

Kazakhstan in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



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Map of Kazakhstan



Chapter 1 Profile

Introduction

Historically the home of nomadic peoples, the modern nation of Kazakhstan is a product of the Soviet era, when the region was established as an autonomous Soviet Republic. In the distant past, the area was roamed by successive waves of migrating or invading peoples. Over the centuries, various Turkic and Mongol tribes gave rise to the Kazakhs, a group of nomadic pastoralists who descended from the region's ethnically diverse inhabitants. In the 15th century, the Kazakhs began developing a vast nomadic empire that stretched across the steppes, or arid grasslands, of Central Asia. Their territory, however, was incorporated into the Russian Empire, whose gradual expansion began in the 1600s and culminated in annexation in the 19th century. Russia's colonization and the subsequent incorporation of the region into the Soviet Union brought about the end of the traditional nomadic lifestyle in the steppes. Thereafter, large-scale industrial and agricultural development—corresponding with massive influxes of Russians and other nationalities—transformed the region.



Kazakhstan became an independent nation in December 1991, shortly after the Soviet Union formally dissolved. The country inherited the Soviet Union's deteriorating industrial infrastructure, severe environmental problems, and a command (or state-run) economy in serious decline. Led by Nursultan Nazarbayev, an ethnic Kazakh who has served as the nation's president throughout the entire independent era, Kazakhstan instituted market reforms and gradually developed its immense energy and mineral reserves to become the wealthiest nation in Central Asia. The Nazarbayev government has received criticism for alleged corruption and slow democratic reform. However, despite ethnic tension and regional security threats, the nation has achieved relative stability. In doing so, it has developed solid relations with its neighbors, as well as the U.S., with whom it shares strong economic and security ties.

Facts and Figures¹

Location:

Central Asia, northwest of China; a small portion west of the Ural River in eastern-most Europe

Area:

Total: 2,717,300 sq km (1,049,155 sq mi)

Land: 2,669,800 sq km (1,030,815 sq mi)

Water: 47,500 sq km (18,340 sq mi)

¹ All information in the Facts and Figures section comes directly from the following source: Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>

Border Countries:

China 1,533 km (953 mi), Kyrgyzstan 1,224 km (761 mi), Russia 6,846 (4,254 mi), Turkmenistan 379 km (235 mi), Uzbekistan 2,203 km (1,369 mi)

Climate:

Continental, cold winters and hot summers: arid and semiarid

Terrain:

Flat steppes extend from the Volga to the Altai Mountains and from the plains in Western Siberia to oases and desert in Central Asia



© Scott Koch
Almaty Lake

Elevation Extremes:

Lowest point: Vpadina Kaundy -132 m (-433 ft)

Highest point: Khan Tangiri Shyngy (Pik Khan-Tengri) 6,995 m (22,949 ft)

Natural Hazards:

Earthquakes in the south; mudslides around Almaty

Environment—Current Issues:

Radioactive or toxic chemical sites associated with former defense industries and test ranges are scattered throughout the country, creating health risks for humans and animals; industrial pollution is severe in some cities; because the two main rivers that flowed into the Aral Sea have been diverted for irrigation, it is drying up and leaving behind a harmful layer of chemical pesticides and natural salts; these substances are then picked up by the wind and blown into noxious dust storms; pollution in the Caspian Sea; soil pollution from overuse of agricultural chemicals and salination from poor infrastructure and wasteful irrigation practices

Population:

15,399,437 (July 2009 est.)

Age Structure:

0–14 years: 21.8% (male 1,717,469/female 1,643,920)

15–64 years: 70.2% (male 5,279,292/female 5,534,607)

65 years and over: 7.9% (male 426,494/female 797,655) (2009 est.)

Median Age:

Total: 29.6 years

Male: 28.1 years

Female: 31.3 years (2009 est.)

Population Growth Rate:

0.392% (2009 est.)

Net Migration Rate:

-3.3 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Urbanization:

Urban population: 58% of total population (2008)

Rate of urbanization: 1.2% annual rate of change (2005–2010 est.)

Sex Ratio:

At birth: 1.06 male(s)/female

Under 15 years: 1.04 male(s)/female

15–64 years: 0.95 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.54 male(s)/female

Total population: 0.93 male(s)/female (2009 est.)

Infant Mortality Rate:

Total: 25.73 deaths/1,000 live births

Male: 30.15 deaths/1,000 live births

Female: 21.06 deaths/1,000 live births (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy at Birth:

Total population: 67.87 years

Male: 62.58 years

Female: 73.47 years (2009 est.)

Total Fertility Rate:

1.88 children born/woman (2009 est.)

HIV/AIDS—Adult Prevalence Rate:

0.1% (2007 est.)

Nationality:

Noun: Kazakhstani(s)

Adjective: Kazakhstani

Ethnic Groups:

Kazakh (Qazaq) 53.4%, Russian 30%, Ukrainian 3.7%, Uzbek 2.5%, German 2.4%, Tatar 1.7%, Uygur 1.4%, other 4.9% (1999 census)

Religions:

Muslim 47%, Russian Orthodox 44%, Protestant 2%, other 7%

Languages: Kazakh (Qazaq, state language) 64.4%, Russian (official, used in everyday business, designated the “language of interethnic communication”) 95% (2001 est.)



© Anguskini Bickr.com
Girls in rural Kazakhstan

Literacy:

Definition: age 15 and over can read and write

Total population: 99.5%

Male: 99.8%

Female: 99.3% (1999 est.)

Country Name:

Conventional long form: Republic of Kazakhstan

Conventional short form: Kazakhstan

Local long form: Qazaqstan Respublikasy

Local short form: Qazaqstan

Former: Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic

Government Type:

Republic; authoritarian presidential rule, with little power outside the executive branch

Capital:

Astana

Administrative Divisions:

14 provinces (*oblystar*, singular—*oblys*) and 3 cities * (*qalalar*, singular—*qala*); Almaty Oblysy, Almaty Qalasy*, Aqmola Oblysy (Astana), Aqtobe Oblysy, Astana Qalasy*, Atyrau Oblysy, Batys Qazaqstan Oblysy (Oral), Bayqongyr Qalasy*, Mangghystau Oblysy (Aqtau), Ongtustik Qazaqstan Oblysy (Shymkent), Pavlodar Oblysy, Qaraghandy Oblysy, Qostanay Oblysy, Qyzylorda Oblysy, Shyghys Qazaqstan Oblysy (Oskemen), Soltustik Qazaqstan Oblysy (Petropavlovsk), Zhambyl Oblysy (Taraz)

Note: administrative divisions have the same names as their administrative centers (exceptions have the administrative center name following in parentheses); in 1995, the Governments of Kazakhstan and Russia entered into an agreement whereby Russia would lease for a period of 20 years an area of 6,000 sq km enclosing the Baykonur space launch facilities and the city of Bayqongyr (Baykonur, formerly Leninsk); in 2004, a new agreement extended the lease to 2050

**Independence:**

16 December 1991 (from the Soviet Union)

National Holiday:

Independence Day, 16 December (1991)

Constitution:

First post-independence constitution adopted 28 January 1993; new constitution adopted by national referendum 30 August 1995

Legal System:

Based on Islamic law and Roman law; has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive Branch:

Chief of state: President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev (chairman of the Supreme Soviet from 22 February 1990, elected president 1 December 1991)

Head of government: Prime Minister Karim Masimov (since 10 January 2007); First Deputy Prime Minister Umirzak Shukeyev (since 3 March 2009) and Deputy Prime Ministers Yerbol Orynbayev (since 29 October 2007) and Serik Akhmetov (since 3 March 2009)

Cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president

Elections: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term; election last held 4 December 2005 (next to be held in 2012); prime minister and first deputy prime minister appointed by the president, with *Mazhilis* approval; note—constitutional amendments of May 2007 shortened the presidential term from seven years to five years and established a two-consecutive-term limit; changes will take effect after Nazarbayev's term ends; he, and only he, is allowed to run for president indefinitely.

Election results: Nursultan A. Nazarbayev reelected president; percent of vote—Nursultan A. Nazarbayev 91.1%, Zharmakhan A. Tuyakbai 6.6%, Alikhan M. Baimenov 1.6%



© Ricardo S. Buckner/14
President Nursultan Nazarbayev

Legislative Branch:

Bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (47 seats; 15 members are appointed by the president; other members are elected by local assemblies; members serve six-year terms, but elections are staggered with half of the members up for reelection every three years) and the *Mazhilis* (107 seats; 9 out of the 107 *Mazhilis* members are elected by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, a presidentially appointed advisory body designed to represent the country's ethnic minorities; non-appointed members are popularly elected to serve five-year terms)

Elections: Senate—(indirect) last held October 2008; next to be held in 2011; *Mazhilis*—last held 18 August 2007 (next to be held in 2012)

Election results: Senate—percent of vote by party—N/A; seats by party—Nur Otan 16; *Mazhilis*—percent of vote by party—Nur-Otan 88.1%, NSDP 4.6%, Ak Zhol 3.3%, Auyt 1.6%, Communist People's Party 1.3%, Patriots' Party 8%, Ruhaniyat 4%; seats by party—Nur-Otan 98; note—parties must achieve a threshold of 7% of the electorate to qualify for seats in the *Mazhilis*

Judicial Branch:

Supreme Court (44 members); Constitutional Council (seven members)

Political Parties and Leaders:

Adilet (Justice) [Maksut Narikbayev, Zeynulla Alshimbayev, Serik Abdrahmanov, Bakhytbek Akhmetzhan, Yerkin Ongarbayev, Tolegan Sydykov] (formerly Democratic Party of Kazakhstan); Agrarian and Industrial Union of Workers Block or AIST (Agrarian Party and Civic Party); Ak Zhol Party (Bright Path) [Alikhan Baimenov]; Alga [Vladimir Kozlov] (unregistered); Auyl (Village) [Gani Kaliyev]; Azat Party (formerly True Ak Zhol Party) [Bolot Abilov]; Communist Party of Kazakhstan or KPK [Serikbolsyn Abdildin]; Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan [Vladislav Kosarev]; National Social Democratic Party (NSDP) [Zharmakhan Tuyakbay]; Nur-Otan [Bakhytzhan Zhumagulov] (the Agrarian, Asar, and Civic parties merged with Otan); Patriots' Party [Gani Kasymov]; Rukhaniyat (Spirituality) [Altynshash Zhaganova]

Political Pressure Groups and Leaders:

Adil-Soz [Tamara Kaleyeva]; Almaty Helsinki Group [Ninel Fokina]; Confederation of Free Trade Unions [Sergei Belkin]; For Fair Elections [Yevgeniy Zhovtis, Sabit Zhusupov, Sergey Duvanov, Ibrash Nusupbayev]; Kazakhstan International Bureau on Human Rights [Yevgeniy Zhovtis, executive director]; Pan-National Social Democratic Party of Kazakhstan [Zharmakhan Tuyakbai]; Pensioners Movement or Pokoleniye [Irina Savostina, chairwoman]; Republican Network of International Monitors [Dos Kushim]; Transparency International [Sergei Zlotnikov]

International Organizational Membership:

Asian Development Bank (ADB), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC), Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRM), International Development Association (IDA), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCS), International Labor Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (ITSO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), Nonaligned Movement (NAM) (observer), Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), Organization of American States (OAS)



(observer), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Partnership for Peace (PFP), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), United Nations (UN), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Confederation of Labor (WCL), World Customs Organization (WCO), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), World Trade Organization (WTO) (observer)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate):

\$141.2 billion (2008 est.)

GDP—Real Growth Rate:

3% (2008 est.)

8.5% (2007 est.)

10.6% (2006 est.)

GDP—Per Capita (Purchasing Power Parity):

\$11,500 (2008 est.)

\$11,200 (2007 est.)

\$10,400 (2006 est.)

Note: data are in 2008 U.S. dollars

GDP—Composition by Sector:

Agriculture: 5.8%

Industry: 39.4%

Services: 54.7% (2008 est.)

Labor Force—by Occupation:

Agriculture: 31.5%

Industry: 18.4%

Services: 50% (2005 est.)

Unemployment Rate: 6.9% (2008 est.)

Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices): 18.6% (2008 est.)

Telephones—Main Lines in Use: 3.237 million (2007)

Telephones—Mobile Cellular: 12.588 million (2007)



Office buildings in Almaty

Telephone System:

General assessment: inherited an outdated telecommunications network from the Soviet era requiring modernization

Domestic: intercity by landline and microwave radio relay; number of fixed-line connections is gradually increasing and fixed-line teledensity is about 20 per 100 persons; mobile-cellular usage is increasing rapidly and subscriptions now exceed 80 per 100 persons

International: country code—7; international traffic with other former Soviet republics and China carried by landline and microwave radio relay, and with other countries by satellite and by the Trans-Asia-Europe (TAE) fiber-optic cable; satellite earth stations—2 Intelsat (2007)



© Michael Irwin
Public telephone booth

Radio Broadcast Stations:

AM 60, FM 18, shortwave 9 (2008)

Television Broadcast Stations:

12 (plus 9 repeaters) (1998)

Internet Hosts:

36,417 (2008)

Internet Users:

1.901 million (2006)

Airports:

95 (2008)

Airports—with Paved Runways:

Total: 64

Over 3,047 m (1.89 mi): 10

2,438 to 3,047 m (1.51 to 1.89 mi): 26

1,524 to 2,437 m (0.95 to 1.51 mi): 16

914 to 1,523 m (0.57 to 0.95 mi): 4

under 914 m (0.57 mi): 8 (2008)

Railways:

Total: 13,700 km (8,513 mi) (2006)

Roadways:

Total: 91,563 km (56,895 mi)

Paved: 83,717 km (52,019 mi)

Unpaved: 7,846 km (4,875 mi) (2006)

Pipelines:

Condensate 658 km (409 mi); gas 11,146 km (6,926 mi); oil 10,376 km (6,447 mi); refined products 1,095 km (680 mi); water 1,465 km (910 mi) (2008)

Waterways:

4,000 km (2,485 mi) (on the Ertis [Irtys] River [80%] and Syr Darya [Syrdariya] River) (2008)

Ports and Terminals:

Aqtau (Shevchenko), Atyrau (Gur'yev), Oskemen (Ust-Kamenogorsk), Pavlodar, Semey (Semipalatinsk)

Military Branches:

Kazakh Armed Forces: Ground Forces, Navy, Air Mobile Forces, Air Defense Forces (2009)

Military Service Age and Obligation:

18 years of age for compulsory military service; conscript service obligation—2 years; minimum age for volunteers—N/A (2004)



DOD Image
Kazakh soldiers

Manpower Available for Military Service:

Males age 16–49: 4,176,731

Females age 16–49: 4,219,636 (2008 est.)

Manpower Fit for Military Service:

Males age 16–49: 2,888,931

Females age 16–49: 3,550,014 (2009 est.)

Manpower Reaching Militarily Significant Age Annually:

Male: 139,262

Female: 133,047 (2009 est.)

Military Expenditures:

0.9% of GDP (Ministry of Defense expenditures) (FY 2002)

Chapter 2 Geography

Introduction

Kazakhstan is a large, geographically diverse country in Central Asia. Although it has an extensive shoreline on the Caspian Sea, it is blocked from ocean access. The country's terrain varies from fertile, grassy steppes in the north to barren desert in the south, and a depression below sea level in the west, to high mountain peaks in the east. In the ancient era, travelers passed through the region via the Silk Road—a network of trade routes that connected the Middle East with East Asia. In the modern era, Kazakhstan was one of several republics of the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R.'s industrial and agricultural development in the region caused severe environmental degradation; the effects are still prominent today. The nation's rich fossil fuel and mineral deposits are its most valuable natural resources; the methods of their extraction, however, have contributed to the country's poor environmental conditions. Kazakhstan's extensive land area and relatively small population (approximately 15.4 million) make it one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world.²



© ktsaeborg/flickr.com
Snow-covered mountain range

Location and Area

Kazakhstan is located in Central Asia, a region comprised of five former Soviet republics. A small portion of the country—the area west of the Ural River (called the Zhayyq River in Kazakhstan) and north of the Caspian Sea—is technically located within Europe's geographic borders. The country shares its entire northern border with Russia, its former sovereign. Measuring 6,846 km (4,254 mi), this jagged boundary is one of the longest international land borders in the world. On its eastern edge, Kazakhstan borders China. To the south, it shares borders with three fellow former Soviet republics: Kyrgyzstan (in the southeast), Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan (in the far southwest). Kazakhstan's western border traces the shore of the Caspian Sea until it meets the nation's boundary with Russia in the northwest. Overall, the country comprises 2,717,300 sq km (1,049,155 sq mi) of territory, making it the ninth largest nation in the world. By comparison, it is roughly four times the size of Texas.³

Geographical Regions and Features

Kazakhstan can be divided into four general regions based on relief and land cover: the northern steppes, the western and southern deserts and semi-deserts, the Caspian Depression, and the mountains of the east and southeast.

² Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>

³ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 14 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>

Northern Steppes

Northern Kazakhstan consists primarily of steppe, or vast, mostly treeless grasslands—in many respects, this region resembles the Great Plains of the American Midwest. The terrain is generally flat or undulating, with some hilly areas; lowlands mark the far north. The region's highpoints lie in the Kazakh Uplands, a large sub-region of hills and low mountains in east-central Kazakhstan. This elevated terrain spreads throughout the northern steppes toward the southern deserts and eastern mountains; its highest point reaches more than 1,500 m (5,000 ft) in the area southeast of Qaraghandy. Broadly, the steppes form a transitional zone between forests and desert. In the far north, patches of forests and woodlands remain, while in the central region, the grassy steppes grow increasingly dry as they merge with the shrubby semi-deserts of south-central Kazakhstan.

The steppes are the agricultural center of Kazakhstan and the traditional home of the Kazakh people, who in the past roamed them as nomadic pastoralists.⁴ More recently, Russian and Soviet expansion brought a significant population of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians to the north.⁵ Local crops consist largely of grains, such as wheat, although some regions grow cotton.⁶ Much of the area is prone to desertification due to loss of natural soils, largely as a result of Soviet agricultural schemes. Strong winds are common.

Semi-Deserts and Deserts

Spanning central and southern Kazakhstan, from the far west to the southeastern mountains, semi-desert and desert terrain covers over two thirds of the nation's territory.⁷ From north to south, the region's ground cover transitions from grasslands to shrublands, with substantial areas of barren desert and smaller regions of irrigated cropland or pasture around water sources.⁸ The region generally consists of flat lowlands, although higher elevations occur in the west (where the Ural Range extends from Russia into Kazakhstan), the central region (where the Ulutau Range runs from the steppes toward the desert), the east (where the Kazakh Uplands spread southward), and the far southwest (where the Ustyurt Desert Plateau is located).



The area comprises several distinct deserts. In the southwest, the Greater Barsuki Desert lies to the north of the Aral Sea. The Kyzylkum Desert lies to the southeast of the Aral and extends into Uzbekistan. The dried-out seabed of the Aral itself is known as the Aral Karakum Desert. In the south-central region, the large Betpaqдала Desert lies in the huge

⁴ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 2: The Land and the Skies: The Steppe [pp. 28–30]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: The Land: Settlement Patterns." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

⁶ *Kazakhstan. The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia*. Corrigan, Jim. "Chapter 2: The Land: Geographical Features [pp. 28–32]." 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "FAO Country Profiles: Kazakhstan: Geographic Description." 3 September 2007. <http://www.fao.org/forestry/18310/en/kaz/>

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "FAO Country Profiles: Kazakhstan: Maps: Land Cover." 2009. <http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/Maps/KAZ/09/lc/index.html>

expanse between the Aral Sea and Lake Balkhash. Finally, the Muyunkum Desert lies to the south of the Betpaqdala, on the other side of the Chu River.⁹ While the semi-desert and desert region provides few opportunities for agriculture, it is the site of immense natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and mineral deposits.

The Caspian Depression

Mostly below sea level, the Caspian Depression is a lowland area surrounding the northern half of the Caspian Sea. Within Kazakhstan the depression extends from the Russian border, around the northeastern side of the sea, to the Tupqaraghan Peninsula on the sea's eastern edge. The terrain is similar to that of the semi-deserts and deserts of the surrounding region, although salt pans and domes are common and marshes and swamps can be found along the shoreline. While the depression reaches a maximum of 28 m (92ft) below sea level,¹⁰ Kazakhstan's lowest point actually lies further south on the peninsula, in the Karagiye Depression at Vpadina Kaundy. Here the elevation drops to -132 m (-433 ft).¹¹ Prone to flooding, the depression is considered ecologically unique due to its biodiversity. However, because the area and the adjacent seafloor of the Caspian hold huge reserves of oil and natural gas, it has suffered industrial pollution.

Mountains of the East and Southeast

On the other side of the country, in the east and the southeast, Kazakhstan is rimmed by high mountain ranges. In the far northeast, the Altai Mountains extend across the country's borderlands with Russia and China. The range's high point of 4,506 m (14,783 ft) is located along the border with Russia. Farther south, along the eastern border with China, two smaller ranges extend into Kazakhstan: the Tarbagatay and the Alatau Ranges, the latter of which is a northern extension of the Tien Shan Range to the south.¹² The impressive Tien Shan Range, which runs through Kyrgyzstan and northwestern China, rings Kazakhstan on its southeastern edge. Kazakhstan's highest point, Khan Tengri, is located in this range; it reaches 6,995 m (22,958 ft) along the border with Kyrgyzstan. To the west, two other ranges extend into southern Kazakhstan: the Chu-Ili Mountains (to the west of Almaty) and the Karatau Range, which extends northwestward between the Chu and Syr Darya Rivers.¹³

⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: The Land: Relief." 2009.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁰ Encyclopedia of Earth. World Wildlife Fund. McGinley, Mark. "Caspian Lowland Desert." 23 August 2008. https://eearth.com/article/Caspian_lowland_desert

¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 14 May 2009.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>

¹² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: The Land: Relief." 2009.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹³ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 2: The Land and the Skies: Mountains [pp. 30–33]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

Climate

Kazakhstan's climate is continental, meaning that it is determined by the surrounding land masses rather than air currents coming in off the oceans, which are too far away to be influential.¹⁴ As a result, the country is generally semi-arid to arid with hot summers and cold winters.

Temperatures vary according to region but generally grow warmer as one moves from the northern steppes (near Western Siberia) to the southern deserts. For

example, in northern and central Kazakhstan, average temperatures in January—typically the coldest month—range between -19° and -16°C (-2° and 3°F). In the south, a temperature range of -5° to -1.4°C (23° to 29°F) is average for that time. Likewise, average July temperatures in the north (20°C , or 68°F) are markedly cooler than those in the south (29°C , or 84°F). The region is also prone to extremes as temperatures may drop to -45°C (-49°F) in the winter and reach 45°C (113°F) in the summer.¹⁵



Because it is landlocked from moist oceanic air currents, most of Kazakhstan receives little rainfall. Average annual precipitation is 35 cm (14 in) in the northern steppes but only 10 cm (4 in) or less in the southern deserts. The eastern mountains, however, may receive up to 150 cm (59 in),¹⁶ although a range of 41–51 cm (16–20 in) is more common for the surrounding valleys. Overall, because of the relatively dry air, sunshine and blue skies are frequent.¹⁷

Rivers

Kazakhstan has approximately 7,000 streams, most of which are small waterways within the drainage networks of the nation's large inland seas and lakes.¹⁸ Many streams are dependent on seasonal rains or snowmelt; those that do not empty into bodies of water often dry up as they flow into the steppes or deserts.¹⁹ In the northern regions, waterways often freeze during the winter. The country has several major rivers that measure more than 1,000 km (621 mi) in length; some measure more than twice that distance.²⁰ Most of the major rivers have their headwaters in neighboring countries.

¹⁴ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Geography: Climate [p. 12]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

¹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: The Land: Climate." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "FAO Country Profiles: Kazakhstan: Geographic Description." 3 September 2007. <http://www.fao.org/forestry/18310/en/kaz/>

¹⁷ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Geography: Climate [p. 12]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

¹⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: The Land: Drainage." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Physical Environment: Topography and Drainage." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0020\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0020))

²⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

The Irtysh River, known as the Ertis in Kazakhstan, is one of Asia's longest rivers. Originating in the Altai Mountains of northwestern China, it enters Kazakhstan in the northeast, where it flows through Lake Zaysan and then northwestward toward the Russian border. It later joins Russia's Ob River system, which empties into the Arctic Ocean. Within Kazakhstan, the river is used for hydroelectric power at the cities of Öskemen and Buqtyrma. The river is navigable for most of its length; Kazakhstan maintains ports at Öskemen, Semey, and Pavlodar.²¹ Originating in north-central Kazakhstan, the Ishim and Tobol rivers also flow northward, where they feed into the Irtysh and, later, the Arctic. The Ishim, known as the Esil in Kazakhstan, is a predominantly snow-fed river that flows from the Kazakh Uplands through the capital, Astana, to the northern steppes, where it provides water to farms.²² Located to the west of the Ishim, the Tobol is typically frozen during the winter and brimming with snowmelt in the spring. It is an important source of water for the local iron-ore industry.²³

In the west, the Ural River, which is known in Kazakhstan as the Zhayyq, forms the traditional geographical border between Europe and Asia. Originating in the Ural Mountains of Russia, the river enters the far northwest of Kazakhstan and flows southward, ultimately emptying into the Caspian Sea.²⁴ The Emba (Embi) River also flows into the Caspian. It originates in west-central Kazakhstan, in the Mugodzhar Hills, which form the southernmost extension of the Ural Range.

In the south, the three major rivers are the Syr Darya, the Chu, and the Ili. The longest river wholly within Central Asia, the Syr Darya has its headwaters in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. After entering southern Kazakhstan, it flows generally northwestward, ultimately into the Aral Sea. In Kazakhstan, the river is dammed at Qyzylorda and Qazaly, and there is a hydroelectric power plant at Shardara. The heavy draw of irrigation water from the river, mostly in Uzbekistan, has contributed to the dramatic shrinkage of the Aral Sea. The river is also laden with pollution, mostly of agricultural chemicals.²⁵ The Chu (Shū) River originates in the Tien Shan Mountains of Kyrgyzstan and flows generally northwestward toward south-central Kazakhstan, where it disappears into the desert. It is an important regional source of irrigation water.²⁶ Finally, the Ili River also has its



²¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Irtysh River." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/294847/Irtysh-River>

²² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Ishim River." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295316/Ishim-River>

²³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tobol River." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/597802/Tobol-River>

²⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Ural River." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/619046/Ural-River>

²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Syr Darya." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/578814/Syr-Darya>

²⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Chu River." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/116625/Chu-River>

headwaters in the Tien Shan. It flows from China into southeastern Kazakhstan, where it ultimately empties into the massive Lake Balkhash.²⁷

Bodies of Water

Kazakhstan has approximately 48,000 lakes, most of which are small. In the north and at higher elevations, the country's lakes typically receive freshwater runoff from melting snow. In the southern deserts, however, they are often salty.²⁸ Many of the nation's large, economically important bodies of water face serious environmental threats.

Caspian Sea

Kazakhstan's western border is largely formed by the shoreline of the Caspian Sea, the largest inland body of water in the world. Covering some 386,400 sq km (149,200 sq mi), the Caspian is larger than the state of Montana. The sea lies within the Caspian Depression; its surface is roughly 27 m (90 ft) below sea level and it reaches a maximum depth of 1,025 m (3,360 ft).²⁹



Kazakhstan shares the sea and its rich resources with the four other countries bordering its shores: Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan. Since these surrounding nations derive significant economic benefit from this common natural border, the Caspian Sea serves alternately as a source of political conflict and cooperation.

The Caspian Sea is renowned as the world's primary source of caviar.³⁰ The beluga sturgeon has been depleted as it is fished year-round; the fish have to be killed in order to harvest the caviar roe. Simultaneously, increased exploitation of fossil fuel deposits has occurred prominently in Kazakhstan's Kashagan field in the sea's northeastern region. While fueling the Kazakhstani economy, this activity has contributed to local pollution levels, which are high, as well as the depletion of fish stocks.³¹ The Caspian Sea has unexpectedly risen over the last three decades; in recent years alone the water level has increased over 2.5 m (8 ft) and it is projected to rise even further.³² The rising sea level

²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Ili River." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/282775/Ili-River>

²⁸ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Geography: Disappearing Lakes [p. 11]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

²⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Caspian Sea: Introduction." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/98044/Caspian-Sea>

³⁰ Pew Institute for Ocean Science. "Quotas Allow More Caviar Export, Further Jeopardize Endangered Sturgeon, Group Says." *Science Daily* 4 June 2008. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080530095456.htm>

³¹ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley, Paul Clammer, and Michael Kohn. "Environment: Environmental Issues: The Aral Sea [pp. 68–69]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

³² UNESCO. *Kazakhstan: Caspian Sea Coast, Eastern Priaralye*. "Chapter 9: Estimation of the Influence of Level [of] the Caspian Sea Rise..." The Institute of Hydrogeology and Hydrophysics of the Ministry of Education and Science. No date. http://water.unesco.kz/ca_ch_8_e.htm

threatens Kazakhstan's coastal settlements with flooding and land loss, in part due to highly erosive tidal waves that destroy the coast.³³

Aral Sea

Once the world's fourth-largest inland body of water covering some 68,000 sq km (26,300 sq mi), the Aral Sea has shrunk dramatically over the last several decades. The primary cause of the sea's reduction has been the long-term diversion of water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, the sea's primary sources. Large-scale diversion began in the 1960s, when Soviet planners initiated massive irrigation-fed agricultural schemes in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. By the 1980s, irrigation levels had increased to the extent that the two once powerful rivers nearly disappeared before reaching the sea, leaving the Aral with less than 10% of its former annual water supply.³⁴ Shrinking quickly, the sea subsequently divided into two sections, a southern "Greater Sea" and a northern "Lesser Sea," which together comprised less than half of the Aral's former volume.

While the Soviet-created network of irrigated cotton plantations remains one of Kazakhstan's biggest cash crops, it comes at high cost. The Aral Sea's shrinkage proved disastrous to the local environment, economy, and population. As the moderately saline sea lost most of its freshwater input from the rivers, it became increasingly salty. The higher salt and mineral concentration made the water undrinkable and eradicated the native fish



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Aral Sea shore

population. This, in turn, decimated the local fishing industry, which had already suffered as the sea's reduction had separated its ports from the actual shoreline, leaving many boats stranded.³⁵ Much of the population was forced to relocate.

The receding waters also left behind a barren, salty wasteland containing chemical residues from fertilizers and pesticides. These exposed toxic deposits have since been carried in the wind and ingested by the remaining regional inhabitants, who have subsequently suffered severe health problems. The local climate has also changed due to the loss of the moderating influence of the sea. Finally, the sea's further reduction connected the mainland with a highly contaminated former island that was the site of Soviet biological weapons testing during the Cold War.³⁶

³³ United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Kazakhstan. *Water Resources of Kazakhstan in the New Millennium*. "Chapter 2: Kazakhstan's Contemporary Water Problems [pp. 35–36]." April 2004. http://www.undp.kz/library_of_publications/files/2496-13297.pdf

³⁴ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley, Paul Clammer, and Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: Environment: The Caspian Sea [pp. 92–93]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

³⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Aral Sea." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31983/Aral-Sea>

³⁶ The Washington Post. Finn, Peter. "Aral Sea's Return Revives Withered Villages." 10 July 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/09/AR2007070902072.html>

After years of mostly failed attempts to address the sea's ongoing reduction, Kazakhstan and the World Bank recently cooperated on a rescue program for what is now known as the North Aral Sea. Initiated in 2001, the project involved the construction of a large dam on the southern side of the North Sea. Completed in 2005, the dam accumulates the sea's waters (which are received from the Syr Darya) and separates them from the South Aral Sea, which is said to be saltier and more heavily polluted. Corresponding with such efforts, the sea has been restocked with fish and a small fishing industry has reemerged. As of 2008, the North Aral Sea was reported to have a surface area of 3,300 sq km (1,275 sq mi) and a depth of 42 m (138 ft)—both substantial increases from measurements taken in 2003.³⁷ In the meantime, the southern sea—now split into two sections—continues to shrink.

The Uzbek government has stated a desire to conduct oil exploration in its remaining wasteland within Uzbek territory.³⁸ Additionally, with the South Sea seemingly beyond reclamation as a viable water source, authorities in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have initiated a plan to transform the outlying areas of the desiccated seabed. Workers have already planted 27,000 hectares (104 sq mi) of the former bottom with drought resistant shrubs and trees.³⁹ Scientists believe that creating forests is the next best thing for the barren area. In the region, blowing salt and dust cause respiratory diseases, intestinal disorders and high rates of cancer, birth defects, and infant mortality.⁴⁰ Breaks of trees and shrubs will help reduce risks to the population and ease erosion by decreasing surface wind velocity by an estimated 60% to 70%. The project is slated to continue over the next decade until up to half of the estimated 600,000 hectares (2,317 sq mi) of dried seabed are planted. The hope is that blown seed will help transform the remaining surface.⁴¹

Lake Balkhash

Located in eastern Kazakhstan, Lake Balkhash faces a threat similar to that of the Aral Sea, although the situation is currently less severe. Measuring approximately 600 km (373 mi) in length, the lake contains freshwater in its shallow western region and saltwater in its deeper, eastern region; the two areas are separated by the Sarymsek Peninsula, leaving only a narrow strait to connect them. The lake receives most of its freshwater input from two rivers: the Ili and the Karatal. Over the last several decades, various development projects have diverted the flow of the Ili. Within Kazakhstan, the construction of a hydroelectric power station and reservoir at Qapshagay significantly



³⁷ Environment News Service. "The Kazakh Miracle: Recovery of the North Aral Sea." 1 August 2008. <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/aug2008/2008-08-01-01.asp>

³⁸ The Washington Post. Finn, Peter. "Aral Sea's Return Revives Withered Villages." 10 July 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/09/AR2007070902072.html>

³⁹ AsiaWaterWire. "Forests Rising on Bottom of the Shrunken Aral Sea." Kozlova, Marina. 29 August 2006. <http://www.asiawaterwire.net/node/382>

⁴⁰ *Kazakhstan* (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia). Corrigan, Jim. "Chapter 2: The Land: Environmental Issues [pp. 28–32]." 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

⁴¹ AsiaWaterWire. "Forests Rising on Bottom of the Shrunken Aral Sea." Kozlova, Marina. 29 August 2006. <http://www.asiawaterwire.net/node/382>

reduced the river's downstream output.⁴² More recently, agricultural schemes in the nearby Xinxiang Province of China have utilized a large percentage of the river's headwaters.⁴³ The Karatal has also been heavily tapped for irrigation water. Combined with evaporation, the diversion of the lake's input has reduced its water levels and increased its salinity. Pollution from agricultural runoff and a local copper smelter have also threatened the lake's sustainability.⁴⁴

Other Major Lakes

Additional significant bodies of water include Lake Tengiz, Lake Zaysan, and Lake Alakol. Lake Tengiz is a large saline lake located in the Kazakh Uplands, to the southwest of Astana. Lake Zaysan is a freshwater body situated in the northeast. It is fed by the Irtysh (Ertis) River and is the site of a local fishing industry. Located to the east of Lake Balkhash, Lake Alakol is another large saline lake.

Major Cities

Kazakhstan's urban areas are largely a product of Russian and Soviet development. As Russians established various settlements in the area from the 17th to 19th centuries, most of the native population lived as nomads or in small agricultural communities. The Soviet Union's subsequent industrialization of the region, however, compelled large numbers of migrants to relocate to industrial city centers.⁴⁵ Today, approximately 58% of the population resides in urban areas.⁴⁶

Almaty (Alma-Ata)

Almaty is located in southeastern Kazakhstan, in the foothills of the northern Tien Shan Mountains. It lies at an elevation of 700–900 m (2,300–3,000 ft), and two rivers—the Bolshaya and the Malaya Almatinka—flow through the area. Russians founded the city as a military outpost in 1854; the previous settlement was razed by Mongols six hundred years earlier. Almaty grew substantially in the 20th century as railway links and Soviet industrial development brought large numbers of migrants to the area. During this time, the city served as the capital of the Kazakh Republic of the U.S.S.R. It was then known in Russian as “Alma-Ata,” or “father of apples”—a reference to its native apple orchards. Its name was changed to the Kazakh “Almaty” after the republic gained its



⁴² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Lake Balkhash.” 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/50390/Lake-Balkhash>

⁴³ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 2: The Land and the Skies: Lakes and Inland Seas [p. 35].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

⁴⁴ IRIN, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “Kazakhstan: Efforts Underway to Save Lake Balkhash.” 3 May 2007. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=71924>

⁴⁵ *Kazakhstan (Cultures of the World)*. Pang, Guek-Cheng. “Geography: Major Cities and Towns [p. 15].” 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. “Kazakhstan.” 14 May 2009.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>

independence in 1991. Thereafter, it served as the country's capital until 1997, when the administrative seat was officially transferred to Astana.⁴⁷

Almaty's current population of 1.25 million makes it the country's largest city.⁴⁸ Today, it is the industrial and financial center of the nation, and it is home to numerous universities, research institutes, and other cultural institutions. It is a wealthy and generally picturesque city; its wide Soviet-era streets are laid out on a grid and lined with trees. Almaty is also known for its cosmopolitan character, as the local population is quite diverse. Although dominated by Russians and Ukrainians, the city is also home to Uzbeks, Chinese (i.e., Uyghurs), Tatars, Germans, and other nationalities.⁴⁹

Astana

Formerly known as Akmola, Astana is situated alongside the Ishim River in north-central Kazakhstan, amid the northern steppes. With approximately 550,000 residents, it is the second most populous city in the country.⁵⁰ Established as a Russian military base in 1824, the city later served as the center for the Soviet Union's "Virgin Lands" project, an agricultural scheme launched by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s. During this time, it was known as Tselinograd.



© Wendy Skar.com
The Bayterek in Astana

In 1994, it was selected, with some controversy, by Kazakhstani leader Nursultan Nazarbayev as the site for the nation's new capital. The government subsequently invested billions of dollars in the city, which at that time was a provincial railroad town. (The Trans-Kazakhstan and South Siberian railways meet at Astana.) The city officially became the nation's capital in 1997, and in 1998, it was renamed Astana, meaning "capital."⁵¹ Today, Astana is home to large numbers of government employees, as well as railroad and industrial workers. The city's development, including the construction of modern architectural sights, is ongoing.⁵²

Shymkent (Chimkent)

Shymkent is situated on ancient trade routes in the foothills of south-central Kazakhstan, just north of Uzbekistan. As the capital of the heavily populated South Kazakhstan oblast, or administrative division, it is home to approximately 526,000 people.⁵³ In the 19th

⁴⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Almaty." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/16771/Almaty>

⁴⁸ CityPopulation.de. UN Demographic Yearbook 2006. Brinkhoff, Thomas. "Kazakhstan: Principal Cities." 22 February 2009. <http://www.citypopulation.de/Kazakhstan.html>

⁴⁹ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: Almaty [pp. 93–94]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁵⁰ CityPopulation.de. UN Demographic Yearbook 2006. Brinkhoff, Thomas. "Kazakhstan: Principal Cities." 22 February 2009. <http://www.citypopulation.de/Kazakhstan.html>

⁵¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Astana." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/39656/Astana>

⁵² *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: North Kazakhstan: Astana [pp. 135–136]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁵³ CityPopulation.de. UN Demographic Yearbook 2006. Brinkhoff, Thomas. "Kazakhstan: Principal Cities." 22 February 2009. <http://www.citypopulation.de/Kazakhstan.html>

century, the city was briefly a part of the Central Asian state known as the Khanate of Kokand (Khoqand), but it was soon overtaken by the Russians (in 1864). Shymkent grew rapidly during the Soviet era, when industry took root in the city. Today, it remains a major industrial hub, particularly for lead, cement, petroleum, chemicals, and food processing. It is also an important cultural center for the region and a transit point on the Turkistan-Siberia railway.⁵⁴

Qaraghandy (Karaganda)

Qaraghandy is located in the Kazakh Uplands, to the southeast of Astana. Initially settled in 1856, the city is known primarily as a center for coal mining, as the surrounding region is rich in the natural resource.⁵⁵ In the 1930s and 1940s, the area was the site of numerous Soviet prison camps, or gulags, where inmates were forced to labor in the coal mines. In 1954, inmates at the local Kengir prison staged a now-famous uprising in which they wrested control of the camp; 700 of them were killed, however, when Soviet forces suppressed the rebellion with tanks.⁵⁶ Today, coal, steel, and iron are major products of local industry. Until recent cleanup efforts, the region long suffered severe pollution from industrial activity. It is also known for its high rate of HIV/AIDS.⁵⁷ The population has shrunk in recent years to approximately 446,000.⁵⁸

Taraz (Zhambyl)

Taraz, previously known as Zhambyl or Auliye-Ata, is situated on the Talas River in southern Kazakhstan, near the Kyrgyzstan border. It is one of the oldest cities in the country, with settlements dating back to the beginning of the 1st century C.E.⁵⁹ Like Shymkent to its southwest, Taraz was an ancient trading post on the Silk Road. Razed by Mongols in the 13th century, the city was later rebuilt and incorporated into the Khanate of Kokand, a state in Central Asia that existed from 1709–1876. The Russians claimed the town in 1864, and the Soviets later developed it as a site of industry.⁶⁰ The city's industrial output declined after Kazakhstan gained its independence—a development that helped to improve local environmental conditions. Today, in addition to fertilizers, the

⁵⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Chimkent." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/111610/Chimkent>

⁵⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Karaganda." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/311969/Karaganda>

⁵⁶ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: North Kazakhstan: Karaganda [p. 142]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁵⁷ *Kazakhstan (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia)*. Corrigan, Jim. "Chapter 6: Cities and Communities: Northern Kazakhstan [pp. 93–94]." 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

⁵⁸ CityPopulation.de. UN Demographic Yearbook 2006. Brinkhoff, Thomas. "Kazakhstan: Principal Cities." 22 February 2009. <http://www.citypopulation.de/Kazakhstan.html>

⁵⁹ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 3: Habitat and Ways of Living: Oblasts: Jambyl Oblast [p. 71]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

⁶⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Auliye-Ata." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/43187/Auliye-Ata>

city is known for producing a popular brand of vodka.⁶¹ It is home to approximately 336,000 people.⁶²

Atyrau

Located in northwestern Kazakhstan, in the Caspian Depression, Atyrau is situated on the Ural River, just north of the Caspian Sea. With districts on both sides of the river, the city effectively straddles the European and Asian continents. Mikhail Guryev, a Russian trader, established the settlement in the 17th century as a fishing and trading post.⁶³ The village, then known as Guryev, subsequently grew as residents exploited the Caspian Sea's sturgeon stocks for caviar.⁶⁴ Today, Atyrau is an important port city and a transshipment center for the regional oil industry. As oil extraction in the Caspian Sea and surrounding deserts has boomed, the city has experienced renewed growth and development.⁶⁵ Situated below sea level, Atyrau has become increasingly vulnerable to flooding as the sea has risen in recent years. Its population is approximately 175,000.⁶⁶

Environmental Issues

Nuclear Radiation

As exemplified in the case of the Aral Sea, which has been described as “one of the 20th century's worst ecological disasters,” Kazakhstan suffers severe environmental damage as a legacy of the Soviet era.⁶⁷ For Kazakhstan, the most notorious case concerns Soviet nuclear testing at a site formerly known as Semipalatinsk Polygon (now known as Semey Polygon), which is located outside the northeastern city of Semey. Between 1949 and 1989, the Soviet military detonated nearly 500 nuclear bombs at the Polygon site; more than 100 of the explosions took place above ground.⁶⁸ In most cases, the local population was neither warned nor evacuated before the explosions occurred. Rather, the civilian residents, as well as many of the Soviet Union's own locally-deployed troops, effectively served as test subjects for human exposure to radiation.⁶⁹

⁶¹ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. “Kazakhstan: South Kazakhstan: Taraz [pp. 120–121].” 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁶² CityPopulation.de. UN Demographic Yearbook 2006. Brinkhoff, Thomas. “Kazakhstan: Principal Cities.” 22 February 2009. <http://www.citypopulation.de/Kazakhstan.html>

⁶³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Atyrau.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/42375/Atyrau>

⁶⁴ *Kazakhstan* (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia). Corrigan, Jim. “Chapter 6: Cities and Communities: Western Kazakhstan [pp. 98–99].” 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

⁶⁵ BBC News, International Version. “In Pictures: Kazakh City of Atyrau.” 21 July 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/5191944.stm

⁶⁶ CityPopulation.de. UN Demographic Yearbook 2006. Brinkhoff, Thomas. “Kazakhstan: Principal Cities.” 22 February 2009. <http://www.citypopulation.de/Kazakhstan.html>

⁶⁷ The Washington Post. Finn, Peter. “Aral Sea's Return Revives Withered Villages.” 10 July 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/09/AR2007070902072.html>

⁶⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Physical Environment: Environmental Problems.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0022\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0022))

⁶⁹ National Review Online. Elegant, Robert. “Fallout: In Kazakhstan, the Human Wreckage of Soviet Nuclear Tests.” 16 September 2002. <http://www.nationalreview.com/16sept02/elegant091602.asp>

The local population soon demonstrated high rates of illness, including various forms of cancer, birth defects, and infertility. However, the U.S.S.R. continued to use the testing grounds until 1989, when the Nevada-Semey Movement—a Kazakhstani-based anti-nuclear-testing campaign—compelled the weakening Soviet Union to close the site.⁷⁰ The highly radioactive testing ground—comprising some 18,500 sq km (7,143 sq mi) or roughly the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined—has since been described as the “most heavily contaminated place on earth.”⁷¹ Moreover, the fallout from the testing extended to surrounding regions. Today, local soils and water resources remain polluted, and the regional population continues to suffer adverse health effects.⁷²

The Soviet military also conducted nuclear testing in other regions of Kazakhstan, as well as biological weapons testing at sites such as the former Vozrozhdeniye Island in the Aral Sea. At that site, living anthrax spores were found as recently as 1999, although the area has since been cleaned up with U.S. assistance.⁷³ Accordingly, one expert reported that “no territory in the world has suffered from radioactive, chemical, and bacteriological weapons as much as Kazakhstan.”⁷⁴

Pollution

Soviet-era industrial and agricultural practices resulted in widespread pollution in Kazakhstan. As industrial emissions were often unregulated or improperly stored, waste from the country’s many factories, plants, and mines—including those handling radioactive materials—frequently drained or leaked into the surrounding environment. For example, a metallurgical plant in the town of Temirtau dumped highly toxic mercury waste into the local Nura River for over 25 years.⁷⁵ Such practices were common. As of 2008, the country possessed some 20 billion tons of industrial waste—much of it stored in insecure landfills.⁷⁶ Likewise, the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides (including DDT) in Soviet agricultural



⁷⁰ *Kazakhstan* (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia). Corrigan, Jim. “Chapter 2: The Land: Environmental Issues [pp. 26–28].” 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

⁷¹ National Review Online. Elegant, Robert. “Fallout: In Kazakhstan, the Human Wreckage of Soviet Nuclear Tests.” 16 September 2002. <http://www.nationalreview.com/16sept02/elegant091602.asp>

⁷² The National. “Kazakhs Cursed by Fallout from Nuclear Weapons Test.” 21 December 2008. <http://www.thenational.ae/article/20081221/FOREIGN/227321060/1135/OPINION>

⁷³ The Washington Post. Finn, Peter. “Aral Sea’s Return Revives Withered Villages.” 10 July 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/09/AR2007070902072.html>

⁷⁴ National Review Online. Elegant, Robert. “Fallout: In Kazakhstan, the Human Wreckage of Soviet Nuclear Tests.” 16 September 2002. <http://www.nationalreview.com/16sept02/elegant091602.asp>

⁷⁵ IRIN, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “Kazakhstan: Environmentalists Call for Caution in Mercury Cleanup in the North.” 25 July 2007. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=73406>

⁷⁶ United Nations Development Program. *National Human Development Report 2008: Climate Change and Its Impact on Kazakhstan’s Human Development*. “Chapter 2: Climate Change: Risks and Mitigation: 2.2.1.2.: Impact on Territorial Development [p. 54].” 2008. http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/europethecis/kazakhstan/Kazakhstan_nhdr_2008.pdf

schemes contaminated the nation's soils and water supplies. Today, the majority of the country's water resources remain polluted.⁷⁷ Furthermore, outdated factories and rising vehicle emissions—often from poorly maintained cars—have contributed to high levels of air pollution in Kazakhstani cities.⁷⁸

Among the country's many environmental hot spots is the Caspian Sea, which is polluted with oil and industrial sewage as a result of intensive hydrocarbon exploration and extraction efforts. The sea also receives the heavily polluted waters of Russia's Volga River. The Aral Sea and its desiccated sea bed also remain severely polluted with residue from pesticides and chemicals. Of the country's rivers, the Syr Darya is the most contaminated; recent reports suggest that it is so polluted with cancer-causing toxins that it should not be used even for irrigation purposes.⁷⁹ The Baikonur Cosmodrome, a Russian-leased and operated launch site in the desert of southern Kazakhstan, is another highly contaminated area due to the dispersal of extremely toxic rocket fuel in the region.⁸⁰

Desertification

Kazakhstan's severe desertification problem is another legacy of the Soviet era. Under the Soviet "Virgin Lands" campaign of the 1950s and 1960s, huge tracts of Kazakhstan's arid steppes—which were historically too dry for cultivation—were plowed under to be replaced by wheat and other crops. However, the loss of the natural vegetation left the top soil exposed to wind and other erosive forces. Over the next four decades, the country lost some 1.2 billion tons of its rich soil. In the meantime, as the soil blew away, increasing amounts of fertilizer were required to cultivate the land.⁸¹ The combination of erosion and over-fertilization left degraded farmland which, combined with drought and overgrazing, led to widespread desertification. Today, more than 60% of the country is subject to "severe" desertification, which in turn leaves less land for grazing and agricultural production.⁸²



© Mental Kibernetika
Dry Aral Sea

⁷⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

⁷⁸ *Kazakhstan* (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia). Corrigan, Jim. "Chapter 2: The Land: Environmental Issues [p. 33]." 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

⁷⁹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Pannier, Bruce. "River Water in Kazakhstan Too Dirty for Even Irrigation." 27 April 2009. http://www.rferl.org/content/Water_In_Kazakhstan_Too_Filthy_To_Even_Use_For_Agriculture/1616923.html

⁸⁰ Environmental Data Interactive Exchange. Bond, Sam. "Pollution 'Off the Scale' at Russian Rocket Crash Site." 8 August 2006. http://www.edie.net/news/news_story.asp?id=11828&channel=0

⁸¹ *Kazakhstan* (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia). Corrigan, Jim. "Chapter 2: The Land: Environmental Issues [p. 32]." 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

⁸² United Nations Development Program. *National Human Development Report 2008: Climate Change and Its Impact on Kazakhstan's Human Development*. "Chapter 2: Climate Change: Risks and Mitigation: 2.2.1.2.: Impact on Territorial Development [p. 53]." 2008. http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/europethecis/kazakhstan/Kazakhstan_nhdr_2008.pdf

Natural Hazards

Common throughout greater Central Asia, earthquakes pose a significant threat in Kazakhstan. The mountainous region of the southeast is the area most prone to seismic activity. Located within this region, Almaty suffered devastating earthquakes in 1887 and 1911. More recently, an earthquake measuring at least 6.5 on the Richter scale struck nearby Zhambyl Province in May 2003. Fatalities were minimal due to the region's low population density, but tens of thousands of residents were nonetheless affected.⁸³

Experts believe that Almaty is due for another strong earthquake. In 2004, one scientist claimed that a major quake—or series of quakes—was likely to occur within the following 10–15 years.⁸⁴ The U.S. State Department has designated Almaty's earthquake threat level at the highest level possible (Level 4). The threat is thought to be particularly dangerous in this region because of the local construction methods, which are considered sub-standard in terms of earthquake resistance. It is estimated that up to one third of the city's residential buildings would not withstand a strong earthquake.⁸⁵ Although the government has worked with international organizations to develop disaster preparedness programs, it reportedly lacks the emergency response resources needed to address a large-scale disaster.⁸⁶

Almaty and the surrounding mountains are also vulnerable to mudslides, which typically result from heavy rains but may also be caused by seismic activity or flooding from glacial lakes. In 1921, Almaty (then known as Verny) was devastated by a large rain-fed mudflow on the local Malaya Almatinka River.⁸⁷ In 1966, government officials set off an artificial landslide in order to dam a nearby gorge and prevent future mudflows. The dam later successfully blocked a major mudslide (in 1973), and after further development, it now measures some 140 m (460 ft).⁸⁸ Nonetheless, in 2004, at least 28 people died after a mudslide wiped out two residential buildings in a small village to the east of Almaty.⁸⁹



⁸³ ReliefWeb. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. "Kazakhstan: Earthquake Information Bulletin No. 1/2003." 28 May 2003. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/OCHA-64BS2S?OpenDocument&rc=3&emid=EQ-2003-0259-KAZ>

⁸⁴ ReliefWeb. IRIN, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "Kazakhstan: Interview on Almaty Earthquake Preparedness." 30 November 2004. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/KHII-67934D?OpenDocument>

⁸⁵ UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. UNDP Kazakhstan, Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan. "Case Study: Local Risk Management in Earthquake Zones of Kazakhstan." 2005. http://www.unisdr.org/eng/public_aware/world_camp/2006-2007/pdf/case-study-kazakhstan-en.pdf

⁸⁶ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department. "Kazakhstan: Country Specific Information." 16 March 2009. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1150.html

⁸⁷ United Nations Development Program Kazakhstan. *Water Resources of Kazakhstan in the New Millennium*. "Chapter 2: Kazakhstan's Contemporary Water Problems [pp. 43–44]." April 2004. http://www.undp.kz/library_of_publications/files/2496-13297.pdf

⁸⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Almaty." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/16771/Almaty>

Finally, flooding is also a significant problem in Kazakhstan. Heavy springtime runoff is the most common cause of flooding. Seasonal downpours, ice blockages on waterways, high winds, and ruptures in glacial lakes or reservoirs may also lead to disaster. Most recently, in 1993, widespread flooding across Kazakhstan's numerous river plains killed six residents, displaced thousands more and caused significant damage to crops, livestock holdings, and infrastructure.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ BBC News, International Version. "Kazakh Mudslide Death Toll Rises." 15 March 2004.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3512352.stm>

⁹⁰ United Nations Development Program Kazakhstan. *Water Resources of Kazakhstan in the New Millennium*. "Chapter 2: Kazakhstan's Contemporary Water Problems [pp. 42–43]." April 2004.
http://www.undp.kz/library_of_publications/files/2496-13297.pdf

Chapter 3 History

Introduction

The steppes of Kazakhstan have long been home to nomadic pastoralists. Following seasonal migration patterns, early tribes roamed in search of pasture for their livestock. Over the centuries, the area served as a home or migratory route for diverse peoples, including powerful invading armies and merchants traveling on the Silk Road. Perpetual conquests meant that regional control was in constant flux. Various empires or tribal confederations were short-lived and soon replaced. The invasion of the Mongols in the 13th century⁹¹ laid the foundation for the emergence—two centuries later—of the Kazakh people, who soon became the dominant group in the region.



© Bernard Gagnon
Kazakh nomads in Xinjiang, China, 1957

The country's modern history has been one of profound and often forced change from a largely nomadic culture to a society marked by industrial development and urbanization. The gradual Russian colonization of Kazakh lands (from the 17th to early 20th centuries) gave way to dramatic changes imposed by the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan became the site of intense Soviet relocation, industrialization, and agricultural development programs for much of the 20th century. The ethnic composition of the area was altered to enforce Soviet political and economic goals, which displaced and assimilated native Kazakhs in the Soviet regional program.⁹²

Kazakhstan became an independent nation after the U.S.S.R dissolved in 1991. Despite initial hardship, the country has transitioned to a market-based economy. Growth has been fueled by Kazakhstan's rich energy and mineral reserves. Overseeing this economic expansion, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has held the office and consolidated power throughout the independent era. While Nazarbayev is credited with bringing stability to the country and the greater region, he has also been criticized for alleged corruption and backsliding on democratic reforms.

Early History

Human settlement in the territory comprising modern-day Kazakhstan dates back to the Stone Age. Ancient cave paintings and rock engravings (petroglyphs) are scattered throughout the region, providing a glimpse of early human society. Much of this artwork depicts various species of wildlife and domestic stock, reflecting the importance of hunting and herding among local inhabitants. Some of these animal figures may have also held religious significance for early tribes. Settlement ruins, ceramic vessels, and

⁹¹ Global Security.org. *Military: Central Asia: Kazakhstan: Introduction*. 27 April 2005. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/kazak-intro.htm>

⁹² History in Focus. Issue 11: Migration. Gatrell, Peter. "Crossing Borders: Migration in Russia and Eastern Europe During the 20th Century." 2006. <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/gatrell.html>

rudimentary tools of various ages have also been uncovered throughout the country.⁹³ Many of these findings are associated with a Bronze-Age society known by scholars as the Andronovo culture; its earliest remains date to the 2nd millennium B.C.E.⁹⁴

The Saks (Scythians)

The Saks (also generally known as the Scythians) are the first historically significant regional culture to occupy the area during the 1st millennium B.C.E. Originating in Iran, the Saks developed an empire that encompassed much of Central Asia and southern Russia, including the territory around the Black and Caspian seas. They were a nomadic people known as skillful equestrians and warriors.⁹⁵ In the 4th century B.C.E., they fended off the invading Greek armies of Alexander the Great.⁹⁶ One of Kazakhstan's most celebrated artifacts is the gold ceremonial armor worn by a Sak warrior popularly known as the "Golden Man."⁹⁷ The warrior's remains were found in a treasure-laden tomb in southeastern Kazakhstan.⁹⁷



The Usun and the Huns

In the 2nd century B.C.E., control of eastern Kazakhstan fell to the Usun (Wusun), a group of Turkic-speaking Mongol tribes from the east. They were a mixture of nomads and sedentary farmers; one subgroup occupied the banks of the Syr Darya River while another migrated throughout the region between the Aral and Caspian seas.⁹⁸ It is believed that the Usun were related to the Huns, a tribal confederation of nomadic pastoralists and warriors who migrated throughout Central Asia during this time.⁹⁹ Much of the history of the Huns remains uncertain. During their sweeping westward expansion from the Central Asian steppes, they made damaging attacks on the Roman Empire. This movement culminated with incursions into Italy in the 5th century C.E. At that time, the Huns were led by the notorious warrior Attila, whose death in 453 C.E. signaled the end of the vast Hunnic Empire.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 98–100]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

⁹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: History: Kazakhstan to 1700." 2009.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

⁹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Scythian." 2009.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/530361/Scythian>

⁹⁶ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: History [p. 86]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁹⁷ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [p. 103]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

⁹⁸ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [p. 5]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

⁹⁹ Türkic History Site Map. Works of Kazakh SSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography, Vol. 8. Zuev, Yury A. "Ethnic History of Usuns." 1960.
<http://www.s155239215.onlinehome.us/turkic/29Huns/Usuns/ZuevHunsandUsunsEn.htm#Huns>

¹⁰⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Hun." 2009.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/276414/Hun>

Turkic Tribes

In the 5th and 6th centuries, repeated attacks from the Altai Turks in the east weakened the domain of the Usun. Over the next few centuries, regional power shifted between various confederations of Turkic tribes. These included the Turkic Kaganate (the western portion of the Gokturk, or “Blue Turk,” empire) and, later, the Turgesh Kaganate, both of which were highly developed, stratified societies. During this time, settlements in southern



Kazakhstan served as important northern outposts on the Silk Road. In the 8th century, Arabs took control of portions of the south, marking the entry of Islam into the region. Shortly thereafter, the Karluks, another group of allied Turkic tribes, established themselves in eastern Kazakhstan.¹⁰¹ The Persian Samanid dynasty took control of the far south in the 9th century.¹⁰² The region’s western territory was left to the Oghuz Turks, who ruled until the 11th century.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, tribal federations of Turkic Kimaks and Kipchaks dominated the north and northwest.¹⁰⁴

The Karluks’ reign ended in the 10th century, when they were defeated by the Karakhanid Turks, who came from the east (western China) in an effort to expand their already substantial territory. They also conquered the Samanids, whose practice of Islam flourished under the Karakhanids. During the Karakhanid reign, sedentary agriculture expanded due to the development of irrigation schemes, and the local economy prospered. However, power again shifted in the 12th century, when the Khitans (Karakitai), originally from Mongolia, defeated the Karakhanids and took control of the steppe.¹⁰⁵ They oversaw the vast territory, including portions of western China, until the arrival of Genghis Khan’s Mongol armies in the early 13th century.¹⁰⁶

The Mongol Empire

The Mongol Invasion

Originally named Temüjin, Genghis Khan rose to power in the Mongolian steppes through military conquest and the unification of the nomadic Mongol tribes. After first expanding his domain into northern China, where he captured Beijing in 1215, he sent his armies westward. In 1218, his forces attacked the Khitans from the east and quickly took

¹⁰¹ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 5–6].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹⁰² *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. “Kazakhstan: History [p. 86].” 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁰³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Historical Setting: Early Tribal Movements.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2?r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0013\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2?r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0013))

¹⁰⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kipchak.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/318970/Kipchak>

¹⁰⁵ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 5–6].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹⁰⁶ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. “Kazakhstan: History [p. 86].” 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

control of their territory. In 1219, following the slaughter of one of his merchant caravans, the Mongol leader sent a vast army to destroy the Khwarezm-Shah Empire, which at that time encompassed Iran and much of Central Asia, including portions of southern Kazakhstan. Numbering more than 150,000 warriors, including skilled mounted archers, the Mongol army swept through the Khwarezm region, razing cities and killing or enslaving much of the local population.¹⁰⁷ Their path took them through the Silk Road town of Otrar, located near Taraz in present-day southern Kazakhstan, where the Mongol merchant caravan had been killed.¹⁰⁸ The city and other regional settlements were left in ruins, thereby eliminating the infrastructure that supported development of a sedentary, agricultural lifestyle in the region.

Mongol Rule

The Mongols heavily influenced regional culture through the 13th century. The local, mostly Turkic tribes adopted aspects of their language, legal code, and social and administrative structure. Broadly, their consolidated rule led to the unification of many previously disorganized tribes stretching from the Caspian Sea to the eastern coast of China. Following Genghis Khan's death in 1227, the Mongol empire was divided amongst his male heirs. His grandson, Batu, received the territory west of the Irtysh River, which included southwestern Russia, Ukraine, and most of northern and western Kazakhstan. This regional khanate¹⁰⁹ became known as the Golden Horde, and Batu expanded its domain in the following years.

Southeastern Kazakhstan, including the area known as Jeti-su or Semirechye, fell under the domain of Chagatai, Genghis Khan's second son. His territory, which extended southward through Central Asia and eastward into western China, became known as the Chagatai Khanate.¹¹⁰



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Portrait of Genghis Khan,
14th century

Decline

In the 14th century, internal power struggles weakened the Golden Horde, as another khanate, known as the White Horde, emerged in southern Kazakhstan and fought to become a fully independent state. While this goal was temporarily achieved, the Golden and White Hordes reunited under Genghis Khan's descendant Tokhtamysh, who ruled from 1381–1395. During this time, Silk Road trading posts, settlements, and agricultural schemes were reestablished in southern Kazakhstan. However, in 1395, the notorious Turkic-Mongol leader, Timur (also known as Tamerlane), dethroned Tokhtamysh after crushing his troops in battle for the second time.¹¹¹ Timur, who claimed to be a

¹⁰⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Genghis Khan." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/229093/Genghis-Khan>

¹⁰⁸ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: History [p. 86]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁰⁹ "Khanate" is defined as a political entity ruled by a "Khan"— a title originating in Central Asia, reserved for a sovereign or military ruler.

¹¹⁰ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: History [p. 86]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹¹¹ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [p. 7]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

descendent of Genghis Khan, emerged from the fractured Chagatai Khanate to wage brutal military campaigns throughout Central Asia and beyond.¹¹² The Golden Horde soon dissolved, and after the death of Timur, two smaller powers developed in the Kazakhstan region in the early 15th century. The Nogai Horde, a confederation of Kipchak tribes, controlled the area north of the Caspian Sea. To the east and southeast, the Uzbek Khanate controlled the central steppes and the Syr Darya river basin.¹¹³

The Kazakhs

The Emergence of the Kazakhs

During the reign of Abul Khayr (1428–1468), the expanding Uzbek Khanate based its capital at Sygnak, in south-central Kazakhstan. In the mid 15th century, the khanate suffered attacks from the Oyrats, a group of Mongol tribes who came from the east. As the khanate weakened, two Uzbeks opposed Abul Khayr's rule; Janibek and Kirai led an estimated 200,000 followers into the region between the Chu and Talas rivers (in southeastern Kazakhstan), where they staked territorial claims. Abul Khayr and his son died in the protracted fighting between the two Uzbek factions.¹¹⁴ The followers of Janibek and Kirai became known as Kazakhs,¹¹⁵ a term that likely referred to their independent, nomadic ways in contrast to the Uzbeks, who practiced a more settled lifestyle.¹¹⁶ As descendents of the Mongol, Turkic, and other peoples who roamed or occupied the region, the nomadic Kazakhs emerged from centuries of tribal migration; their numbers would grow as other tribes joined them. More directly, Janibek and Kirai traced their roots to Barak Khan (of the White Horde), a descendent of Genghis Khan.¹¹⁷

The Kazakh Khanate

In the 16th century, as the Uzbek Khanate shifted its presence to the south, the Kazakhs gradually expanded their territory. The Kazakh Khanate formally organized under Qasim Kahn, who ruled from around 1511 to 1523.¹¹⁸ During this time, Qasim expanded the khanate's domain, consolidated its political power, and incorporated additional regional tribes into the Kazakh



¹¹² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Timur: Life." 2009.

<http://cache.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/596358/Timur>

¹¹³ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [p. 7]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹¹⁴ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 7–8]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹¹⁵ The etymological roots of the name "Kazakh" are purported to come from the Turkic language with several possible meanings. The most often cited are the Turkish verb *qaz* which means "to wander," and the term *Qazak* which means "free" or "independent."

¹¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: History: Kazakhstan to 1700." 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹¹⁷ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 121–122]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹¹⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakstan: Historical Background: Historical Setting: Forming the Modern Nation." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0014\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0014))

fold, including Kipchaks from the Nogai Horde, Mongols, and additional Uzbeks. By this time, the Kazakhs had an estimated population of one million tribal members, who were united through a common Turkish language, culture, and economy based largely on nomadic pastoralism. While ethnically and culturally related to the nearby Uzbeks, the Kazakhs were thereafter considered a distinct group. In the following decades, their territory grew to include the Lake Balkhash region, the Syr Darya river basin, and the central and northern steppes.¹¹⁹

The Three Hordes

In the mid-to-late 16th century, three administrative divisions within the Kazakh Khanate emerged. Commonly known as hordes but more accurately described as *juz* (*zhuz*), or tribal unions, these divisions corresponded with specific geographic regions; they were likely formed for political and military organization. The Great Horde oversaw the southeastern region of the Kazakh territory, where its members migrated between the basins of the Chu, Talas, and Ili rivers and the Alatau Mountains. The Middle Horde controlled the central Kazakh region, migrating seasonally between the Syr Darya basin in the south and the steppes in the north. In the west, the Lesser Horde roamed between the Aral Sea, the Ural River, and the west-central steppes.

Within the tribal unions, the power structure included a khan (the *juz* leader), sultans (tribal leaders and noblemen), *bii* (clan leaders who often served as judges or mediators), *batirs* (proven warriors), and *aksakal* (communal elders). Clan leaders and communal elders were much more influential within their community than the khan, who relied on their support to raise armies for war. As a result of this structure, the khanate lacked a consolidated, centralized authority, as well as a standing army; these factors ultimately left the Kazakhs vulnerable to internal dissension and foreign threats.¹²⁰

The Decline of the Khanate

After expanding their territory to include most of modern-day Kazakhstan, as well as, for a time, portions of Siberia and present-day Uzbekistan, the Kazakhs faced encroaching powers in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the late 16th century, the Kalmyks (or Jungars/Dzungars), a subgroup of the Mongol Oyrats, began migrating into the southeast. The Kalmyks staged attacks on settlements and disrupted trade. These invasions expanded in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, when Kalmyk forces captured much of eastern and southern Kazakhstan. During this time, the Kazakhs periodically united to resist the invading troops. The most notable union was under Tauke Khan (1680–1718), best known for developing the Kazakh legal code.¹²¹

However, in 1723, Kalmyk troops advanced upon the economically important Syr Darya basin (the site of numerous trade outposts), forcing the unsuspecting Kazakhs to

¹¹⁹ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 3–10].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹²⁰ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 11–14].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹²¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: History: Kazakhstan to 1700.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

undertake what is known today as the Great Retreat or Great Disaster. Abandoning most of their assets, members of the Great Horde fled south into present-day Uzbekistan. The Middle and Lesser hordes moved to the northwest, where Russia had already established a presence.¹²²

In 1731, Abul Khayr, leader of the Lesser Horde, pledged allegiance to the Russian Empire as part of a mutual effort to preserve Russian and Kazakh interests in the region amid the onslaught of the Kalymks. (Fifteen years earlier, the Russians had begun constructing a series of forts along the northern edge of the steppes due to similar concerns.) Abul Khayr's cooperation with Russia effectively ended the Kazakh Khanate.¹²³ In the following



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Kalmyk brides and grooms, pre-1917

decade, the leaders of the Middle Horde, as well as a faction of the Great Horde, signed similar treaties with Russia. According to these agreements, the Kazakhs received protection in exchange for loyalty.¹²⁴ The other tribes of the Great Horde fell under the Kalmyks. However, the Kalmyks were finally defeated in the late 1750s—not by the Kazakhs, but by the Chinese forces of the Qing (Ch'ing) Empire, which thereafter expanded its territory westward to include portions of eastern Kazakhstan.¹²⁵

The Russian Empire

Russian Expansion into the Steppe

As part of its 17th century, large-scale expansion throughout northern Eurasia, the Russian Empire gradually encroached into Kazakh territory by establishing trading and military outposts along the Ural River, north of the Caspian Sea.¹²⁶ In the 18th century, Russian forts were constructed along the northern edge of the steppes. These included sites that can be found in present-day Kazakhstan, such as Semey (Semipalatinsk) and Öskemen (Ust-Kamenogorsk).¹²⁷ Cossack soldiers and Russian traders began moving into the steppe region. During this time, the Kazakhs were, for the most part, preoccupied with the expansion of the Kalymks into their eastern territory.

Although the Kazakh tribes signed treaties of allegiance to Russia, their relations with the empire were unstable and often marred by conflict and rebellion. Ablai Khan, of the Middle Horde, emerged as the dominant Kazakh leader in the mid 18th century. While

¹²² *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 25–26]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹²³ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 26–27]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹²⁴ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 3: The Development of a Colonial Apparatus [pp. 71–72]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: History: Kazakhstan to 1700." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹²⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Historical Setting: Forming the Modern Nation." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0014\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0014))

¹²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: History: Russian and Soviet Rule." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

making efforts to unify the Kazakh tribes, he shrewdly cultivated relations with Russia, China, and the Dzungar (Kalmyk) state while occasionally staging attacks on their interests.¹²⁸ Eventually, both the Russian and Qing empires recognized him as the preeminent khan of the steppes.¹²⁹ At the same time, Ablai Khan maintained his power independently of foreign support or protection—the last of the Kazakh khans to do so. He also resisted Russian settlement of the traditionally nomadic region. After his death in 1781, the Kazakh tribes quickly lost the unity that had developed under his consolidated rule.¹³⁰

Annexation

During the following century, Russia took advantage of its treaties of protection over the Kazakh Hordes to gradually annex their territories. This process included the steady construction of additional military forts and defensive lines throughout the region. At the same time, it promoted colonial settlement in the area by offering tax breaks to migrant settlers while imposing increased regulations on Kazakh nomads.¹³¹ These developments disrupted traditional Kazakh migratory patterns and led to severe economic instability and disgruntlement among the Kazakh peoples.¹³²

From the late 18th to late 19th centuries, the Kazakhs staged numerous organized revolts. Anti-Russian uprisings were waged under Syrym Datov, leader of the Lesser Horde, from 1792–1797, and Kenesary Kasymov, leader of the Middle Horde and grandson of Ablai Khan, from 1837–1844. By the 1870s, however, Russia had suppressed these and several other rebellions.¹³³ According to some estimates, as many as one million Kazakhs—roughly 25% of the population—may have died throughout this period as a result of conflict or famine.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the fractured Kazakh Hordes lost their formal authority within the Russian administrative structure. The empire officially abolished the Middle Horde in 1822, followed by the Lesser and Great Hordes in 1824 and 1848, respectively.¹³⁵

In the 1860s and 1870s, Russia conquered the Khanate of Kokand, a state based in what is now southern Kazakhstan and eastern Uzbekistan. The Khanate of Kokand had

¹²⁸ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 126–127].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹²⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: History: Kazakhstan to 1700.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹³⁰ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 2: The Russian Conquest [pp. 41–43].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹³¹ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 127–128].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹³² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Historical Setting: Forming the Modern Nation.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0014\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0014))

¹³³ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 127–128].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹³⁴ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. “Kazakhstan: History [p. 87].” 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹³⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: History: Russian and Soviet Rule.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

previously absorbed much of the former Great Horde territory into its domain. After Russia's conquest, however, that region, and the many Kazakhs within it, fell under Russian control. The Kazakh steppes were thereafter divided into Russian administrative regions known as oblasts.¹³⁶

Settlement

In the late 19th century, the Russian Empire ordered the resettlement of massive numbers of Russian and Ukrainian peasant farmers into the steppes of Kazakhstan. By 1917, nearly 3 million settlers had been relocated to the region, resulting in the large-scale appropriation, settlement, and agricultural development of Kazakh lands.¹³⁷ This influx of migrants changed the ethnic



© Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii
Kazakh nomad family, pre-1917

composition of the region and devastated the Kazakhs' nomadic lifestyle and pastoral economy. Much of their traditional pastureland was transformed to cropland or otherwise made inaccessible. During the Russian imperial era, Kazakhstan also functioned as a site of "internal exile" for dissidents within the empire. The most famous of these banished nonconformists was the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, who was sent to live in Semipalatinsk (Semey) in the mid 19th century.¹³⁸

Growing Unrest and the Fall of Imperial Russia

In 1916, the Russian Empire called for the conscription of large numbers of Kazakhs into the Russian army for mobilization—largely in the form of labor support—against German forces in World War I. Already demoralized by economic hardship and the loss of their native lands, Kazakhs and other indigenous groups soon organized resistance to the draft. Led by such figures as Amangeldy Imanov, Kazakh resistance armies staged several attacks on Russian settlements, most notably the city of Turgai, which they temporarily held under siege. The Russian retaliation against the Kazakh rebellion proved devastating. According to some estimates, as many as 150,000 Kazakhs were killed in the resulting crackdown, and some 200,000 more fled to nearby western China to escape the violence.¹³⁹

Shortly thereafter, in 1917, Russia's weakened imperial government collapsed under pressure from Marxist revolutionaries. In the temporary absence of a central authority, an indigenous Kazakh political party, known as Alash Orda, made efforts to form a provisional government in the Kazakh region. Meanwhile, civil war between the provisional Soviet government—led by the Bolsheviks—and royalist, anti-Bolshevik forces was waged from 1918–1920. After the Soviets emerged victorious, they reestablished control over the Kazakh region and soon replaced the Alash Orda

¹³⁶ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 3: The Development of a Colonial Apparatus [pp. 71–82]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹³⁷ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 4: The Land Problem [pp. 83, 90]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹³⁸ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 128–129]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹³⁹ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 130–133]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

provisional leadership with their own Communist Party members.¹⁴⁰ The Soviets named the greater area the Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic on 20 August 1920. In 1925, three years after the official establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), the region was reconfigured and renamed the Kazakh Autonomous Republic. It became a full Soviet Republic in 1936.¹⁴¹

The Soviet Era

Early Soviet Policy in the Steppe

When the Soviets took power, the local population was suffering greatly from the devastation caused by the civil war. An estimated 750,000 regional inhabitants died from famine in the immediate aftermath of the conflict.¹⁴² The Soviets soon implemented large-scale social and economic programs throughout Central Asia. While reconfiguration of the Kazakh Republic's borders consolidated some Kazakh-inhabited areas, other realignments in the region served to weaken Muslim or Turkic unity.¹⁴³ Indeed, Kazakh religion (Islam) and indigenous ethnic solidarity were suppressed throughout much of the Soviet era.¹⁴⁴



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Bolshevik party meeting, 1920s

In the late 1920s, the Soviets instituted an agricultural collectivization scheme under orders from the Soviet leader, Josef Stalin. This plan called for the relocation, settlement (or “de-nomadization”), and collection of nomadic peoples into sedentary farming communities. Many Kazakhs resisted the scheme and instead slaughtered their own livestock before it could be nationalized by the Soviets, who made land and assets properties of the state. Some Kazakh tribes also staged attacks on the newly created agricultural settlements. In general, the state-run collective farms were poorly conceived. Many were established in desert or semi-desert areas and often lacked essential equipment and resources. In any case, most Kazakhs had little or no farming experience. Combined with the slaughter and appropriation of livestock, low agricultural yields led to widespread famine. In turn, livestock holdings further plummeted as many remaining herds were slaughtered in the absence of food supplies.

It is estimated that more than 1.5 million Kazakhs died between 1929 and 1939 as a result of famine or violence stemming from resistance to Soviet policy. Hundreds of thousands of Kazakhs also fled the region, mostly to China, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan; many of

¹⁴⁰ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [p. 134].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁴¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: History: Russian and Soviet Rule.” 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁴² *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 7: The New Economic Policy in Kazakhstan [pp. 158–159].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹⁴³ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [p. 134].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁴⁴ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. “History: The Soviet Era: Construction of Nationalities [pp. 39–40].” 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

them died on their journey.¹⁴⁵ By this time, after decades of Russian and Soviet policy, the Kazakhs' traditional nomadic lifestyle was largely destroyed; most of the remaining nomadic communities subsisted in the south-central desert.¹⁴⁶

Imprisonment, Exile, and Industry under Stalin

Due to its remoteness from European Russia (the heart of the Soviet Union), Kazakhstan became the site of several large-scale Soviet industrial, military, and social programs. In the 1930s and 1940s, Stalin consolidated his power through massive purges of perceived or suspected enemies, including many within the Communist Party. Indeed, most of the ranking Kazakh Communist Party officials were arrested and executed as part of the purge of suspected disloyalists. During this time, numerous prison and labor camps, known as gulags, were established in Kazakhstan, the most notorious of which were located around Karagandy. Many Kazakhs who resisted de-nomadization were sent to such compounds. This practice continued during World War II, when large numbers of ethnic Germans, Chechens, Tatars, Kalmyks, and other groups were exiled to Kazakhstan due to their perceived threat to Soviet security (as potential collaborators with the enemy). At this time, German forces were advancing into the Soviet Union's European regions.¹⁴⁷

The German threat prompted Soviet planners to shift industrial production from the nation's European territory—the site of the war's front lines—to the seemingly remote, isolated region of Central Asia. As a result, approximately 220 evacuated factories were reestablished in Kazakhstan; 200 new plants were constructed in order to harness the area's rich natural resources.¹⁴⁸ Metallurgical factories, chemical plants, and mines—particularly of coal and copper—were among those developed or expanded. The growth of these industrial sites would correspond with urbanization in the coming years. In addition to industrial output, the Kazakh region also contributed manpower to the war effort, with some 450,000 Kazakhs mobilized in the fight against Nazi Germany.¹⁴⁹



© Mark Pichet
Soviet nuclear detonator console

After the war, Kazakhstan was selected—again, due to its perceived remoteness and emptiness—as the site of a now notorious Soviet weapons testing program. Beginning in 1949, the Soviet military exploded nearly 500 nuclear bombs at a testing site outside of Semey, then known as Semipalatinsk.¹⁵⁰ More than 100 tests took place above ground, and continued throughout the Cold War until the final

¹⁴⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: History: Russian and Soviet Rule.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁴⁶ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 8: Collectivization and the Stalinist Economic System [pp. 184–187].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹⁴⁷ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 136–141].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁴⁸ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [p. 138].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁴⁹ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 8: Collectivization and the Stalinist Economic System [p. 188].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹⁵⁰ International Atomic Energy Agency - IAEA.org. “Semipalatinsk Revisited: Old Nuclear Test Site Sets New Course.” 31 August 2006. <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2006/semipalatinsk.html>

years of the Soviet Union. In many cases, the local civilian inhabitants were neither warned nor evacuated before the explosions occurred. As a result, the regional population has suffered high rates of illness, including cancers and birth defects.¹⁵¹ Weapons testing programs were conducted in other areas of the republic over the following decades. Throughout this time, the region served as the site of many of the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons facilities, as well as the Baikonur Cosmodrome, a launch site for spacecraft.¹⁵²

The “Virgin Lands” Campaign and Industrial Expansion

After Stalin's death in 1953, the new Soviet leadership—principally Nikita Khrushchev—continued the intensive development of the Kazakhstan region. The centerpiece of Khrushchev's development policy was the “Virgin Lands” campaign, which the Soviets implemented between 1953 and 1965. In an effort to increase agricultural productivity, the Soviets called for the large-scale cultivation of the supposedly untouched or underutilized northern steppes of Kazakhstan. They began to plow and seed vast tracts of the region's arid pasturelands. This posed a problem; historically, these areas were too dry to allow for sustained agriculture and instead served as traditional grazing lands for Kazakh herders.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Portrait of Nikita Khrushchev

During this time, the Soviets encouraged the settlement of additional waves of Russian, Ukrainian, and other migrant farmers. Their influx came at the expense of the indigenous Kazakhs, many of whom were moved to collective livestock-breeding centers where they were forced to abandon their traditional methods for new practices.¹⁵³ Focusing on the production of wheat and cotton, the Virgin Lands scheme initially produced large yields.¹⁵⁴ However, output soon declined and large-scale soil erosion and fertility loss occurred, leaving the region prone to desertification. In the coming decades, these conditions compelled farmers to use increasingly large amounts of fertilizer, in addition to pesticides. Combined with intensive diversion of irrigation waters from regional rivers, these practices led to severe environmental problems in the country, including the pollution of water resources and the shrinking of the Aral Sea.¹⁵⁵

The 1960s and 1970s were a period of increased industrialization in the Kazakh Republic, as the Soviet Union expanded its exploitation of the region's vast energy and mineral reserves. The Soviets again encouraged Slavic migrants to relocate to the Republic,

¹⁵¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Kazakstan: Physical Environment: Environmental Problems.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0022\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0022))

¹⁵² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: History: Russian and Soviet Rule.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁵³ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 10: The Virgin Lands and the Creation of a Socialist Kazakhstan [p. 224].” 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹⁵⁴ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. “Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 141–142].” 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁵⁵ *Kazakhstan* (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia). Corrigan, Jim. “Chapter 3: The History: Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union [p. 44].” 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

where they received bonuses for working in the region's expanding industrial centers. After centuries of immigration to the region—either voluntary or forced, the Kazakh Republic was home to a diverse population, including various European and Slavic (i.e., Russian, Ukrainian) ethnicities. The Kazakhs themselves, however, had become a minority due to these influxes and the corresponding large-scale losses of their people.¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, Russian and Soviet culture was a dominating influence, especially in terms of language and education. Indeed, the establishment of schools and the increase in literacy rates were some of the major benefits of the Soviet era.¹⁵⁷

Kazakh Politics and Growing Nationalism

The Kazakhs regained a sense of political representation within the Soviet structure when Dinmukhamed Kunayev, a Kazakh, took power as the First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party. He held that office from 1959–1962 and, more importantly, from 1964–1986.¹⁵⁸ As the First Secretary, Kunayev was effectively in control of the Republic. He was also the first Kazakh to be elected as a full member of the Soviet Politburo, the central committee, and ultimate authority of the Soviet Communist Party, which in turn controlled the Soviet government.¹⁵⁹

Kunayev was a loyal friend of Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader from 1964–1982, and he administered the republic in accordance with the demands of the central Soviet authorities.¹⁶⁰ At the same time, he maintained support within the Republic, where he was seen as a strong representative of its interests. The standard of living generally increased during his rule, and his popularity extended to Kazakh and Slavic peoples alike. Under Kunayev, ethnic Kazakhs became increasingly involved in regional government, in part due to Kunayev's nepotistic appointments of friends and family members.¹⁶¹ His rule corresponded with a period (beginning in the 1970s) in which Slavic migration to the Republic gradually decreased, with many non-Kazakhs leaving the region. Meanwhile, the Kazakh population increased substantially, growing from 2.7 million in 1959 to 6.7 million in 1987.¹⁶² Both of these trends would continue in the coming years.

¹⁵⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Historical Setting: In the Soviet Union." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0016\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0016))

¹⁵⁷ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day: The Soviet Legacy [p. 148]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁵⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Reform and Nationalist Conflict." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0017\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0017))

¹⁵⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: History: Russian and Soviet Rule." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁶⁰ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [p. 142]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁶¹ *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook*. Hanks, Reuel R. "Kazakhstan: Part One: Narrative Section: Kazakhstan Institutions: Government and Politics: The Kunaev Era (1964–1986) [pp. 208–209]." 2005. ABC-CLIO.

¹⁶² *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*. Dave, Bhavna. "Chapter 4: Ethnic Entitlements and Compliance [p. 79]." 2007. London: Routledge.

After Brezhnev's death in 1982, Kunayev lost his key ally in the central Soviet command. Kunayev was removed from power in 1986, largely due to economic decline, but also because of his nepotistic and reportedly corrupt practices. Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader at that time, chose Gennady Kolbin, an ethnic Russian from outside the region, to replace Kunayev.¹⁶³ The decision sparked demonstrations in Almaty (then known as Alma-Ata), where ethnic Kazakhs protested the appointment of a Russian outsider to the republic's top political position. At the same time, the demonstrations signaled a growing sense of nationalism in the region. By that time, Kazakhstan had long served as a major source of industrial and agricultural output for the benefit of the greater Soviet Union. The protests indicated that many Kazakh residents felt that they had not received adequate representation or ample return.¹⁶⁴ Soviet authorities responded with a crackdown on the demonstrations, resulting in numerous arrests, detentions, and injuries, as well as fatalities.¹⁶⁵

The Decline of the Soviet Union and the Emergence of an Independent Kazakhstan

When Gorbachev took power in March 1985, the Soviet Union was in a state of serious economic decline. Gorbachev's signature policies—*perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness)—sought to bring market reforms and transparency to the weakening communist state. These efforts, however, proved ineffective in maintaining the union. As the economy continued to deteriorate and the power of the central Soviet government waned, calls for greater autonomy within the Soviet republics increased.

In 1989, Nursultan Nazarbayev, a rising Kazakh politician and former engineer, replaced Kolbin as the First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party. He skillfully balanced his support of Gorbachev with the rising Kazakh nationalism in his own republic. During this time, he fought for an increased share of revenues from the centrally owned industrial operations based in the region. Likewise, he supported bills that instituted Kazakh as the official state language, and called for open evaluation of the negative consequences of Soviet policy in the Republic. He also expanded religious freedoms, which had been heavily curtailed throughout most of the Soviet era. This soon led to the revival of Islam in Kazakhstan.¹⁶⁶

Nazarbayev, like the leaders of other Soviet republics, became the nominal president of the Republic in 1990. In October of that year, the Kazakh government issued a declaration of sovereignty in response to the central government's own claims to sovereignty over the Republic. Meanwhile, Nazarbayev continued to support the maintenance of the Soviet Union due to the economic interdependence of its republics. In

¹⁶³ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [p. 142]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁶⁴ Time. Jackson, James O. "What Really Happened in Alma-Ata." 2 March 1987.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,963672-1,00.html>

¹⁶⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Reform and Nationalist Conflict." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0017\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0017))

¹⁶⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: The Rise of Nazarbayev." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0018\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0018))

1991, however, he secured the rights to the Republic's energy and mineral reserves; this event would prove to be of monumental importance for the country's future economic growth. He also closed the Semipalatinsk nuclear base during this time.

After a failed coup attempt and the banning of the Communist Party, the crumbling U.S.S.R. formally dissolved in December 1991. By then, most of the Soviet republics had already declared their independence. Nazarbayev won an uncontested presidential election on 1 December, and the country formally declared its independence 15 days later, on 16 December. It was the last Soviet republic to do so.¹⁶⁷ Less than a week later, Kazakhstan entered into the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States, a union of 11 (at that time) former Soviet republics.¹⁶⁸

The Independent Era

Development and Policy under Nazarbayev

Born to Kazakh peasants in 1940, Nursultan Nazarbayev had gradually—and skillfully—ascended the ranks of the Communist Party to become Kazakhstan's first popularly elected president.¹⁶⁹ His policies have since determined the political, economic, and social trajectory of the nation. After independence, the country remained closely linked to Russia, particularly in terms of defense and the economy; these ties initially included a shared currency.¹⁷⁰ Culturally, Kazakhs embraced their heritage in renaming cities and streets with Kazakh names. Meanwhile, ethnic Kazakh refugees—known collectively as Oralmans—began returning to their homeland from various neighboring countries.



As in the rest of the former Soviet Union, the economy suffered serious decline in Kazakhstan during the initial transition to independence. Inflation, in particular, was rampant. In November 1993, Kazakhstan introduced its own currency, the *tenge*. This event marked the beginning of the liberalization of the nation's economy, which involved the gradual movement from a state-run command economy to one based on market policies.¹⁷¹

Beginning in the mid 1990s, Nazarbayev used his growing presidential powers to push through various economic reforms aimed at privatizing business and attracting foreign

¹⁶⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Kazakhstan*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Sovereignty and Independence." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0019\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0019))

¹⁶⁸ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "History: Nazarbayev in Power [p. 31]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

¹⁶⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Nursultan Nazarbayev." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/407143/Nursultan-Nazarbayev>

¹⁷⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: History: Independent Kazakhstan." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

¹⁷¹ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [pp. 150–152]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

investment.¹⁷² These efforts gradually led to the extensive development of the nation's rich energy and mineral reserves, including the ongoing construction of major oil pipelines. Beginning in 2000, the booming energy and industrial sectors contributed to several years of sustained economic growth, making Kazakhstan the richest country in Central Asia.¹⁷³

Kazakhstan's economic development coincided with the establishment of enhanced relations with investment partners such as the U.S. and China. In 1993, Kazakhstan signed a nuclear dismantlement pact with the U.S.; it gained nuclear-free status in 1995. In late 2001, Nazarbayev and then-U.S. President George W. Bush committed to a strategic partnership based on both economic and security interests. Likewise, in 1996, Kazakhstan joined the Shanghai Five, now known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional economic and security organization. In addition to Kazakhstan, the SCO includes China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and now Uzbekistan. The SCO member countries have since participated in various economic development projects and joint military exercises.¹⁷⁴



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Shanghai Five leaders, 2001

In 1994, Nazarbayev announced his plan to transfer the national capital from Almaty, the country's largest city, to Akmola, a smaller provincial town in the northern steppes. The announcement sparked some controversy due to Akmola's extreme climate conditions and lackluster setting.¹⁷⁵ Government officials cited Almaty's remote, southeastern location and its susceptibility to earthquakes as reasons for the move. However, many observers interpreted the transfer as an effort to strengthen the government's presence in the northern provinces, where ethnic Russians form a large percentage of the population.¹⁷⁶ After substantial investment in new infrastructure, Akmola formally became the nation's capital in 1997, and its name was changed to Astana in 1998. Nazarbayev funneled billions of dollars of energy profits into further developing the city into a modern, high-tech capital—one that has been described as a symbol of the burgeoning Kazakhstani identity.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 4: Heritage and History to the Present Day [p. 151]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁷³ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Kazakhstan." April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>

¹⁷⁴ Council on Foreign Relations. Scheineson, Andrew. "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization." 24 March 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/10883/>

¹⁷⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Bransten, Jeremy. "Kazakhstan: Waiting for Nazarbayev in His New Capital." 9 October 1997. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1086797.html>

¹⁷⁶ BBC News. "New Kazakh Capital Unveiled." 9 June 1998. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/109460.stm>

¹⁷⁷ EurasiaNet.org. Lillis, Joanna. "Kazakhstan: Astana's Anniversary Celebration Serves as a Showcase for New National Identity." 7 July 2008.

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav070708.shtml>

were found shot to death in late 2005 and early 2006, respectively; members of opposition parties claimed the killings were politically motivated.¹⁸⁵

Since the late 1990s, allegations of corruption have plagued the Nazarbayev government, despite longstanding and highly publicized campaigns against such practices. Known as “Kazakhgate,” the most high-profile case involves allegations that senior officials in the Nazarbayev government accepted bribes from a U.S. oil executive in order to secure energy contracts.¹⁸⁶ Nazarbayev himself has been criticized for personally profiting from various business and development deals, as well as engaging in nepotism. The president has filled numerous high-ranking government, industry, and media positions with friends and family members.¹⁸⁷ Over the years, the nation’s media have encountered increased restrictions from the government, particularly after reporting on allegations of corruption.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, today, a large percentage of Kazakhstani media are owned, operated, subsidized, or otherwise influenced by the government.¹⁸⁹



Broadly, Nazarbayev’s authoritarian presidential rule has brought stability to a country in a region prone to ethnic strife and other security threats. Tangible results including marked economic gains and improved regional security have served to shield the president from greater internal criticism. Nevertheless, corruption and the slow democratization process in Kazakhstan remain concerns to would-be international partners. The country’s most recent parliamentary elections—held in August 2007—demonstrated improvements in the electoral process but were again criticized by foreign observers.¹⁹⁰ That same year, a constitutional amendment personally exempted Nazarbayev from the country’s two-term limit for the presidency, effectively allowing him to remain in power beyond 2012, when his current term ends.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ The Washington Post. Finn, Peter. “Six Held in Kazakh Figure’s Slaying.” 21 February 2006.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/20/AR2006022001397.html>

¹⁸⁶ The New York Times. Stodghill, Ron. “Oil, Cash and Corruption.” 5 November 2006.

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B06E7DA103FF936A35752C1A9609C8B63&sec=&spoon=&pagewanted=all>

¹⁸⁷ The New York Times. Kramer, Andrew E. “Amid Growing Wealth, Nepotism and Nationalism in Kazakhstan.” 23 December 2005.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/23/business/worldbusiness/23kazakh.html?pagewanted=print>

¹⁸⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: Kazakhstan.” December 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. “2008 Human Rights Report: Kazakhstan.” 25 February 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/sca/119135.htm>

¹⁹⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: Book of the Year 2008.” 2009.

<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9437872>

¹⁹¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kazakhstan: History: Independent Kazakhstan.” 2009.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

History Timeline

c. 700 B.C.E. – 200 B.C.E. – The Saks (Scythians), a nomadic tribe of skillful horsemen and warriors, occupy much of Central Asia and southern Russia.

c. 200 B.C.E. – 500 C.E. – The Usun, a group of Turkic-speaking Mongol tribes, inhabits the Kazakhstan region; they are linked to the Huns, who roam throughout Eurasia during this time.

c. 550 C.E. – 750 C.E. – The Turkic Kaganate and its successor, the Turgesh Kaganate, control southern Kazakhstan.

c. 739 C.E. – **Arabs invade southern Kazakhstan and introduce Islam to the area. In the following century, portions of the south fall to the Muslim Persian Samanid Dynasty.**

766 C.E. – 1218 C.E. – Various tribal confederations—mostly of Turkic peoples—control different areas of the Kazakhstan region. Among the dominant groups are the Karluks, Karakhanids, and Khitans.

1218 – 1219 C.E. – The Mongol armies of Genghis Khan conquer eastern and southern Kazakhstan, destroying the Silk Road city of Otrar and other local settlements.

1227 – Genghis Khan dies. His vast empire, including the Kazakhstan region, is divided amongst his heirs.

1420 – The Uzbek Khanate emerges in south-central Kazakhstan following the dissolution of the Mongol Empire.

1468 – **A breakaway group of nomadic Uzbeks establishes itself in southeastern Kazakhstan. They soon come to be known as Kazakhs.**

1511 – 1523 – The Kazakh Khanate emerges during the rule of Qasim Khan, who expands the khanate's territory and consolidates its political power.

1550 – Three tribal divisions emerge within the Kazakh Khanate: the Great Horde, the Middle Horde, and the Lesser Horde.

1620 – 1645 – Russian traders establish settlements along the Ural River, north of the Caspian Sea. In the following century, Russia constructs numerous forts along the northern steppes.

1723 – After several decades of invasions, Kalmyk Mongols force the Kazakh hordes to flee their lands in southern Kazakhstan—an exodus known as the Great Retreat.

1731 – The Kazakh Khanate ends when the Lesser Horde signs a treaty of protection with the Russian Empire; the other hordes soon sign similar agreements.

1760 – **Amid the growing threat of Russian colonization, Ablai Khan emerges as the preeminent khan in the steppes; he temporarily unifies the Kazakh hordes.**

1822 – The Russian Empire rescinds the authority of the Middle Horde; the Lesser and Great Hordes are subsequently abolished in 1824 and 1848, respectively.

1837 – 1844 – Kenesary Kasymov, grandson of Ablai Khan, leads the Middle Horde in a rebellion against Russian forces; the movement is ultimately suppressed.

1876 – Years of struggle culminate when the Khanate of Kokand is abolished, and incorporated into Russian Turkestan.

1890 – 1917 – Almost three million Russian settlers arrive in the region as part of Russia's large-scale seizure and development of Kazakh lands.

1917 – 1920 – After the Bolshevik Revolution, civil war rages throughout Russia. In the aftermath, hundreds of thousands of Kazakhs perish from famine.

1925 – **Formerly called the Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic (in 1920), the Kazakh Autonomous Republic is established. It becomes a full Soviet Socialist Republic in 1936.**

1929 – 1939 – A Soviet agricultural collectivization scheme enforces the settlement of Kazakh nomads; more than 1.5 million Kazakhs die from famine and violence.

1941 – 1945 – Stalin orders the mass deportation of various ethnic groups to Kazakhstan during World War II. Soviet industrial production shifts to the region.

1949 – The Soviet military conducts its first of over 450 nuclear tests at a site near Semipalatinsk (Semey) Kazakhstan. Tests continue until 1989.

1953 – 1965 – The Soviet “Virgin Lands” campaign calls for the intensive cultivation of the grasslands of the northern steppes; Slavic settlers arrive in large numbers.

1986 – The political replacement of Dinmukhamed Kunayev, the longtime leader of the Republic, with a Russian outsider sparks protests in Almaty (Alma-Ata).

1989 – Nursultan Nazarbayev, an ethnic Kazakh, becomes leader of the republic. The Nevada-Semey Movement calls for the end of nuclear testing at Semey.

December 1991 – **The Soviet Union formally dissolves. Nazarbayev is elected as the first president of Kazakhstan, which officially declares its independence on 16 December.**

1993 – Kazakhstan introduces its own currency, the *tenge*, and adopts its first constitution. Parliamentary elections are held for the first time the following year.

1995 – Parliament is dissolved and a new constitution is adopted, greatly expanding presidential power. A referendum extends Nazarbayev's presidential term until 2000.

1995 – Kazakhstan becomes nuclear-free after cooperating with the U.S. to remove all warheads and weapons-grade material from its territory.

1997 – **The nation's capital shifts from Almaty to Akmola. Akmola is renamed Astana in 1998.**

1999 – In a rescheduled election (originally planned for 2000), Nazarbayev wins another presidential term. Foreign observers deem the election unfair.

2001 – Kazakhstan opens the first major pipeline connecting its Caspian Sea oil fields to world markets (through a Russian port on the Black Sea).

2001 – Nazarbayev meets with then-U.S. President George W. Bush and agrees to a “long-term strategic partnership” between the U.S. and Kazakhstan.

2005 – Nazarbayev is elected for another presidential term following government crackdowns on opposition parties. Foreign observers judge the election unfair.

2007 – **A constitutional amendment makes Nazarbayev personally exempt from the country's two-term limit for the office of president. Parliament regains some power.**

2009 – Kazakhstan agrees to allow the U.S. to transport non-military cargo through its territory to U.S. bases in Afghanistan.

April 2009 – Nazarbayev prepares to build a nuclear fuel bank to consolidate regional materials. Proposed by the IAEA in 2005, the plan is supported by U.S. and Russia.

Chapter 4 Economy

Introduction

When the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) dissolved in late 1991, newly independent Kazakhstan inherited a mixed economic legacy. The Soviets developed Kazakh industry and agriculture to serve the needs of the entire country. In the process, the Republic, located in the Central Asian steppe, became the third-largest economy in the U.S.S.R.¹⁹² However, it was part of a command (or state-run) system of production, a large percentage of which remained under the complete or partial control of central authorities in Moscow until independence.¹⁹³ Because the centrally planned Soviet republics were interdependent, the inefficiencies that contributed to the abandonment of state socialism led to further problems in the immediate post-Soviet era. Specifically, Kazakhstan lost its huge fixed market for locally produced industrial and agricultural products; this resulted in steep declines in output and employment levels as the economy contracted.¹⁹⁴

Such dire circumstances forced Kazakhstan to develop an independent, market-based economy. The government implemented changes that included the establishment of a national currency (the *tenge*), the privatization of state-run industry and public assets, and the solicitation of foreign investment. These reforms laid the institutional groundwork for exploitation of the country's immense natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and minerals. Beginning in 2000, the Kazakhstani economy began to expand rapidly, with annual GDP growth rates reaching 13.5% in 2001 and ranging between 8.5–10.7% from 2002–2007. Meanwhile, in 2002, the U.S. Department of Commerce formally awarded market economy status to Kazakhstan.¹⁹⁵



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Kazakh tenge banknotes

Largely driven by the energy sector, this economic boom brought increased levels of development to the country, although cronyism and corruption reportedly funneled a large share of the economic gains to a small class of connected elites.¹⁹⁶ Today, Kazakhstan has a mixed economy that features both private and state-owned companies. It remains heavily dependent upon the energy sector despite recent efforts to diversify.

¹⁹² *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 12: Creating an Independent Kazakhstan [p. 271]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

¹⁹³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Historical Setting: In the Soviet Union." Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2?r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0016\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2?r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0016))

¹⁹⁴ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 7: Economy [pp. 234–235]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

¹⁹⁵ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Kazakhstan." April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>

¹⁹⁶ *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 4: Trying Pluralism and Abandoning It [p. 124]." 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

GDP growth fell to 3% in 2008 because of the global economic downturn and the corresponding decline in oil prices.¹⁹⁷

Energy

Oil

Kazakhstan possesses an immense supply of oil, with some 30 billion barrels (bbl) of proven reserves. A large portion of its supply is located in the northeastern region of the Caspian Sea, in the Tengiz and Kashagan oil fields.¹⁹⁸ The Kashagan field is the fifth largest oil field in the world. It is still under development and yet to reach its full production potential. Another major field, Karachaganak, is located onshore, north of the Caspian Sea, near the Russian border. U.S. oil companies have significant stakes in these fields. Chevron holds a 50% share in the massive Tengiz field, which it began developing in 1993. Kazmunaigaz, Kazakhstan's state-owned oil company, also has significant shares in the Tengiz and Kashagan fields. Overall, the nation's proven oil reserves are the 11th largest in the world.¹⁹⁹



In 2008, Kazakhstan's oil production averaged 1.429 million bbl per day, while its consumption levels for that year were forecasted at 239,000 bbl per day.²⁰⁰ The large surplus of oil allows Kazakhstan to export huge volumes to market, although the nation is still in the process of developing and expanding its delivery network. In 2001, Kazakhstan opened its first major pipeline connecting the Tengiz oil field to the Russian port city of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. Constructed by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), a group of Kazakhstani, Russian, and other international interests, the pipeline links Kazakhstan's landlocked supplies to world markets.²⁰¹ In 2007, President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced plans to greatly expand the pipeline's capacity in the coming years.²⁰²

Kazakhstan is also developing an extensive pipeline connecting its Caspian Sea oil fields to facilities in western China. In 2006, the eastern portion of the pipeline opened, allowing a flow of oil from the city of Atasu (in central Kazakhstan) into China, where demand is high. The pipeline's unfinished middle portion—spanning west-central

¹⁹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

¹⁹⁸ Energy Information Administration. "Kazakhstan Energy Profile." 15 May 2009. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=KZ

¹⁹⁹ Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Oil." February 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Oil.html>

²⁰⁰ Energy Information Administration. "Kazakhstan Energy Profile." 15 May 2009. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=KZ

²⁰¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Lelyveld, Michael. "Kazakhstan: Caspian Sea Oil Pipeline Symbol of Cooperation." 27 March 2001. <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1096063.html>

²⁰² Forbes.com. AFX News Limited. "Kazakhstan and Russia Plan to Increase CPC Oil Pipeline Capacity." 10 May 2007. <http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2007/05/10/afx3707054.html>

Kazakhstan—is scheduled for completion in 2011.²⁰³ Kazakhstan also maintains a pipeline running from Atyrau (near the Caspian Sea) to the Russian city of Samara; this pipeline taps into the expansive Russian delivery network. Finally, in an effort to reduce its dependency upon Russian networks, Kazakhstan is developing the Kazakhstan–Caspian Transportation System.²⁰⁴ In this network, a planned pipeline will link the Kashagan field with the Kazakhstani port city of Kuryk. From there, oil supplies will be transported on barges across the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan, where they will be pumped through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline to Turkey.²⁰⁵

From 1999–2000, the extraction and export of oil propelled several years of remarkable economic expansion. As of early 2008, the oil industry was responsible for approximately 30% of the nation’s GDP.²⁰⁶ However, declining oil prices slowed economic growth in 2008, demonstrating the nation’s heavy dependence on the petroleum sector. Nonetheless, oil production is projected to rise substantially in the coming decade, potentially pushing Kazakhstan into the ranks of the top ten oil-producing nations in the world.²⁰⁷ To insulate itself from fluctuations in the world market price, in 2000 the Kazakhstani government established the National Oil Fund of Kazakhstan.²⁰⁸ As of March 2009, the fund held roughly USD 22 billion despite heavy spending on economic rescue and stimulus packages in the midst of the global economic downturn.²⁰⁹



Natural Gas

Kazakhstan possesses an estimated 2.832 trillion cubic meters of proved reserves of natural gas, the 16th largest supply in the world.²¹⁰ Nearly all of the country’s natural gas is “associated”—it is found with other fossil fuels, namely oil. Western Kazakhstan contains most of the nation’s deposits; Karachaganak field in the northwest accounts for an estimated 25% of total reserves. As of 2007, Kazakhstan consumed slightly more gas than it produced; nonetheless, it is expected to become a net exporter of the resource in

²⁰³ The Jamestown Foundation. *China Brief*, Vol. 8, No. 21. Peyrouse, Sebastien. “Sino-Kazakh Relations: A Nascent Strategic Partnership.” 4 November 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34142

²⁰⁴ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*. Cutler, Robert M. “Kashagan Leads Kazakhstan to Increase Trans-Caspian Oil Exports.” 9 July 2008. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4901>

²⁰⁵ Energy Information Administration. “Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Oil.” February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Oil.html>

²⁰⁶ Energy Information Administration. “Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Background.” February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Background.html>

²⁰⁷ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Kazakhstan.”

April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>

²⁰⁸ Energy Information Administration. “Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Background.” February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Background.html>

²⁰⁹ Silk Road Intelligencer. “Kazakhstan’s Oil Fund Decreases by 20 Percent Since Beginning of 2009. 8

April 2009. <http://silkroadintelligencer.com/2009/04/08/kazakhstans-oil-fund-decreases-by-20-percent-since-beginning-of-2009/>

²¹⁰ Energy Information Administration. “Kazakhstan Energy Profile.” 15 May 2009.

http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=KZ

the coming years. Its ability to do so depends upon the development of a suitable delivery network. The Central Asian Center Pipeline (CACP), which stretches from Turkmenistan to Russia, currently runs through western Kazakhstan. Various related pipelines are planned or in development, including a pipeline from Turkmenistan to China via Kazakhstan, as well as an expansion of the CACP.²¹¹ Much of Kazakhstan's extracted gas is exported into nearby Russia, while major cities in the south import gas from Uzbekistan on the Tashkent–Bishkek–Almaty pipeline.²¹²

Coal and Electricity

Kazakhstan has long been the site of intensive coal mining, particularly during the Soviet era. North-central Karaganda province is the heart of the nation's coal industry.²¹³ The country possesses the largest recoverable coal reserves in Central Asia, holding approximately 34.5 billion short tons of the resource.²¹⁴ Generally producing more than it consumes, Kazakhstan is a net exporter of coal; Russia and Ukraine are the primary destinations for its coal exports. Because of safety concerns and lack of investment, the coal industry has actually declined since the nation gained its independence.²¹⁵ However, production levels have shown solid growth in recent years.²¹⁶

In 2006, the most recent year with official data, Kazakhstan generated more electricity than it consumed.²¹⁷ Most of the nation's power plants are coal-fired, although Kazakhstan also possesses some hydroelectric facilities, primarily on the Irtysh (Ertis) River. The country's transmission network is outdated, resulting in significant energy loss during distribution.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Power plant in Ekibastuz

The network is also divided into three distinct grids: two in the north and one in the south. The northern grids are connected to a regional network of coal-fired plants; these grids have exported electricity to Russia in recent years. However, the transmission grid in the south has been dependent upon electricity imports from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In 2004, the Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company began construction of an additional north–south power line in an effort to supply the south with reliable, locally produced energy; this project is ongoing.²¹⁸

²¹¹ Reuters UK. Auyezov, Olzhas. "Kazakhstan Starts Building Gas Pipeline to China." 9 July 2008.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKL0939802620080709?sp=true>

²¹² Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Natural Gas." February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/NaturalGas.html>

²¹³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²¹⁴ A short ton = 2000 lbs.

²¹⁵ Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Coal." February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/NaturalGas.html>

²¹⁶ Energy Information Administration. "Kazakhstan Energy Profile: Energy Data Series." No date.

http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_time_series.cfm?fips=KZ

²¹⁷ Energy Information Administration. "Kazakhstan Energy Profile." 15 May 2009.

http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=KZ

²¹⁸ Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Electricity." February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Electricity.html>

Industry and Natural Resources

When it gained its independence, Kazakhstan inherited a well-developed but diminishing industrial sector with deteriorating infrastructure. Without the guaranteed market and support of the greater Soviet Union, Kazakhstan's industrial production sharply declined during the 1990s. Overall output fell by 50% between 1990 and 1995, and the sector's contribution to GDP dropped from 31%–21% over the course of the decade. Since the early 2000s, the oil industry has been largely responsible for the resurgence of Kazakhstan's industrial sector and the economy as a whole.²¹⁹

In addition to fossil fuels, Kazakhstan possesses massive reserves of other mineral resources, the extraction and processing of which have contributed greatly to the nation's industrial output. The country has major deposits of iron ore, lead, copper, chromite, gold, zinc, bauxite, manganese, and uranium. Its reserves of the latter resource are particularly rich; Kazakhstan is thought to possess roughly 20% of the world's total uranium supply.

Since the country initiated privatization, foreign investment in mineral extraction has been substantial. This has allowed widespread development or expansion of mining and metallurgical operations, many of which were initiated during the Soviet era and are in need of rehabilitation.²²⁰



Diopside minerals from Karaganda Province
© Craig J. Boss

In recent years, Kazakhstan has made efforts to diversify its industrial base to reduce its dependency upon the energy sector.²²¹ These efforts have concentrated on the expansion of the manufacturing sector, which has attracted significantly less foreign investment.²²² Major products within this sector include machinery and construction materials. Other industrial products include chemical fertilizers, processed food, synthetic textiles, and pharmaceuticals.²²³ Largely because of the development of the oil and gas industries, the nation's construction industry grew over the last decade as new infrastructure was needed. Nazarbayev's extensive reconstruction and expansion of Astana, the capital city, also contributed to the construction boom.²²⁴ Overall, industrial activity accounted for an

²¹⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²²⁰ U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior. Levine, Richard M. and Glenn J. Wallace. "2005 Minerals Yearbook: Commonwealth of Independent States [pp. 7.5–7.7]." December 2007. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2005/myb3-2005-am-aj-bo-gg-kz-kg-md-rs-ti-tx-up-uz.pdf>

²²¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²²² U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior. Levine, Richard M. and Glenn J. Wallace. "2005 Minerals Yearbook: Commonwealth of Independent States [pp. 7.5–7.7]." December 2007. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2005/myb3-2005-am-aj-bo-gg-kz-kg-md-rs-ti-tx-up-uz.pdf>

²²³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kazakhstan: The Economy: Industry." 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan>

²²⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

estimated 39.4% of GDP in 2008, with only a modest growth rate in industrial production estimated for that year (0.7%).²²⁵

Agriculture

The Soviet legacy is still evident in the agricultural sector. Decades of large-scale development and intensive cultivation practices expanded agricultural areas but also led to severe environmental damage. The extensive single-crop cultivation of the arid steppes led to massive soil erosion and fertility loss, while the heavy use of pesticides and fertilizers contaminated soils and regional water resources with chemical runoff.²²⁶ After independence, the nation was left with deteriorating agricultural infrastructure, and the sector was overshadowed by the development of oil and mineral resources.²²⁷ In 1990, agriculture accounted for 35% of the Kazakh Republic's GDP.²²⁸ By 2008, this percentage had fallen to an estimated 5.8%.²²⁹



Agriculture remains an important sector for the labor force, despite its relatively small contribution to GDP. As of 2005, the most recent year with available estimates, about 31.5% of the population worked in agriculture and animal husbandry.²³⁰ The wide gap between the sector's labor force participation and its economic productivity helps explain rural poverty. In cooperation with international organizations such as the World Bank, the Kazakhstani government has made efforts to revitalize the industry.²³¹ These efforts include investing in modern infrastructure and initiating land reforms aimed at privatizing agricultural plots.²³²

Today, Kazakhstan has around 220 million hectares of agricultural land, the majority of which is used for pasture or the cultivation of forage crops. Its primary agricultural product is wheat. The nation annually produces some 14–15 million tons of the crop, making it the seventh-largest wheat producer in the world. Additional food crops include barley, rice, sugar beets, and various fruits and vegetables. Cotton is an important industrial crop. Livestock and animal products, including meat, dairy goods, and wool,

²²⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²²⁶ The New Agriculturist. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." January 2008. <http://www.new-ag.info/08/01/country.php>

²²⁷ EurasiaNet.org. Nurskenova, Assel. "Kazakhstan Has High Hopes for Agricultural Reform." 29 January 2004. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav012904.shtml>

²²⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²²⁹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²³⁰ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²³¹ The World Bank. "Revitalizing Agriculture in Kazakhstan." No date. <http://go.worldbank.org/X2L1G81MQ0>

²³² EurasiaNet.org. Nurskenova, Assel. "Kazakhstan Has High Hopes for Agricultural Reform." 29 January 2004. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav012904.shtml>

are also important products.²³³ Agricultural crops, especially those of wheat, are primarily grown in the northern steppes.

Banking and Currency

Kazakhstan's banking system includes both state-owned and private financial institutions. The system is dominated by the government-run National Bank of Kazakhstan, which oversees financial regulation and monetary policy in the country. As the nation's central bank, it represents the Kazakhstani government in its transactions with foreign banks and financial institutions.²³⁴ Below the first-tier National Bank, some of the major second-tier banks include BTA (Bank Turan-Alem), Kazkommertsbank, Halyk, and Alliance. Some foreign-based banks, such as Citibank and HSBC, also operate within the country.²³⁵



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Kazakh tenge banknotes

After a period of expansive development, Kazakhstan's indigenous banks encountered serious financial problems at the onset of the global economic crisis in 2007–2008, when credit markets tightened. BTA, the country's largest bank, was one of the hardest hit. After years of growth, it lacked the funds to repay foreign lenders for the debt that it compiled when credit was easy.²³⁶ A similar problem—a high loan-to-deposit ratio—affected the nation's other large banks. As the crisis grew increasingly severe, the Kazakhstani government shifted USD 10 billion from its National Oil Fund to a rescue fund designed to inject capital into the unstable banks.²³⁷ While providing financial support, the government also took administrative control of some of the banks. In doing so, it nationalized BTA and Alliance while acquiring shares in Kazkommertsbank and Halyk.²³⁸

The government has also sought foreign investment, notably from Russian and Chinese interests, to recapitalize the banks. Such investment exposes Kazakhstan to greater Russian influence, compounding its already substantial economic dependence upon its neighbor to the north. The banking crisis posed a major threat to the Kazakhstani economy; in mid 2009, its private sector foreign debt (USD 103 billion) amounted to roughly 86% of the nation's projected GDP for that year.²³⁹

²³³ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Kazakhstan." April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>

²³⁴ The National Bank of Kazakhstan. "About the National Bank of the Republic of Kazakhstan." 2009. <http://www.nationalbank.kz/?uid=2D2DE3A1-D7EC-AA39-CDD03B807F06025A&docid=164>

²³⁵ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Kazakhstan." April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>

²³⁶ The New York Times. Kramer, Andrew E. "Kazakhstan Bank Stops Repaying Foreign Debt." 24 April 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/25/business/global/25default.html>

²³⁷ The New York Times. Kramer, Andrew E. "Kazakhstan Takes Control of 2 Banks." 2 February 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/03/business/worldbusiness/03kazakh.html?_r=1

²³⁸ Reuters India. Auyezov, Olzhas. "Factbox: Key Changes in Kazakhstan's Banking System." 2 February 2009. <http://in.reuters.com/article/mergersNews/idINL266938920090202?sp=true>

²³⁹ StratFor Global Intelligence. "Special Series: The Recession Revisited: The Recession in Kazakhstan." 18 June 2009. http://web.stratfor.com/images/writers/Recession_Revisited_Kazakhstan.pdf

Established in 1993, the *tenge* (KZT) is Kazakhstan's national currency. In February 2009, amid the height of the banking crisis, the National Bank of Kazakhstan devalued the *tenge* by 22%. The move was a response to the depreciation of the Russian ruble, which affected Kazakhstan's economy because of its strong connections with Russia. While helping to maintain the viability of Kazakhstani exports in the Russian market, the move also increased the value of loans taken out in foreign currency, thereby increasing the nation's debt burden.²⁴⁰ After devaluation, the *tenge*'s exchange rate hovered around 150 KZT/1 USD (as of mid 2009).



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Currency exchange in Almaty

Foreign Trade and Investment

The extraction of fossil fuels and minerals has driven Kazakhstan's foreign trade over the last decade. Because of the high value and increasing volume of its oil exports, Kazakhstan has carried a trade surplus since 1999.²⁴¹ In 2008, the country's export values totaled approximately USD 71.2 billion. Imports totaled USD 37.9 billion, providing a USD 33.3 billion surplus. This positive trade balance represented a 100% increase from the previous year, with overall export values growing by nearly 50% from 2007 to 2008.²⁴² (The economic downturn was expected, however, to stall such growth in the coming years.) Mineral products, including fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas, comprised roughly 73% of exports for 2008, with metals accounting for an additional 15.2%. Major imports for that year included machinery and equipment, metals, mineral products, and chemicals. Kazakhstan's major export markets include Italy, Switzerland, China, and Russia. Its major sources of imports are Russia, China, Germany, and Ukraine.²⁴³ Kazakhstan's largest trade partner is Russia, with whom it has carried a negative trade balance in recent years.²⁴⁴

The dominance of commodities in Kazakhstan's export trade is indicative of the country's lack of a diversified economy, most notably a manufacturing sector producing finished goods.²⁴⁵ Oil will almost certainly remain dominant in Kazakhstan's export trade,

²⁴⁰ StratFor Global Intelligence. "Special Series: The Recession Revisited: The Recession in Kazakhstan." 18 June 2009. http://web.stratfor.com/images/writers/Recession_Revisited_Kazakhstan.pdf

²⁴¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²⁴² Reuters India. Swaha Pattanaik, Ed. "Table: Kazakhstan's Trade Surplus Doubles in 2008." 16 February 2009. <http://in.reuters.com/article/asiaCompanyAndMarkets/idINLG10955620090216>

²⁴³ Economist.com. Economist Intelligence Unit. "Country Briefings: Kazakhstan: Factsheet." 9 June 2009. <http://www.economist.com/countries/Kazakhstan/profile.cfm?folder=Profile-FactSheet>

²⁴⁴ International Trade Centre. "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Kazakhstan – 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands)." No date. http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=398&YR=2006&IL=00%20%20All%20industries&TY=T

²⁴⁵ Economist.com. Economist Intelligence Unit. "Country Briefings: Kazakhstan: Factsheet." 9 June 2009. <http://www.economist.com/countries/Kazakhstan/profile.cfm?folder=Profile-FactSheet>

however, as oil production is expected to grow substantially in the coming years with the further development of major oil fields.²⁴⁶

Kazakhstan has received substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) since it began its economic liberalization in 1993. Between 1993 and mid 2008, total FDI in Kazakhstan amounted to just over USD 76 billion. The U.S. has been the nation's primary investor, providing USD 16.8 billion during that time. Other major investors during this period included the Netherlands (USD 12.6 billion), UK (USD 6.5 billion), France (USD 3.8 billion), and Italy (USD 3.6 billion). Russia and China have also served as significant sources of FDI, providing USD 2.86 billion and USD 2.76 billion, respectively. Extractive industries have received a large portion of the nation's FDI.²⁴⁷

Tourism

Kazakhstan's tourism industry is small because of its lack of infrastructure and well-known attractions. Urban areas have Western-style hotels, but they cater more to business travelers than tourists.²⁴⁸ The country's relatively remote location and severe environmental problems also pose limitations to tourists. The industry has potential for further development, however, as Kazakhstan possesses nature reserves, historical ruins, small ski resorts (in the mountains near Almaty), hunting grounds, and shoreline cities on the Caspian Sea and other large bodies of water. Kazakhstan has made efforts to draw more visitors by investing in new infrastructure.²⁴⁹ Significant projects include the newly developed Aktau City on the Caspian Sea shore, a large resort complex on Kapchagay Reservoir (near Almaty), and the mountain resort town of Borovoye in the northeast.²⁵⁰



In recent years, Kazakhstan has also been the site of a small space tourism industry, with extremely wealthy patrons traveling to the International Space Station on spacecraft launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome. The program is operated by the Russian Federal Space Agency, which has leased the launch site from Kazakhstan until 2050.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Oil." February 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Oil.html>

²⁴⁷ Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs. "2008 Investment Climate Statement–Kazakhstan." February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/othr/ics/2009/117413.htm>

²⁴⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²⁴⁹ Ferghana.ru. "Kazakhstan Will Build Aktau-City for \$20 Billion." 12 September 2007. <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2115>

²⁵⁰ Agence France Presse, Google. "Blundering Borat Boosted Tourism: Kazakh Minister." 12 November 2008. http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5htCoYu_NeDFGAhYiWuuZNIFYyA7g

²⁵¹ BBC News. Demytrie, Rayhan. "Ready for Lift-Off on the Kazakh Steppe." 26 March 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7964196.stm>

Transportation

Kazakhstan's transportation network was constructed during the Soviet era. Today, much of this infrastructure is in poor condition, although new highways and rail routes between key areas have been developed in recent years. Kazakhstan's road and rail networks are under heavy stress because of the nation's economic dependence upon freight. With extractive industries operating in various remote locations of the vast country, long-distance shipping is required to move materials throughout the country and into nearby nations on international trade routes. Likewise, the import and distribution of goods requires similar long-distance transport throughout the region.²⁵² As a result, Kazakhstan has one of the highest per-capita volumes of road and rail freight in the world.²⁵³

The country has approximately 91,563 km (58,895 mi) of roadway, most of which is paved.²⁵⁴ Major routes include a recently rehabilitated highway between Astana and Almaty, and highways linking Kazakhstan's important Caspian Sea cities in the west. Some two thirds of the nation's main highways may be in poor condition, however.²⁵⁵ Combined with heavy use, debilitated infrastructure contributes to the country's relatively high number of fatal traffic accidents each year.²⁵⁶

Kazakhstan's railways comprise some 13,700 km (8,513 mi) of track, with major routes running between Kazakhstan's large and/or commercially important cities, although not always directly. The north has the highest concentration of railways; many of these routes extend into the Russian railroad network, including the Trans-Siberian Railway. Of the country's many airports, the most important include the international airports at Almaty, Astana, and Atyrau. Kazakhstan's major shipping ports include the cities of Atyrau and Aktau on the Caspian Sea, and Öskemen, Semey, and Pavlodar on the Irtysh (Ertis) River.²⁵⁷

Standard of Living

Kazakhstan's standard of living is high in comparison with the rest of Central Asia. With an estimated per capita gross national income of USD 6,140, Kazakhstan is classified as a middle-income country. Its human development index (HDI) score—a measure of overall national well-being based on average income, life expectancy, literacy, and educational attainment—places it at the lower end of the high human development level.



© Ulian Harrington
Market in Almaty

²⁵² The World Bank. "Transport: Kazakhstan." 23 February 2006. <http://go.worldbank.org/8BT9WT8PS0>

²⁵³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²⁵⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²⁵⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²⁵⁶ The World Bank. "Transport: Kazakhstan." 23 February 2006. <http://go.worldbank.org/8BT9WT8PS0>

²⁵⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

Of the 179 countries measured in 2008, Kazakhstan ranked 71st, higher than all of its neighbors: Russia (73), China (94), Turkmenistan (108), Uzbekistan (119), and Kyrgyzstan (122).²⁵⁸

While stark disparities between urban and rural areas exist, Kazakhstan's current standard of living represents a marked improvement from that of the initial post-Soviet period, when poverty, unemployment, and inflation were rampant. After development of the energy sector, the country's economic growth resulted in higher average incomes and a sizable middle class.²⁵⁹ The economic windfall also allowed the Kazakhstani government to enhance its health care and social welfare programs; among the latter is a reformed, privatized pension plan that provides support to retirees.²⁶⁰

Despite investment in human development, poverty remains a problem, particularly in rural areas. As of 2008, around 12% of the population lived below the poverty line. While this represents a huge improvement since 1998, when poverty affected 39% of the populace, the recent economic downturn could cause the rate to rise.²⁶¹ Some areas are already severely affected. In the north, the agricultural oblasts of Akmola and North Kazakhstan had poverty rates of 16% in 2007. In the south, Mangystau and Kyzylorda oblasts, both of which are the site of lucrative oil deposits, had poverty rates of 24% in 2007. Of these, Mangystau had a rural poverty rate of approximately 56%, the highest in the nation.²⁶²

Outlook

In mid 2009, Kazakhstan remained affected by the global economic downturn, showing decreased revenues from oil exports and ongoing instability in the banking sector. In June of the same year, the country's total economic stimulus plan, including the bank rescue package, amounted to USD 19 billion. Nurali Aliyev, the deputy head of the Development Bank of Kazakhstan and the grandson of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, was effectively in charge of the rescue package. With a total of USD 43 billion in reserves, the country had significant additional funds at its disposal to relieve the effects of the downturn.²⁶³ However, Grigori Marchenko, the chairman of the National Bank, stated



²⁵⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2007/2008*. "Human Development Indices: A Statistical Update 2008 – HDI Rankings." 18 December 2008. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

²⁵⁹ Silk Road Studies Program, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Daly, John C.K. "Kazakhstan's Emerging Middle Class." March 2008. <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0803Daly.PDF>

²⁶⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Najibullah, Farangis. "Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev Marks 20 Years in Power." 21 June 2009.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kazakhstans_Nazarbaev_Marks_20_Years_In_Power/1759332.html

²⁶¹ Silk Road Studies Program, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Daly, John C.K. "Kazakhstan's Emerging Middle Class [p. 7]." March 2008. <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0803Daly.PDF>

²⁶² The World Bank. "Kazakhstan: Country Brief 2009." April 2009.

<http://go.worldbank.org/9UH84B3B70>

²⁶³ StratFor Global Intelligence. "Special Series: The Recession Revisited: The Recession in Kazakhstan." 18 June 2009. http://web.stratfor.com/images/writers/Recession_Revisited_Kazakhstan.pdf

that the country's banks would not need additional aid in 2009.²⁶⁴ He also expected the inflation rate to fall below 8%; it had reached an estimated 18.6% the previous year.²⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the nation's Economy Minister, Bakhyt Sultanov, forecasted minimal or flat GDP growth for 2009, despite the economy's contraction in the first half of the year.²⁶⁶ Other forecasts predicted that renewed growth would not occur until 2010.²⁶⁷

The World Bank has identified several long-term economic challenges for Kazakhstan. Foremost, the country needs to diversify its economy to reduce its dependence upon oil exports, which are subject to wide fluctuations in the market. This would involve funneling oil revenues and FDI into the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, as well as enhancing educational opportunities to further develop a skilled workforce.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ Bloomberg.com. Lovasz, Agnes. "Kazakh Banks Won't Need Further Aid, Marchenko Says (Update 1)." 17 June 2009. <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601085&sid=aVGJJaeVZVHc>

²⁶⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 28 May 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²⁶⁶ The Guardian. Reuters. Golovnina, Maria and Olzhas Auyezov. "Kazakh Econ Minister Expects Economy to Shrink in H1." 22 June 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/feedarticle/8570473>

²⁶⁷ Economist.com. Economist Intelligence Unit. "Country Briefings: Kazakhstan: Forecast." 9 June 2009. <http://www.economist.com/countries/kazakhstan/profile.cfm?folder=Profile-Forecast>

²⁶⁸ The World Bank. "Kazakhstan: Country Brief 2009." April 2009. <http://go.worldbank.org/9UH84B3B70>

Chapter 5 Society

Introduction

As a relatively young country with an ethnically diverse population, Kazakhstan is still developing a sense of national identity. This process has been challenging because of the historical and cultural divisions between the nation's major ethnic groups. During the Soviet era, Russian culture grew dominant as the Kazakhs' traditional nomadic lifestyle was replaced by the Soviet communist model. Since independence, however, the country has experienced a resurgence of Kazakh culture and political power; the latter has been consolidated by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the nation's ethnic-Kazakh president. While the Kazakhstani government has made attempts to balance the interests of its Kazakh and Slavic (i.e., Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, etc.) communities, social tensions have arisen over issues of nationality, language, and access to economic opportunities. Many non-Kazakhs have left the country because of such concerns.



Despite these tensions, Kazakhstan has remained relatively stable while transitioning from a communist Soviet republic to a constitutional republic with a market-oriented economy. This transition has benefited some groups more than others; socioeconomic conditions vary widely, particularly between urban centers and remote rural areas, where poverty is rampant. Culturally and politically, Kazakhs remain influenced by their tribal traditions and affiliations. Their Muslim heritage is also influential, but less so than in most Islamic cultures. Russian culture remains prominent; it has had a far-reaching and long-term presence in the region. Amid the ongoing interaction of the region's mixed cultures, the government continues to foster the development of a cohesive national identity—one that could bond the country's diverse, regional subgroups through a common heritage.

Ethnic Groups

Kazakhstan has a diverse population, a result of the large-scale settlement and relocation of various ethnic groups to the region during the Soviet era. According to the most recent census (1999),²⁶⁹ the Kazakhstani population consists of Kazakhs (53.4%), Russians (30%), Ukrainians (3.7%), Uzbeks (2.5%), Germans (2.4%), Tatars (1.7%), Uyghurs (1.4%), and various other ethnicities (4.9%).²⁷⁰ Overall, more than 100 different ethnic groups are represented in the country.²⁷¹ Kazakhs are predominant in the south and in rural areas, while Russians, Ukrainians, and Germans are concentrated mostly in the

²⁶⁹ Final data from the 2009 census has yet to be released as of this writing.

²⁷⁰ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 26 June 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²⁷¹ United Nations Development Programme, Kazakhstan. "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan [p. 5]." 2006. http://www.undp.kz/library_of_publications/files/6838-29587.pdf

north and in urban centers.²⁷² In many cases, Kazakhstan's ethnic minorities live near related populations in neighboring countries. For example, the nation's Uzbek population is concentrated in south-central Kazakhstan (near Uzbekistan), while the Uyghur community is concentrated in the southeast, near the Xinjiang Province of western China.

Although Kazakhs are now the nation's predominant ethnic group, they were a minority in the region for much of the Soviet era. Following independence, the country's ethnic composition changed significantly. One and a half million Russians moved out of Kazakhstan between 1992 and 2000; many others had already left during the final years of the Soviet era. Kazakhstan also lost about two thirds (600,000) of its German population and one third (300,000) of its Ukrainian community during this time. While the Germans received financial incentives from the German government to return to their native country, many Russians and Ukrainians left due to their perceived loss of economic opportunity in a nation increasingly dominated by Kazakhs.²⁷³



Kazakhstan's independence also compelled many expatriate Kazakhs to return to their native homeland from various countries; these returnees are known as *oralmans*. Despite their repatriation, the nation's population declined 7.7% according to the 1999 census.²⁷⁴ The decline occurred primarily because of large-scale out-migration of non-Kazakhs during the first decade of the independent era.²⁷⁵ This trend seems to have reversed; early reports of data collected in the 2009 census show a 9% rise in population over the last 10 years.²⁷⁶

Languages

The issue of language is a prime example of the social tensions experienced in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Kazakh is the nation's official "state" language, a designation that dates to 1989, when Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated pro-Kazakh reforms during the final years of the Soviet Union. The language's "state" status was confirmed in 1993, when the newly independent country adopted its first constitution. At this time, Russian, which had

²⁷² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

²⁷³ *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 6: A Divided Society [pp. 174–177]." 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

²⁷⁴ Cairn pour Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques. Arel, Dominique. "Volume 57: Demography and Politics in the First Post-Soviet Censuses: Mistrusted State, Contested Identities [pp. 801–827]." June 2002.

<http://www.google.com/search?q=1999+Kazakhstan+census+population+decline&hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&start=50&sa=N>

²⁷⁵ United Nations Development Programme, Kazakhstan. "Status of Oralman in Kazakhstan [p. 8]." 2006. http://www.undp.kz/library_of_publications/files/6838-29587.pdf

²⁷⁶ Newzzz.kz. "The Population of Kazakhstan has Increased Over the 10 Years to 9%." 2009. http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=ru&u=http://www.newzzz.kz/story/naselenie_kazahstana_uvelichilos_za_10_let_na_9_.html&ei=D2ZwSo3UKY3EsQPJvY3pCA&sa=X&oi=translate&resnum=1&ct=result&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dhttp://newzzz.kz/story/naselenie_kazahstana_uvelichilos_za_10_let_na_9_.html%26hl%3Den

been the dominant language in the region throughout the Soviet era, was designated the official language of “inter-ethnic communication.”²⁷⁷ This sanctioned the wide use of Russian, which members of all ethnic groups had learned in school and used in the public sphere under the Soviets. At the same time, the classification of Kazakh as the “state” language appealed to the country’s Kazakh population, especially those promoting Kazakh nationalism.

In an effort to reconcile ethnic differences, the Russian language was later given “official” status in the country’s 1997 language law. However, the law retained Kazakh as the only “state” language, and it simultaneously called for the language’s increased use in official documentation and media broadcasts.²⁷⁸ Many ethnic Russians have felt alienated by this policy, because their opportunities to work in the government sector have, in effect, been limited by their lack of Kazakh language skills. (At the time of the 1999 census, only 15% of the ethnic-Russian population claimed proficiency in Kazakh.²⁷⁹) Furthermore, as part of the government’s push to expand the use of Kazakh, many non-Kazakh children are now required to learn the language in school. Its incorporation into the educational system has been hampered, however, by the need to translate Russian-language textbooks into Kazakh. There are few teachers who are proficient in the language, and many Kazakhs are more fluent in Russian than in Kazakh.²⁸⁰



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Flower vendor in Almaty

According to 2001 estimates, roughly 95% of the population can speak Russian, while approximately 64% speak Kazakh.²⁸¹ Bilingualism is common. Broadly, Russian remains the language of commerce and the language spoken between members of different ethnic groups. As of 2005–2006, Russian also remained the most widely used language in higher education institutions, with around 56.5% of students taught in the language.²⁸² Aside from Kazakh and Russian, additional languages, such as German, Uyghur, and

²⁷⁷ *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*. Dave, Bhavna. “Chapter 5: Enshrining Kazakh as the State Language [pp. 100–101].” 2007. London: Routledge.

²⁷⁸ *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*. Dave, Bhavna. “Chapter 5: Enshrining Kazakh as the State Language [p. 102].” 2007. London: Routledge.

²⁷⁹ *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*. Dave, Bhavna. “Chapter 5: Enshrining Kazakh as the State Language [p. 113].” 2007. London: Routledge.

²⁸⁰ *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 3: The Challenge of Creating Kazakhstanis [pp. 73–74]” and “Chapter 6: A Divided Society [pp. 177–178].” 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

²⁸¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. “Kazakhstan.” 26 June 2009.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

²⁸² Google Books. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Bank. *Higher Education in Kazakhstan*. “Chapter 7: Internationalisation [p. 149].” 2007. OECD Publishing. http://books.google.com/books?id=2YGOwq2SjIC&pg=PA15&lpg=PA15&dq=Organisation+for+Economic+Co-operation+and+Development,+World+Bank.+Higher+Education+in+Kazakhstan&source=bl&ots=EAi0jbbSR_&sig=Xq9gNENli56lH3oiYuo7MxtJkSM&hl=en&ei=W9htStKKLYjIsQOt8YXLDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1

Ukrainian, are spoken among the country's diverse ethnic groups.²⁸³ The Kazakhstani government has announced tentative plans to replace the Soviet-instituted Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin alphabet. The transition would occur over a 12–15 year period, according to the government. Kazakhstani officials stated that “boosting the national identity of the Kazakh people is the main and decisive” reason for the proposed change—one that would replace the “Soviet (colonial) identity” with a “sovereign (Kazakh) identity.”²⁸⁴

Religion

Traditionally, ethnic Kazakhs are followers of Islam. The religion first came to the region in the 8th century, but it was not until the 18th and 19th centuries that it became widely accepted among the Kazakhs.²⁸⁵ Many Kazakhs adopted elements of Islam while also observing indigenous religious practices, such as animism and ancestor worship. This synthesis produced what some observers have called “folk Islam,” an informal, less rigid version of the traditional religion.²⁸⁶ Religious activity was largely suppressed during the Soviet era. The nation experienced a moderate religious revival after religious freedoms were, for the most part, restored under Nursultan Nazarbayev. Today, a large percentage of Kazakhs identify themselves as Muslims, but active participation in the religion is not widespread.²⁸⁷ This is, in part, a legacy of the secular Soviet era. Kazakhstan's Uzbek, Uyghur, and Tatar ethnic groups are also traditionally Muslim. The vast majority of Kazakhstan's Muslims practice the Sunni form of Islam; small numbers of Shafi'i Sunni, Shi'a, Sufi, and Ahmadi followers also live in the country. Southern Kazakhstan, near the border with Uzbekistan, has the highest concentration of practicing Muslims. Most of the country's Muslim groups are affiliated with the Spiritual Association of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK), which is closely linked to the Kazakhstani government.²⁸⁸



Men gathered in a mosque in Almaty

²⁸³ Ethnologue.com. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 15th ed. Raymond G. Gordon, Jr., Ed.

“Languages of Kazakhstan.” 2005. Dallas: SIL International.

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=KZ

²⁸⁴ EurasiaNet.org. Bartlett, Paul. “Kazakhstan: Moving Forward with Plan to Replace Cyrillic with Latin Alphabet.” 4 September 2007. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav090407.shtml>

²⁸⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill.

“Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Religion: Islam in the Past.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996.

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0028\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0028))

²⁸⁶ Google Books. *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook*. Hanks, Reuel R. “Kazakhstan: Part One: Narrative Section: Kazakhstan Institutions: Religions and Society [pp. 217–218].” 2005. ABC-CLIO.

http://books.google.com/books?id=7qEgs9ZL7LgC&pg=PA80&lpg=PA80&dq=Central+Asia:+A+Global+Studies+Handbook.+Hanks,+Reuel+R.&source=bl&ots=ugripmcZL4&sig=a6ReYf341OzoVEA72spBkzEbTfM&hl=en&ei=n99tSpinNlz-sgOZpanKDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6

²⁸⁷ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. “Religion: Islam in Kazakhstan Today [p. 74].” 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

²⁸⁸ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *2008 Report on International Religious Freedom*. “Kazakhstan.” 19 September 2008.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108501.htm>

Traditionally, Kazakhstan's ethnic Slavs are followers of the Russian Orthodox Church, also known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, a major branch of Christianity. Other Christian groups in Kazakhstan include Roman Catholics (often of Ukrainian or German ethnicity), Lutherans, Greek Catholics, Protestants, Baptists, and several other denominations. Other religious groups include Jews, Buddhists, Hare Krishna, and Baha'is. Some Kazakhs continue to observe elements of ancient belief systems such as animism, shamanism, and ancestor worship; these practices are traditionally linked to the nomadic lifestyle.²⁸⁹ Broadly, there are also many nonbelievers in Kazakhstan, and many of those who identify themselves with a certain religion may not be active participants.²⁹⁰

Kazakhstan is a secular nation with a constitution that provides relative freedom of religion to its citizens. In 2008, the government passed legislation that imposed various restrictions on minority, or "nontraditional," religious groups. In 2009, however, the legislation was stalled by the nation's Constitutional Council, which stated that the laws were "inconsistent" with the Kazakhstani constitution.²⁹¹ The government has routinely defended its regulation of religious activity—it requires religious groups to register with the government—by claiming the need to deter religious extremism and ethnic conflict. Indeed, the government has banned political groups based on either religion or ethnicity, and it has made efforts to equally recognize the interests of its Muslim Kazakh and Christian Slavic constituencies.²⁹² Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia that does not give special significance to Islam in its constitution.²⁹³



Traditions

Within the Kazakh community, identification with one of the three traditional Kazakh hordes remains an important part of social identity. The three hordes, or *juz* (*zhuz*), are tribal divisions that emerged within the Kazakh Khanate sometime during the 16th century.²⁹⁴ Each horde corresponds with a specific geographic region of the country: the Lesser Horde traditionally roamed western Kazakhstan; the Middle Horde controlled the central, northern, and northeastern portions of the region, and the Great Horde occupied the south and the southeast. Because of their location, the Lesser and Middle Hordes were exposed to Russian influence earlier than the Great Horde and are thus described as more

²⁸⁹ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Religion: Ancient Practices [pp. 76–77]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

²⁹⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *2008 Report on International Religious Freedom*. "Kazakhstan." 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108501.htm>

²⁹¹ The Washington Times. Duin, Julia. "Kazakhstan Backs Off on Religion Limits." 13 February 2009. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/13/kazakhstan-reverses-law-to-restrict-minority-relig/>

²⁹² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *2008 Report on International Religious Freedom*. "Kazakhstan." 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108501.htm>

²⁹³ *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook*. Hanks, Reuel R. "Kazakhstan: Part One: Narrative Section: Kazakhstan Institutions: Religions and Society [pp. 219–220]." 2005. Oxford: ABC-CLIO.

²⁹⁴ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 11–14]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

“Russified” than the latter group.²⁹⁵ This extends, in particular, to language; the Lesser and Middle Hordes have greater percentages of Russian-language speakers than the Great Horde.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, each tribal division roughly corresponds to the three dialects of the Kazakh language: western, northeastern, and southern Kazakh.²⁹⁷

Most Kazakhs continue to trace their heritage to one of the three hordes, which are further divided into tribes and clans. Indeed, it is customary for Kazakhs to know seven generations of family lineage on the male side. However, not all Kazakhs may know such information, particularly after the social unrest and large-scale loss of life that afflicted the Kazakh community during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, the Middle Horde has the largest population, followed by the Great and Lesser Hordes. Clan networks continue to play an important role in Kazakhstani politics and business; tribal relations can be a factor in securing employment, for example. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the country’s president, is a member of the Great Horde.²⁹⁸

Gender Issues

Kazakhstani men and women have been affected in different ways by the often difficult transition from a Soviet communist society to an independent nation with a market economy. Traditionally, women have played a strong role in nomadic Kazakh society, particularly in economic production and household management. The latter responsibility often empowered them with decision-making authority within the household. Under the Soviets, gender equality was promoted according to the idea that both sexes should contribute to the greater society’s economic production (outside of the domestic sphere). Women were, however, encouraged to work in social sectors, such as health care and education; these were deemed “suitable” for them according to Russian traditions. Today, women remain heavily involved in the economic and social spheres, although patriarchal attitudes influence and, in many cases, limit their roles. Broadly, non-Kazakh traditions in which men are assigned the dominant role in decision-making and income-earning have become more common in the independent era.²⁹⁹



© Fabio Caramei
Women selling wool and blankets

Both sexes have relatively equal access to education, with high primary-to-secondary school enrollment rates (96.2% for women and 97% for men) and high overall literacy

²⁹⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: Population and Society: Clans.” Glenn E. Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0027\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0027))

²⁹⁶ *Kazakhstan (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia)*. Corrigan, Jim. “Chapter 5: The People: Culture Clashes [pp. 73–76].” 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

²⁹⁷ *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook*. Hanks, Reuel R. “Kazakhstan: Part One: Narrative Section: Kazakhstan Society and Social Issues: Ethnicity and Social System: Ethnic Groups [p. 232].” 2005. Oxford: ABC-CLIO.

²⁹⁸ *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 6: A Divided Society: Intra-Ethnic Relations [pp. 183–189.]” 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

²⁹⁹ Asian Development Bank. *Country Gender Assessment: Republic of Kazakhstan*. “Chapter 2: Gender Dimensions of Poverty [pp. 8–11].” May 2006. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Country-Gender-Assessments/cga-kaz.pdf>

rates (99.3% for women and 99.8% for men).³⁰⁰ In higher education, women actually comprise the greater percentage of students (58.1%). However, men have a higher workforce participation rate (74.9% compared to 64.6% for women), and they generally receive higher wages.³⁰¹ This is in part due to women's high rate of employment in social and service sectors, such as education and health care, in which salaries are lower than those for men, despite often high levels of education.³⁰²

On the other hand, men more often work in high-income fields, such as the energy sector, and they often work at higher levels in the management structure, for which they generally receive more opportunities than women. As a result, in 2002, women earned, on average, 62% of the average wage earned by men. This gap has actually increased since the end of the Soviet era. These disparities contribute to elevated rates of unemployment and greater susceptibility to poverty for women. Overall, many Kazakhstani women have expressed a sense of disempowerment in the independent era.³⁰³ This extends to governmental representation; only 12.9% of the nation's parliamentary seats are held by women. Broadly, economic insecurity and stress related to social change have also contributed to domestic violence.³⁰⁴



Another significant gender gap in Kazakhstan is the disparity in life expectancy for men and women. As of 2007, Kazakhstani women lived an average of 72.5 years, while men averaged only 61.5. This wide gap has been attributed to men's higher participation in potentially dangerous industrial jobs, as well as unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and alcohol abuse.³⁰⁵

Cuisine

Kazakhstan has two major styles of cuisine: Russian and Kazakh. Russian cuisine is common in urban areas and the northern steppes, where the Russian population is concentrated. It is influenced by the cuisine of Central Asia, and thus it overlaps with regional cuisine in some respects. Meats, fish, vegetables (often pickled), soups (hot or cold), and bread comprise a large share of the traditional Russian diet. A typical full-course meal begins with appetizers (*zakuski*) such as salads, cold meats, salted fish,

³⁰⁰ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kazakhstan." 26 June 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/KZ.html>

³⁰¹ UNdata. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." 2009.

<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?cname=Kazakhstan>

³⁰² Asian Development Bank. *Country Gender Assessment: Republic of Kazakhstan*. "Chapter 6: Gender Dimensions of Human Development [p. 44]." May 2006. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Country-Gender-Assessments/cga-kaz.pdf>

³⁰³ Asian Development Bank. *Country Gender Assessment: Republic of Kazakhstan*. "Chapter 5: Gender Dimensions of Economic Development [pp. 27–28]." May 2006.

<http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Country-Gender-Assessments/cga-kaz.pdf>

³⁰⁴ UNdata. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." 2009.

<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?cname=Kazakhstan>

³⁰⁵ IRIN, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "Kazakhstan: Alarm Raised over the Deteriorating Health of Men." 12 July 2007. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=73207>

caviar, or pickled vegetables. Soups are also common starters; *borscht* (beet soup), *shchi* (cabbage soup), and *solyanka* (a thick vegetable stew made with meat or fish) are traditional varieties. Main courses generally consist of a fish or meat dish with bread. *Pelmeni* (meat-filled dumplings) and *shashlyk* (kebabs) are two common meat-based dishes. Popular varieties of fish include herring, sturgeon, pike, and salmon. *Bliny* (pancakes) are commonly eaten for breakfast or on special occasions. Black tea and vodka are popular beverages.³⁰⁶

With a heavy emphasis on animal products, Kazakh cuisine reflects the culture's traditional nomadic pastoral lifestyle. Meat is the basis for most meals; vegetarianism is practically unheard of in Kazakhstan. Favorite meats include mutton (sheep), beef, and, especially, horse. Made from all parts of the body, Kazakh horse meat specialties include *kazy* and *shuzhuk* (smoked seasoned sausage encased in intestines), *zhaya* (smoked and boiled hip meat), and *zhal* (smoked and boiled neck fat).³⁰⁷ *Kazy* is occasionally sliced and served with cold noodles in a dish called *naryn*. The most well-known dish in Kazakhstan is *bashbarmak*, or "five fingers."³⁰⁸ Eaten by hand, *bashbarmak* consists of boiled chunks of horse meat or mutton served with onions and pieces of boiled pasta dough. The broth (*sorpa*) from the boiling process is consumed after the meat portion of the meal. *Kuurdak* is another popular meal; it is a stew-like dish made from the fat and organs (i.e., heart, liver, kidneys, etc.) of sheep, horse, or cow.³⁰⁹ *Manti* are meat dumplings, often made with lamb. Boiled sheep or horse heads are traditionally presented to honored guests as delicacies.

Aside from red meats, Kazakhs also eat chicken and fish, such as pike, sturgeon, and salmon. Caviar is served as a delicacy. Found throughout Central Asia, *plov*, or pilaf, is a common rice dish combining vegetables, meat, and, occasionally, fruits such as apples, apricots, or raisins. *Sorpa* (meat broth) and *kespe* (red meat or chicken with noodles) are common soups. Flat breads, such as *lepeska*, are typically paired with meals. Similar to doughnuts, *boursaki* is a popular snack that may also accompany meals. Animal products such as cheese, yogurt, curd, sour cream, and butter are widely consumed. Likewise, many Kazakh drinks are dairy-based. *Kumys* (fermented horse's milk) is a traditional favorite, as is *shubat* (fermented camel's milk). Milk, fruit juices, black tea, coffee, and vodka are also common beverages.³¹⁰



Shubat, fermented camel milk

³⁰⁶ Food in Every Country. "Food in Kazakhstan." No date. <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Kazakhstan.html>

³⁰⁷ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Food: Meat [pp. 113–114]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

³⁰⁸ The New York Times. Greenberg, Ilan. "Almaty." 18 September 2006. <http://travel.nytimes.com/2006/09/18/business/businessspecial2/18almaty.html>

³⁰⁹ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley, Paul Clammer, and Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: Food and Drink [p. 93]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

³¹⁰ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Food [pp. 114–120]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

Traditional Dress

In urban areas, modern styles of clothing are worn by both sexes. Some garments that are suggestive of traditional dress, such as felt hats and fur-lined coats, are still common, however. For men, this may also include knee-length boots.³¹¹ While residents of remote rural villages may wear traditional Kazakh clothing, it is largely reserved for special occasions and cultural festivals. For men, a characteristic item is the *chapan* (*shapan*), a long, woolen robe tied with a sash. Today, ceremonial *chapan* are often richly embroidered and made from velvet. Traditionally, Kazakh men wore the *chapan* over a loose shirt, jacket, and trousers, with tall leather boots and elaborate headwear. Reflecting the Kazakhs' traditional pastoral economy, these items were made from wool, camel hair, leather, fur, and goat or antelope hides.³¹²



© Sara Yeomans
Elderly man in Almaty

For Kazakh women, traditional clothing consists of a long, sleeveless jacket or vest worn over flowing dresses made of cotton, silk, or velvet. A *beldemshe*, or wrap-around skirt, may also be worn; it is fastened with a belt. Ceremonial dresses are usually finely embroidered and paired with jewelry. Kazakh women frequently cover their hair with a shawl or handkerchief. Various forms of headgear are also common, especially on ceremonial occasions; these include fur hats and tall, conical headpieces.³¹³ White, open-faced hoods may be worn by older Kazakh women.

The Arts

Today, popular art forms in Kazakhstan include film, theatre, opera, and ballet. While the film market is dominated by foreign-made movies, theatre and dance productions—which grew popular during the Soviet era—they now often incorporate Kazakh cultural themes. Many of them come from the Kazakhs' rich oral, literary, and musical traditions.

Oral and Musical Tradition

In the nomadic era, the Kazakhs passed their culture from generation to generation through an oral tradition of legends, stories, and poems. Such performances were typically accompanied by music. The narrative aspect was performed by *akyn* (improvisational poets, singers, and storytellers) or *jyrau* (lyric poets and storytellers with greater social esteem and worldly knowledge than the *akyn*). Their stories and poems described the Kazakhs' nomadic life on the steppes, often focusing on the exploits of a *batir*, or heroic Kazakh warrior, and his horse. The Kazakhs' historical battles with the

³¹¹ *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook*. Hanks, Reuel R. "Kazakhstan: Part One: Narrative Section: Kazakhstan Society and Social Issues: Ethnicity and Social System: Ethnic Groups [p. 232]." 2005. Oxford: ABC-CLIO.

³¹² *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 6: The Creative Force [pp. 216–217]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

³¹³ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 6: The Creative Force [pp. 216–217]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

Kalmyk Mongols figure prominently in their oral tradition.³¹⁴ Many of these stories and poems survive today and form the basis for the Kazakh literary tradition. One of the most famous early Kazakh poets, Asan Kangi, also known as Asan the Sad, left the Golden Horde of the Mongol Empire to join Kirai and Janibek in the formation of the Kazakh tribal union.³¹⁵

The Kazakhs' musical tradition has played a similar, complementary role in the presentation and preservation of their culture. Traditional Kazakh songs, known as *kyuis*, are played on a variety of instruments. The most notable of these is the *dombra*, a two-stringed lute with a long-neck, made from wood. This instrument typically accompanies traditional folk singing, often of a sad and reflective variety. Today, *dombra* players continue to compete in song competitions known as *aitys*—events that are common during holidays.³¹⁶ Additional Kazakh musical instruments include the violin-like *kobyz*, the *sybyzgy* (a reed flute), the *dauylpaz* (a type of drum), and the *asatayak* (a long staff with metal pendants that serves as a rattle).³¹⁷



Literature

Building upon centuries of oral storytelling and poetry, Kazakh literature emerged in written form in the 19th century. Its initial development is closely associated with Abai Kunanbaev (1845–1904), a well-educated ethnic Kazakh from the northeastern steppes, near modern-day Semey. Kunanbaev produced songs and poetic works that celebrated the Kazakh nomadic lifestyle. Educated in both the Muslim and Russian traditions, he translated Russian literary works into Kazakh and found inspiration in Muslim poetry and philosophy. While promoting Kazakh culture, he also embraced many aspects of the Russian tradition, particularly its emphasis on education.

Modern Kazakh literature is often associated with the work of Mukhtar Auezov (1897–1961), a writer, historian, and critic. Born to a nomadic family, Auezov dedicated much of his work to examining and preserving Kazakh culture, language, and history amid the rapid and often destructive social change brought about by the Soviets. Some of his most famous works are *Abai* (1947) and *Abai's Path* (1956), two epic novels that explore the work of Abai Kunanbaev amid the larger backdrop of Kazakh culture. Many of Auezov's contemporaries were victims of Stalin's purges in the 1930s.³¹⁸

³¹⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Kazakhstan: A Country Study*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Kazakhstan: Historical Background: National Identity: Culture." Glenn E Curtis, Ed. 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kz0031\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kz0031))

³¹⁵ *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 1: Origin of the Kazakhs and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate [pp. 21–22]." 1995. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

³¹⁶ *Central Asia*, 3rd edition. Mayhew, Bradley and Paul Clammer, Michael Kohn. "Kazakhstan: Arts [pp. 90–91]." 2004. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

³¹⁷ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Arts [pp. 89–91]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

³¹⁸ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 6: The Creative Force [pp. 203–205]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

Textiles and Jewelry

The Kazakhs maintain a rich tradition of finely crafted textiles, especially in the form of carpets and embroidered costumes. Northeastern Kazakhstan is especially known for its carpet industry. Traditionally made from wool, Kazakh carpets display various geometric designs in a variety of colors. Kazakhs are also known for their silversmithing, a traditional practice that reached its peak in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.³¹⁹ Intricately designed silver objects from this period include silver-adorned wooden saddles, belt clasps, amulets, bracelets, and rings. Many of these objects display floral and geometric patterns; they can be seen in Kazakhstan's many museums.³²⁰

Sports and Recreation

Kazakhstan's sporting scene is a mix of modern and traditional pastimes. Reflecting the traditional nomadic lifestyle, equestrian sports remain popular. The most well-known of these games is *kokpar*, which is somewhat similar to polo. In *kokpar*, an unlimited number of horse-riding participants scramble for possession of a goat carcass; the action takes place in the open steppes, with no assigned boundaries. Other equestrian events include *audaryspak*, a wrestling match between two mounted riders, and *alaman-baiga*, a long-distance endurance race. Kazakhs also test their horsemanship skills in *kumis alu*, an event in which riders attempt to grab a small item, such as a coin or handkerchief, from the ground while galloping at a fast pace.³²¹ Other traditional Kazakh sports include *kazaksha kures*, a Kazakh form of wrestling, and falconry, which is known as *berkutchi*. The latter sport involves the patient training of a captured bird of prey, often an eagle, which is thereafter used to hunt small game such as foxes.³²²

Today, soccer, known elsewhere as football, is an extremely popular spectator sport. The country's professional league, now known as the Premier League, was founded shortly after independence. The Soviet legacy is evident in Kazakhstan's participation in various Olympic events, including speed skating and ice hockey, both of which are quite popular.³²³ The massive Medeo skating rink in Almaty hosts these activities. Other winter sports, such as skiing, are similarly suited to Kazakhstan's cold climate. Several small ski resorts are located in the mountains of the southeast, and cross-country skiers can be seen in the northern steppes. First built by the Soviets to train their athletes, Chimbulak is a winter sports venue that was expanded by the Kazakhs, and has become one of Central



³¹⁹ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Arts [pp. 92–93]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

³²⁰ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 6: The Creative Force [pp. 218–219]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

³²¹ *Kazakhstan* (Cultures of the World). Pang, Guek-Cheng. "Leisure [pp. 98–99]." 2001. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation.

³²² *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 5: The Social Scene [pp. 184–187]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

³²³ *Kazakhstan: The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia*. Corrigan, Jim. "Chapter 5: The People: Arts and Entertainment [p. 85]." 2005. Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers.

Asia's premier ski resorts.³²⁴ Additional popular sports and pastimes include hiking, hunting, cycling, boxing, weight-lifting, and horse racing.³²⁵

³²⁴ BBC News. "On the Piste in Kazakhstan." MacWilliam, Ian. 14 February 2004.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/3485835.stm

³²⁵ *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age*. Fergus, Michael and Janar Jandosova. "Chapter 5: The Social Scene [pp. 188-189]." 2003. London: Stacey International.

Chapter 6 Security

Introduction

Kazakhstan's global significance has increased dramatically during the last decade; it has emerged as a cooperative, politically stable nation in a strategic, energy-rich region. The extraction of the country's immense fossil fuel deposits and other natural resources largely propelled its rise. Through foreign investment and bilateral trade, the development of Kazakhstan's energy sector enhanced the country's relations with a number of regional and global powers. In this process, the Kazakhstani government has generally followed what it describes as a "multi-vectored" foreign policy, in which inclusive engagement with multiple, often competing foreign powers is pursued.³²⁶



© Dan Nevill
Flag of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is linked to its neighbors through shared economic and security interests, particularly in terms of energy production and delivery contracts. Its regional commitments include membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a coalition of former Soviet Republics, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an economic and security alliance comprising Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It is also a member of a regional military alliance, the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); this commitment reflects the country's deep military ties to Russia. At the same time, Kazakhstan has developed strong economic and security ties with the U.S. It has also cooperated with the Belgium based North American Treaty Organization (NATO), the post World War II military alliance that includes the U.S., Canada, and numerous European countries.³²⁷

On the domestic front, the strong presidential rule of Nursultan Nazarbayev has shaped Kazakhstan's political landscape and national security policies. The Nazarbayev government has been criticized for the nation's corruption problems and slow democratization process. Conversely, it has been credited with stifling the ethnic tension, religious extremism, and internal conflict that have plagued other former Soviet Republics. Under Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan has cooperated with regional and global powers on various security issues, including counterterrorism efforts. In 2009, the country remained relatively stable, despite the global economic downturn and potential political infighting concerning the eventual replacement of Nazarbayev, who has ruled the country for the entire independent era.³²⁸

³²⁶ EurasiaNet.org. "Foreign Minister Confirms Kazakhstan's Multi-Vectored Policy." 3 October 2003. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav100303a.shtml>

³²⁷ Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. McDermott, Roger N. "Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends [pp. 1–2]." February 2009. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB904.pdf>

³²⁸ Economist.com. Economist Intelligence Unit. "Country Briefings: Kazakhstan: Political Forces." 27 September 2007. <http://www.economist.com/COUNTRIES/Kazakhstan/profile.cfm?folder=Profile%2DPolitical%20Forces>

Military and National Security

Structure of the Armed Forces

Kazakhstan's Armed Forces consist of Ground, Air Defense, and Airmobile Forces, as well as a small Navy and a Missile Troops and Artillery division. The largest branch, the Ground Forces, has an estimated troop strength of 45,000. It is administered through four regional commands: Central (Astana), Eastern, Western, and Southern. The Air Defense Forces (ADF) has an estimated troop strength of 13,000. The ADF, which includes a ground-based regiment, operates nine regional air bases. Soviet- and Russian-designed MiG and Sukhoi aircraft comprise the majority of the ADF fleet.



With a functional naval college but no confirmed ships, the Kazakhstani Navy was still under development in early 2009. Scheduled to begin operations in 2010, the Navy will be tasked with protecting Kazakhstani interests on the Caspian Sea.³²⁹ Kazakhstan's Maritime Border Guard currently performs similar duties. As a whole, the Armed Forces are overseen by the Ministry of Defense. The National Security Committee (KNB) is the nation's central intelligence and security agency. Additional national security forces include various paramilitary units, including police, border protection forces, a presidential guard (known as the Republican Guard), and a government guard.³³⁰ Broadly, Kazakhstan's military doctrine emphasizes antiterrorism and border defense capabilities.³³¹

Reform Efforts and Issues Affecting the Military

When it became an independent country, Kazakhstan faced the task of developing an independent army from the incomplete and decaying military infrastructure that it inherited from the Soviet Union. This slow, ongoing process of development and reform has been hampered by underfunding, obsolete equipment, poor or insufficient training, and a lack of professional service members.³³² Historically, the Kazakhstani military has relied heavily on compulsory conscription, which previously involved a two-year service obligation for selected 18 year-old males. However, in line with the military's efforts to transition to a professional army, the standard service obligation was reduced to 12

³²⁹ Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. McDermott, Roger N. "Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends [pp. 6–10]." February 2009.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB904.pdf>

³³⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." December 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

³³¹ Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. McDermott, Roger N. "Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends [pp. 6–10]." February 2009.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB904.pdf>

³³² The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 1, No. 71. McDermott, Roger. "Kazakhstan's Military Reform Creeps Forward." 10 August 2004.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=26743

months in 2005. The minimum age for volunteers is reportedly 19, although teenagers can attend military boarding schools and preparation classes.³³³



Hazing is a widespread problem in the Kazakhstani military, with many such incidents reported each year. In 2007, for example, the deaths of three soldiers were attributed to military hazing, while another 115 non-lethal hazing incidents were documented. Several suicides that year were also linked to hazing.³³⁴ Reflecting a broader political and social issue, corruption is another major concern in the Kazakhstani military. Low wages, low

morale, and a lack of training and discipline have been identified as contributing factors to this problem, which extends to high levels.³³⁵ Daniyal Akhmetov, the nation's first civilian Defense Minister, was removed from office in mid 2009 amid a highly publicized crackdown on corruption. While Akhmetov was not immediately charged, his dismissal occurred in the wake of investigations into suspect defense contracts with foreign-based companies.³³⁶ Some observers saw his firing as a sign of internal power struggles within the Kazakh elite.³³⁷

Defense Ties

As a legacy of the Soviet era, Kazakhstan's defense network remains closely tied to Russia, which has played a major role in Kazakhstan's efforts to develop and modernize its military. Lacking a well-developed defense industry of its own, Kazakhstan is heavily dependent upon Russian military equipment and weaponry. It also relies on Russian support for military education and training. Indeed, many pilots in the Air Defense Forces (ADF) are Russian nationals who trained in the Russian military but work in the Kazakhstani armed forces on a contract basis.³³⁸ The Kazakhstani and Russian defense networks are further linked through the broader organizational union of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The union is a regional military alliance dominated by the Russians and generated by the Commonwealth of Independent States

³³³ Refworld. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*. "Kazakhstan." 20 May 2008.

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c2254a,459be22b2,486cb10d26,0.html>

³³⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*.

"2008 Human Rights Report: Kazakhstan." 25 February 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/sca/119135.htm>

³³⁵ Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. McDermott, Roger N. "Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends [pp. 31–39]." February 2009.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB904.pdf>

³³⁶ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 120. McDermott, Roger. "Akhmetov Sacked as Astana Purges 'Corruption'." 23 June 2009.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35162&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=2dcb63e33a

³³⁷ EurasiaNet.org. Lillis, Joanna. "Kazakhstan: Corruption Scandals an Indicator of Clan Infighting in Astana?" 10 July 2009. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav071009a.shtml>

³³⁸ Central-Asia Caucasus Institute. *Central-Asia Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Yermukanov, Marat.

"Kazakhstan Seeks Russian Assistance to Modernize its Army." 7 March 2007.

<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4472>

(CIS).³³⁹ The Kazakhstani military has committed a unit of its Airmobile Forces to the CSTO's fledgling military organization, the Collective Operation Reaction Force (CORF), previously known as the Collective Rapid Response Force.³⁴⁰

The Russian-led development of the CSTO has been widely interpreted as an attempt to counterbalance the influence of NATO.³⁴¹ Despite its close connections to Russia and the CSTO, Kazakhstan has also developed ties with NATO, although on a much smaller scale. For example, Kazakhstan's KAZBRIG unit (formerly known as KAZBAT), a peacekeeping brigade, underwent structural reforms to achieve interoperability with NATO forces. As part of NATO's Partnership for Peace program, the KAZBAT unit served alongside coalition troops in Iraq between 2003 and 2008. While this targeted reform effort was moderately successful, it affected only a small portion of the Kazakhstani army, which is in need of systemic reform.³⁴²

U.S.–Kazakhstan Relations

With a history of cooperative relations, the U.S. maintains a strong strategic partnership with Kazakhstan. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was the first country to recognize Kazakhstan as an independent nation (in December 1991). Early relations between the two countries were marked by initial U.S. investment in the Kazakhstani energy sector and U.S. involvement in the removal of Soviet-era nuclear weaponry, materials, and infrastructure from Kazakhstani territory. As a result of the latter process, Kazakhstan obtained nuclear-free status in 1995 and garnered international support for voluntarily relinquishing such materials. The U.S. also assisted Kazakhstan in the sealing of 181 nuclear test tunnels, a process that was completed in May 2000.³⁴³



The U.S. relationship with Kazakhstan strengthened after September 2001, when Kazakhstan pledged support for U.S.-led efforts to combat international terrorism. This support included the deployment of the Kazakhstani KAZBAT (now KAZBRIG) unit to Iraq, and the opening of Kazakhstani airspace to NATO aircraft operating in support of the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan. U.S.–Kazakhstan military engagement has also

³³⁹ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 93. Sharip, Farkhad. "Kazakhstan Balances NATO and Pro-Russian Alliances." 14 May 2009. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34984&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=eb703d237d

³⁴⁰ Asia Times Online. McDermott, Roger. "Russia's 'Virtual Cold War' in Central Asia." 21 February 2009. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Front_Page/KB21Aa05.html

³⁴¹ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 107. Felgenhauer, Pavel. "Moscow Struggling to Transform CSTO into a 'Russian NATO'." 4 June 2009. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35085&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=adf13b6e1e

³⁴² Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. McDermott, Roger N. "Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends [pp. 23–26]." February 2009. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB904.pdf>

³⁴³ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Kazakhstan." April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>

involved joint military exercises, information exchanges, and training assistance for Kazakhstan's KAZBAT unit. In line with a five-year military cooperation agreement signed by the two countries in February 2008, additional bilateral exchanges and exercises are planned for coming years.³⁴⁴ Most recently, in early 2009, Kazakhstan announced that it will allow the U.S. to ship non-military cargo through its territory en route to Afghanistan.³⁴⁵

Since the institution of market reforms in Kazakhstan, the U.S. has been its largest source of foreign direct investment. Between 1993 and mid 2008, U.S. companies invested approximately USD 16.8 billion in Kazakhstan; a large percentage of this investment targeted the energy sector.³⁴⁶ Bilateral trade between the two countries grew substantially throughout this time, reaching USD 2.6 billion in 2008.³⁴⁷ The U.S. Government has also provided considerable financial aid to Kazakhstan, amounting to nearly USD 1.4 billion between 1992 and 2007. In addition to supporting Kazakhstani security operations and the removal of nuclear infrastructure, these funds have promoted market reforms, advancements in healthcare and education, and political democratization.³⁴⁸ The U.S. has also provided support to various Kazakhstan-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that promote causes such as media freedom and legal reform.³⁴⁹

Relations with Neighboring Countries

China

Since 2005, Kazakhstan and China have maintained a strategic partnership based on mutual economic and security interests.³⁵⁰ Although bilateral exchanges began shortly after Kazakhstan's independence, their early relations were marked by a border dispute. After more than five years of discussions, the two sides signed an agreement in 1998 that officially demarcated their 1,533 km (953 mi) boundary. This agreement allowed expansion of trade between the two countries in the following years.³⁵¹ In 2008, bilateral

³⁴⁴ Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. McDermott, Roger N. "Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends." February 2009.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB904.pdf>

³⁴⁵ BBC News. "Kazakhstan to Allow US Shipments." 9 February 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7878824.stm>

³⁴⁶ Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "2008 Investment Climate Statement – Kazakhstan." February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/othr/ics/2009/117413.htm>

³⁴⁷ Office of the United States Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President. "Kazakhstan." 21 May 2009. <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/south-central-asia/kazakhstan>

³⁴⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Foreign Operations Appropriated Assistance: Kazakhstan: Fact Sheet." 20 January 2009. <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/103634.htm>

³⁴⁹ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Kazakhstan." April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>

³⁵⁰ The Jamestown Foundation. *China Brief*, Vol. 8, No. 21. Peyrouse, Sebastien. "Sino-Kazakh Relations: A Nascent Strategic Partnership." 4 November 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34142

³⁵¹ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Levinsson, Claes and Ingvar Svanberg. "Kazakhstan-China Border Trade Thrives After Demarcation Treaty." 16 February 2000.

<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/367>

trade was expected to reach USD 15 billion, up from USD 13.87 billion in the previous year.³⁵²

Kazakhstan's relations with China are largely founded on energy extraction and delivery contracts; these deals serve to meet the extensive energy demands of China, the world's 2nd largest consumer of oil and 12th largest consumer of natural gas.³⁵³ Chinese companies, notably the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), have invested in numerous Kazakhstani oil fields over the last several years. This process has corresponded with the development of the Kazakhstan–China oil pipeline, which will connect oil fields in the Caspian Sea region to facilities on the Kazakhstani-Chinese border. This extensive, three-stage pipeline is partially under construction; its unfinished middle section—spanning central Kazakhstan—is scheduled for completion in 2011. In 2006, the eastern portion of the pipeline opened, allowing for the initial flow of Kazakhstani oil into China.³⁵⁴ Chinese interests have also signed several natural gas deals with Kazakhstan; these projects include the construction of a major pipeline running from Turkmenistan to China via Kazakhstan. An estimated one third of the pipeline's capacity will be filled by Kazakhstani natural gas exports.³⁵⁵



In terms of security, Kazakhstan and China are linked through their strategic partnership agreement and the organizational framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Through the latter alliance, Kazakhstan has committed to combat what Chinese officials describe as the “three evil forces” of terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Cooperative efforts have included military exercises and information exchanges, as well as joint operations targeting cross-border drug trafficking.³⁵⁶

Recent ethnic unrest in China's western Xinjiang Province has highlighted cross-border security issues. In July 2009, ethnic riots between Uyghurs and Han Chinese broke out in Urumqi, the Xinjiang capital, resulting in at least 184 fatalities. Chinese authorities responded with a sweeping crackdown on the Uyghur community that provoked further unrest. These events raised concerns that the violence could spread throughout the greater region, including Kazakhstan, the home of the largest Uyghur population outside

³⁵² China View. Xinhua News. “Backgrounder: Basic Facts about China-Kazakhstan Relations.” 29 October 2008. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-10/29/content_10271965.htm

³⁵³ Energy Information Administration. “China Energy Profile.” 15 May 2009. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=CH

³⁵⁴ Energy Information Administration. “Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Oil.” February 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Oil.html>

³⁵⁵ The Jamestown Foundation. *China Brief*, Vol. 8, No. 21. Peyrouse, Sebastien. “Sino-Kazakh Relations: A Nascent Strategic Partnership.” 4 November 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34142

³⁵⁶ The Jamestown Foundation. *China Brief*, Vol. 8, No. 21. Peyrouse, Sebastien. “Sino-Kazakh Relations: A Nascent Strategic Partnership.” 4 November 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34142

China.³⁵⁷ While describing the issue as China's "internal affair," the Kazakhstani government responded by restricting cross-border travel to Xinjiang and evacuating many of its citizens from the province.³⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter, ethnic Uyghurs held non-violent demonstrations in Kazakhstan.³⁵⁹

Kyrgyzstan

A small, mountainous country bordering Kazakhstan to the southeast, Kyrgyzstan is a fellow former Soviet Republic whose independent history has been marked by economic stagnation, terrorist attacks, and, in recent years, political instability. Kazakhstan maintains stable, cooperative relations with Kyrgyzstan, a fellow member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Their respective armed forces have participated in joint military exercises through the latter two organizations.

Although the two countries experienced tensions over monetary policy in the early independent era, their economic relations are now close. Kyrgyzstan, a poorer country with fewer resources, is the more dependent of the two.³⁶⁰ Kazakhstan is one of Kyrgyzstan's leading trade partners, accounting for 18% of its exports and 12.9% of its imports in 2007.³⁶¹ It is also one of Kyrgyzstan's primary sources of foreign aid and investment. On the other hand, Kazakhstan is reliant upon Kyrgyzstan for water and electricity, the latter of which is produced via hydroelectric facilities.³⁶² On these matters, the two countries are linked through the Chu-Talas Rivers Commission. Under the framework of the commission, Kazakhstan provides funds for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure on shared water resources in Kyrgyzstan.³⁶³



© Stefan Bauch
Kazakh-Kyrgyz border

In recent years, many Kyrgyzstanis have migrated across the border to find seasonal or permanent work in Kazakhstan's southern cities, while Kazakhstanis have traveled the

³⁵⁷ Associated Press, Google. Leonard, Peter. "Central Asian Uighurs Fear Crackdown Could Spread." 14 July 2009. http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jMAcDDHI-3iZ1fRm8F0_1RLhBucwD99E9CO01

³⁵⁸ Reuters AlertNet. Golovnina, Maria. "Feature – C. Asia Uighurs Harbour Revenge for Xinjiang Kinfolk." 16 July 2009. <http://alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/LG223143.htm>

³⁵⁹ Reuters. Golovnina, Maria. "Uighurs in Kazakhstan Rally Against China Crackdown." 19 July 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLJ612396>

³⁶⁰ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan." April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

³⁶¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Kyrgyzstan." 26 June 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

³⁶² Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Electricity." February 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Electricity.html>

³⁶³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. "Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan Inaugurate the Chu-Talas Rivers Commission: A Breakthrough in Central Asian Water Relations." 24 July 2006. http://www.unece.org/press/pr2006/06env_p06e.htm

opposite direction for tourist activities.³⁶⁴ A recent sign of the steadily improving relations between the two countries was Kyrgyzstan's long-delayed ratification of a 2001 border demarcation agreement. The ratification occurred in 2008, despite some Kyrgyzstani protest about relinquishing properties along the border.³⁶⁵

Russia

With deep historical, cultural, and ethnic bonds, Kazakhstan and Russia maintain close relations, particularly in the areas of defense and economy. Their current relationship is in part an outgrowth of the Soviet era, which left the country with a large ethnic-Russian community, a "Russified" society, and structural links with the Russian army and economy. It is also a product of Kazakhstan's independent history, however, during which it has established itself as an energy-rich, politically stable partner in Central Asia. While Kazakhstan remains heavily dependent upon Russia for military equipment and support, its economic success has enhanced its leverage in the relationship. Formally, Russia and Kazakhstan are aligned through the CIS, SCO, and CSTO, as well as various other organizations. In 2009, Kazakhstan's withdrawal from planned NATO exercises in Georgia was widely interpreted as a concession to Russia and its competing military alliance, the CSTO.³⁶⁶

Economically, Russia and Kazakhstan are closely linked through trade and energy transshipment networks. Russia is Kazakhstan's leading trade partner, particularly in terms of supply; it was the source of 36.3% of Kazakhstan's total import volume in 2008.³⁶⁷ Total trade between the two countries reached USD 16.6 billion in 2007, with a significant increase forecasted for 2008.³⁶⁸ While developing additional delivery routes, Kazakhstan remains dependent upon Russian transshipment networks for its oil exports. These exports are primarily shipped through the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) pipeline to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk or through the Atyrau-Samara pipeline that runs northward from the Caspian Sea to Russia. Russia is also the primary destination for Kazakhstan's natural gas exports; these exports are processed at a refining plant that is jointly owned by Kazakhstani and Russian interests under a long-term agreement.³⁶⁹ Russia remains dependent upon Central Asian gas (including Turkmen gas

³⁶⁴ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 4, No. 135. Marat, Erica. "Kazakh-Kyrgyz Economic Relations Receive New Boost." 12 July 2007.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=32864

³⁶⁵ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Ababakirov, Nurshat. "Kyrgyz-Kazakh Border Deal Stirs Up Dust in Kyrgyzstan." 16 April 2008.

<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4843>

³⁶⁶ Jamestown Foundation Blog, The Jamestown Foundation. Melikishvili, Alexander and Roman Kupchinsky. "Amid Intensifying Russian Complaints Kazakhstan Boycotts NATO Exercises in Georgia." 21 April 2009. <http://jamestownfoundation.blogspot.com/2009/04/amid-intensifying-russian-complaints.html>

³⁶⁷ Economist.com. Economist Intelligence Unit. "Country Briefings: Kazakhstan: Factsheet." 9 June 2009. <http://www.economist.com/countries/Kazakhstan/profile.cfm?folder=Profile-FactSheet>

³⁶⁸ Tehran Times. "Kazakhstan Seeks to Export Oil Via Russia." 24 September 2008.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=178542

³⁶⁹ Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan." February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Full.html>

imported via Kazakhstan) while it attempts to further develop its own massive natural gas reserves, which are largely located in remote Siberia.³⁷⁰

Additional areas of cooperation include Russia's long-term rental of Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome and their coordinated exploration of Caspian Sea energy fields. The two countries amicably established their Caspian seabed boundary, an issue that remains to be resolved with other Caspian coastal states.³⁷¹ Likewise, in 2005, they signed a border demarcation agreement. This was a particularly important step in their bilateral relations because of the strong presence of ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan's northern territory, along the lengthy Russian boundary.³⁷² In 2009, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus announced plans to form a customs bloc to further strengthen Russian-Kazakhstani trade relations.³⁷³ (Kyrgyzstan has also expressed interest in joining the bloc.) At that time, Kazakhstan appeared to be one of Russia's strongest partners in Central Asia, where other countries were seeking enhanced relations with the West to reduce their dependency upon Russia.³⁷⁴



Turkmenistan

Bordering the Caspian Sea, Turkmenistan is a fellow energy-rich nation, particularly in terms of natural gas. With only a small private sector, however, the country has made limited progress in transitioning from a Soviet-era state-run economy to one based on market policies.³⁷⁵ For most of its independent history, the predominantly Muslim nation was under the authoritarian rule of Saparmyrat Niyazov, whose status as “president for life” was supported by a strong cult of personality until his death in 2006. The Niyazov regime's signature platform was a policy of “permanent neutrality,” or non-participation in formal alliances, which resulted in the country's relative isolation (aside from international energy deals).³⁷⁶ Today, Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian nation that is not a member of the SCO (although it has recently been courted as a “guest”).

³⁷⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Kimmage, Daniel. “Kazakhstan: The Limits of Cooperation.” 5 October 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1071827.html>

³⁷¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: Kazakhstan.” December 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kazakhstan.pdf>

³⁷² RIA Novosti. “Russia-Kazakhstan Border Agreement Crucial – Diplomat.” 8 January 2006. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20060108/42892424.html>

³⁷³ StratFor. “Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan: Forming a Customs Bloc.” 9 June 2009. http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090609_russia_belarus_kazakhstan_forming_customs_bloc

³⁷⁴ Reuters. Dyomkin, Denis and Oleg Shchedrov. “Old Allies Signal Loyalty to Russia Has Limits.” 20 July 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE56J2VV20090720?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0&sp=true>

³⁷⁵ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Turkmenistan.” November 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35884.htm>

³⁷⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: Turkmenistan.” February 2007. <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Turkmenistan.pdf>

Likewise, while a member of the CIS, it is not a member of the Russian-dominated CSTO.³⁷⁷



© Joseph Schemel
President Berdimuhamedov, Turkmenistan

Under Niyazov's successor, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Turkmenistan has steadily improved its relations with Kazakhstan. These ties are primarily economic, with an emphasis on energy delivery networks. Kazakhstan is a principal transit country for Turkmenistan's natural gas exports, a large share of which is shipped to Russia via the multi-branch Central Asia Center Pipeline (CACP) that runs through

Kazakhstan.³⁷⁸ (Delivery along this network was stalled in 2009 by a burst pipeline and subsequent disagreements between parties.) In 2007, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan agreed to extend the CACP, with a new branch to be built along the Caspian Sea, running from Turkmenistan through western Kazakhstan. Known as the Caspian Coastal Pipeline, this branch is scheduled for completion in 2012.³⁷⁹ The extensive Turkmenistan-to-China natural gas pipeline also runs through Kazakhstan; the Kazakhstani section was completed in July 2009, with delivery operations scheduled for 2010.³⁸⁰ The latter is one of several pipelines—either planned or under development—that are designed to reduce Turkmen and Kazakhstani reliance on Russian delivery networks.³⁸¹

In addition to energy contracts, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have also cooperated on the development of their respective Caspian Sea shoreline properties, including the enhancement of regional transportation and communication networks.³⁸² A border dispute between the two countries was solved in 2001, with boundary demarcation initiated in 2005.³⁸³ However, the two countries have yet to agree upon the definition of their Caspian seabed boundary.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Turkmenistan." 26 June 2009.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html>

³⁷⁸ Encyclopedia of Earth. Energy Information Administration. "Energy Profile of Central Asia." 4 September 2008. http://www.eoearth.org/article/Energy_profile_of_Central_Asia

³⁷⁹ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Cutler, Robert M. "Moscow and Ashgabat Fail to Agree Over the Caspian Coastal Pipeline." 8 April 2009. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5080>

³⁸⁰ EurasiaNet.org. "Kazakhstan: Workers Complete Section of Turkmenistan-China Pipeline." 10 July 2009. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/news/articles/eav071009a.shtml>

³⁸¹ Washington Examiner. Associated Press. Vershinn, Alexander. "Turkmenistan Plans Gas Pipeline to Supply Iran from Field Previously Reserved for Russia." 12 July 2009. <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/economy/ap/50581162.html>

³⁸² Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Durddiyeva, Chemen. "Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan Intensify Strategic Partnership." 3 October 2007. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4710>

³⁸³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Turkmenistan." February 2007. <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Turkmenistan.pdf>

³⁸⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Turkmenistan." 26 June 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html>

Uzbekistan

The most populous country in Central Asia, Uzbekistan is a predominantly Muslim nation that has struggled with economic stagnation and religious extremism in the post-Soviet era. Like Kazakhstan, it has been ruled by a single leader, President Islam Karimov, throughout its entire independent history. Despite their historical and ethnic bonds (approximately 4% of the Uzbekistani population is ethnic Kazakh), the two countries have a history of strained relations in the independent era.³⁸⁵ Broadly, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, they have competed for the role of regional leader, with Kazakhstan demonstrating markedly more success in terms of economic growth, social stability, and foreign diplomacy.³⁸⁶

Areas of disagreement between the two have included water-use rights (concerning the Syr Darya and Aral Sea) and cross-border issues such as boundary demarcation, border-patrol conflicts, militant activity, and illegal immigration. The latter issue concerns large numbers of illegal migrants from Uzbekistan, who, over the last several years, have immigrated to southern Kazakhstan to seek better economic prospects.³⁸⁷ Uzbekistanis have also sought refuge in Kazakhstan from the political suppression in their home country; the most notorious example of this was the Uzbekistani government's severe crackdown on riots in Andijon in May 2005.



CCO Image
Uzbek soldiers

In recent years, however, relations between the two countries have improved, beginning with an important presidential meeting in 2006, in which the leaders agreed to enhance their economic and diplomatic ties.³⁸⁸ The two leaders again pledged increased bilateral cooperation in 2008, when they discussed developing a common trade zone along their border.³⁸⁹ Currently, economic ties between the two countries largely concern energy delivery contracts, as Kazakhstan's southern cities rely on electricity and natural gas exports from Uzbekistan. The two countries are linked via multiple natural gas pipelines, including the Turkmenistan–China pipeline.³⁹⁰ While Kazakhstani interests have tried to

³⁸⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Uzbekistan." February 2007. <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>

³⁸⁶ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Saidazimova, Gulnoza. "Uzbekistan/Kazakhstan: Summit is a Sign of Changing Times." 18 March 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1066842.html>

³⁸⁷ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Yermukanov, Marat. "Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan Move from Rivalry to Cooperation." 5 April 2006.

<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3876>

³⁸⁸ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Saidazimova, Gulnoza. "Uzbekistan/Kazakhstan: Summit is a Sign of Changing Times." 18 March 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1066842.html>

³⁸⁹ The Jamestown Organization. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 79. Marat, Erica. "Karimov, Bakiyev React Differently to Nazarbayev's Central Asia Union." 25 April 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33582

³⁹⁰ Energy Information Administration. "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan." February 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Full.html>

invest in the Uzbekistani economy, they have often been hindered by its lack of market reforms.³⁹¹

Uzbekistan is a fellow member of the SCO, CIS, and CSTO. Cooperative security efforts between the two countries have targeted cross-border drug trafficking and smuggling operations; religious extremism and terrorist activity have also been shared concerns.³⁹² The two countries signed a border agreement in 2003, with demarcation beginning the following year.³⁹³

Water Security

Water security is a serious concern in Central Asia, where precious resources are shared among several countries with varying levels of need. Regional water policy has been affected by decades of Soviet development projects, which left a legacy of pollution and unsustainable water-use practices. Today, many regional residents are dependent upon impractical agricultural schemes established by the Soviets; these involved large-scale production of irrigation-intensive crops (e.g., cotton) in a region largely consisting of desert or semi-desert. (Uzbekistan is the most economically dependent of the Central Asian states on cotton production, and its agricultural operations account for more than half of the region's annual water consumption.)³⁹⁴ The dramatic shrinkage of the Aral Sea, a result of the long-term redirection of its source waters, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, is the most well-known example of the disastrous effects of poor water policy in the region. Despite this lesson, irresponsible water use remains a major issue in Central Asia. The regional supply is also affected by an increasingly dry climate and the decaying Soviet-era infrastructure.³⁹⁵

The area's major rivers provide a freshwater supply; the Central Asian states are classified as either "upstream" (the mountainous, higher-elevation countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) or "downstream" (the flatter, lowland countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan). As a downstream country, Kazakhstan is particularly susceptible to water insecurity. With most of its major rivers originating in surrounding countries, Kazakhstan is dependent upon its neighbors for more than 50% of

³⁹¹ The Jamestown Organization. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 79. Marat, Erica. "Karimov, Bakiyev React Differently to Nazarbayev's Central Asia Union." 25 April 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33582

³⁹² The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 3, No. 85. McDermott, Roger. "Kazakh-Uzbek Border Incident Signals Tension." 2 May 2006.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=31641

³⁹³ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 9. Rotar, Igor. "Uzbekistan Bulldozes Settlements Along Border with Kazakhstan." 12 January 2005.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=27369

³⁹⁴ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 147. Daly, John C. K. "Central Asia's Water Problems Soar During Long Summer." 1 August 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33854&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=166&no_cache=1

³⁹⁵ Reuters. Golovnina, Maria. "Central Asian Leaders to Gather for Water Summit." 26 April 2009.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUSTRE53P1AA20090426?sp=true>

its water supply.³⁹⁶ Historically, its most pressing water issue has concerned the reduced downstream flow of the Syr Darya River and the corresponding shrinkage of the Aral Sea. A recent effort to dam the northern section of the Aral Sea has demonstrated some success in increasing its capacity, although the environmental and economic fallout of its reduction (and pollution) remains severe.³⁹⁷ More recently, similar concerns have arisen amid the large-scale diversion of water from the Ili and Irtysh Rivers in western China, where the Chinese government has encouraged expansive development.³⁹⁸ Such diversion projects have reduced the rivers' downstream input into massive Lake Balkhash in southwestern Kazakhstan, which provides drinking water for more than 20% of the Kazakhstani population. In 2007, a conference between Kazakhstani and Chinese officials concerning the issue ended without compromise.³⁹⁹

Another pressing issue concerns water-use practices in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, two countries that are rich in water resources—including the headwaters of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers—but poor in energy reserves. In recent years, these two countries have amassed their upstream water supplies during the summer months in order to release the water through their hydroelectric facilities in the cold winter months, when domestic demand for electricity is high. This practice reduces downstream output in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan during the agriculturally important summer months, while resulting in flooding during the winter months, when the rivers are frozen. Meanwhile, downstream irrigation operations are inefficient, placing greater demand on upstream resources.



Despite cooperative attempts to regulate water usage in the region—notably through the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), founded in 1993—the Central Asian states have made little multilateral progress in doing so.⁴⁰⁰ As noted, Kazakhstan has cooperated on a bilateral basis with Kyrgyzstan to establish the Chu-Talas Rivers

³⁹⁶ United Nations Development Program. *National Human Development Report 2008: Climate Change and Its Impact on Kazakhstan's Human Development*. "Chapter 2: Climate Change: Risks and Mitigation: 2.2.2: Water Resources [pp. 55–56]." 2008.

http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/eurothecis/kazakhstan/Kazakhstan_nhdr_2008.pdf

³⁹⁷ Environment News Service. "The Kazakh Miracle: Recovery of the North Aral Sea." 1 August 2008.

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/aug2008/2008-08-01-01.asp>

³⁹⁸ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Saidazimova, Gulnoza. "Kazakhstan: Environmentalists Say China Misusing Cross-Border Rivers." 13 July 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1069833.html>

³⁹⁹ The New York Times. Greenberg, Ilan. "Kazakhstan and China Deadlock Over Depletion of a Major Lake." 8 March 2007.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/08/world/asia/08kazakhstan.html?_r=1&oref=login

⁴⁰⁰ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 147. Daly, John C. K. "Central Asia's Water Problems Soar During Long Summer." 1 August 2008.

http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33854&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=166&no_cache=1

Commission, which addresses two important rivers in southeastern Kazakhstan.⁴⁰¹ However, in April 2009, a “water summit” involving all of the Central Asian nations ended, again, without a comprehensive and proactive agreement.⁴⁰² The current impasse concerns Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan’s plans to construct new hydroelectric dams to increase their domestic energy supply. Such projects have been resisted by the downstream countries, particularly Uzbekistan, a major energy provider to the two upstream countries.⁴⁰³ While regional cooperation remains lacking, Kazakhstan has demonstrated a proactive approach to addressing its water-supply issues. In addition to the Aral Sea reclamation project, it is also constructing a reservoir to collect the Syr Darya runoff released by its upstream neighbors during the winter.⁴⁰⁴

Issues Affecting Stability

Terrorism

Terrorism remains a threat in Central Asia, where religious extremism, ethnic tension, poverty, and political repression are potential contributing factors to such activity. Of the Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been most affected by terrorist activity; each has suffered deadly bombings and incursions over the last decade.⁴⁰⁵ While Kazakhstan has been less affected by terrorism, cross-border insurgent operations are a shared concern among all Central Asian states. These issues have been addressed through a cooperative security branch under supervision of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The Regional Antiterrorism Center based in Tashkent is an additional mechanism through which SCO members—including Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—have developed joint policy.⁴⁰⁶

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and a splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), are the primary terrorist organizations in the area.⁴⁰⁷ Responsible for terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as attacks on coalition troops in

⁴⁰¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. “Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan Inaugurate the Chul-Talas Rivers Commission: A Breakthrough in Central Asian Water Relations.” 24 July 2006.

http://www.unece.org/press/pr2006/06env_p06e.htm

⁴⁰² The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 83. Marat, Erica. “‘Water Summit’ in Central Asia Ends in Stalemate.” 30 April 2009.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34931&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=9ec1fd69e2

⁴⁰³ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 88. Marat, Erica. “Controversy Intensifying Over the Construction of Dams in Central Asia.” 7 May 2009.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34962

⁴⁰⁴ EurasiaNet.org. Lillis, Joanna. “Kazakhstan: Amid Central Asian Dysfunction, Astana becomes an Island of Sound Water-Management Policy.” 6 May 2009.

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav050609.shtml>

⁴⁰⁵ Foreign Press Center, U.S. Department of State. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. Nichol, Jim. “Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implication for U.S. Interests [pp. 7–9].” 7 January 2005. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/43392.pdf>

⁴⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State. U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Kazakhstan. *U.S. Government Reports: 2006 Country Report on Terrorism in Kazakhstan*. 30 April 2007. <http://kazakhstan.usembassy.gov/tr2006.html>

⁴⁰⁷ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2008*. “Chapter 2: Country Reports: South and Central Asia Overview.” 30 April 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122434.htm>

Afghanistan, the IMU is believed to have operatives in Kazakhstan. The IJU, whose activities have included bombings in Tashkent, just south of Kazakhstan's border with Uzbekistan, may also have members in Kazakhstan.⁴⁰⁸

Religious Extremism

In recent years, the radical Islamist organization of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), or the Islamic Party of Liberation, has received greater attention in Kazakhstan than the IMU or IJU. The Kazakhstani government has classified HT as a terrorist group, although the U.S. has not done so.⁴⁰⁹ (As of early 2009, the U.S. had no evidence of the group's participation in terrorist activities.) HT seeks to establish an international Islamic government that spans the Muslim world; its members have reportedly encouraged or supported the use of violence against Western interests.⁴¹⁰ Kazakhstan's intelligence agency, the KNB, has actively pursued the organization, arresting many of its members.⁴¹¹



The KNB's efforts are part of the government's larger program to prevent the spread of religious extremism within and across the nation's borders. Additional measures include a ban on religious-based political groups and regulations that require religious groups to register with the government.⁴¹² While religious extremism has contributed to instability in the greater Central Asian region, some observers have asserted that the Kazakhstani government has overplayed the domestic threats of extremism and terrorism as a means to maintain rigid state controls.⁴¹³

In Central Asia, such charges are not unique to Kazakhstan. Analysts have cautioned that Central Asian regimes may falsely label criminal activity as terrorism or use operations targeting Islamic extremism or terrorist activity as a "mask" for political or religious repression.⁴¹⁴ Analysts have identified the potential radicalization of religious or political groups as one of the primary security threats affecting Kazakhstan. The government's

⁴⁰⁸ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2008*. "Chapter 6: Terrorist Organizations." 30 April 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122449.htm>

⁴⁰⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Uzbekistan." February 2007.

<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>

⁴¹⁰ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2008*. "Chapter 2: Country Reports: South and Central Asia Overview." 30 April 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122434.htm>

⁴¹¹ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 4, No. 162. McDermott, Roger. "Kazakhstan Cracking Down on Hizb-ut-Tahir." 4 September 2007.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=32966

⁴¹² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *2008 Report on International Religious Freedom*. "Kazakhstan." 19 September 2008.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108501.htm>

⁴¹³ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Pannier, Bruce. "Kazakhstan: Islamic Group Members on Trial for Terrorism." 2 August 2007. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1077949.html>

⁴¹⁴ Foreign Press Center, U.S. Department of State. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. Nichol, Jim. "Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implication for U.S. Interests [pp. 4-5]." 7 January 2005. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/43392.pdf>

restrictions on media and religious freedoms, as well as its history of suppressing political opposition, are seen as factors that could lead to the radicalization of these groups.⁴¹⁵

Ethnic Unrest

Kazakhstan has largely avoided the ethnic conflict that has affected other countries in the region. This threat appeared most severe during the first decade of the independent era, when tensions between the Russian and Kazakh communities mounted over issues such as nationality, official language policy, and access to economic opportunities. A large-scale outmigration of Russian and other non-Kazakh ethnic groups occurred during this time. In 1994, President Nazarbayev announced his decision to move the Kazakhstani capital from Almaty, in the southeast, to Akmola (now Astana), in the north-central region of the country; the move was widely interpreted as an effort to establish a strong governmental presence in a region heavily populated by non-Kazakh ethnic groups, namely Russians and Ukrainians. The official transfer occurred in 1997.⁴¹⁶



Chinese protesters for Uyghur freedom

In 1999, Kazakhstani authorities arrested 22 people, mostly ethnic Russians, on charges of plotting to form a separatist state in northeastern Kazakhstan. Fourteen of those arrested were later convicted in a trial criticized by foreign observers as lacking substantial evidence against the defendants.⁴¹⁷ More recently, ethnic unrest among the Uyghur population in China's nearby Xinjiang Province has posed a greater, although not severe, threat to regional security.

Corruption and Political Infighting

Corruption is widespread in Kazakhstan.⁴¹⁸ Numerous recent U.S. Commercial Service reports have shown that business regulations and practices in Kazakhstan remain troubling.⁴¹⁹ In 2008, Transparency International ranked Kazakhstan 145th out of 180 countries on its Corruption Perceptions Index, up from 150 in 2007.⁴²⁰ These practices have, in particular, concerned the lucrative energy industry, which brought huge sums of foreign investment into the country amid intense international competition for exploration

⁴¹⁵ Silk Road Studies Program, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2. Olikier, Olga. "Kazakhstan's Security Interests and Their Implication for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship [pp. 65-66, 72]." 2007. http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/May_2007/Olikier.pdf

⁴¹⁶ BBC News. "New Kazakh Capital Unveiled." 9 June 1998. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/109460.stm>

⁴¹⁷ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Pannier, Bruce. "Kazakhstan: Convictions of Russian 'Separatists' Upset Relations." 6 January 2000. <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1094162.html>

⁴¹⁸ Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs. "2008 Investment Climate Statement – Kazakhstan." February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/othr/ics/2009/117413.htm>

⁴¹⁹ U.S. Commercial Service, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Doing Business in Kazakhstan." 2009. http://www.buyusa.gov/kazakhstan/en/doing_business_kazakhstan.html

⁴²⁰ Transparency International. *Policy Research: Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2008*. 2008. http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2008

and extraction contracts.⁴²¹ The problem has been compounded by a sociopolitical system in which clan and family relations play a large role in governmental appointments and private business deals.⁴²² One of the most high-profile (and ongoing) corruption cases involves allegations that senior officials in the Nazarbayev government accepted bribes from a U.S. oil executive to secure energy contracts.⁴²³ More recently, in 2008 and 2009, several mid- and high-level officials were charged or removed from office amid a highly publicized governmental campaign against corruption. At the same time, numerous elite private businessmen were under investigation or on trial for suspected illegal activities.⁴²⁴



The case of Rakhat Aliyev, President Nazarbayev's former son-in-law, reflects the related issues of corruption and political infighting in Kazakhstan. Previously married to Dariga Nazarbayev, the President's daughter, Aliyev was a deputy foreign minister, wealthy businessmen, and media mogul while in good favor with the President. He also formerly served as the deputy head of the KNB, at which time he was in charge of the government's anti-corruption campaign.⁴²⁵ In 2007, he was ousted from his role as an ambassador amid charges of corruption and criminal activity, including kidnapping. In 2008, while he was exiled in Austria, Aliyev was tried and convicted of these charges in Kazakhstan. Later that year, in a second trial in Kazakhstan, he was convicted (again, in absentia) of plotting a coup against the Nazarbayev regime.⁴²⁶ In turn, Aliyev claimed that the charges were politically motivated, largely stemming from his desire to run for president in 2012, ostensibly against his former father-in-law, Nazarbayev. He also accused the Nazarbayev administration of rampant corruption.⁴²⁷ As of early 2009, he remained in Austria while the Kazakhstani government pursued his extradition.⁴²⁸

These events occurred amidst a political backdrop in which there is no clear successor to Nazarbayev, whose consolidated rule has largely determined the country's development

⁴²¹ *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 5: Economic Development or Stealing the State [pp. 159–161]?" 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁴²² *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 6: A Divided Society [pp. 187–189]." 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁴²³ The New York Times. Stodghill, Ron. "Oil, Cash and Corruption." 5 November 2006.

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B06E7DA103FF936A35752C1A9609C8B63&sec=&spn=&pagewanted=all>

⁴²⁴ EurasiaNet.org. Lillis, Joanna. "Kazakhstan: Corruption Scandals an Indicator of Clan Infighting in Astana?" 10 July 2009. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav071009a.shtml>

⁴²⁵ *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Olcott, Martha Brill. "Chapter 6: A Divided Society [p. 189]." 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁴²⁶ BBC News. "Kazakh Son-in-Law 'Gets 20 Years.'" 26 March 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7315063.stm>

⁴²⁷ The Wall Street Journal. Simpson, Glenn R. and Susan Schmidt. "Kazakhstan Corruption: Exile Alleges New Details." 22 July 2008. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121667622143971475.html>

⁴²⁸ Forbes. Sidorov, Dmitry. "Justice in Kazakhstan." 9 February 2009. http://www.forbes.com/2009/02/09/rakhat-aliyev-kazakhstan-opinions-contributors_0209_dmitry_sidorov.html?partner=contextstory

throughout the entire independent era.⁴²⁹ Current legislation allows Nazarbayev to seek an unlimited number of terms as president, for which the next election will be held in 2012. In the meantime, the recent corruption purges have been widely interpreted as a sign of political infighting amongst the Kazakh elite; the campaign ostensibly allowed the government to remove political opponents while burnishing its anti-corruption image.⁴³⁰
⁴³¹ In any case, power struggles within the Kazakh elite could pose a threat to stability when the issue of choosing Nazarbayev's successor is more immediate.

Outlook

In 2009, Kazakhstan prepared to assume the 2010 chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), an intergovernmental organization dedicated to fair elections, human rights, media freedom, arms control, and various other democratic and security issues. Announced in 2007, the selection of Kazakhstan for the role was groundbreaking, as the nation will be the first former Soviet republic and first non-European country to hold the chairmanship. The decision also sparked controversy, however, due to Kazakhstan's corruption and democratization issues (including its substandard elections), which are seen as contradictions to the OSCE platform.⁴³² It also raised concerns that Russia would attempt to influence Kazakhstan in order to modify the scope of OSCE in line with its own agenda. However, with U.S. support, Kazakhstan has distanced itself from Russia's "reform" proposals and committed to continue its own democratization process. Furthermore, Kazakhstan's chairmanship is seen as an opportunity to focus OSCE's efforts on the geopolitically strategic region of Central Asia, where issues such as energy security and drug trafficking have global ramifications.⁴³³



⁴²⁹ Economist.com. Economist Intelligence Unit. "Country Briefings: Kazakhstan: Political Forces." 27 September 2007.

<http://www.economist.com/COUNTRIES/Kazakhstan/profile.cfm?folder=Profile%2DPolitical%20Forces>

⁴³⁰ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 120. McDermott, Roger. "Akhmetov Sacked as Astana Purges 'Corruption.'" "

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35162&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=2dcb63e33a

⁴³¹ EurasiaNet.org. Lillis, Joanna. "Kazakhstan: Corruption Scandals an Indicator of Clan Infighting in Astana?" 10 July 2009. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav071009a.shtml>

⁴³² Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Pannier, Bruce. "Kazakhstan to Assume OSCE Chairmanship in 2010." 1 December 2007. <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1079221.html>

⁴³³ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 117. Socor, Vladimir. "Kazakhstan Poised to Step into the OSCE's Chairmanship." 18 June 2009.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35142