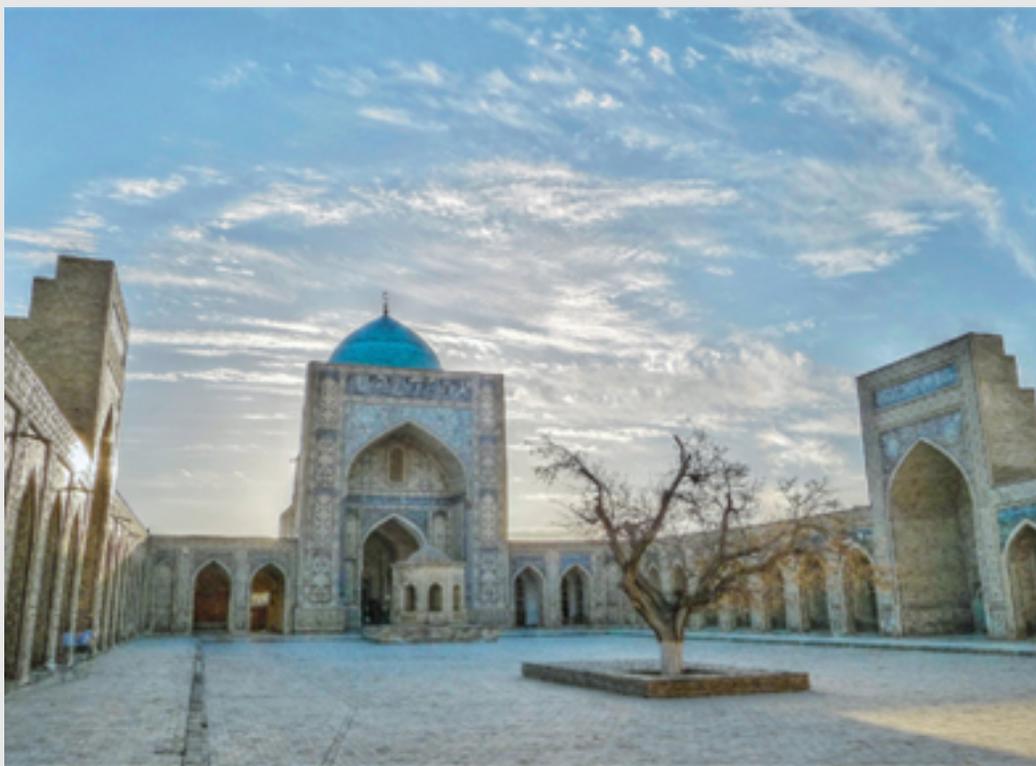




COUNTRY IN PERSPECTIVE

UZBEKISTAN



*Kalân Mosque (Masjid-i Kalân)
Flickr / Teseum*

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*Amu Darya River
Flickr / oh contraire*

Chapter 1 | Language Cultural Orientation

Geography

Introduction

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, former Soviet republics, including Uzbekistan, became sovereign states. Uzbekistan is roughly the size of California; it shares borders with Afghanistan for 137 km (85 mi), Kazakhstan for 2,203 km (1,369 mi), Kyrgyzstan for 1,099 km (683 mi), Tajikistan for 1,161 km (721 mi), and Turkmenistan for 1,621 km (1,007 mi).^{1, 2}

Uzbekistan and its Central Asian neighbors share transportation linkages that were established by Moscow to meet the needs of the former USSR.³ These countries are mutually dependent in important areas, such as sharing scarce water resources. The

prospect of conflict in Central Asia is heightened not only by disputes over natural resources, but by the ambitions of powers such as Russia, Iran, Turkey, and China.⁴

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

Uzbekistan is a doubly landlocked country, meaning that its neighbors are also landlocked. It is one of only two such countries in the world.⁵ The nation features a diverse topographical landscape that includes high mountains and glaciers. At lower elevations, dry steppes and deserts predominate.⁶ Nearly 80% of Uzbekistan is covered with desert. The largest is the Kyzyl-Kum Desert (also spelled Qizilqum) in the north central region. The mountain areas of the far southeast and far northeast have elevations as high as 4,500 m (14,763 ft).⁷ Arable land is estimated to be just over 10% of the total land area.⁸ Though Central Asia has abundant water resources, those resources are unequally distributed. More than 90% of the region's water is concentrated in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; but Uzbekistan, located downstream, is the largest user.^{9,10} The Fergana Valley was divided among the Soviet republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in the 1920s by Soviet administrators. The valley is Uzbekistan's most fertile and densely populated area.^{11, 12, 13} The western part of the country is dominated by lowlands, including the southern half of the drying Aral Sea.¹⁴



*Gissar mountain ridge
Flickr / ...your local connection*

Climate

Uzbekistan has a harsh continental climate marked by four distinct seasons and extreme temperature changes.¹⁵ During the summer, temperatures may rise as high as 45°C (113°F) in southern Uzbekistan. The average temperature in July is 27.8°C (82.04°F).^{16,17} Winter temperatures in the north may drop as low as -35°C (-31°F), and temperatures throughout the country in January average -3.2°C (26.24°F).^{18,19,20} Humidity is low and precipitation is mainly confined to the winter and spring months.^{21,22} The plains receive the least amount of precipitation, 100-200 mm (3.9-7.9 in) per year. To the east and south, precipitation rises to 900 mm (35.4 in) annually.²³

Bodies of Water

Uzbekistan lacks substantial river systems. The three main rivers, the Amu Darya, the Syr Darya, and the Zeravshan, cross into a small part of Uzbekistan from other countries.²⁴

Amu Darya

The Amu Darya is 2,540 km (1,578 mi) in length, making it one of Central Asia's longest rivers. Originating in the Hindu Kush, its waters flow to the Pamir Mountains in Afghanistan. From there the river cuts west and marks the 137 km (85 mi) border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan before emptying into a dam at what was once the southern shore of the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan.^{25, 26} The river's high silt level is the result of its overuse for irrigation, which has prevented it from replenishing the mostly dried out Aral Sea.²⁷



Amu Darya
Flickr / Hans Birger Nilsen

Syr Darya

The Syr Darya, which travels 2,212 km (1,374 mi), originates in a remote part of Kyrgyzstan before descending from the Tien Shan range into the Fergana Valley.²⁸ Skirting Tashkent, it flows through southern Kazakhstan before reaching the north shore of the Aral Sea. Much of the river's water is diverted for irrigation along its course.^{29,30} Because of the overuse of the river, the amount of water discharged into the Upper Aral Sea has been greatly reduced.³¹

Zeravshan

The Zeravshan is the third-largest river of Uzbekistan. Upstream in Tajikistan, it is called the Mostchokh Darya. It enters Uzbekistan through the Zeravshan Valley, in the Samarkand region.³² It provides water for some of the most important oases in the country.^{33,34}

Aral Sea

The Aral Sea, half of which is in Uzbekistan, is situated in a large, flat desert basin. It is supplied with water by the Amu Darya in the south and the Syr Darya in the north. In 1960, the Aral Sea was the fourth-largest lake in the world. Moscow-centered economic planners diverted the rivers waters to provide irrigation for Central Asia's cotton industry. As a result, the cotton industry flourished, but the sea began to shrink. By 2000, the water volume had dropped by some 75%.³⁵ By 2015, only 10% of its surface remained, mostly within Kazakhstan.³⁶ Water levels in the northern portion of the lake, which is located in Kazakhstan, are rebounding slightly, due largely to the construction of a dam on its southern edge.³⁷



Aral Sea
Flickr / kvitlauk

Wetlands disappeared because of the lack of water; falling water tables caused oases to dry up. Average temperatures became colder and summers hotter without the sea's moderating effects. The quality of drinking water has been adversely affected, especially in Uzbekistan's western Karakalpakstan Republic. Vozrozhdeniye Island, which contains the remains of a Soviet anthrax weapons-testing laboratory, is now connected to the shore.³⁸ Efforts are underway to extract oil and gas from deposits under the dry sea bed.³⁹

Major Cities

Tashkent

The capital city's name means "stone village;" it dates back to the 1st century CE. By the 8th century, it had become a Muslim city.^{40, 41} The city became part of the Mongol empire in 1220 and the Russian empire in 1865. By 1889, a trans-Caspian rail that ran through Tashkent facilitated transportation and brought the city closer into the Russian orbit. Today, little remains of the city's historic buildings because of a 1966 earthquake. When the city was rebuilt, it was modled after Stalinist architecture.⁴² The city's population is approximately 2.3 million.⁴³

Samarkand

The city of Samarkand, situated on an oasis, is home to approximately 509,000 people.⁴⁴ Known as the “Crossroads of Cultures,” it developed as an urban center along the Silk Road in the 10th century BCE.⁴⁵ The city was successively conquered by Alexander the Great, the Arab Abbasid Caliphate, and Genghis Khan, whose army sacked it in 1220.⁴⁶ Samarkand, with its distinctive blue-roofed buildings, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001.⁴⁷



*Samarkand City Center
Flickr / Stahlbauer*

Bukhara

Bukhara is known as Uzbekistan’s most historical city. When Genghis Khan’s forces burned it down in 1220, the city’s most famous landmark, the Kalyan Minaret, remained standing. Lore has it that Genghis Khan, impressed by the structure’s beauty, ordered it not to be touched.⁴⁸ For a time it was the tallest building in Central Asia. Bukhara’s edifices have earned the distinction of being the most representative of medieval architecture in Central Asia.⁴⁹ Currently, the city has about 272,000 residents.⁵⁰

Environmental Issues

Uzbekistan is one of the largest cotton producers in the world.⁵¹ This status was achieved through massive irrigation projects. In 1913, there were 1.2 million hectares (ha) (2.9 million acres (a)) of irrigated land. By 1990, the year before the collapse of the USSR, that number had increased to 4.2 million ha (10.3 million a).⁵² The expansion of the cotton industry created an ecological disaster.

Decades of intensive cotton cultivation have altered the water table, resulting in soil and water salinization.⁵³ In areas that were once covered by the Aral Sea, salt and pesticides blanket the ground.^{54,55} In addition to killing the fish, salinization has rendered the water unsuitable for irrigation, forcing Uzbek cotton farmers to rely on water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya. Although cotton (referred to locally as white gold) continues to be a mainstay of the Uzbek economy, production has largely

declined as a result of environmentally-induced constraints and government-led agricultural and economic reforms.^{56,57}

The disappearance of the Aral Sea ranks among the world's biggest environmental disasters of the 20th century. As the water has receded, more than 60,000 sq km (23,166 sq mi) of former seabed have been left bare.⁵⁸ In addition to salt, the dry seabed is covered by a thick layer of chemical fertilizer residue. This debris is blown about in toxic plumes by strong winds, affecting crop quality and yields, natural ground cover, air quality, and the life expectancy of livestock and humans.^{59,60}



*Samarkand City Center
Flickr / Stahlbauer*

Most cleanup projects have been underwritten by the international community, but each aid agency works on its own and rarely coordinates with other agencies.^{61,62} The Uzbek government is also attempting to improve conditions in the area by planting trees to reduce the spread of toxins and by creating fish farming lakes.⁶³

In addition to problems with the Aral Sea, Uzbekistan's lakes and rivers have been severely polluted by industrial wastes and the heavy use of fertilizers. The contaminated drinking water is causing numerous health issues for the population. The soil is also seriously contaminated with the synthetic pesticide DDT, an agent known to cause birth defects and other health problems in humans and animals.^{64,65}

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Uzbekistan in Perspective

Chapter 1 | Geography

Assessment

1. The majority of the population of Uzbekistan lives on the shores of the Aral Sea.
2. Most of Uzbekistan is covered by green, fertile valleys.
3. The destination of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya was the Aral Sea.
4. The Kalyan Minaret of Bukhara was built by Genghis Khan.
5. Cotton cultivation in Uzbekistan led to one of the greatest environmental disasters of the 20th century.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True;



*Timur Statue
Flickr / Arthur Chapman*

Chapter 2 | Uzbekistan Country in Perspective

History

Introduction

Over the centuries, foreign armies swept through Central Asia. From the west came Alexander the Great; from the east, Genghis Khan and the Mongols; and from the north, Russian tsarists and Soviets.¹ Under Soviet rule, Uzbekistan became a vast cotton plantation and a populous Soviet republic.^{2,3} After Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, the hope for political pluralism evaporated as the regime clung to Soviet-style authoritarian rule.

Early History

During the first millennium BCE, Indo-Iranian nomads arrived in present-day Uzbekistan. They constructed irrigation systems along the rivers of Central Asia and built settlements in Samarkand and Bukhara. These towns became thriving and wealthy resting points on the Silk Road, which commercially linked Europe and Asia.⁴



*Tower of Silence
Flickr / Sergel Golyshev*

By the fourth century BCE, after the campaigns of Alexander the Great, the region assumed a prominent role as a trading center.⁵ Trade brought a diverse mix of cultures and religions to the region.⁶ In the sixth century CE, western Turks migrated into the area. They settled the land and gave up their nomadic way of life.⁷

In the seventh century, Arabs dominated trade and commerce and introduced Islam to the region. Islam replaced Buddhism as the dominant faith. By the 10th century, present-day Uzbekistan had become an important part of the Muslim world. The region, called Mawarannahr by the Arabs, continued to thrive under Arab, then Persian, and finally Turkish rule.⁸

Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, and Babur

Genghis Khan's Mongolian army ravaged Central Asia from 1219 to 1225, burning cities and destroying irrigation systems. This conquest changed the people of Mawarannahr and hastened the Turkification of the region.⁹ Although Genghis Khan was a Mongol, his army was made up primarily of Turks who had been conscripted as he moved southward. The Mongol armies intermixed with the population, and the Iranian population in Mawarannahr became a minority.¹⁰ Following Genghis Khan's death, the empire was divided between his three sons, and orderly succession prevailed for the next few generations. But by the early 14th century, the empire fragmented as princes of various tribal groups competed for influence.¹¹

One tribal chieftain, Tamerlane, fought his way to the top in the 1380s and became the unchallenged ruler of Mawarannahr. From there, he proceeded to conquer all of Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, the southern steppe region north of the Aral Sea,

and Russia, leveling cities in his wake and massacring millions.¹² Tamerlane, whose Turkish name Timur means “iron,” established the second-largest empire in history (after Alexander the Great), and made Samarkand his capital, even though he spent little time there.¹³ Though his empire did not remain intact after his death in 1405, Timur left behind a rich architectural history, courtesy of the craftsmen and artists he exiled to Samarkand from around the empire. Many of these buildings have been preserved.^{14,15}



Genghis Khan
Flickr / John Bridges

In 1941, the tomb in the *Gūr-e Amīr* mausoleum in Samarkand was opened by a Soviet team of archaeologists, and a skeleton of a man believed to be Timur was exhumed from the tomb. In post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Timur is considered a national hero.¹⁶

Babur, another Turkic-Mongol warrior revered in Uzbekistan, was the father of the Mogul dynasty of India. His memoirs, which were written in a variant of Turkish, hold an acclaimed place in Uzbek and Indian literature. In 1519, Babur marched his armies south through Afghanistan and began his conquest of India. He established an empire that was still in place when the British colonialists arrived in the early 17th century.^{17,18}

Uzbeks

By the 15th century, the Uzbeks, who migrated into the area as Turkish nomads, had established several states. Of these, the khanate of Bukhara was the most powerful. Bukhara controlled the Fergana Valley, the most fertile region in Central Asia. But the declining fortunes of the region affected the Uzbeks. New trade routes and modes of transportation, including freight ships that sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, meant that less commerce traveled the Silk Road, leading to a regional economic decline. These developments impeded the ability of local leaders to maintain the standing armies necessary to keep their influence and expand their empires.¹⁹ The Sunni Uzbeks’ uneasy relations with Shi’ite Iran isolated them from the Muslim world. In the late 16th century, invasions from Iran, as well as incursions by nomadic tribes in the north, further weakened the khanate of Bukhara.²⁰

Russian Conquest

By the 19th century, Russian interest in Central Asia had increased; the Russians were concerned that the British might gain control of the region. Shortly after the Russians began asserting control over Central Asia in the mid-19th century, the United States Civil War broke out. Because Europeans had relied on cotton from the American South to manufacture textiles, they needed to find an alternate source. The tsarist rulers of Russia saw Uzbekistan and surrounding regions as a suitable replacement site to grow cotton.²¹



*Russian Orthodox Center
Flickr / Ahmed Sajjad Zaldi*

By 1876, the region of present-day Uzbekistan had fallen fully under Russian control. This had little effect on the daily lives of most Uzbeks. Farmers grew more cotton than ever, but the Russians were not interested in the well-being of the locals. Although transportation links were established, a textile industry was slow to develop because the cotton was sent to Russia for processing.²²

By the early 20th century, Russian influence in Central Asia inspired the development of a modernization movement led by young, foreign-educated intellectuals from wealthy families. This group, known as the Jadidists, tried to take advantage of Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, the 1905 Russian revolution, and the revolutions of 1917, in order to overturn Russian rule and establish modern, independent states. Their efforts failed, and after 1917, many Jadidist leaders aligned with the Soviet communists.²³

The Soviet Empire

After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet Union inherited and maintained Russia's imperial administrative structure in Central Asia. In 1924, Moscow created the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Five years later, the republic's southeastern part was separated into the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic.^{24,25,26} The Soviets established their administrative divisions in Central Asia in such a way as to discourage loyalty to the former khanate boundaries, thwart the formation of political opposition along ethnic lines, ensure dependence on Moscow, and promote Russian as the region's common language.²⁷

Imposing an administrative structure was not difficult; changing long-standing cultural norms was another matter. Pre-existing ties simply adapted to the new empire. The Soviet practice was to install local elites in top administrative positions, served by Russian deputies. Since the local elites had no prospect of advancing beyond Uzbekistan, those in national positions had every incentive to build up local patronage networks.²⁸ By the mid-1980s, those local patronage networks had a reputation for corruption. Uzbekistan was the first target of the anti-corruption campaign of newly appointed Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Over 2,000 functionaries were dismissed. The death of First Secretary Sharof Rashidov, the leader of Uzbekistan's Communist Party, exempted him from the purge. Moscow viewed Rashidov as corrupt, whereas Uzbeks lauded him for diverting resources that benefited the republic.²⁹

Independence

In 1991, as the Soviet Union collapsed, Uzbekistan reluctantly became an independent country.³⁰ Though independence offered autonomy, it meant the loss of Soviet subsidies. Islam Karimov, appointed Uzbek Communist leader in 1990, emerged as the country's president in 1991. His election was seen as neither free nor fair. In 1995, his presidency was extended by popular referendum. In 2000, the legislature ruled that the extension was part of his first term, which allowed Karimov to run for a second term in 2000.³¹ He won with 92.5% of the vote.³² This election was also judged unfair because of the Karimov government's pre-election maneuvering.³³



*Old Black Women and Men Spirits Images
Wikimedia / Junius*

Uzbekistan and its Central Asian neighbors quickly became aware of how a post-Soviet Islamic revival could be used as a platform for dissent and violent opposition to the establishment.³⁴ In February 1999, a series of bombings shook Tashkent and led to an immediate crackdown on those perceived to be Islamist fundamentalists; these measures also extended to a broad range of opponents to the regime.³⁵ In 2004, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and Al-Qaeda-aligned terrorist group, executed several attacks in Tashkent, including suicide attacks against the Israeli and US embassies and the Uzbek prosecutor general's office. Islam Karimov used strict measures against the IMU and other Islamists in an effort to mitigate the militant threat.^{36,37}

Authoritarian Regime

In May 2005, suspected Islamist extremists successfully stormed a prison in Andijan. Among the freed prisoners were some 20 businessmen believed to be members of Akramiya, an organization thought to have ties to the IMU.³⁸ The extremists fled into Andijan, where they engaged in street fighting with security forces.³⁹



*Islam Karimov and John Kerry
Flickr / U.S. Department of State*

Amid the prison break, anger toward the government for repressing individuals such as these businessmen led to a peaceful gathering of civilians in the streets of Andijan. As men, women, and children protested deteriorating economic and social conditions, security forces opened fire, killing unarmed citizens. The incident became known as the Andijan Massacre. The government claimed its reaction was an appropriate response to provocation by armed Islamist groups. Most outside observers agreed that possibly hundreds of victims who had turned out to demonstrate were mostly unarmed civilians, including minors.^{40,41}

The Uzbek government's response caused friction with the West. Foreign journalists and aid workers faced difficulties remaining in the country. The government's refusal to convene an outside commission to review the incidents strained international relations and led Western governments to impose sanctions.^{42,43} In response, the Karimov administration ordered American forces to leave Karshi-Khanabad air base, which was integral to the US mission in Afghanistan.⁴⁴

The continuing fight against Islamist militants led to an intensified crackdown on political opposition and Muslims in general. In 2009, the government harassed and beat political opposition and human rights activists and placed dozens under de facto house arrest.^{45,46} Yet despite continued human rights violations, Uzbekistan saw slight improvements in relations with the West. In 2009, the European Union lifted the arms embargo it had imposed after the 2005 Andijan Massacre.⁴⁷ In 2012, Uzbekistan agreed to allow its territory to be used by NATO forces to remove personnel and equipment from Afghanistan.⁴⁸

In 2015, Islam Karimov won his fourth presidential election by more than 90%.⁴⁹ His election was once again criticized by international observers and denounced by opponents abroad.⁵⁰ But Karimov's dominance over Uzbekistan was overshadowed by poor health and scandal. A year earlier, his daughter Gulnara, seen by some as a possible successor, had been placed under house arrest after becoming the focus of a Swiss investigation into corruption and money laundering. In late 2016, Karimov died after suffering a brain hemorrhage. He was succeeded by his prime minister, Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Early in his term, Mirziyoyev appeared to continue Karimov's authoritarian rule while cautiously pursuing economic reform and improved relations with Uzbekistan's neighbors.^{51,52,53} In May 2017, the United Nations called on Mirziyoyev to fulfill his government's pledge for reform into concrete improvements of human right.⁵⁴



*Earthquake Memorial
Flickr / G Travels*

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Uzbekistan in Perspective

Chapter 2 | History

Assessment

1. Persian and Turkish nomads introduced Islam to modern-day Uzbekistan by mixing with the local population.
2. Tamerlane made Samarkand the capital of the Timurid Empire.
3. The American Civil War ushered Uzbekistan into the international cotton market.
4. Islam Karimov was the authoritarian president of Uzbekistan from 1991 until his death in 2016.
5. The Andijan Massacre refers to a rebellion that broke out in a prison near Andijan and left dozens of prisoners dead.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False;



*Grains in Samarkand
Flickr / Arthur Chapman*

Chapter 3 | Uzbekistan Country in Perspective

Economy

Introduction

After the demise of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan's economy began to improve slowly. But harsh measures such as stringent border restrictions, high tariffs on imports, and limited circulation of money often undermined the government's commitment to economic reform. The fledgling economy led to crime, corruption, and consumer shortages.¹ The cotton, natural gas, and gold industries are key to Uzbekistan's economy.² Remittances from workers outside the country, especially in Russia, also play an important role.³

Since taking power in late 2016, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has signaled a willingness to ease economic restrictions and open Uzbekistan to foreign investment. This new attitude was exemplified by the return of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to Uzbekistan in early 2017. But concrete reforms have been slow to materialize due to resistance from powerful hardliners in the administration.⁴

Agriculture

Agriculture makes up 16% of Uzbekistan's gross domestic product (GDP), behind industry and the services sector, but agriculture employs between one-quarter and one-half of the country's workforce.^{5,6} Cotton is the major agricultural product. As of June 2017, Uzbekistan was the world's eighth-largest cotton producer and fifth-largest cotton exporter.⁷ Additionally, a quarter of Uzbekistan's GDP consists of enterprises related to cotton.⁸ Grain, primarily wheat, is the other principal crop.⁹ Since its independence, Uzbekistan has



*Cotton fields
Flickr / Sergio Tittarini*

made efforts to move its agriculture sector away from the state-owned, centralized Soviet model that existed for decades.¹⁰ The focus has been on modernization and diversification, strengthening food security, and relieving rural poverty. International agencies have assisted Uzbek farmers who choose to move beyond cotton and wheat and into horticulture, animal husbandry, and fish farming.¹¹ Fruit growing enterprises have been especially successful. Additionally, farmers are gaining increased access to expertise, innovation, and advanced farming techniques to improve crop yields.^{12,13,14} The state continues to own, control, and regulate agricultural lands. Farmers rent land from the state and are given land use rights.¹⁵

The practices surrounding the cotton harvest continue to stain Uzbekistan's international image. In a tradition that dates back to Soviet times, much of the country's able-bodied population is mobilized during the harvest season and other crucial times to labor in the cotton fields.¹⁶ To meet quotas, workers have long shifts and live in unsanitary conditions close to the fields. Government employees and college students face threats and serious repercussions if they refuse to participate. Many wealthy Uzbeks avoid work by paying others to take their place. Those who grow and harvest the cotton receive little to none of the revenues from sales, which

are very profitable to the government. In 2012, the Uzbek government said it would stop using the forced labor of school children to harvest cotton, but the practice continues.¹⁷ In 2015, some two million Uzbek children harvested cotton. The blatant use of forced labor and child labor has led to calls to boycott Uzbek cotton.^{18,19,20}

Natural Resources and Industry

Other than cotton, a considerable portion of Uzbekistan's international exports consists of extracted natural resources, particularly gold. Uzbekistan's Murunatu gold mine is the largest open-pit gold mine in the world, and the country is the world's 12th largest gold producer. Additionally, state companies operate 48 mines and processing facilities that produce lead, copper, zinc, molybdenum, tellurium, bismuth, and uranium.^{21,22} Reliance on commodity exports has caused earnings to be affected by international price fluctuations.²³



*Energy efficient irrigation
Flickr / United Nations Development Programme*

In the years after Uzbekistan's independence, the government pursued a gradual transition to a free-market economy. Nevertheless, the state retains shares in key industries such as telecommunications, energy, mining, airlines, and silk.^{24,25} The industrial sector accounts for about 32% of Uzbekistan's GDP.²⁶ Under President Mirziyoyev, the country is courting foreign investments to modernize its textile industry and process more of its cotton fibers domestically.²⁷ In addition to cotton, other major exports are energy products, gold, mineral fertilizers, ferrous and nonferrous metals, textiles, foodstuffs, machinery, and automobiles.²⁸

Energy

With its significant energy reserves, Uzbekistan is energy self-sufficient and is one of the major energy exporters in Central Asia.²⁹ The country is working with international partners to enhance extraction of its oil. Estimates are that Uzbekistan has less than three decades of proven oil reserves remaining.³⁰

The majority of Uzbekistan's energy consumption consists of natural gas. The country has 65 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves and is an important natural gas producer

in Eurasia. It is also constructing a major gas processing plant in Bukhara Province, with the help of Russian expertise.³¹ As of 2014, Uzbekistan was the 15th-largest producer of natural gas in the world.³² The oil and gas industry of Uzbekistan is estimated at 16% of GDP.³³

As of 2015, Russia, China, and Kazakhstan were the primary importers of Uzbek gas.³⁴ Uzbekistan currently exports 350 billion cubic feet of natural gas per year to China via the Central Asia-China pipeline. Progress on an expansion of the pipeline, which is meant to boost Uzbek gas production, has stalled.^{35,36} In 2012 and 2013, Uzbekistan suspended shipments of natural gas to Tajikistan several times to pressure the Tajik government to abandon plans to build more hydroelectric plants, which would affect irrigation systems in Uzbekistan, and to fulfill overdue payments.³⁷ Afghanistan also is a recipient of some Uzbek petroleum products and electricity.³⁸

Trade, Tourism, and Banking

Since independence, Uzbekistan has developed a reputation for unreliability due to its approach to trade, and for violating its own laws guaranteeing foreign investors' rights.^{39,40} Despite these challenges, exports have been on a generally upward swing, reaching USD 12.9 billion in 2017.⁴¹ Uzbekistan is the world's 100th largest export economy. In 2015, the country exported USD 5.85 billion and imported USD 10 billion.⁴²



*Uzbekistan tourism
Flickr / United Nations Development Programme*

Uzbekistan's location on the ancient Silk Road makes it a potentially attractive tourist destination.⁴³ After independence, the country organized its tourism industry. Tourism has been on the rise since 2005.⁴⁴ The largest numbers of foreign visitors come from Russia, Turkey, and India. Visits are largely confined to known cultural and historical attractions. Tourists may encounter difficulties like visa restrictions, poor infrastructure, and border controls.⁴⁵

Uzbekistan's banking system remains highly regulated and under strict government control, making it difficult for banks to stimulate development. Banking assets and loans are controlled and channeled by the state, and funds are used to serve state interests. The banking sector contains both government-controlled and foreign

investment banks. The Central Bank of Uzbekistan is not independent, but rather under the control of the government, making it unable to impartially enforce regulations. Banking system reform has been slow.⁴⁶

Standard of Living and Unemployment

Official statistics indicate that Uzbekistan has made significant progress in improving its citizens' standard of living in recent years. The country has the third-lowest rate of poverty in Central Asia, with a per capita income of USD 6,500 in 2016.^{47,48} Life expectancy is 73.8 years, making Uzbekistan 126th in the world. The infant mortality rate is 18.6 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁴⁹ In January 2017, the Uzbek government signaled it would devote increased effort and resources toward socioeconomic development.⁵⁰



*Ippodrom Bazaar
Flickr / Fang-Yu Lin*

The scarcity of agricultural employment options has led to an exodus of young men from rural areas.⁵¹ Until recently, Russia was the primary destination for Uzbek migrant workers and a primary source of remittances to Uzbekistan. However, Russia's declining wages, stringent guest worker regulations, and potentially exploitative employers have led Uzbeks to seek work elsewhere. Kazakhstan, the United Arab Emirates, and South Korea are the new preferred destinations.⁵² In 2016, Uzbekistan had a remittances inflow of USD 2.7 billion, down from a peak of USD 6.6 billion in 2013.⁵³

Official estimates of unemployment in 2016 stand at 5.2%, and an additional 20% of the population is underemployed.⁵⁴ Uzbekistan's economic growth remains sustained, but it slowed from 8.0% in 2015 to 7.8% in 2016. The decline is attributed to economic stagnation in Uzbekistan's trading partners, such as Kazakhstan and China. Additionally, remittances from Uzbek workers in Russia have declined, from USD 4 billion in 2014 to USD 1.8 billion in 2016, due to Russia's weakened economy. Services is the strongest economic sector, driven by trade, finance, and telecommunications.⁵⁵

Outlook

Uzbekistan's economic growth is projected to remain sustained, hovering around 7%. It will likely be driven by continued investment, agricultural development, and improved economic situations for the country's trading partners. The annual export of natural gas is expected to increase by 20% by 2020.⁵⁶

Consumer spending will be hampered by the reduced flow of remittances but helped by planned wage increases. Given Uzbekistan's high government spending and currency controls, as well as growing food prices and a possible rise in economic protectionism worldwide, inflation remains a major challenge.⁵⁷

The biggest factor in Uzbekistan's long-term economic outlook will be the direction in which the new president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, takes the country. In February 2017, Uzbekistan announced a new development strategy that promotes the streamlining of business registrations, agricultural diversification, and transparent business practices. Such reforms are aimed at improving Uzbekistan's business climate for foreign investors as well as small businesses. Nonetheless, it is not yet clear how committed Mirziyoyev is to breaking with the isolationist and paternalist economic policies of his predecessor. Additionally, those past policies have been very beneficial to the country's powerful and influential elite, and attempts at economic reform will likely be met by entrenched resistance.^{58,59}



*New employment Opportunities
Flickr / United Nations Development Programme*

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Uzbekistan in Perspective

Chapter 3 | Economy

Assessment

1. Severe droughts and food insecurity make cotton growing less attractive to farmers in Uzbekistan.
2. Child labor remains a serious problem in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.
3. The number of Uzbek migrant workers in Russia has been increasing over the past few years.
4. The largest open-pit gold mine in the world is located in Uzbekistan.
5. Uzbekistan imports natural gas from China and Russia.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False;



*Woman Blacksmith
Flickr / United Nations Development Programme*

Chapter 4 | Uzbekistan Country in Perspective

Society

Introduction

Uzbekistan, an administrative entity which was created by the Soviets in 1924, encompassed a variety of ethnic groups other than Uzbeks. At its creation, some Uzbek settlements were split off Uzbekistan and continued to function as Uzbek enclaves inside the territories of neighboring countries. Before Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, Russians were the largest minority, making up 8% of the population.¹ After the Soviet Union's collapse, all long-term residents were offered Uzbek citizenship, but most non-ethnic Uzbeks rejected the offer, even though some had lived there for generations.² The alternative, emigration to countries where their ethnicity

constituted the majority, was an attractive option to the Russian population, few of whom were fluent in Uzbek. Currently, only 5% of the population is ethnic Russian. Following this trend, ethnic Uzbeks who lived in neighboring countries returned to their cultural homeland. Thus, the population of Uzbekistan has become more homogeneous since it became an independent state.^{3,4}

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Uzbeks

Uzbeks, who account for 80% of the population, are primarily of Turkic, Mongolian, and Persian origin. Their name is believed to come from Öz Beg, a powerful 14th-century Mongol leader. Their Turkic-derived language is one of the most widely spoken in Central Asia. Sizeable minorities of Uzbeks are found in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and northwest China.^{5,6,7} Uzbeks are generally followers of Sunni Islam and are considered among the most religious Muslims and least Russified peoples in Central Asia.^{8,9,10}



*Uzbek dancer
Flickr / Michel Meynsbrughen*

Tajiks

The Tajiks speak a form of Persian called Tajik and were the original inhabitants of ancient Afghanistan and Turkistan.¹¹ They officially make up 5% of the population of Uzbekistan, but most experts agree that this is an undercount.¹² After the Soviet Union's collapse, a long civil war engulfed Tajikistan, making it difficult for Tajiks to return to their ancestral homeland.¹³ Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan's president until his death in 2016, was of Tajik descent.¹⁴

Kazakhs

Kazakhs are descendants of nomadic Mongol and Turkic tribal livestock herders. Their nomadic lifestyle was organized from geographically distributed hordes (ordas) down to extended family groups. In the 19th and 20th centuries, many Kazakhs abandoned

their nomadic lives in favor of planting crops.¹⁵ They are found in the northern border region of Uzbekistan and constitute 3% of the population. They are the fourth-largest ethnic group in the country.¹⁶

Kyrgyz

The small Kyrgyz minority inhabits the Fergana Valley. The Kyrgyz are mainly Sunni Muslims. This group was primarily nomadic until the 1930s, when the Soviets introduced collectivization and this lifestyle was halted. Men still herd flocks in the mountains, while the women stay in the valleys to work the land.¹⁷ The Kyrgyz language is part of the Turkic language group.^{18,19}

Karakalpaks

Karakalpaks are a Turkic people, like the Kazakhs. The Karakalpak language belongs to the Qipchaq family of Turkic languages. The Karakalpaks settled in the region surrounding the Amu Darya in the 18th century. In 1936, the Karakalpakstan region became an autonomous republic in the western half of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. It retained its autonomous republic status within independent Uzbekistan. Today, Karakalpaks in Uzbekistan suffer from economic stagnation, ecological and health problems from the receding Aral Sea, and neglect from the central government in Tashkent. Many are renouncing their Karakalpak nationality and declaring themselves Kazakhs or Uzbeks, in order to have better access to employment opportunities and social assistance.^{20,21,22}



*Poi Kalyan Mosque Complex
Flickr / Ahmed Sajjad Zaldi*

Religion

Most Uzbeks are Sunni Muslim, and nearly a quarter are considered Sufis. Approximately 9% of the population belongs to the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity, a remnant of the Soviet occupation. The other 3% of the country adhere to a variety of faiths including Judaism, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Korean Protestants, and Seventh Day Adventists.^{23,24}

In Uzbekistan, Islam is not monolithic. There are followers of several schools, including the Hanafi and the Shafi'i legal schools, along with the Sufi organizations.²⁵ Uzbek Muslims have traditionally practiced a more tolerant form of the religion, although more radical forms of Islam are emerging.²⁶

The modern history of Islam in Uzbekistan includes strong anti-Islamic campaigns by the Soviets and purges in the 1920s and 1930s. During the 70 years of communism, the Soviets attempted to purge Islam from the region. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the more moderate Hanafi legal school began to lose influence to the more conservative Salafi-Wahhabi schools. These more fundamentalist groups began to operate more openly in the 1980s, resulting in a greater politicization of Islam.²⁷ After independence, Islam in Uzbekistan was influenced by Sufism from Turkey and Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia.²⁸

The repression of religion by the state extends to all independent religious activity. Muslims continue to be arrested, and individuals, groups, and mosques that do not subscribe to government-approved practices are repressed. This policy has led to the imprisonment of thousands. While there is some validity to the government's concerns about extremist groups, many government targets pose no credible threat to national security.^{29,30}

Cuisine

In contrast to their nomadic neighbors, the ancestors of present-day Uzbeks were settled farmers who grew grain centuries ago. Rice was successfully cultivated in the lower portions of the Fergana Valley, irrigated by water from three major rivers. As a result, Uzbekistan can claim a long culinary heritage. Plov, a rice pilaf, is the national dish, although specific ingredients vary by region. It is typically rich in meat, sweetened by diced onions and shredded carrots, spiced, and cooked in a cast-iron pot. The recipe passed from merchant to merchant on the Silk Road. Variations of this dish are consumed from Azerbaijan to northwestern China.³¹ Another staple of the daily diet is fruit. Grapes and apricots are dried to extend their consumption beyond summer. Melons are seasonal.³²



*Fresh Salad Appetiser
Flickr / ...your local connection*

Uzbek food is flavorful but not particularly hot or spicy. Common spices include cumin, pepper, barberries, coriander, sesame seeds, cilantro, dill, parsley, and basil. Fermented milk products are common. Katyk, a yogurt made from sour milk, and suzma, strained clotted milk, are eaten plain, included in salads, or added to main dishes and soups.³³

Bread is a staple for most of the population. Non, or flatbread, is commonly served at every meal. Some non varieties are made with onions or meat stuffed in the dough, and sesame seeds may be used as a topping.³⁴

Tea is an important national drink. Green tea is the predominant beverage and is the “drink of hospitality,” while black tea is more commonly seen in Tashkent. Drinking tea, including elaborate tea ceremonies, has a prominent place in the food culture of Uzbekistan.^{35,36}

Dress

European-style clothing is common among modern, urban Uzbeks.³⁷ Islamic culture normally dictates modesty in dress, and clothing should not show much skin. Trousers and long-sleeved shirts are the appropriate wear for men. Similarly, long-sleeved blouses and long skirts are a good choice for women. Uzbek women often wear headscarves, and occasionally, the fuller covering for the head and face is seen.³⁸



*Women in Dresses
Flickr / Francesco Veronesi*

Traditional Uzbek dress reflects cultural traditions and tends to be bright and colorful. A woman’s headdress is composed up of a skullcap, kerchief, and turban. Traditional women’s clothing for holidays is made of satin and accentuated by jewelry and embroidery. Color and embroidery patterns can denote the wearer’s social status. Men’s wardrobes are composed of a quilted robe called a chapan, a straight-cut undershirt called a kuylak, a wrap shirt called a yakhtak, wide trousers with narrow ankles called ishton, a skullcap called a tubeteika, ornate belts, and tall boots made of thin leather. Today, traditional clothing is worn primarily in rural areas.³⁹

Gender Issues

After independence, Uzbekistan was one of the first Central Asian Republics to codify equal rights for men and women. In 1995, the government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.⁴⁰ The reality of gender relations is somewhat different, and a strong tradition of patriarchy is reflected in Uzbek culture. Women disproportionately lose their jobs when the economy struggles.⁴¹ Unemployment leaves women with no independent claim to housing, rendering them more vulnerable to domestic abuse.⁴²



*Young HIV awareness trainers
Flickr / UNDP in Europe and Central Asia*

Women are often victims of domestic violence. Although prohibited by law, domestic violence is often widely accepted and rarely results in a conviction against the offender. The trafficking of women for prostitution abroad is a serious problem.^{43,44}

Women face additional hardships, such as forced marriage, early marriage, and polygamy. Although the minimum age for legal marriage is 17 for women and 18 for men, the United Nations reports that 13% of girls between 15 and 19 are married, widowed, or divorced. Polygamy is illegal under the current penal code, but the practice appears to be on the rise. Men are regarded as the undisputed leaders of the household and make most of the important economic decisions.⁴⁵

Since the 1990s, the government of Uzbekistan has allegedly carried out a policy of forced sterilization of women.⁴⁶ Hospitals and clinics allegedly receive sterilization quotas from the central government, for which doctors are held responsible. Medical professionals in turn pressure or coerce women to agree to undergo surgical sterilization; sometimes the procedures are performed without the women's consent.⁴⁷ Women who deliver their second child by caesarean section are especially likely to be targeted. The apparent goals of this policy are to curb population growth and improve Uzbekistan's maternal and infant mortality statistics.^{48,49,50}

The Arts

Dance

Uzbekistan has a long dance tradition. Uzbek dance is characterized by arm and hand movements, spins and turns, back and shoulder movements, and facial expressions. The dancers are typically women and girls, usually accompanied by music. Historically, some dancers were men who played female parts. Some Uzbek dances celebrate specific occasions, such as Navruz, the Persian spring solstice; other dances can be performed at any time for entertainment.^{51,52,53}

Literature

Uzbekistan has a well-established literary tradition, dating back to Alisher Navai, a prodigious 15th-century pioneer in Turkic literature.⁵⁴ During the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, artists of all types, including writers, suffered greatly. They faced the prospect of being named an “enemy of the people,” making them eligible for the death penalty. As a result, Uzbekistan’s flourishing literary scene declined under Soviet rule. In order to earn a living, writers were forced to produce socialist realist prose that depicted communism in a positive light.⁵⁵ After the introduction of perestroika and glasnost in the 1980s, writers began to produce works that were mildly critical of their society and its leaders.⁵⁶



*Artistic prints
Flickr / Arthur Chapman*

Once the Soviet Union collapsed, the restoration of the Uzbek language became a priority. The use of the Russian lexicon was intentionally minimized. The 1992 constitution declared Uzbek to be the official language of the newly independent state.⁵⁷ But censorship persisted under President Karimov, and internationally-recognized works by Uzbek authors were banned.⁵⁸ Some writers and journalists, like the award-winning author Mamadali Makhmudov, were imprisoned on false charges.⁵⁹ In order to survive, many prominent Uzbek writers have had to praise the president and write patriotic works.⁶⁰ It remains to be seen whether President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Karimov’s successor in 2016, will take any steps to loosen the state’s grip on artistic expression.

Sports

A game known as kok boru (goat grabbing), also called kupkari or uloq, is Uzbekistan's national pastime. Traditionally played on Friday afternoons, players on horseback compete to grab the headless body of a goat and drag it around a pole. Regional tournaments can include teams from Afghanistan, China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The game is said to have been introduced throughout the Central Asian region by Genghis Khan.^{61,62,63}



*Uzbek Sporting Event
Flickr / United Nations Development Programme*

Kurash, a traditional style of wrestling, originated in Uzbekistan more than 3,500 years ago. It is one of the most ancient martial arts. The post-Soviet regime worked to develop this native form of wrestling as a way to restore national values and traditions long suppressed by Moscow. These efforts have met with much success, and kurash is gaining popularity all over the world.⁶⁴ Other important sports include football (soccer), boxing, skiing, and rugby.^{65,66}

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Uzbekistan in Perspective

Chapter 4 | Society

Assessment

1. Uzbek is a Turkic-derived language.
2. Uzbekistan's small Kyrgyz minority is concentrated around the Aral Sea.
3. Rice was introduced to Uzbekistan by nomadic herders..
4. *Kurash* is a traditional style of wrestling.
5. Sunni Islam is practiced openly and freely in Uzbekistan.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False;



Map of Uzbekistan
Courtesy of CIA

Chapter 5 | Uzbekistan Country in Perspective

Security

Introduction

Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991 after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The country borders Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.¹ Its strategic location makes this predominantly Muslim nation of approximately 31 million people the center of geopolitics and trade in the region.^{2,3}

Perceived threats of Islamist fundamentalism among Uzbekistan's neighbors, particularly Afghanistan and Tajikistan, have laid the foundation for its foreign policy. Relations with neighboring countries have been strained, and the areas that border

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are mined.^{4,5} Since independence, Uzbekistan has maintained a cautious distance from Russia.^{6,7}

Uzbekistan is an authoritarian republic with limited power outside of the executive branch. It is one of the most repressive states in the world and remains a “Country of Concern” with respect to human rights abuses.^{8,9,10} Relations with Europe and the United States weakened after the Andijan crackdown in 2005.¹¹ But in 2010, Uzbekistan began supporting nonmilitary logistics for NATO operations in Afghanistan, which improved relations with the West.¹² Following the death of long-time ruler Islam Karimov in 2016, his successor, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, appeared poised to improve Uzbekistan’s relations with the outside world while maintaining the authoritarian policies of his predecessor.^{13,14,15}



*Center for Strategic & Intl Studies
Flickr / Center for Strategic & International Studies*

US-Uzbekistan Relations

Following the attacks of 9/11, Uzbekistan became a key strategic ally of the United States.¹⁶ Tashkent became a partner in counterterrorism because both governments shared a desire to avoid the “Talibanization” of Central Asia. In March 2002, the two countries signed the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework.^{17,18}

Relations cooled after the Andijan Massacre of 2005, in which the Uzbek security forces were accused of killing many unarmed civilians. President Karimov rebuffed US and European demands for an international investigation into the incident and rescinded American rights to use the Karshi-Khanabad air base.¹⁹ Uzbekistan then signed a security treaty with Russia and joined the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) led by Moscow. Despite efforts by the Russians, strong divisions between members- Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan-made CSTO an ineffective alliance.^{20,21}

Uzbekistan remains a major transit hub for NATO supplies to troops in Afghanistan.^{22,23} The strategic importance to the US could enable the Uzbek government to wield even more influence and resist efforts by the international community to encourage transparency and human rights.^{24,25}

Foreign Relations with Neighboring Countries

Kyrgyzstan

Uzbekistan's relations with Kyrgyzstan have been problematic. The border between the two countries remains largely undefined, and each has small enclaves within the other's territory.^{26,27} One border issue concerns an enclave that Uzbekistan acquired under Soviet rule, which has not been restored to Kyrgyz sovereignty.²⁸ Political instability and ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan, and the threat of Kyrgyz Islamist fundamentalists, have prompted Uzbekistan to tighten border controls, plant mines, and amass troops along the border.²⁹ The two countries also disagree over increasingly precious water resources. Uzbekistan wants to maintain the unimpeded flow of rivers from Kyrgyzstan and has claimed usage rights to Kyrgyzstan's Soviet-era Orto-Tokoy reservoir (also known as the Kasan-Sai reservoir).^{30,31}



*Nasa border view
Flickr / NASA Johnson*

Tajikistan

Uzbekistan's relationship with its neighbor to the southeast has been unstable.³² Tashkent's decision to mine parts of the border to prevent the entry of Islamist fundamentalists is a source of tension. The mines were haphazardly placed, resulting in casualties among residents of border countries.³³ Tajikistan lost territory to Uzbekistan when the Soviets drew borders for the republics.³⁴ Poor, remote, and reeling from a post-independence civil war, Tajikistan has one important resource: control of water in a landlocked, desert region.^{35,36}

Tajikistan is slowly proceeding with plans to dam the Vakhsh River, a tributary of the Amu Darya. The hydropower project promises to be the world's tallest dam and to bring the country energy independence.³⁷ Uzbekistan strongly opposes the dam for fear it would reduce its water supplies. Recently, the Uzbek foreign minister stated that international conventions provide guidelines and assurances for countries upstream and downstream of major rivers and that he expects the Tajiks to honor these conventions.³⁸ In the past, the Uzbek government has restricted rail and road

access into Tajikistan and has raised tariffs in an effort to dissuade Tajikistan from building the dam.³⁹

Turkmenistan

Strain and cautious optimism define the relations between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.⁴⁰ The Uzbek minority in Turkmenistan and the Turkmen minority in Uzbekistan have experienced discrimination in times of economic decline.⁴¹ In 2002, charges of Uzbek complicity in an assassination attempt on Turkmenistan's president heightened tensions between the two countries.⁴² Yet the leaders of the two countries have met several times and sought to expand cooperation and defuse tensions.^{43,44} In early 2017, newly elected Uzbek leader Shavkat Mirziyoyev surprisingly chose to make his first foreign visit as president to Turkmenistan.^{45,46}



*Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border
Flickr / Christian Benke*

Afghanistan

Uzbekistan views Afghanistan as a significant member of the Central Asian community, and Uzbekistan supported the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.^{47,48,49} Since the toppling of the Taliban, Uzbekistan has contributed to development efforts in Afghanistan. The Uzbek government built several bridges in Afghanistan to expand transportation links. Uzbekistan also exports electricity to Afghanistan.⁵⁰ In 2011, a railway line opened between the Uzbek border and the Afghan city of Mazar-e Sharif, offering the potential for trade growth between the two neighbors.⁵¹ The policy of cooperation in the interest of growth and stability continued under President Mirziyoyev. In early 2017, the two countries agreed to triple annual trade and increase the supply of Uzbek wheat, medicines, appliances, and vehicles to Afghanistan.⁵²

China

Even though the two countries don't share a border, China has a strong interest in Uzbekistan, particularly Uzbekistan's energy sector. In the spring of 2007, the two

countries agreed to build a pipeline carrying Uzbek natural gas to China. In 2011, the Chinese agreed to provide more than USD 5 billion to Uzbekistan to improve investment projects.⁵³ In recent years, Uzbekistan and China have also strengthened cooperation on defense, security, and trade.^{54,55,56} Uzbekistan has been an enthusiastic participant in China's Belt and Road infrastructure development initiative. Among the proposed projects is a China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway network.^{57,58}



*NRC Counter Narcotics Training
Flickr / NATO-Russia Council*

Russia

Since independence, Uzbekistan has struck a cautious balance in its relations with Russia. President Karimov showed some signs of friendship toward Moscow, yet refrained from joining Russian-dominated regional bodies such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union.⁵⁹ Karimov also skillfully counterweighed Russian influence by cooperating with China and the United States when it suited him.⁶⁰ In the wake of President Karimov's death in 2016, Russia signaled it wished for greater cooperation with his successor, Shavkat Mirziyoyev. For his part, Mirziyoyev seems willing to strengthen relations with Russia, and the two countries signed investment and military cooperation deals in 2017.^{61,62}

Military, Police, and Intelligence Services

With approximately 76,500 personnel in its armed forces, Uzbekistan commands the largest military in Central Asia.⁶³ An additional 19,000 internal security forces and 1,000 national guard personnel assist in security operations.⁶⁴ Uzbekistan's armed forces are spread across four military districts. Because it is landlocked, Uzbekistan has no navy. Conscripts serve for 12 months, although those with higher education only serve for nine months. The short duration of tours is intended to reduce corruption in the army.⁶⁵

Army

Estimated to have 50,000 troops, the army consists of 15 infantry brigades (11 motorized rifle brigades, one light mountain brigade, one air assault brigade, one airborne brigade, and one special forces unit), one tank brigade, and seven artillery brigades (including one multiple rocket launcher (MRL) brigade). Bases are located in Tashkent, Termez, and Fergana; garrisons are situated in Bukhara, Fergana, Samarkand, Tashkent, Termez, and Urgench.^{66,67,68} The army relies on Soviet-made battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, reconnaissance vehicles, and armored personnel carriers. Airborne and special forces units are issued NATO-standard gear and weaponry.⁶⁹



Uzbek Soldiers parachute training
wikipedia

Uzbekistan is considering creating a more professional army. Emphasis is being placed on mobile, skilled forces capable of combating terrorism and defending against threats to internal security and regional stability. A gradual downsizing of the army is underway. One new initiative involves enhanced opportunities for language training in English and French.^{70,71}

Air Force

With a strength of 13,700 personnel, the air force comprises six fighter aviation units, one bomber aviation unit, two fighter-bomber aviation units, five helicopter units, and nine independent, mixed-aviation units. Bases are situated at Andijan, Chirchik, Fergana, Kagan South, Kakaydy, Karshi-Khanabad, Navoi, Pakhtakor, Tashkent, and Termez. All aircraft are of Soviet and Czech manufacture.^{72,73}

The air force allegedly attacked Tajik rebels during the early years of Tajikistan's civil war, which seemed to illustrate Karimov's desire and willingness to project Uzbekistan's strength in the region.⁷⁴ The air force has played an active role in the government's operations against the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a terrorist organization bent on creating a unified Islamic state in Central Asia. Combat and assault helicopters play a significant role in such engagements, especially in remote regions.⁷⁵

Internal Security

The Ministry of the Interior (MIA) oversees the work of the police and some paramilitary units. In May of 2017, internal security forces were once again placed under MIA control, after having been placed under the National Security Service (SNB) in the wake of the Andijan crackdown. There are 20,000 internal security force personnel, divided into five brigades and a special battalion.⁷⁶ The alleged involvement of the internal security forces in human rights abuses, including the Andijan Massacre, has complicated US efforts to provide training assistance.⁷⁷ The National Security Service (SNB), which is subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior, is responsible for eliminating dissent and suppressing all Islamic-inspired activity that falls outside the narrow state-defined parameters.^{78,79} Police units are equipped with predominantly Soviet-made weapons.⁸⁰

Intelligence Services

Charged with quelling political dissent and quashing Islamist terrorism, the National Security Service (SNB) is Uzbekistan's primary intelligence service. Built on the model of the Soviet-era KGB and incorporating former KGB personnel, the SNB is alleged by international observers to be a regime tool for suppressing political opposition.^{81,82} Human rights organization have repeatedly accused the SNB of arresting perceived dissidents on fabricated charges and subjecting them to torture while in custody.^{83, 84}

Border Guards

Charged with protecting the borders from infiltration by Islamist terrorists from neighboring countries, the Uzbekistani Border Guards rely heavily on highly mobile paramilitary units to engage in such counterterrorism operations. At the turn of the century, US military advisors assisted in training units. But with fewer than 1,000 personnel and inadequate equipment, the force is thinly spread over the long borders and must frequently coordinate with the armed forces when dealing with armed terrorists.⁸⁵



*Guard on Horse
Flickr / United Nations Development Programme*

Issues Affecting Security

Terrorism

Uzbekistan's principal terrorist organization is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has known ties to al-Qaeda. Established in 1992, it initially sought to overthrow the government.^{86,87,88} Its goal later shifted to creating an Islamic state in all of Central Asia and Muslim-dominated northwest China. It has engaged in guerrilla warfare; after attacks, combatants retreated to villages where they blended in with the local population.⁸⁹ This threat led to violent, repressive responses from the government, which has declared all opposition groups illegal and views Islamic organizations with great suspicion.^{90,91}

The IMU was initially based in the Fergana Valley, where it benefitted from the limits that conflicting ethnic and national boundaries place on law enforcement agencies.⁹² IMU was driven out of Uzbekistan and was active in Central Asia and the Middle East, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Iraq. American forces killed its founding leadership in Afghanistan.⁹³ By 2016, the group's remaining members in Afghanistan had fractured, some pledging allegiance to the Islamic State and others to the Taliban and Al Qaeda.⁹⁴

Crime and Drug Trafficking

While the Uzbek government does not release crime statistics, the country is perceived as having a moderate level of crime. Violent crimes are reported in Tashkent's poorer neighborhoods. Muggings, petty theft, vehicle theft, burglaries, and credit card fraud occur regularly. Foreigners are perceived as wealthy and are often targeted. Criminality may be driven by increasing food and fuel prices and by the endemic corruption that permeates government and the private sector.^{95,96}



*Uzbek National Security destroy drugs
wikipedia*

Poverty is another factor contributing to the crime rate. In 2016, approximately 14% of the population lived below poverty line, mostly in rural areas.⁹⁷ The rural poor

have little prospect of improvement in their standard of living. As a result, Islamist militancy may prove attractive. The government invariably labels even protests channeled through non-Islamist outlets as dissident Islamist activity, providing a pretext for harsh repression.^{98,99}

Uzbekistan is a transit country for heroin, hashish, opium, and marijuana. Drugs enter the country from Afghanistan and Tajikistan on their way to Russia and Europe. Uzbekistan's fairly developed infrastructure, long international borders, geography dominated by desert and mountains, and corruption facilitate ease of smuggling. Uzbek authorities have implemented anti-corruption initiatives and have worked with the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime to counter drug smuggling and improve training for law enforcement personnel.^{100,101,102}

Water Security

Uzbekistan ranks among countries at extreme water security risk. The nation is already experiencing internal and international tensions partly because of a scarcity of water in the region.^{103,104} Salt and pollutants from washing and irrigating land strongly limit the human use of water in the lower Amu Darya river.¹⁰⁵ Uzbekistan, along with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, is a relatively wealthy receiver of waters flowing from the poorer countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The tensions generated by this challenging layout are likely to grow.^{106,107}

Outlook

The repressive tactics of the Uzbek government and the socioeconomic problems affecting a broad spectrum of the population create an increased risk of domestic unrest. Yet the ongoing lack of an organized opposition suggests that, in the short run, the regime is likely to remain unchallenged.¹⁰⁸ President Shavkat Mirziyoyev seems intent on addressing these socioeconomic concerns without fundamentally altering Uzbekistan's authoritarian, centralized, and corrupt power structure.^{109,110}

Uzbekistan remains a significant player in Central Asia due to its geography and commitment to regional security. Its population and military are the region's largest.^{111,112} As president Mirziyoyev consolidates power, he faces ongoing disputes with neighbors over land, water, resources, terrorist threats, and border security.^{113,114} As NATO involvement in Afghanistan continues and Russia and China compete for regional influence, Uzbekistan is in a position to shape the regional landscape and build beneficial alliances.^{115,116,117}

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Uzbekistan in Perspective

Chapter 5 | Security

Assessment

1. There is no strategic partnership agreement in place between the United States and Uzbekistan.
2. Uzbekistan and China have strengthened their defense and security collaboration.
3. The United States continues to use the airbase at Karshi-Khanabad for operations in Afghanistan.
4. Uzbekistan is home to the largest armed force in Central Asia.
5. Uzbek relations with neighbors Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are cordial.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False;

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Country in Perspective | Uzbekistan

Final Assessment

1. Only 10% of the total land area of Uzbekistan can be used for agriculture.
2. Uzbekistan's summers are hot and humid and the winters are relatively warm. Rainfall is frequent and heavy throughout the year.
3. The Amu Darya is one of three important rivers that flow through Uzbekistan.
4. Uzbekistan is an attractive tourist destination.
5. Samarkand is the capital city of Uzbekistan.
6. Uzbekistan gained independence at the end of World War II.
7. Most of the Aral Sea, which was the fourth largest inland lake in the world, has dried up.
8. Uzbek militant groups fought to free Uzbekistan from Soviet rule for almost 50 years.
9. The Russians built a robust textile industry in Uzbekistan in the 19th century.
10. US troops were evicted from Karshi-Khanabad air base in response to US criticism of Uzbekistan's human rights violations.

Country in Perspective | Uzbekistan

Final Assessment

11. Oil drilling and natural gas production have made Uzbekistan energy independent.
12. Remittances from migrant workers abroad are a growing part of the economy.
13. Uzbekistan was one of the first Central Asian countries to codify equal rights for men and women.
14. The government of Islam Karimov refused to support coalition forces in Afghanistan.
15. Since taking power in early 2017, the new president of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has been applauded by foreign observers and Uzbeks alike as a champion of democracy.
16. Relationships between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are tense and volatile.
17. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which was based in the Fergana Valley, was driven out of Uzbekistan.
18. During the harvest season every citizen, including children and school teachers, has to participate in the cotton harvest.
19. The government controls the country's key industries.

Country in Perspective | Uzbekistan

Final Assessment

20. Ethnic Russians were the largest minority before Uzbekistan gained independence.
21. Kok boru is a traditional rice dish consumed during family celebrations.
22. Uzbekistan has the strongest and largest military force among the five Central Asian nations.
23. Most Uzbeks are Sunni Muslim.
24. Uzbekistan is ranked among countries with a strong and stable water security situation in Central Asia.
25. Uzbek became the official language of Uzbekistan in 1992.

19.true 20.true 21.False 22.True 23.True 24.False 25.True

8. False; 9. False; 10. True 11. True; 12. False 13. False 14. False 15. False 16.True 17.True 18.False

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False; 6. False; 7. True; 8. False