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Module 6. Central Asia

Developed by the
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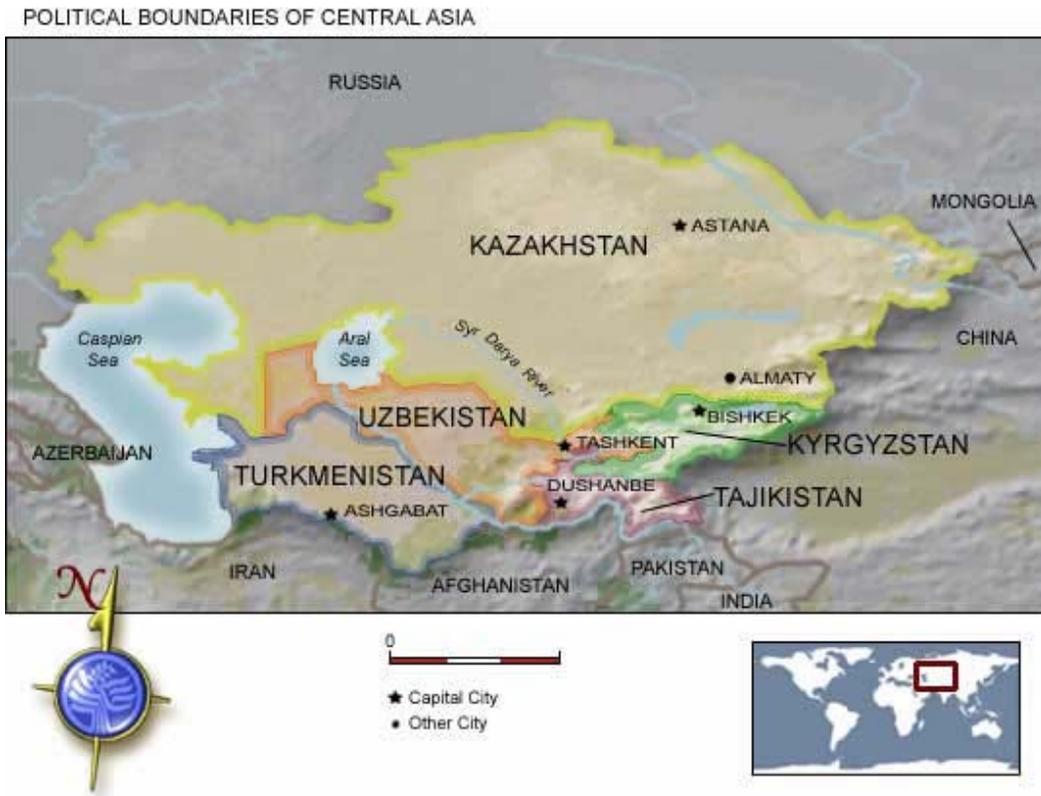
Overview

Central Asia

Five 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.



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Central Asia, Continued

Natural divisions

Central Asia has four basic types of natural landscape:

- 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 Fergana 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



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Central Asia, Continued

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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Central Asia, Continued

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, but it is being studied and spoken decreasingly by youth.

States before the Soviet period

Transoxiana

The nomadic peoples had tribal leaders, but they did not have states in the modern sense. However, the core area of Central Asia, 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.

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.

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. However, this designation was somewhat artificial, since people in the region did not possess ethnic identities as understood today.

At the initial stage, Soviet ethnographers created Kazakh, Turkmen, and Uzbek union republics, and several autonomous republics: they were designated for 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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States before the Soviet period, Continued

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 settlement and based on linguistic and cultural commonalities. It was impossible to make the correspondence exact because of the region's diversity and lack of ethnic identity. In some cases, people were given a group label but placed in the "wrong" republic. 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. Over several generations, people began internalizing the national identities imposed by the Soviet system.

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, a conflict over land between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks exploded in 1990 into large-scale ethnic violence. By establishing political units on a mono-ethnic basis in a region where various peoples have historically lived side by side, the Soviet process of national delimitation sowed the seeds of today's inter-ethnic tensions.

International organizations

Overview

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 Organization--provide links with Russia and other post-Soviet states.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization links all the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan with China and Russia.
- The Economic Cooperation Organization provides links with Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.
- The Inter-State Coordinating Commission for Water Resources links the Central Asian states with each other.

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International organizations, Continued

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 have also provided use of their airspace and facilities for the deployment of U.S. forces during the post-September 11, 2001 war in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan ended this arrangement in 2005 in response to U.S. pressures for reform.

A few Central Asian countries also have security ties with China.

Caspian Oil

Oil in the Caspian Sea

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

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 gas is more important for Turkmenistan.

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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Oil in the Caspian Sea, Continued

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 and Azerbaijan dispute their offshore borders. In July 2001, an Iranian gunboat challenged two Azerbaijani vessels surveying for oil in the contested area.

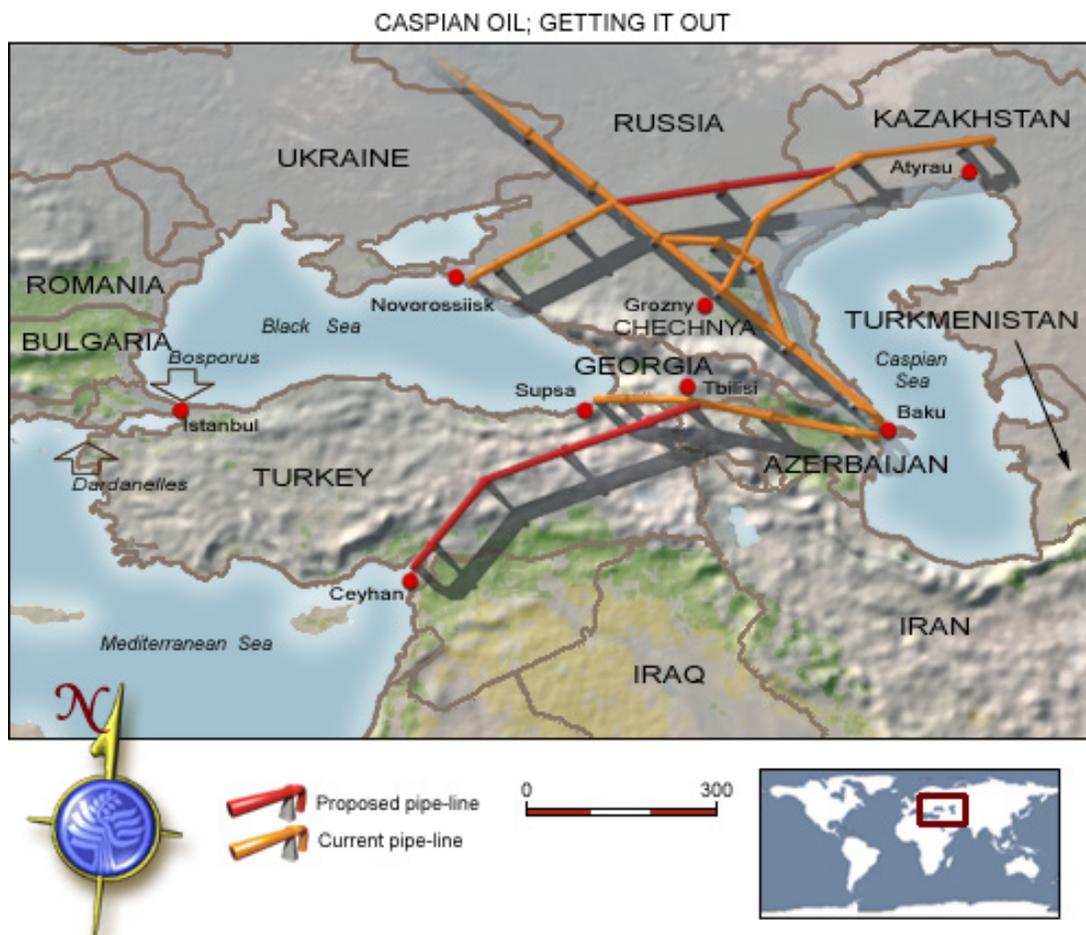
In May 2003, Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the division of the northern and central parts of the seabed. This covered about 64% of the seabed.

The leaders of the five Caspian littoral states attended a summit meeting in Tehran in October 2007, but failed to make progress in resolving the outstanding border and legal issues dividing them.

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). In the post-Soviet period, some pipelines have been extended and new ones have been constructed. A section of pipeline bypassing Chechnya was added, so that Russia's oil supply would no longer be hostage to what happens in Chechnya. A new section west to the port of Novorossiisk on the Black Sea coast was also completed, enabling Russia to export oil from Azerbaijan. A connecting east-west link from Kazakhstan enables 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.



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Getting the oil out, Continued

Development of southern alternative export routes

Meanwhile, the West heavily promoted alternative export routes further to the south that did not go through Russia. A pipeline from Baku through Tbilisi to Supsa, a port on Georgia's Black Sea coast, has been in use for several years. In May 2005, a major pipeline carrying oil from Baku, through Tbilisi, to Turkey's Mediterranean coast at Ceyhan, was inaugurated. Kazakhstan is considering providing access to the southern route for its oil, either by tanker or by building an underwater pipeline to Baku from the new Caspian port of Kuryk.

Alternative export route farther south

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 strongly opposed by the United States.

Economic and geopolitical rivalry

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

Energy summits seek to reduce Russian leverage

The presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Poland, and the three Baltic states, and officials from other European and Caspian region governments, the EU and the U.S., met in Kyiv for a summit on energy security, in May 2008. It was the third in a series of summits of this group, seeking ways to reduce Russian leverage on the energy security of the European countries involved.

Over-fishing and pollution

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.

In January 2006, the UN banned trade on wild caviar in order to save the endangered Caspian sturgeon. The ban was lifted in 2007, despite opposition from conservation groups.

Central Asia's Water

The drying up of the Aral Sea

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.

Why is the Aral Sea drying up?

The largest body of water in Central Asia –the fourth largest inland body of water in the world--used to be the Aral Sea. But the Aral Sea has been drying up. Why?



This Derelict fishing boat is aground in desert that was once part of the Aral Sea.

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The drying up of the Aral Sea, Continued

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.



The Tien Shan mountain range in Kyrgyzstan is one of Central Asia's most important water sources. OSCE/Lubomir Kotek

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The drying up of the Aral Sea, Continued

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.

Dam to preserve northern section of the sea

Kazakhstan completed a seven-mile-long dam in 2007 to enclose a northern section of the sea, which it hopes will be preserved by the inflow from the Syr Darya. A second dam is scheduled for completion by 2010. The southern half of the sea controlled by Uzbekistan will then dry up completely unless it takes steps of its own.

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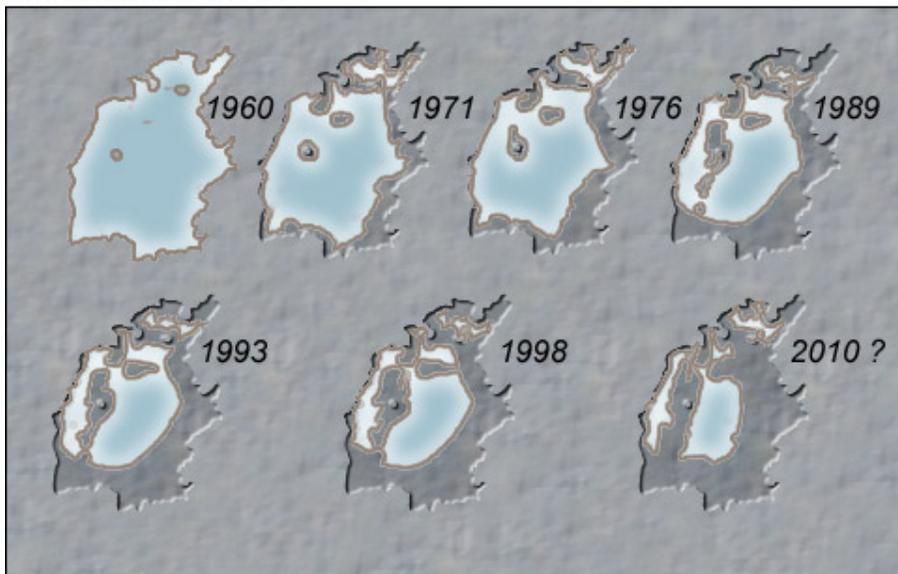
The drying up of the Aral Sea, Continued

Aral Sea lost 80% of its volume since 1960

The 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 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



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 through the rivers of Central Asia.

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.

Conflicts over water

Inter-State Coordinating Commission for Water Resource

Efforts have been made to improve the joint management of the region's water. In 1992 the five Central Asian countries set up the Interstate Coordinating Commission for Water Resources. The World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union, and OSCE have also provided assistance.



A representative of an Uzbek non-governmental organization speaks at an OSCE-organized roundtable on water management in Uzbekistan, September 2002. (OSCE/Lubomir Kotek)

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 Turkmenistan's plan 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

Multiple choice 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 economic interest
-

Kazakhstan

Overview

At a glance

The following table describes geographic and demographic information for Kazakhstan.

Item	Description
Area	1,050,000 square miles
Location	<p>Kazakhstan is located in the middle of the Eurasian land mass. It borders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russia to the north and northwest• The Caspian Sea and Turkmenistan to the southwest• Uzbekistan to the south• Kyrgyzstan to the southeast• China's Xinjiang Province and Mongolia to the east
Capital	<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, Almaty has remained the commercial, intellectual, and cultural center of Kazakhstan.</p>

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Climate Northern Kazakhstan has a continental climate, with warm summers and cold winters. Temperatures rise in the south.</p> <p>Terrain Most of northern Kazakhstan is steppe, which gradually gives way to semi-desert to the south and then the Kyzyl Kum Desert. In the far south are the fertile lands of the Syr Darya basin. 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>Natural Resources Kazakhstan is rich in mineral resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil in the west around Atyrau • Coal in the north around Qaraghandy and Pavlodar • Deposits of many metal ores: iron, copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, uranium, etc.
Population	Just over 15 million (2007 estimated)
Ethnic composition of the population	<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"> • Indigenous Kazakhs • Russian-speakers including Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, and others, concentrated in the north and northeast and in Almaty • 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)

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Changing ethnic composition	<p>In 1991, Russian-speakers accounted for 50% of the population, Kazakhs 40%, and other non-Europeans the remaining 10%.</p> <p>Russian-speakers are now about 30% and Kazakhs up to 56%. 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>
Kazakhs divided into Senior, Middle, and Junior Juz	<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>
Languages	<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>
Religion	<p>Muslim - 47%</p> <p>Russian Orthodox - 44%</p> <p>Other - 9%</p>

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
System of government	In form, Kazakhstan is a presidential democracy, but real power has increasingly been concentrated in the hands of the president.
Head of state	The president of Kazakhstan since independence has been Nursultan Nazarbayev.
Currency	The currency of Kazakhstan is the Tenge.
Standard of living	Estimated GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) per capita in 2007 was about \$10,400. After a period of decline, the standard of living in Kazakhstan has started to recover.

Basic geography of Kazakhstan

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



Basic geography of Kazakhstan, Continued

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 is sparsely populated and overwhelmingly Kazakh. The oilfields are here.
 - The steppe and uplands of the north and northeast 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.
-

Kazakhstan before Russian rule

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.

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.

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.

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 Chinese armies 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.

Kazakhstan under Russian and Soviet rule

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).

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.

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.)

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% of Kazakhs died from starvation, epidemics, and executions.

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Kazakhstan under Russian and Soviet rule, Continued

Inflow of Non-Kazakhs

In their place 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% in 1926 to 30% in 1959.

Kazakhstan lands used for military purposes

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 Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan: from Perestroika to independence

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.

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: from Perestroika to independence, Continued

Kazakhstan declares independence

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.

Domestic politics in Kazakhstan

Evolution toward presidential dictatorship

While there remains some scope for independent political activity in Kazakhstan, the country has gradually evolved into 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.

Media acquired by President's daughter

In 1997, Nazabayev's control over the media was tightened. The President's son-in-law Rakhat Aliev gained control over the popular newspaper Karavan. Dariga Nazarbayeva, the President's daughter, had already acquired much of the country's media. Remaining independent (mainly print) 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 aroused international concern. In April 2004 Nazarbayev rejected a draft on constitutional advice. However, in July 2006 he signed into a law a bill tightening government control over the media

Political opposition

Opposition parties that are not considered capable 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 set such high requirements for parties' participation in elections that few parties can satisfy them.

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Domestic politics in Kazakhstan, Continued

1999 presidential elections

Presidential elections finally took place in January 1999. Nazarbayev won with 81% of the vote. His sole opponent, Serikbolsyn Abdildin of the CPK, got 12%. 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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Domestic politics in Kazakhstan, Continued

1999 parliamentary elections

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

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

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

Parliamentary elections of September 2004

Pro-presidential parties won a strong majority in the elections for the Mazhilis (lower house of parliament). The pro-presidential Otan won 43 seats, the newer pro-presidential Asar four seats, and the pro-presidential AIST bloc of the Civic and Agrarian Parties 11 seats. The moderate opposition party Ak Zhol won one seat. Seventeen independents also won election to the 77-member Mazhilis. The OSCE saw some improvements over past elections, but the electoral process fell short of OSCE commitments and international standards.

Ak Zhol party leader Altynbek Sarsenbaev was given a ministerial post in Nazarbayev’s government but resigned it, as well as his parliamentary seat, to protest alleged fraud in the elections. Ak Zhol did not fill its seat in parliament until December 2006.

Nazarbayev’s daughter Dariga had less political success. Her Asar party fared poorly in the 2004 elections. In July 2006, she led a merger of the Asar and Otan Parties, signaling her continuing ambitions.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kazakhstan, Continued

Presidential election of December 2005

In August 2005, the Constitutional Council resolved a dispute on the scheduling of the presidential election and ordered it held in December. Five candidates were officially registered, including former parliamentary chairman and head of the opposition bloc For a Just Kazakhstan Zharmakhan Tuyakbai (who broke with the ruling party after the 2004 parliamentary elections) and Ak Zhol leader Alikhan Baimenov.

Also in August, the Constitutional Council overruled a law proposed by parliament aimed at tightening restrictions on the activities of nongovernmental organizations. Nonetheless, Nazarbayev warned that foreign-sponsored NGOs, in particular, would be closely monitored to ensure their compliance with state law.

Nazarbayev landslide

Nazarbayev won an overwhelming victory in the December presidential election, with official results giving him more than 90% of the vote with a 70% turnout. The OSCE stated the elections had failed to meet a number of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections.

Political violence

Opposition Naghyz Ak Zhol party co-chairman Altynbek Sarsenbaev and two aides were found murdered outside of Almaty in March 2006. Five members of the National Security Committee's (KNB) special forces unit were arrested for involvement, and the head of the Senate administration was arrested as the alleged ringleader. In the aftermath, KNB head Nartai Dutbaev resigned. Sarsenbaev's murder came three months after the death of Zamanbek Nurkadilov, who had accused Nazarbaev of corruption and had threatened to publish evidence proving his accusation.

Nazarbaev falling out with son-in-law

Tensions between Nazarbaev and his son-in-law Rakhat Aliyev exploded in May 2007. Aliyev was accused of involvement in the kidnapping of two Kazakh bankers, and his KTK television channel was taken off the air and Karavan newspaper closed for three months. He was then fired from his post as Kazakh Ambassador to Austria. His wife also divorced him. Finally, Kazakh authorities issued an international arrest warrant for Aliyev, allegedly for running an organized crime network and for the reported kidnapping. An Austrian court decided against Aliev's extradition in August 2007.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kazakhstan, Continued

Presidential term limit removed

Meanwhile, Nazarbayev proposed a series of constitutional amendments, most importantly, removing term limits for the sitting president. The package quickly passed parliament and was signed by Nazabayev, enabling him to remain as president for as long as he wishes.

2007 parliamentary elections

The election created a one-party parliament. Nazabayev's Nur-Otan party won all 98 seats at stake, with a reported 88% of the vote. None of the other six parties contesting the elections passed the 7% threshold. Another 9 seats in parliament are to be chosen by the appointed Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan, which represents the country's ethnic groups.

The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) reported that these elections reflected welcome progress in the pre-election process and during the conduct of the vote, but a number of OSCE commitments and Council of Europe standards were not met in elements of the new legal framework and in the vote count. Notably, the counting of votes was not transparent, and the counting process was assessed negatively in 43% of polling stations visited. A wide range of irregularities was observed, according to the IEOM.

Ethnic relations in Kazakhstan

Real power 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.

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.

Potential problems

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

There were reports of interethnic violence in 2007 between Kazakhs and Uighurs, as well as Kazakhs and Kurds in south Kazakhstan.

Juz, tribal, and clan divisions

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. Some, however, see the importance of the Juz factor as having declined since the 1990s. More significant is the clash of elites, each focused on self-interest, and looking to their position in the post-Nazarbayev era.

Foreign relations in Kazakhstan

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.

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan signed a Treaty of Eternal Friendship in 1998.

Nazarbayev also 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).

In 2007, during a visit to Kyrgyzstan, Nazarbayev proposed a Central Asian Union (CAU) that would deal primarily with interstate border issues such as trade, visas, tourism and security. If it develops content, such as organization could compete with the Russian-led Collective Security Organization and the Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Council. So far, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have signed an agreement to create a International Supreme Council. Uzbekistan President Karimov, however, has reacted negatively to the CAU proposal, perhaps seeing it as Kazakhstan's effort to compete with Uzbekistan for regional leadership.

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Foreign relations in Kazakhstan, Continued

Kazakhstan security and energy 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 2003, Nazarbayev announced that Kazakhstan would continue to route its oil exports through Russian territory. In 2004, Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to pursue joint exploration and development of Caspian Sea resources. In 2005, they signed a long-term production sharing agreement to develop the Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field, involving \$23 billion in investments. In 2006, Russia agreed to provide \$160 million to develop infrastructure on the Russia-Kazakhstan border.

Nazarbayev joined with his Russian and Turkmen counterparts at a summit meeting in Turkmenbashi City in May 2007 that resulted in a declaration of intent to expand gas transport pipelines along the Caspian coast. (This seemed to exclude participation in the Western-backed Trans-Caspian pipeline that would lead to the Caucasus and the West, bypassing Russia.) Separately, the Uzbek president declared his intent to modernize the Uzbekistan section of the existing Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan gas pipeline leading to Russia.

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Foreign relations in Kazakhstan, Continued

Penetration of extremist Islamic organizations into Kazakhstan

Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan share the goal of 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 supposedly penetrated from Uzbekistan into southern Kazakhstan.

In November 2004, the Kazakh government announced the arrest of thirteen alleged members (including nine Kazakh citizens) of a terrorist group that had carried out attacks in Uzbekistan earlier that year.

Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan tensions

But this common interest has not prevented past tensions between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan over border, water, and other issues. Their relations were especially strained by an incursion of Uzbekistan forces across the disputed border in February 2000. In 2002, a compromise was reached on the border issue. Nevertheless, the two states have continued their rivalry to be the paramount regional superpower in Central Asia.

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Foreign relations in Kazakhstan, Continued

Kazakhstan's broad relationship with China

Chinese President Hu Jintao and President Nazarbaev signed a strategic partnership agreement between their two countries in July 2005. There is considerable trade between the two countries. China financed an \$800 million oil pipeline to connect the oilfields in western Kazakhstan to northwestern China. The 1,000 km Atashu-Alashankou pipeline opened in December 2005 with an initial capacity of 10 million tons. By 2011, the pipeline is expected to double in length and triple in capacity. Kazakhstan is likely to seek to attract continuing Chinese investment in its energy sector, while avoiding Chinese control over it.

Border issues have been resolved in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan has grievances against China, such as the nuclear testing at the Lop Nor site not far across the border in Xinjiang Province.

Cross-border ethnic ties

Cross-border ethnic ties are a source of potential conflict, as well as a possible basis for security cooperation. 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 treatment of ethnic kin in Xinjiang, and does not allow Uighurs in Kazakhstan to assist the separatist movement of Uighurs in Xinjiang. The two governments also have a common interest in containing Islamic extremist Uighurs associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan reportedly coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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Foreign relations in Kazakhstan, Continued

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.

Since 9/11, Kazakhstan has increased its military ties with NATO and the US, from which it receives military aid. In June 2004, Kazakhstan contracted with a British firm to upgrade its air defenses. Kazakhstan sent a small contingent of troops to Iraq. In 2006, Kazakhstan concluded an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO.

While concerns about corruption and a lack of democracy—as well as Nazarbaev's own fear of foreign destabilization—have continued to put a strain on U.S.-Kazakh relations, the cancellation of the U.S.-Uzbek strategic partnership has led to efforts to again strengthen the U.S.-Kazakh relationship. In September 2006, President Nazarbaev visited the U.S., where President Bush balanced his hopes for future cooperation, while lightly stressing the desire for democratic reforms.

Unlike Uzbekistan, President Nazarbaev has never let his interest in good relations with the U.S. and the West affect the cordial relations between Kazakhstan and Russia.

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Foreign relations in Kazakhstan, Continued

OSCE

An [OSCE Centre](#) was opened in Almaty in 1999 to promote OSCE principles and commitments, and greater regional cooperation.

Kazakhstan had been campaigning since 2006 to chair the OSCE in 2009. It eventually won agreement to become chair in 2010, finally winning over countries like the U.S. that had advocated delay because of Kazakhstan's poor observation of OSCE commitments. The U.S. decided to give its support after Kazakhstan pledged to reform its election law, handling of the media, and treatment of political parties, as well as safeguard ODIHR, the OSCE election monitoring body. The Kazakh government had in the past supported Russian efforts to weaken ODIHR's monitoring mandate.

Kazakhstan culture

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.



Traffic on a road in Astana, Kazakhstan on 10 April 2007. (OSCE/Susanna Loof)

Continued on next page

Kazakhstan culture, Continued

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.



A mountain range near Almaty, Kazakhstan, October 2004. (OSCE/Mikhail Evstafiev)

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Kazakhstan culture, Continued

Almaty, cont.

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, nightclubs 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.

Continued on next page

Kazakhstan culture, Continued

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.

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, are 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.

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.

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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Kazakhstan culture, Continued

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).

Mini-quiz

Multiple choice 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

Overview

At a glance

The following table describes geographic and demographic information for Turkmenistan.

Item	Description
Area	190,000 square miles
Location	Turkmenistan borders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kazakhstan to the northwest• The Caspian Sea to the west• Iran and Afghanistan to the south• Uzbekistan to the east and northeast
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Climate The climate of Turkmenistan is hot and dry.</p> <p>Terrain Over 80% 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>Natural Resources Turkmenistan possesses the largest deposits of natural gas in the Central Asian region, in addition to substantial deposits of oil.</p>
Capital	The capital of Turkmenistan is Ashgabat (sometimes spelled Ashgabad).
Population	5.18 million (2008 estimated)

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Ethnic composition of the population	<p>About 85% 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">• Millions of Turkmen live outside Turkmenistan, mainly in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan.• Russian-speakers now make up only about 4% of the population, concentrated mostly in Ashgabat.• Uzbeks, who are concentrated in the east of the country, are 5% of the population. Kazakhs, who are concentrated in the northwest near the border with Kazakhstan, make up 2%.
Language	Turkmen belongs to the Turkic family of languages.
Religion	Muslim - 89%, Eastern Orthodox - 9%, Unknown 2%
System of government	Turkmenistan is a presidential dictatorship with a one party system
Head of state	Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov was elected president in February 2007.
Currency	The currency of Turkmenistan is the Manat.
Standard of living	Estimated per capita GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) in 2007 was \$9,200.

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.

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Basic geography of Turkmenistan, Continued

Map The following graphic is a map of Turkmenistan.



Historical background of Turkmenistan

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.

Turkmen 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.

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.

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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Historical background of Turkmenistan, Continued

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.

Independence

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, Saparmurat Niyazov, became president of the new state in May 1992.

Domestic politics of Turkmenistan

Power concentrated in hands of the President

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

Parliament

Parliament was reduced in size from 125 to 50 deputies, four-fifths of whom were members of the president's party, the DPT. Niyazov had the power to disband parliament if it expressed lack of confidence in the cabinet. Moreover, the supreme representative body was not parliament but the People's Council, a very large super-parliament headed by the president.

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

Censorship and control

There is no freedom of expression in Turkmenistan. Although freedom of speech and 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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Domestic politics of Turkmenistan, Continued

Human rights

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

The International Crisis Group warned in 2004 that deteriorating conditions in Turkmenistan constituted an “unfolding catastrophe,” and that Niyazov’s destruction of state and civil society institutions had actually increased in the past year.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities paid a brief visit to Turkmenistan in 2003 and again in 2004 to observe the situation of minorities in the country.

In 2006, Turkmenistan received international condemnation when it was revealed that Ogulsapar Muradova, a journalist imprisoned in August on dubious grounds, died under mysterious circumstances. The European Parliament also voted against a trade agreement with Turkmenistan in 2006 because of human rights concerns.

Opposition

There have 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.

There is no apparent organized political opposition inside the country. The four major opposition groups that operate abroad united in 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 in 2002. Numerous arrests followed.

In 2006, claiming to have foiled a coup plot, Niyazov had several journalists and opposition activists arrested.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics of Turkmenistan, Continued

Niyazov dies

President-for-Life Niyazov died suddenly on December 20, 2006. He had held all key government posts and left no designated heir. Deputy Prime Minister Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov was named acting head of state, with the constitution quickly amended to allow him to run for president. New elections were scheduled. State media and top officials expressed a clear preference for Berdymukhamedov, of the six candidates running for president.



Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov (official site)

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Domestic politics of Turkmenistan, Continued

Berdymukhamdov elected

Berdymukhammedov was elected president in the February 2007 elections, reportedly garnering 89.23% of the vote. Authorities claimed that 98% of registered voters cast their ballots.

OSCE's ODIHR sent a needs assessment mission to Turkmenistan prior to the election, followed by an election support team. This team reported that while the new presidential election law met some OSCE commitments, there was room for substantial improvement in the right of citizens to stand as candidates and the rights of candidates. Although the election support team did not serve a formal observation or monitoring role, nor did it issue a report, OSCE did see these visits as the first step in a renewed dialogue with Turkmen authorities on election processes and other issues. A delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was also present during the election.



A poster in Ashgabat, prior to the 11 February 2007 presidential election in Turkmenistan. (OSCE/Holly Ruthrauff)

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Domestic politics of Turkmenistan, Continued

Continuity and measured change

Berdmukhamedov moved to fulfill campaign promises to implement reforms in the agricultural, education and health fields. There has been little sign, however, of political reform. Two government-sponsored internet cafes have been opened in Ashgabat, but at rates few Turkmen can afford.

Berdmukhamedov has acted more decisively in making governmental personnel changes to strengthen his position. Less than two months after taking office, he fired Minister of Interior Akrammed Rakhmanov, blaming him for the corruption and failures of the Turkmen police. In May 2007, he removed from office the powerful head of the presidential security service, Akmurad Rejepov.

Constitutional change

A seven-year ban on opera and circus entertainment was ended. Plans were announced in January 2008 to reopen the opera house and circus, build a cinema and add new books to libraries.

In January 2008, government officials reiterated their commitments to education reform and announced an additional major increase in the budget for schools and universities.

In May 2008, a State Commission for Constitutional Reform was established chaired by the President. Expected constitutional amendments include lengthening the presidential term, eliminating the rubberstamp super-parliament People's Council, and strengthening parliament.

Ethnic relations in Turkmenistan

Current and potential tensions

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.

Dual citizenship

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

Tribal tension

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.

Foreign relations in Turkmenistan

Declaration of the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan

Niyazov's foreign policy had been 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 kept its distance both from those member states that cooperate closely with Russia and from those that opposed Russian domination. In August 2005, Turkmenistan downgraded its participation in the CIS to “associate” member status.

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

Bilateral ties with Russia

Turkmenistan has maintained important bilateral relationships with Russia in the economic and military spheres. Above all, it exports oil and gas to and through Russia -- a crucial form of dependence.

In September 2006, Russia's gas monopoly Gazprom agreed to buy 50 billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan annually from 2007 to 2009.

The new President Berdmukhamedov hosted a summit with the Russian and Kazakh presidents in Turkmenbashi City in May 2007, agreeing on a declaration of intent to construct a new gas pipeline along the Caspian coast. (This seemed to exclude participation in a Western-backed Trans-Caspian pipeline to the Caucasus and Europe that would bypass Russia.) He also made his first trips out of Turkmenistan to visit Russia and Kazakhstan.

Continued on next page

Foreign relations in Turkmenistan, Continued

Strengthening links with neighbors and the West too

Much more interested in international contacts than Niyazov, Berdmukhamedov visited Brussels to meet with EU officials in November 2007.

Berdmukhamedov visited Turkey in March 2008, the first high-level contact between the two states in seven years. There were no statements of possible energy transit cooperation, such as on the U.S. backed Trans-Caspian Pipeline (that would bypass Russia). He also visited Uzbekistan, warming the chilly bilateral relations that had existed prior to Niyazov's death in 2006. His talks with Karimov focused in improving bilateral economic cooperation, including gas and oil transit. The two states continue to differ over the use of water from the Amu Darya River, and how to share the Kokdumalak gas condensate deposits on their shared border.

Berdmukhamedov also attended NATO's April 2008 Bucharest Summit, suggesting that he is serious about balancing his country's security relationships. (Turkmenistan has been a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace since 1994.)

Also in April 2008, EU officials visited Ashgabat to conclude a major agreement to export natural gas to Europe through the Nabucco pipeline. This visit was part of the EU Central Asian Strategy, which seeks to deepen ties while advancing human rights and democratization in the area, and contribute to Europe's energy security. Earlier, in 2006, the EU and Turkmenistan had signed a Memorandum of Agreement to strengthen energy cooperation.

Getting the gas out

Turkmenistan signed a deal with China in 2006 to supply 30 billion cubic meters annually for 30 years beginning in 2009.

Turkmenistan also maintains a close energy relationship with Ukraine, which relies on Turkmenistan for about half of its gas imports.

Turkmenistan has a cooperative relationship with Iran, especially in the economic field.

Continued on next page

Foreign relations in Turkmenistan, Continued

OSCE

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

In spite of the invocation of the Moscow mechanism to investigate human rights violations and attacks on journalists, Turkmenistan largely resisted any OSCE pressures to reform its political system or human rights practices. The mission has been more active in organizing seminars in Turkmenistan since Niyazov's departure from the scene.



Participants at a three-day training course on human rights standards in the treatment of accused persons, organized by the OSCE Centre in Ashgabad and Turkmenistan's National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, Ashgabad, 30 November 2007. (OSCE)

Turkmenistan culture

Ashgabad

Ashgabad, the capital, means City of Love. About 10% of Turkmenistan's population lives 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.

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. To the 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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Turkmenistan culture, Continued

Parthians

Nisa, some 18 km. southwest of Ashgabat, is described as one of the first capitals of the Parthians. An earthquake destroyed Nisa in the first decade BC. UNESCO declared the Nisa fortress a World Heritage Site in 2007.

There are also ancient buildings and archeological ruins 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.



The remains of the ancient city of Nisa, near Ashgabat. Photo taken June 2006.
(OSCE/Armonds Pupols)

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Turkmenistan culture, Continued

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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

Mini-quiz

- Multiple choice** 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

Overview

At a glance

The following table describes geographic and demographic information for Uzbekistan.

Item	Description
Area	175,000 square miles
Location	Uzbekistan borders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kazakhstan to the north and northwest• Turkmenistan to the west and southwest• Afghanistan to the south• Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the east
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Climate The climate of Uzbekistan is hot and dry.</p> <p>Terrain 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 Fergana Valley in eastern Uzbekistan.</p> <p>Natural Resources Uzbekistan is rich in natural resources, including oil and natural gas, coal, minerals, uranium, gold, silver, copper and other metals.</p>
Capital	The capital of Uzbekistan is Tashkent.
Population	28.27 million (estimated 2008)

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Ethnic composition of the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uzbeks 80%• Russian-speakers 5.5%• Tajiks 5%• Karakalpaks 2.5%• Kazakh 3%• Tatr 1.5%• Kyrgyz 1%• Turkmen 1%
Religion	Muslim (Sunni) - 88%, Eastern Orthodox - 9%, Other 3%
Languages	Uzbek, which belongs to the Turkic family, is the state language. Since 1993 it has been written in the Latin script.
System of government	Uzbekistan is formally a democracy with a strong presidency. In reality it is a presidential dictatorship.
Head of state	Since independence the President of Uzbekistan has been Islam Karimov.
Currency	The currency of Uzbekistan is the Sum.
Standard of living	Estimated per capita GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) in 2007 was \$2,200.

Basic geography of Uzbekistan

12 provinces, Tashkent, and Karakalpakstan

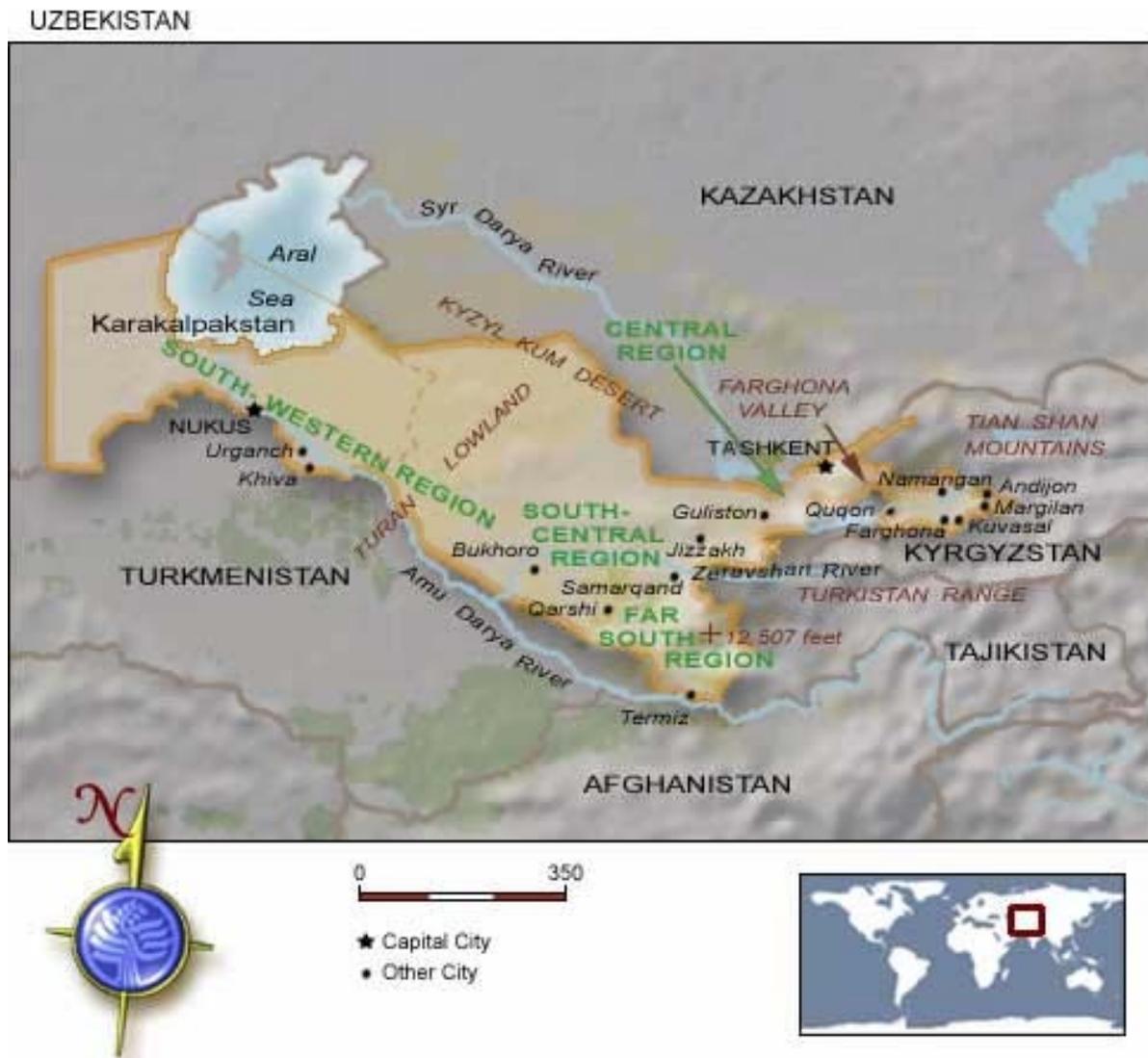
The Republic of Uzbekistan is divided administratively into 12 provinces, the capital city of Tashkent, and the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic (Karakalpakstan). It is convenient to distinguish 6 broad regions:

- Starting in the east is Uzbekistan's section of the Fergana Valley, watered by the Syr Darya River.
- West from the Fergana 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.

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Basic geography of Uzbekistan, Continued

Map The following graphic is a map of Uzbekistan.



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.

The Muslim civilization of Bukhara and Samarkand

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.

Ghengis Khan

The Mongol conqueror Ghengis Khan captured and razed Bukhara and Samarkand about 1221, but his descendants rebuilt them.

13th century

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

Continued on next page

The Muslim civilization of Bukhara and Samarkand, Continued

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.

Ulug-Bek

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

The Turko-Persian civilization

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.

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.

Alisher Navoi (1441-1501), considered the father of Uzbek literature, lived in this period.

1860s - 1870s conquered by Czarist Russia

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Uzbek khanate declined, 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.

Uzbekistan under Russian and Soviet rule

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.

Resistance to Russian and Soviet rule In 1916, the Basmachi Revolt, an uprising of local Muslims against Russian (then Soviet) rule, began in response to the seizure of land and grain and efforts to impose new laws on the population. It spread throughout Central Asia before being crushed by the Bolsheviks in 1932.. 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 and ended hopes for independence.

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. The Uzbek SSR replaced these in 1924.

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Uzbekistan under Russian and Soviet rule, Continued

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. The USSR was also responsible for major social and 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.

Uzbekistan: Perestroika and independence

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).

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.

Ethnic and political disturbances

In June 1989, Uzbeks in Fergana (in the Fergana 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.

Domestic politics in Uzbekistan

Eight legal parties

The Communist Party of Uzbekistan, renamed in November 1991 the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), became the ruling party under Karimov's leadership. Later the presidency became the dominant institution, and the PDPU lost its central role. In 1996, Karimov gave up his membership in the party.

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% 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 fled into exile.

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Domestic politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

**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.

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. Parliamentary elections held in December 1999 were considered by the OSCE to be “far from democratic.”

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Domestic politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

Illusion of human rights

In 1995 the OSCE was allowed to establish a regional office in Tashkent 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.

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 OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to implement programs "to promote democracy and civil society."

Opposition disappears

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

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Domestic politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

Presidency

In the presidential election of January 2000, Karimov was re-elected with 92% of the vote. The other handpicked candidate, PDPU leader Abdulkhafiz Jalolov, received 4%.

2002 Referendum

In January 2002 the president's term of office was extended by referendum from 5 to 7 years.

The January 2002 referendum also approved the creation of a new parliament consisting of two chambers: a 100-member upper chamber (Senate) representing the regions (and filled by representatives appointed by regional councils and the president) and a 120-member lower house (Majilis).

Temporary liberalization

A temporary swing toward liberalization occurred in 2002. While arrests and harassment of opposition activists have continued, Birlik was allowed to resume public activity under police supervision and in October 2003 Erk was permitted to hold a congress in Tashkent.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

2004-05 parliamentary elections

Two rounds of parliamentary elections were held in December 2004 and January 2005. The following parties, all pro-presidential, won seats:

- LDPU - 41
- NDP - 32
- Fidokorlar - 17
- MTP - 11
- Adolat - 9
- Unaffiliated - 10

A limited OSCE monitoring team found very minor improvements over previous elections, concluding that the elections fell far short of OSCE and international standards. Among other problems, the observers noted that the platforms of the competing parties were virtually identical, thereby not offering the voters any real choice. The two main opposition parties, Erk and Birlik, had not been allowed to register to contest the elections.



Participants discuss election rights and responsibilities in Samarkand, 2 June 2004, at a training course of the OSCE Centre in Tashkent for domestic election observers (OSCE)

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Domestic politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

2007 presidential elections

Although there were questions regarding Karimov's constitutional eligibility to run for another term, he was reelected for another term as the Liberal Democratic Party's candidate with 81% of the vote, according to the Central Election Commission, with 91.6% of the voters participating. Asliddin Rustamov of the Uzbekistan People's Democratic Party received 3.17%, Dilorom Toshumamedova of the Justice Social Democratic Party with 2.94%, and Akmal Saidov nominated by a citizens' group with 2.85%.

OSCE/ODIHR's Limited Observation Mission reported that the election took place in a tightly controlled political environment that failed to meet OSCE election commitments. While there were four candidates (including the first woman to run for president in Uzbekistan, and a candidate nominated by an initiative group of voters), there was an absence of a real choice as all candidates running supported the positions of the incumbent president Karimov. Legal and administrative obstacles had prevented opposition candidates from running. Moreover, recommendations for improving the electoral framework made after the 2004 elections were not implemented.

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Domestic politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

Concentration of power in Karimov's hands

Government power is concentrated in Karimov's own hands. All ministers and provincial governors, and in practice even the president of the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic, are appointed by him. Officials are often moved to new positions or fired to ensure that opposition groups cannot form. Local government is entrusted to the traditional neighborhood institution of the mahalla, which provides an effective means of social control. The main source of opposition resides within the regime itself, in the form of regional groups, sometimes called “clans”, the most prominent of which are the Tashkent, Samarkand, and Fergana groups.

The president's daughter, Gulnora Karimova, has become increasingly prominent in business and political circles, leading to speculation that she could be Karimov's successor.

Civil society and opposition parties are weak

In 2006, a new party, the Sunshine Coalition, emerged, claiming to represent a united opposition and offering alternative policies to Karimov. However, shortly after announcing the group's intentions, its leaders, Sanjar Umarov and Nodira Hidoyatova, were arrested.

Western and local non-governmental organizations came under attack in 2005 and 2006 in response to the regime change in Kyrgyzstan and the Andijon events. This paralleled a shift in foreign policy away from the U.S. and toward Russia.

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. Efforts to assert greater control over the informal bazaar sector in late 2004 led to localized unrest.

Islam and politics in Uzbekistan

"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 have been removed, arrested, and even 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. Karimov established the Tashkent Islamic Institute in 1999 to train religious leaders according to the principles of state-sanctioned Islam.

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Islam and politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

Islamists are believed responsible for numerous terrorist acts

Despite strict state control, Islamist extremists are believed responsible for numerous assassinations, bombings, and other terrorist acts committed since 1997. Explosions rocked the center of Tashkent in February 1999, and several incursions by militants from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) occurred over the next few years. The Karimov regime responded to attacks with mass arrests and increased monitoring of religious activity. There was a new series of suicide bombings and shootouts in Tashkent and elsewhere between March 28 and April 1, 2004, as well as later in the summer, but it is unclear whether banned religious groups were responsible. Thousands of people were jailed for participation in banned Islamist groups, particularly the IMU and the extremist, but self-avowedly nonviolent, Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation). The IMU was mostly destroyed in the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, although some of its leaders are believed to be hiding in Pakistan.

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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Islam and politics in Uzbekistan, Continued

Andijon, May 2005

An armed attack by supporters of 23 local businessmen on trial for membership in a banned extremist Islamist group precipitated a bloody series of events in Andijon, a town in the Fergana Valley, on May 12-13, 2005.

During the night of May 12, attackers occupied a police station and military base, seized the prison and released the businessmen and hundreds of other prisoners. They also seized the regional administrative building, but failed to capture the local offices of other security forces. During May 13, a large demonstration formed in the Andijon Central Square. Subsequently, Uzbek troops opened fire on unarmed people in the Square as they took control of the area. According to unofficial reports, as many as 750 people may have been killed. President Karimov, giving the official version of the events, focused on the casualties inflicted by the attackers on the security forces. The official death toll of 169 was also much lower than unofficial reports.

In the trial that followed, 15 alleged organizers of the jailbreak were sentenced to 14 to 20 years in prison (although they could have been sentenced to harsher verdicts). An unusual moment in the otherwise well-orchestrated trial occurred when a female witness for the prosecution testified that government forces had indeed opened fire on innocents. Overall, over 100 people have been convicted for participating in the events.

Government authorities have continued to harass, detain and imprison opposition and human rights activists, as well as journalists, investigating or reporting on the Andijon events.

Ethnic relations in Uzbekistan

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. However, as Russians have always played a major role in the Uzbek economy and the Russian language is predominant among Uzbek officials, Russian schools and cultural institutions have not been suppressed.

Uzbek-Tajik conflict a possibility

It is hard to gauge the potential for unrest of the largest minority, the Tajiks. Many in Bukhara and Samarkand are bilingual in Uzbek and Tajik, and value their Tajik culture. Protest demonstrations in those cities in 1988 suggest that some Tajik speakers do have deeply felt grievances, even if they have been much more cautious about voicing them.

Uzbek security forces reportedly drove IMU militants out of the Surkhandarya area in 2000, minefields were placed, and about 5,000 residents (mostly Tajikhs) of border villages were resettled. Some residents were convicted and jailed for aiding the IMU. Subsequently, border and customs controls were eased, and exiles from Surkhandarya were allowed to return to their villages.

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 Fergana Valley
- The western group, from Bukhara or Samarkand
- The Tashkent group

These groups are also said to predominate in each of the power ministries, specifically the Tashkent group in the SNB (former KGB) and the Samarkand/Bukhara group in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Foreign relations in Uzbekistan

Shifts between pro-Western and pro-Russian orientations

Following a pro-Russian orientation in the early 1990s, Uzbekistan turned toward the West in the second half of the decade to balance its ties with Russia. In 1999, Uzbekistan withdrew from the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization and joined GUAM, a grouping of post-Soviet states opposed to Russian domination. Uzbekistan remained a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which provides a forum for security cooperation for Russia, China and four Central Asian states.

Arguments over human rights, a breakdown in Uzbekistan's relations with the IMF, and concerns over the Taliban in Afghanistan led to a return to a pro-Russian orientation.

Uzbekistan turned toward the West again following September 11, 2001. It allowed the U.S. to use its military facilities for the war in Afghanistan. In 2002 Presidents Bush and Karimov signed a declaration declaring a strategic partnership. In 2004, however, the U.S. sharpened its criticism of Uzbekistan's human rights practices. In 2005 the U.S. joined with the EU, UN and others in calling for an independent investigation of the events in Andijon.

Reacting negatively to U.S. pressure, Uzbekistan gave the U.S. six months in July 2005 to end use of the Kharshi-Khanabad air base and announced an end to counterterrorism cooperation. The U.S. vacated the base in November 2005.

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Foreign relations in Uzbekistan, Continued

Karimov's realignment with Russia

Karimov's realignment with Russia increased. It was further spurred by the 2005 regime change in Kyrgyzstan, which heightened his fear that Western states intended to destabilize non-democratic governments in the region. Russian understanding for the crackdown in Andijon also contributed to their relationship. In November Uzbekistan and Russia signed an "unprecedented" (in Karimov's words) mutual security pact that allowed for the stationing of Russian military troops in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan also formally left GUAM in 2005. In 2006 Uzbekistan joined the Russian-dominated Eurasian Economic Community, and signed several agreements with Gazprom to develop Uzbekistan's gas fields. Uzbekistan also reinstated its membership in the CIS Collective Security Treaty in 2006.

A 2007 Russian-Turkmen-Kazakh summit agreed to expand gas transport pipelines along the Caspian coast (seemingly excluding participation in the Western-backed Trans-Caspian pipeline). Although not present, Karimov added to the agreement a declaration of intent to modernize the Uzbek section of the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan gas pipeline bound for Russia.

A sign of improving relations with the West was the announcement on March 2008 of Uzbekistan's agreement to allow Americans attached to NATO to use the German air-bridge through Termez Air Base to Afghanistan.

In another apparent balancing between East and West, Karimov (in his first foreign trip since the 2005 Andijon events) attended the April 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit. His presence there followed a visit by the U.S. Central Command Commander to Tashkent in January, where he was well received. Karimov's address in Bucharest focused on Afghanistan – the key issue at the Summit. He emphasized his country's strategic importance with regard to the war there, balancing himself between the U.S. and Russia. He called for discussion of a corridor for bringing in non-military goods to Afghanistan (which NATO should like), while favoring resumption of the 6+2 formula (which included Russia) for talks on Afghanistan.

EU sanctions

The European Union decided in October 2007 to lift the remaining travel bans on eight senior Uzbek officials instituted after the 2005 Andijon crackdown. In May 2007, four travel bans had already been lifted, The arms embargo, however, was maintained. The EU had resumed suspended technical level talks in late 2006.

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Foreign relations in Uzbekistan, Continued

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.

Anti-government IMU bases removed

IMU incursions through Tajikistan in 1999 and 2000 were intercepted in Kyrgyzstan with military assistance from Uzbekistan.

The collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 removed bases used by antigovernment IMU fighters. Most IMU fighters then fled to the tribal areas of Pakistan. By 2007 many had become embroiled in fighting between Pakistani authorities and rival tribal groups, far from the organization's origins in Uzbekistan.

Tense relations with Central Asian neighbors

Uzbekistan is the most populous 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.

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are rivals for the leading role in the region. There have also been twenty shooting incidents between the two countries' border guards in recent years. The delimitation of the Uzbek-Kazakh border is now complete, however, and in 2004 the first border checkpoint was erected. Uzbekistan tightened its borders with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to prevent smuggling, but this only increased the opportunities for corruption and harassment of shuttle traders.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have traded accusations about the harboring of Islamic militants. The two also have differences regarding water issues. Uzbekistan is concerned by Tajikh plans to build dams to control the flow of the Amu Darya River, which is essential for irrigation of Uzbekistan's cotton cultivation.

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Foreign relations in Uzbekistan, Continued

Asia

China expressed full understanding for Uzbekistan's handling of the Andijon events during Karimov's visit to meet his Chinese counterpart in Beijing in late May 2005.

Karimov has also held high-level meetings with the leaders of South Korea, Japan, and India in order to diversify economic ties and increase foreign investment.

OSCE

An OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia was established in Tashkent in 1995 to link the five Central Asian participating states with OSCE activities. The office changed its name to OSCE Centre in Tashkent following the decision to open OSCE Centres (missions) in the other Central Asian countries.

The Centre in Tashkent promotes OSCE principles and commitments in Uzbekistan. Several training courses organized during 2004 involved policing borders, the treatment of prisoners, promoting tourism within the region, leadership training for women, and training in election monitoring.

In June 2006, the OSCE Centre in Tashkent was renamed the [OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan](#).



Participants at a conference in Samarkand on the role of the Constitution of Uzbekistan supported by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator, 27 November 2007. (OSCE)

Uzbekistan culture

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.



Chorsu Bazaar, Tashkent. April 2005 (USIP/Ted Feifer)

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Uzbekistan culture, Continued

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.



Samarkand, October 2005, (USIP/Ted Feifer)

Geography

The rocky Kyzyl Kum (Red Sand) Desert and arid plains take up over two-thirds of Uzbekistan. 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 which 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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Uzbekistan culture, Continued

Attire

Uzbek men usually wear somber colors, except for the bright-colored sash that older men use to close their long quilted coats. Outside of the capital, older men wear the dopy, a square black skullcap embroidered in white. Most women wear knee-length cloth dresses over cloth trousers. In Tashkent, both men and women dress in western styles.

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.

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 many Uzbeks drink alcohol as well, even vodka (outside of the conservative Fergana Valley), at least when they entertain guests, despite their Muslim heritage.

Mini-quiz

Multiple choice Uzbekistan faces which of the following challenges?

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

Kyrgyzstan

Overview

At a glance

The following table describes geographic and demographic information for Kyrgyzstan.

Item	Description
Area	77,000 square miles
Location	Kyrgyzstan borders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kazakhstan to the north and northwest• Uzbekistan to the west• Tajikistan to the south• China's Xinjiang Province to the southeast and east
Capital	The capital of Kyrgyzstan is Bishkek.
Population	5.356 million (estimated 2008). It is growing rapidly due to a high birth rate.
Ethnic composition of the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kyrgyz 64.9%• Russian 12.5%• Uzbeks 13.8%• Other 8.8%
Religion	Muslim (Sunni) 75%, Russian Orthodox 20%, Other 5%.
Languages	Kyrgyz belongs to the Turkic family of languages. Kyrgyz and Russian enjoy equal standing as state languages. Uzbek has no official status.

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Climate</p> <p>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 Fergana Valley. There is abundant rainfall.</p> <p>Terrain</p> <p>High mountains, topped by snowfields and glaciers, cover almost nine-tenths of Kyrgyzstan's land area. 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 Jalal-Abad and Osh in the southwest, which is the easternmost section of the Fergana 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>Natural Resources</p> <p>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>
System of government	<p>Kyrgyzstan had a functioning system of democratic government through the 1990s. The 1993 constitution provided for an even distribution of prerogatives between parliament and president. Standards of democratic governance subsequently deteriorated. President Akayev's regime was toppled by a popular uprising in 2005.</p>

Continued on next page

Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Head of state	Kurmanbek Bakiev was elected President in 2005.
Currency	The currency of Kyrgyzstan is the Som.
Standard of living	Estimated per capita GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) in 2007 was \$2,000. The standard of living in Kyrgyzstan has been in sharp decline in recent years.

Basic geography of Kyrgyzstan

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 Fergana Valley. Here is Osh, the country's second largest city. About one-third of the region's population belongs to the Uzbek minority.

KYRGYZSTAN



Historical background of Kyrgyzstan

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.

Subjugated in the early 19th century by the Kokand Khanate

After a brief period under Chinese rule in the late 18th century, the Kokand Khanate subjugated the Kyrgyz in the early 19th century. 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.

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.

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.

New public organizations and independent political groups

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.

The Osh conflict and the 'Silk Revolution'

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.

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.

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.



The Kyrgyz President, Askar Akayev (left), and Deputy Foreign Minister Talant Kushchubekov. 9 July 2003 OSCE/Alex Nitzsche

Continued on next page

The Osh conflict and the 'Silk Revolution', Continued

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.

Ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan

Ethnic tension 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 occasionally make demands such as greater representation in state institutions and official status for the Uzbek language. Government responses have been negative. Seizure by a Kyrgyz mob of the property of a wealthy Uzbek businessman in July 2006 and the murder of an ethnic Uzbek businessman in Osh in October 2006 underlined the continuing potential for inter-ethnic conflict.

Kyrgyz and Russians in the north There has also been tension between Kyrgyz and Russians in the north of the country, especially over 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 made other conciliatory gestures toward Russian-speakers, such as the opening of the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University in Bishkek.

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. This division is pronounced in spheres such as ministerial appointments and is a popular theme in the media, but it matters little to most ordinary people.

Domestic politics in Kyrgyzstan

Many political parties, most weak and unstable

Parties that played important roles in the early 1990s lost electoral support or disappeared completely, while the party that won the largest number of seats in the 1995 elections -- the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan -- did not win any seats in the parliamentary elections of 2000. In contrast, pro-presidential parties set up since 1991 received substantial support, but none held together for long. Over half the deputies elected in successive parliamentary elections lacked any party affiliation.

Parliamentary elections of February-March 2000

The results of the February-March 2000 parliamentary elections were:

- The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan came in first with 15 seats
 - 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.
-

Reputation as oasis of democracy 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 were harassed. OSCE observers noted serious abuses in the conduct of both the 2000 parliamentary as well as the presidential elections, in which Akayev was re-elected president with 74% of the vote.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

Persecution of prominent politicians

Politicians with the stature to pose an effective challenge to Akayev were 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, was 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 Aksy, his home district, which were fired on by security forces. Six were killed and over sixty injured.

First ethnic Russian prime minister

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

Confrontation defused but political tensions continued

As protests continued, confrontation between the government and the opposition escalated. It was also perceived as a confrontation between the north and the south of the country. Escalation of the conflict was prevented by a dialogue between President Akayev and the opposition, who reached an 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).

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, remained tense.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

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.

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 U.S. airbase.

In May 2006, a group of armed men in Tajikistan attacked a checkpoint on the Kyrgyz border and killed several guards. Two hundred Kyrgyz soldiers sent to the area killed or captured most of the attackers. It is not known whether the assault was political in nature or drug-related.

In August 2006, the Kyrgyz National Security Services killed a popular imam, whom they claimed was a terrorist, in a shootout in southern Kyrgyzstan. His followers, who protested vociferously, claimed he was not a member of the IMU.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

Parliamentary elections of February-March 2005

The first round of voting in February produced 32 winners, with 45 races to be run again in a second round. The OSCE pointed to violations and failures to meet democratic standards.

The second round in March resulted in a landslide victory for pro-government candidates in the 75-seat parliament, according to official returns. President Akayev's daughter, Bermet Akayeva and son, Aider Akayev, each won a seat. The opposition won only 6 seats. Opposition leader Bakiyev was allegedly defeated.

The OSCE again noted concerns unchanged from the first round, including lack of voter access to varying sources of information, bias in the media, continued deregistration of candidates on minor grounds, and inaccurate and poorly maintained voter lists.

March 2005 uprising

Protests that started even before the February elections mushroomed after the opposition complained that the election results had been rigged. Protesters first seized the southern cities of Jalal-Abad and Osh, and then moved on to Bishkek. As opposition leaders were planning their next moves, protesters unexpectedly seized the president's office. President Akayev fled the country as his rule disintegrated in what became known as the Tulip Revolution.

By the end of March, former opposition leaders were in power. Kurmanbek Bakiyev became acting president and prime minister. Arranging an orderly and legal succession became a high priority. After an initial stalemate, the old parliament resigned, making way for the new parliament chosen in the recent elections.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

Tense run-up to presidential elections

A June 2005 shoot-out in Osh between supporters and opponents of Osh-based businessman and parliamentarian Bayaman Erkinbaev left 12 injured. Subsequently, supporters of presidential candidate Urmat Baryktabasov briefly seized the main government building in Bishkek to protest his not being registered as a candidate because he held joint Kyrgyz-Kazakh citizenship.

July 2005 Presidential elections

Bakiev won a landslide victory, garnering almost 90% of the 75% voter turnout. He ran very strongly in his home region in the country's south, and his alliance with northerner Felix Kulov won him strong support there as well. Bakiev promised to name Kulov prime minister. The OSCE evaluated the election as marking tangible progress toward meeting OSCE and international commitments for democratic elections, although there were problems with the vote count.



Kurmanbek S. Bakiev

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

Post-electoral Violence

The first months of the new administration were marked by a number of assassinations of prominent figures, raising questions about the stability of the regime and the continuing influence of criminal structures. A month before the presidential election, parliamentarian and businessman Jyrgalbek Surabaldiev was killed. Parliamentarian Bayaman Erkinbaev, at the center of the June conflict in Osh, was shot dead in September. The next month, Tynychbek Akmatbaev, a third parliamentarian and brother of an influential criminal kingpin, Rysbek, was killed in a prison riot. In May 2006, Rysbek himself was assassinated in Bishkek.

Tynychbek's killing prompted protests demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Kulov, while pro-Kulov demonstrators demanded that he remain in office. Attempts to relocate prisoners involved in the slaying resulted in more riots that were forcibly suppressed.

Continuing political instability

President Bakiev clashed immediately with the mostly pro-Akaev parliament, leading parliamentary speaker Omurbek Tekebaev to resign in protest.

Within a year of the Revolution, many were disappointed with the progress Bakiev had made in dealing with crime and corruption. An alliance of opposition businessmen and activists formed and began organizing demonstrations with thousands of protesters.

In September 2006, Tekebaev was arrested in Poland for carrying heroin. He was released when evidence was presented that it had been planted. Parliament began an inquiry into the incident and Bakiev's brother was implicated.

In November 2006, the anti-Bakiev alliance led a series of street protests leading the president to accept a new constitution. The document strengthened the parliament at the expense of the president and provided that half the members of the legislature would be elected by party lists.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

Bakiev and Kulov split

Kulov served as prime minister until December 2006, and then failed to receive parliamentary confirmation after being renominated by Bakiev in January 2007. Bakiev then named Azim Isabekov, a close associate, to head the government. Isabekov's decision to fire seven cabinet ministers, however, did not receive Bakiev's support. Isabekov thereupon resigned, after only two months in office. Bakiev then asked Almaz Atambaev, the leader of the Social Democrats and until then the opposition For Reforms movement, to become prime minister. Meanwhile, Kulov joined the opposition United Front for a Worthy Future for Kyrgyzstan, which had called for Bakiev to resign and for early presidential elections to be held.

2007 referenda

In October, 75% of voters approved a new constitution and electoral law submitted by Bakiev that strengthened the president's authority in picking key government officials and dissolving parliament. Only 4% of voters reportedly voted against. The constitutional amendments also changed the election process from a single-constituency system to a proportional all-party list, with a 5% overall threshold and a five percent threshold in each of the country's seven regions and two cities. OSCE criticized the vote counting and use of state resources to take voters to the polls.

2007 parliamentary elections

Bakiev moved quickly to dissolve parliament and hold new elections in December. The Central Elections Committee said Bakiev's Ak Zhol Party won 71 seats, the pro-Bakiev Social Democrats 11, and the Communists 8. The opposition Ata-Meken received no seats despite its second place finish, allegedly because it did not win the minimum number of votes in Osh.

The OSCE election mission reported that the elections failed to meet a number of OSCE commitments. Legal actions had been taken against specific parties, vote counting and tabulation challenged transparency, candidate registration procedures were unequally applied, and the media did not provide adequate information for voters to make an informed choice. The new legal framework also contained ambiguous provisions that were still unclear even after election day.

Foreign relations in Kyrgyzstan

Close cooperation with Russia

Kyrgyzstan has been one of the post-Soviet states willing to cooperate closely with Russia in 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. Kyrgyzstan 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 after the clashes in 1999 and 2000 with armed Uzbek Islamists who crossed over into Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan on their way to Uzbekistan from Afghanistan. Russia was allowed to establish an airbase at Kant near Bishkek; the base was officially opened in October 2003.

After the Tulip Revolution in March 2005, Kyrgyzstan's new leadership continued to cultivate close relations with Russia, which remains the country's leading strategic partner. The two countries held joint counterterrorist exercises in 2006.

In addition to its presence at Kant airbase, Russian maintains a torpedo testing facility on Lake Issyk-Kul, a communications facility at Chaldovar, and a seismic station at Mailuu-Suu.

Continued on next page

Foreign relations in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

Balanced relations with the West and China

Kyrgyzstan has balanced relations with Russia, China, and the West. The U.S. has been allowed to use Bishkek's Manas International Airport since the post-September 11 war in Afghanistan. Russian and American airbases 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.

As a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Kyrgyzstan consented to that organization's request to the U.S. to set a deadline for the departure of its military forces from Central Asia. In subsequent statements, however, Bakiyev and other officials assured the U.S. that its troops were welcome as long as was needed for maintaining security in Afghanistan. After intense negotiations, the US agreed to pay \$150 million annually to continue leasing the base.

Relations with Uzbekistan have been strained

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have disputes over borders, the supply of gas from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, and the flow of water from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan. A compromise border settlement was reached in 2001 and in 2004 Uzbekistan agreed to de-mine sections of the border.

Kyrgyzstan's willingness to give asylum to Uzbek refugees after the 2005 Andijon events and to allow the UN to fly them out to a third country, rather than return them to Uzbekistan, complicated their relationship. In response, Uzbekistan temporarily cut off gas supplies to northern Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan agreed to supply gas to Kyrgyzstan instead.

Improving security relations with Uzbekistan

Bakiev has sought common ground with Uzbekistan in the area of security. In July 2006, the countries agreed to conduct joint anti-terror operations, and Kyrgyzstan has several times arrested and extradited suspects wanted in Uzbekistan.

Continued on next page

Foreign relations in Kyrgyzstan, Continued

OSCE

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

The OSCE opened an OSCE Academy in Bishkek as a regional educational and research institution at the end of 2002. In 2003 the OSCE gave the Kyrgyz interior ministry \$4 million to buy modern police equipment and for police training. The OSCE Center in Bishkek has also held seminars and training courses dealing with corruption, trafficking, money laundering and other forms of economic crime.



Participants at a seminar on pastures and forests organized by the Osh Field Office of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek. (OSCE)

The OSCE CiO, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dmitrij Rupel, visited Bishkek at the end of March 2005 after the change of government to pledge OSCE support to help Kyrgyzstan move toward stability, unity and democracy. Rupel had earlier sent his Special Representative in Central Asia Alojz Peterle and OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis to support the OSCE Centre in Bishkek's efforts to assist in finding a peaceful solution to the political crisis.

[OSCE Centre in Bishkek](#)

Kyrgyzstan culture

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.

High mountains

High mountains cover most of Kyrgyzstan. 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.

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Kyrgyzstan culture, Continued

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 Fergana 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 Fergana 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.

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 lakeshore are health spas and thermal springs, and also the summer homes of the new rich.

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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Kyrgyzstan culture, Continued

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.

Osh The culture of the south, centered in 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.

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.

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.

Tajikistan

Overview

At a glance

The following table describes geographic and demographic information for Tajikistan.

Item	Description
Area	55,000 square miles
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kyrgyzstan to the north• Uzbekistan to the northwest and west• Afghanistan to the south• China's Xinjiang Province to the east
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Climate In the mountains the climate is cold and wet. The river valleys are temperate or hot, depending on altitude and wind direction.</p> <p>Terrain Over 93% of Tajikistan is mountainous. The Pamir range, known as “the roof of the world”, dominates the eastern part of the country. 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 Fergana 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>Natural Resources Tajikistan has rich deposits of minerals and metal ores, including uranium. Hydroelectric power is a major resource.</p>

Continued on next page

Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Capital	The capital of Tajikistan is Dushanbe.
Population	7.211 million (2008 estimated)
Ethnic composition of the population	<p>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.</p> <p>Uzbeks are concentrated in the northern salient, Dushanbe and in the southwest.</p> <p>Millions of Tajiks also live outside Tajikistan, mainly in eastern Uzbekistan and northern Afghanistan. Ethnic percentages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tajik 80%• Uzbek 15%• Russian 1%
Religion	Sunni Moslem -- 85%, Ismaili Moslem -- 5%; Other -- 10%
Languages	<p>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.</p> <p>Pamiris, usually considered to be Tajiks, have their own languages that are also related to Persian but are distinct from Tajik.</p>
System of government	Since 1999 Tajikistan has been a multiparty democracy with a strong presidency.

Continued on next page

Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Head of state	The current president is Imomali Rakhmonov.
Currency	The currency of Tajikistan is the Somoni.
Standard of living	Estimated per capita GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) in 2007 was \$1,600.

Four regions of Tajikistan

11 administrative units

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

- Leninobod Province is in the northern salient. It forms part of the Fergana 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.



Historical background of Tajikistan

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 Persian and Chagatai had replaced Tajik 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.

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.

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.

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.

Presidential elections of 1991

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

The civil war

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.

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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The civil war, Continued

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, which it assumed to be opposition supporters.

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.

Continued on next page

The civil war, Continued

**CIS
"peacekeeping
force"
deployed**

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. Russian troops turned these borders over to Tajik forces in December 2004. In spite of these border controls, Tajikistan continues to be a major transit point for drugs from Afghanistan.

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The civil war, Continued

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.

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% of the vote to Abdullojanov's 40%. Power shifted from the formerly dominant Khujandi leaders to the new Kulobi elite.

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.

Nature of the war

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.

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.

Negotiations and the peace process

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.

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
-

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Negotiations and the peace process, Continued

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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Negotiations and the peace process, Continued

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, the only legal Islamic party in Central Asia, 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 were shut down.

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Negotiations and the peace process, Continued

OSCE

An OSCE centre was established in Tajikistan in February 1994, and renamed as the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe in 2002. It 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.

[OSCE Centre in Dushanbe](#)

The Centre 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.



Members of the Tajik Parliament discuss ways to improve the implementation of current legislation ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women during an OSCE-organized training session, Dushanbe, 30 June 2007. (OSCE/Alexander Sadikov)

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.

Domestic politics in Tajikistan

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.

1999 presidential elections

Of five individuals who tried to stand against Rakhmonov in the 1999 presidential elections, 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 97% of the vote.

The Constitution was subsequently 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.

2000 parliamentary elections

The parliamentary elections of February and March 2000 were won by the ruling People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, with 65% of the vote. The Communist Party received 21%, 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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Domestic politics in Tajikistan, Continued

2004 pre-election arrests

Opposition parties complained of a tightening of government control in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, and two prominent figures from opposite sides of the political spectrum were arrested. In August 2004, counter-narcotics head Gaffor Mirzoev, a prominent Kulobi general and former commander of the presidential guard, was arrested on a variety of charges, including murder and abuse of power; Rakhmonov subsequently accused Mirzoev of plotting a coup against him.

In December, opposition Democratic Party leader Makhmadruzi Iskandarov was detained in Moscow at the request of the Tajik government, which accused Iskandarov of organizing attacks on government facilities, and also embezzlement while earlier serving as head of the state gas company.

2005 parliamentary elections

The ruling People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan won 49 of 63 seats in the February 2005 lower house legislative elections. Two opposition parties won seats -- the Communist Party with 3 and the Islamic Revival Party with 2. The other winners were independents, most with ties to the regime.

Opposition parties initially refused to recognize the results, and threatened to boycott the parliament if President Rakhmonov did not respond to their election complaints. OSCE observers said the elections failed to meet many key OSCE commitments and other standards on democratic elections.

Tightening of government control

Following the elections, government control tightened, independent media was suppressed and opposition figures and journalists were arrested. While Russian authorities released Iskandarov after the parliamentary elections, he was subsequently spirited away to Dushanbe and sentenced to 23 years in jail in October 2005. European and U.S. authorities voiced concern regarding the arrests and media restrictions.

In the run-up to the 2006 elections, the government harassed the opposition and worked to control media outlets. The main opposition group, the Islamic Renaissance Party, decided against fielding a candidate in the presidential election.

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Domestic politics in Tajikistan, Continued

2006 presidential elections

Rakhmonov defeated his four opponents, reportedly winning 79 percent of the 3 million votes cast, which represented 91 percent of the electorate. His nearest competitor won just over five percent of the vote. The OSCE assessed that the election “did not fully test democratic electoral practices...due to a lack of genuine choice and meaningful pluralism. The election process also revealed substantial shortcomings.”

Foreign relations in Tajikistan

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.

Less dependence on Uzbekistan

There has been an important change in Tajikistan's foreign relations . The old Khujandi elite, which included members of the Uzbek minority, had very close relations with the Karimov regime in neighboring Uzbekistan. The Kulobi ruling group, by contrast, includes no Uzbeks and has decreased 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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Foreign relations in Tajikistan, Continued

Improved relations with the West

Tajikistan has allowed the U.S. and other NATO states to use military facilities on its territory since 2001. Closer relations have been established between Tajikistan and the West, expanding Tajikistan's access to Western aid. In 2002, the U.S. lifted its ban on arms sales to Tajikistan. It also funded the creation of a Drug Control Agency to combat trafficking in drugs from Afghanistan, as well as a \$36 million Tajik-Afghan bridge across the Pyanzh River that will substantially increase transport links between the two countries.

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Foreign relations in Tajikistan, Continued

Cooperation with Russia continues

At the same time, Tajikistan continues to cooperate with Russia in the security and the economic spheres. Russia has 20,000 troops in Tajikistan, and in 2004 was allowed to establish a permanent military presence and take over the Nurek Space Surveillance Center. Russia has also offered to complete the construction of hydroelectric power stations in Tajikistan that were abandoned during the civil war.

Russian border guards were replaced by Tajik border guards along the 1,344 km Tajik-Afghan border in 2005. While Tajik government officials had complained that the Russians were not providing effective security on the border, the departure of the Russian border guards led to concerns that their absence has facilitated substantial increases in the already considerable flow of drugs into Tajikistan from Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Tajik government has concerns regarding the treatment of Tajik migrant workers in Russia.

Border issues

Tajikistan has border disputes with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. Some progress has been made toward resolving the disputes with Uzbekistan and China. In June 2004, Uzbekistan agreed to de-mine sections of the Tajik-Uzbek border area. However, the Tajik-Kyrgyz border in the Batken district remains tense. After gunmen attacked a border post in May 2006, the countries agreed to strengthen cooperation in policing the border. Still, Tajikistan border guards shot and killed an Uzbekistan border guard in November 2006. The Tajikhs later expressed regret, while Uzbekistan alleged aggressive Tajik behavior.

Mini-quiz

Multiple choice 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

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.



Two men stop for a discussion at the open-air market in Dushanbe, February 2008. (OSCE/Anette Keloneva)

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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Tajikistan culture, Continued

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.

Energy problems

Tajikistan faces power shortages every winter, despite having a greater hydroelectric capacity than any other country in Central Asia. Half of its electric output is reportedly used to power one factory, the Tajikistan Aluminum Plant (TALCO).

Tajikistan went on a winter power schedule in October 2007 providing for the supply of electricity mornings and evenings for a total of 6-8 hours a day. Unusually severe winter weather impacted further on power generation, as well as inflicted significant damage to the Tajik economy. To make matters worse, Uzbekistan reduced gas shipments to Tajikistan because of unpaid debts in January 2008. Tajikistan appealed to the UN for emergency assistance in February 2008.

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Tajikistan culture, Continued

Rahmonov becomes Rahmon

In April 2007 Tajik President Rahmonov announced that he was dropping the Slavic-style “-ov” suffix from his name, and called on all Tajiks to do the same. How this break with Tajikistan’s Russian and Soviet past will impact on ordinary Tajiks remains to be seen. A majority of Tajiks live below the poverty line, and this cultural issue may not be important for most. Will there, however, be more significant changes from above? Will there be a change from the official Cyrillic alphabet? Will there be an effort to develop stronger cultural or other links with neighboring countries with which it shares an essentially common language – Afghanistan and Iran?



Tajik men play backgammon in the street in Dushanbe, 1 March 2008. (OSCE/Mikhail Evstafiev)

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Tajikistan culture, Continued

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 Fergana 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.

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.

Attire

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



Elderly Tajik men enjoy their afternoon tea. (OSCE/Lubomir Kotek)

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Tajikistan culture, Continued

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.
