstan.

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**OSCE**

An OSCE Centre was opened in Bishkek in 1999 to promote OSCE principles and commitments in all three dimensions, and promote regional cooperation.

On July 8, 2003, it was announced that the OSCE is giving the Kyrgyz interior ministry \$4 million to buy modern equipment for the police and for police training.

[OSCE Centre in Bishkek](#)

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## Kyrgyzstan Culture

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**Bishkek**

The capital *Bishkek* is home to over one in seven of the country's inhabitants. (The capital's name comes from the word for a wooden churn used to make fermented mare's milk.) The city was founded only in 1825. Most of it was built in the late Soviet period. The main streets are wide and lined with trees. Industrial plants are out on the city outskirts. In the background loom the mountains of the Alatau range. A few miles south of the capital is the Ala-Archa Canyon nature reserve.

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**High mountains**

Most of Kyrgyzstan is covered by high mountains. Besides the Alatau, there are the Tian Shan (Heavenly) Mountains in the middle of the country, which are the main range, and the Pamir-Alau range in the far south. The Kyrgyz pasture their cattle, sheep, and goats on grassy meadows at high altitudes during the summer, bringing them down into the valleys when the cold rains and snow start in late fall. The peaks, which in the Tian Shan reach 24,000 feet and above, are covered by huge snowfields and glaciers.

## **Lowlands**

The main lowland areas are the temperate valleys of the Talas River (in the northwest) and of the Chu River (in the north), and the much hotter fertile region in the southwest, which is the easternmost section of the Ferghana Valley. Here is Osh, the country's second largest city -- and one that, unlike Bishkek, dates back to ancient times. Grains and sugar beet are grown in the valleys, and in the Ferghana Valley also cotton. The third important river, besides the Talas and Chu, is the Naryn, which originates in the Tian Shan Mountains and joins with other streams to form one of Central Asia's two great rivers, the Syr Darya.

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## **Mountain lakes**

Kyrgyzstan also has some 3,000 mountain lakes. The best known is Lake Ysyk-Kol in the northeast. Over 5,000 feet above sea level, it is the second largest alpine lake in the world. Along the lake shore are health spas and thermal springs, and also the summer houses of the new rich.

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## **Natural resources**

Natural resources are limited to some deposits of coal, gold, mercury, and antimony, and abundant hydroelectric power. Most people are desperately poor, especially in the undeveloped mountainous south and southeast along the borders with China and Tajikistan.

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## **Manas**

The great Kyrgyz national epic in honor of the legendary hero *Manas* is twenty times longer than Homer's *Odyssey*. The most famous contemporary Kyrgyz writer is Chingiz Aitmatov, whose masterpiece "The Day Lasts Longer Than 100 Years" mixes folklore with science fiction.

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## **Osh**

The culture of the southwest around *Osh* differs from that of the rest of the country. The people of this region lack a nomadic past: they have long been settled on the land. Islam is more strongly entrenched here, and social customs are more restrictive.

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## **Navrus**

Besides the usual Muslim holy days, the traditional spring festival of *Navrus* (New Days) is an occasion for celebration. Large-scale festivities have been devoted to the *Manas* epic.

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## **Cuisine**

The food eaten in Kyrgyzstan has developed from the subsistence diet of the nomads -- mainly meat, spices, milk products, potatoes and bread. Tea is drunk, generally without milk. Other drinks are the mildly alcoholic *kumys*, fermented mare's milk, and *bozo*, a thick yeasty concoction made from fermented millet.

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## **Tajikistan**

## Tajikistan at a glance

<b>Area</b>	55,000 square miles	
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Kyrgyzstan to the north</li> <li>· Uzbekistan to the northwest and west</li> <li>· Afghanistan to the south</li> <li>· China's Xinjiang Province to the east</li> </ul>	
<b>Climate, terrain, and natural resources</b>	<p><b>Climate</b> In the mountains the climate is cold and wet. The river valleys are temperate or hot, depending on altitude and wind direction.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b> Over 93 percent of Tajikistan is mountainous. The eastern part of the country is dominated by the Pamir range, known as "the roof of the world." The highest peak is located in Tajikistan--over 24,000 feet above sea level. There are several more mountain ranges in western Tajikistan.</p> <p>The six percent of cultivable land is in the river valleys, such as the Gissar Valley in the west, the Vakhsh Valley in the southwest, and the Ferghana Valley in the northern salient. Except in the northwest, rivers feed into the Amu Darya River, which originates in the Pamirs and flows west through Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to the Aral Sea. One tributary of the Amu Darya, the Pyanj, forms the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan.</p> <p><b>Natural Resources</b> Tajikistan has rich deposits of minerals and metal ores, including uranium. Hydroelectric power is a major resource.</p>	
<b>Capital</b>	The capital of Tajikistan is Dushanbe.	
<b>Population</b>	6.8 million	
<b>Ethnic composition of the population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Tajik 67%</li> <li>· Uzbek 23%</li> <li>· Russian 3%</li> </ul>	<p><i>Tajiks are divided into several ethnic sub-groups on the basis of region of origin—for example, Khujandis from the northern salient, Garmis from the Garm area in the center-north, and Kulobis from the Kulob area in the southwest. The Pamiris possess an especially distinct identity, including a unique affiliation with the Ismaili sect of Islam.</i></p> <p><i>Uzbeks are concentrated in the northern salient, Dushanbe and in the southwest.</i></p> <p><i>Millions of Tajiks also live outside Tajikistan, mainly in eastern Uzbekistan and northern Afghanistan.</i></p>
<b>Religion</b>	Sunni Moslem -- 80%, Ismaili Moslem -- 5%; Other -- 15%	
<b>Languages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Tajik</li> <li>· Pamiris</li> </ul>	<p><i>Tajik is unlike all other major Central Asian languages, which belong to the Turkic family of languages, in that it is closely related to Persian and belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family.</i></p> <p><i>Pamiris, usually considered to be Tajiks, have their own languages that are also related to Persian but are distinct from Tajik.</i></p>
<b>System of government</b>	Since 1999 Tajikistan has been a multiparty democracy with a strong presidency.	
<b>President</b>	The first post-independence president of Tajikistan was Rakhman Nabiev. The current president is Imomali Rakhmonov.	

<b>Currency</b>	The currency of Tajikistan is the Somoni.
<b>Standard of living</b>	GDP per capita in Tajikistan in 2002 was about \$170, which is roughly one half of 1 percent of the U.S. level.

## Four regions of Tajikistan

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### 11 administrative units

Tajikistan is divided into 11 (formerly 12) administrative units, but it is convenient to divide the country into four broad regions:

Leninobod Province is in the northern salient. It forms part of the Ferghana Valley, and is connected to the rest of the country by a mountain pass open only in the summer months. The main city is Khujand, Tajikistan's second largest city.

Khotlon Province is in southwestern Tajikistan. Until recently, this region comprised two provinces, Kulob and Qurghonteppa, which have now been merged.

The region of the Pamir Mountains in eastern Tajikistan is commonly known as Mountainous (or *Gorny* in Russian) Badakhshan. It constitutes an autonomous political unit called the Pamiri Republic of Badakhshan.

The remaining central western parts of Tajikistan, including the capital, are directly subordinate to the central government.

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## Historical Background of Tajikistan

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### Tajiks are the oldest known inhabitants of Central Asia

The Tajiks are of Persian origin, and were known to be farming the great river valleys of the region 3-4,000 years ago. Modern literary Tajik, written in the Arabic alphabet, emerged under the great Muslim civilization of Bukhara and Samarkand (Transoxiana) in the 9th century. It was also at this time that the Tajiks adopted Islam. By the 11th century Tajik had been replaced by Persian and Chagatai as the main languages of the civilization of Bukhara and Samarkand.

The Bukharan Emirate- including most Tajiks (although not the Pamiris)—became a Russian protectorate in the mid-19th century.



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**Tajikistan a union republic in 1929**

In 1924, Tajikistan became an autonomous republic within the Uzbek SSR. Only in 1929 was it given the status of a union republic separate from Uzbekistan.

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**Perestroika slow to impact Tajikistan**

Independent political groups began to appear in 1989, but were not allowed to take part in the 1990 elections to the Supreme Soviet.

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**Polarized society**

Tajikistan faced the collapse of the Soviet Union as a deeply polarized society. When the hard-line coup was mounted in Moscow in August 1991, the Tajik party boss supported the plotters. Following the failure of the coup, mass demonstrations in Dushanbe forced him to resign. In September 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the republic declared Tajikistan independent.

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**Presidential elections of**

In presidential elections held in November 1991, Rakhman Nabiev, a former party boss and chairman of the Supreme Soviet, won with 58 percent of the vote. An opposition candidate, a well-known cinematographer by the name of Davlat Khudonazarov received 25 percent but

**1991** charged that the result had been falsified.

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## The Civil War

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### **Devastating consequences**

The civil war of 1992-97 in Tajikistan was the bloodiest armed conflict that accompanied the breakup of the Soviet Union. About 750,000 people were uprooted from their homes and the economy was devastated, while estimates of the number killed go from 70,000 to 100,000.

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### **Rival demonstrations in Dushanbe**

The Tajik civil war was triggered by rival demonstrations that took place in Dushanbe in the spring of 1992. In response to the non-stop opposition demonstration on Shohidon Square, Supreme Soviet speaker Safarali Kenjayev summoned his supporters from Kulob Province to a counter-demonstration on Ozodi Square.

President Nabiev reached a compromise with the opposition, providing for a new coalition government and the replacement of the unrepresentative Supreme Soviet by a new assembly. A coalition government was set up, but the old Supreme Soviet refused to disband. Instead, arms were distributed to the demonstrators on Ozodi Square, who returned to Kulob Province ready to fight.

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### **Popular Front: a Pro-Soviet paramilitary force**

In the summer of 1992 violence spread to the southwest of the country. A pro-Soviet paramilitary force called the Popular Front attacked migrants from Garm and other mountain districts, whom they assumed to be opposition supporters.

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### **Reign of terror against the opposition**

In November 1992, the old Supreme Soviet re-convened in Khujand and chose a new government that excluded the opposition. The presidency was abolished, and the new Supreme Soviet speaker Imomali Rakhmonov, who was associated with the Popular Front, was nominated head of state. In December 1992, the Popular Front, aided by the intervention of Uzbekistani armed forces, captured Dushanbe, installed the new government in the capital, and embarked on a reign of terror against the opposition.

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### **CIS "peacekeeping force"**

While activists in the democratic wing of the opposition took refuge in Moscow, those belonging to the Islamist wing—together with many ordinary refugees—crossed the border into Afghanistan. From there they infiltrated back into Tajikistan to bolster the armed resistance that continued in the mountain districts. The Russian military deployed forces in Tajikistan in an effort to seal off the border with Afghanistan. Later this job was taken over by a CIS peacekeeping force that consisted mainly of Russian troops but included small

Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek contingents.

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### **Impasse**

Neither side could achieve victory. The opposition could not hope to topple a government that had the military and economic backing of Russia and Uzbekistan. The government was unable to secure effective control over large areas of Tajikistan.

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### **Presidency restored in July 1994**

Meanwhile the government side split between politicians from Kulob Province, represented by Rakhmanov, and politicians from Leninobod Province (Khujandis), led by Abdumalik Abdullojanov.

The Presidency was restored in July 1994, and presidential elections held in November 1994, in conjunction with a referendum to confirm a new constitution. Abdullojanov stood against Rakhmonov, who won with 58 percent of the vote to Abdullojanov's 40 percent. Power shifted from the formerly dominant Khujandi leaders to the new Kulobi elite.

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### **New 181-seat parliament**

Elections to a new 181-seat parliament followed in February 1995. Almost all the deputies elected were supporters of the government.

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## **Nature of the War**

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### **Conflict between government and opposition**

The Islamic Revival Party (IRP), standing for traditional Islamic values and customs, was the largest and best-organized force in the opposition.

Allied with the IRP were a number of organizations advocating democracy and national independence, the most important being the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT).

The Pamiri organization *La'li Badakhshon* (Ruby of Badakhshan) was concerned primarily with enhancing the autonomy of Badakhshan.

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### **Conflict between regionally based Tajik sub-groups**

The war can be understood as a conflict between regionally based Tajik sub-groups, with Khujandis and Kulobis on the post-communist side confronting Garmis, Pamiris, and other sub-groups on the opposition side. As a result of the uneven development of Tajikistan during the Soviet period, people in some parts of the country, especially Leninobod and Kulob Provinces, were deeply influenced by the Soviet system, while the inhabitants of many mountain districts remained attached to traditional ways.

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## Negotiations and the peace process

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### Push to negotiations

The military stalemate, Russian pressure on the sides to reach a settlement and the advance of the Taliban in Afghanistan (who were feared by Tajiks of all political persuasions) all pushed the parties toward negotiations.

Intra-Tajik peace talks took place mainly under the aegis of Russia, with the United Nations playing a mediating role. In late 1994 a ceasefire was agreed, and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT), consisting of 40 military observers and their support staff, was deployed to monitor it. The ceasefire did not hold.

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### National Peace Accord

The real breakthrough came in December 1996, when Rakhmonov and leader of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), Said Abdullo Nuri, met in Afghanistan and Moscow, agreed on a new ceasefire and on the basic principles of an agreement.

The National Peace Accord that brought the war to an end was finally signed by the government of Tajikistan and the UTO in Moscow in June 1997.

The peace accord provided for the:

- Immediate creation of a coalition government
  - Legalization of opposition parties and a transition to multiparty democracy
  - Resettlement of refugees
  - Integration of opposition fighters into the national army
- 

### Accord implemented

The accord has by and large been implemented. A coalition government was formed and remains in office. Opposition figures were appointed to a number of important positions. For example, the highly respected Moslem religious leader *Qadi* Akbar Turajonzoda (*Qadi* is an honorific title) was made first deputy Prime Minister.

Opposition parties were legalized in September 1999. Refugees returned to their homes, though many suffered intimidation and discrimination at the hands of local authorities. The military forces of the two sides were formally integrated, but particular army units retained informal links with one or another political grouping.

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### The peace accord and the Islamist threat

The continued confrontation between Islamists and governments elsewhere in the region placed the peace accord under strain, especially given the presence of an Islamist party, the IRP, in the government coalition. The IRP has distanced itself from radical Islamism and has not blocked action against foreign and Tajik radical Islamists based in Tajikistan. Government forces crushed some Tajik Islamists who had rejected the peace accord and continued fighting in summer 2001. Training camps that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan had in northern Tajikistan have been closed.

Relations between the Rakhmonov regime and the IRP were placed in question, however, with the arrest in May 2003 of IRP deputy chairman Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov.

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## OSCE

An OSCE mission was established in Tajikistan in February 1994, and now has five regional field offices. Together with UNMOT, the OSCE mission has assisted in the peace process and monitored implementation of the 1997 peace accord. OSCE is one of the guarantors of the accord.

It has facilitated dialogue and confidence-building between political and regional forces, promoted respect for human rights and the development of civil society, and helped create democratic political and legal institutions. Following Tajikistan's first multiparty parliamentary elections in early 2000, implementation of the peace accord was considered complete. UNMOT was withdrawn in May 2000.

The focus of the OSCE's work has now shifted to post-conflict rehabilitation and assistance in implementing OSCE commitments. Priorities are the rule of law, separation of powers, human rights, freedom of the media, modernization of legislation and reforms toward building a market economy.

[OSCE Centre in Tajikistan](#)

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## Domestic Politics in Tajikistan

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### New parliament

The referendum of September 1999 approved the creation of a new parliament. It consists of a lower house filled by popular election and an upper house whose members are appointed either by the president or by regional governing bodies. As the president selects the members of regional governing bodies, he is effectively in full control of the upper house.

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### Presidential elections

The last presidential elections were in late 1999. Of five individuals who tried to stand against Rakhmonov, four were denied registration. The fifth, Davlat Usmon of the IRP, announced his withdrawal in protest at restrictions on campaigning, but his name was left on the ballot. According to the official result, Rakhmonov won with 97 percent of the vote.

The next presidential elections are due in 2006. However, the Constitution was amended by referendum in June 2003 to allow Rakhmonov to stand for another two 7-year terms -- that is, to possibly stay in office until 2020.

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### Government consolidates control of the country

The government is gradually consolidating its control of the country and restoring law and order. In 2002 many local warlords, especially in the area around Dushanbe, were arrested or forced to retreat.

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## **Parliamentary elections**

The parliamentary elections of February and March 2000 were won by the ruling People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, with 65 percent of the vote. The Communist Party received 21 percent, and the Islamic Revival Party seven percent. Three other parties failed to surmount the five percent barrier to entry into parliament. Although irregularities were reported, international observers concluded that the elections were a step forward toward democracy for Tajikistan.

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## **The party system in Tajikistan**

The party system in Tajikistan today is somewhat different from that existing at the outbreak of the civil war.

The main pro-presidential party remains the People's Democratic Party. The three main opposition forces are:

- the Islamic Revival Party, which is the only legal Islamic party in Central Asia;
- the Communist Party, which is no longer associated with the ruling regime; and
- the Democratic Party, which is forming an alliance with the Social Democratic Party and perhaps the Socialist Party to contest the 2005 parliamentary elections

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## **Conflict between Kulobi and Khujandi elites**

Besides continuing differences between the post-communist and the opposition wings, the conflict between the Kulobi and Khujandi elites remains very acute. An omission of the peace accord was its exclusion of the "third force"—that is, the Khujandis.

In May 1996, demonstrators in Khujand and Ura-Teppe, the two main cities of Leninobod Province, demanded the removal of unpopular local officials appointed by the Kulobi-dominated central government.

Severe repression of the protests provoked a violent response, including assassination attempts against Rakhmonov and other government figures and mutinies in 1997 and 1998 led by a Khujandi army colonel named Makhmud Khudoiberdiev.

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## **Foreign Relations in Tajikistan**

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### **Increased dependence on outside powers**

The civil war increased Tajikistan's dependence on outside powers. The post-communist elites managed to hold on to power thanks to economic support from Russia and military assistance from Russia and Uzbekistan.

Large-scale famine has been averted largely thanks to humanitarian aid from the

international community.

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**Dependent on Uzbekistan**

There has been an important change in Tajikistan's foreign relations since the early 1990s. The old Khujandi elite, which included members of the Uzbek minority, had very close relations with the Karimov regime in neighboring Uzbekistan. The new Kulobi ruling group, by contrast, includes no Uzbeks and seeks to decrease Tajikistan's dependence on Uzbekistan. The Tajikistan government accused Uzbekistan of giving sanctuary to the Khujandi mutineer Khudoiberdiev, while the Uzbekistan government accused Tajikistan of harboring IMU training camps. The closing of these camps has somewhat eased the situation.

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**Post-Sept. 11th**

Tajikistan has allowed the U.S. to use military facilities on its territory during and since the post-September 11, 2001 war in Afghanistan. Closer relations have been established between Tajikistan and the West, expanding Tajikistan's access to Western aid. In January 2002, the U.S. lifted its ban on arms sales to Tajikistan. It has also funded the creation of a Drug Control Agency to combat trafficking in drugs from Afghanistan.

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**Cooperation with Russia continues**

Tajikistan continues to cooperate with Russia in the security and the economic sphere. A permanent base is to be established for the 20,000 Russian troops still in Tajikistan. Russia has offered to complete the construction of hydroelectric power stations in Tajikistan that were abandoned during the civil war.

However, the Tajik government is concerned about the treatment of the numerous Tajik migrant workers in Russia. Tajik government officials have also complained that Russian troops are not providing effective security on the Tajik-Afghan border.

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**Border issues**

Tajikistan has border disputes with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. Some progress has been made toward resolving the disputes with Uzbekistan and China. However, Uzbekistan refuses to de-mine the Tajik-Uzbek border area, and the Tajik-Kyrgyz border in the Batken district remains tense.

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**Mini-Quiz**

**The National Peace Accord in Tajikistan:**

- has never been implemented
- was opposed by the United Tajik Opposition
- resulted in the closure of the OSCE mission in Bishkek
- led to the formation of a coalition government, transition to multiparty democracy, resettlement of refugees, and integration of opposition fighters into the national army

## Tajikistan Culture

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### Dushanbe

The capital Dushanbe is home to about one in ten of the country's inhabitants. Tree-lined avenues of pale buildings stand against a backdrop of mountains. The city, previously just a village, was made into the capital and built up during the Soviet period. There are several interesting museums. At the Museum of Ethnography, Tajik pottery, carpets, jewelry, and musical instruments are on display.

In the city center you will find the Barakat Market. Just about anything is on sale, reflecting the extreme poverty brought about by the Soviet collapse and the civil war. Many people are trying to sell their old clothes or any other old odds and ends that they can find.

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### Mountain ranges

Most of the country is mountainous. Eastern Tajikistan is completely covered by the Pamir range, otherwise known as "the roof of the world." A few thousand people farm in the mountain valleys, while another few thousand nomads pasture their sheep and goats on the high plateau. There are several other mountain ranges in Western Tajikistan.

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### Travel

Travel from one part of the country to another is always difficult and at times impossible. Roads, where they exist, are poorly surfaced, often no more than rutted tracks of frozen mud precariously perched on narrow mountain ledges. Landslides and avalanches are a constant danger. The high mountain passes are open only for a few months in the summer. At other times you have to take roundabout routes passing through neighboring countries. Towns in the mountain areas are small, few and far between. In the Pamirs there is only one town, Khorog, with a population barely exceeding 20,000.

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### Lowlands

Lowland Tajikistan is divided in two by the Fan Mountains. To their south lie the Dushanbe region and the southern province of Khotlon. To their north is Leninobod Province, a salient sticking out into the fertile Ferghana Valley. Here is Khujand, the country's second largest city.

Unlike Dushanbe, Khujand is a very ancient city, founded by Alexander the Great more than 2,300 years ago, and has an old mosque, medrassa (religious college), and mausoleum. The goods in the bazaar suggest that Khujand is much more prosperous than Dushanbe. That is partly because it largely escaped the ravages of the civil war, although even before the civil war it was more prosperous.

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### Natural resources

Despite the poverty of most of its people, Tajikistan has significant natural resources. In addition to hydroelectric power, there are rich deposits of uranium, zinc, lead, and other minerals and metal ores. But the economy is in ruins. Everything is in short supply, and in many places trade is by barter rather than cash.

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**Attire**

Older Tajik men wear long quilted jackets and embroidered caps. Women of all ages favor multicolored long dresses with striped trousers underneath and head scarves to match.

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**Cuisine**

Most Tajiks can afford to eat only vegetable dishes, such as soup made from beans, milk, and herbs, flat bread, chickpea porridge, *tuhum barak* (egg-filled ravioli coated with sesame seed oil), and *chakka* (curd mixed with herbs). When meat -- usually lamb -- is available, it's often made into *tushbera* (steamed dumplings), served plain or with vinegar or butter. A popular drink is *sher chay* -- tea with goat's milk, salt, and butter.

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## **Congratulations!**

### **You have completed:**

### **Module 6: Central Asia**

**If you would like to take the test for this module, please go to the interactive test on the [REACT website](#).**

*Please note, you must be a U.S. candidate with a user name and password to take the test.*