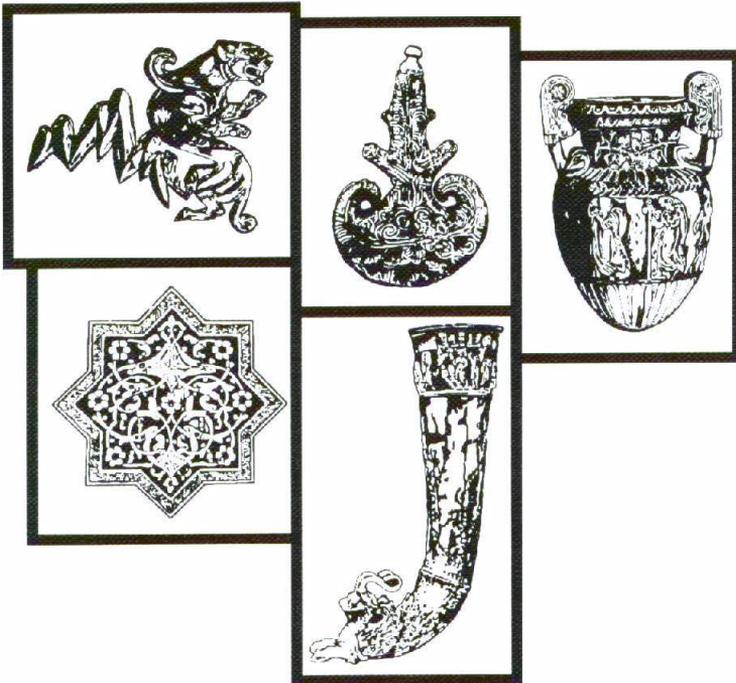


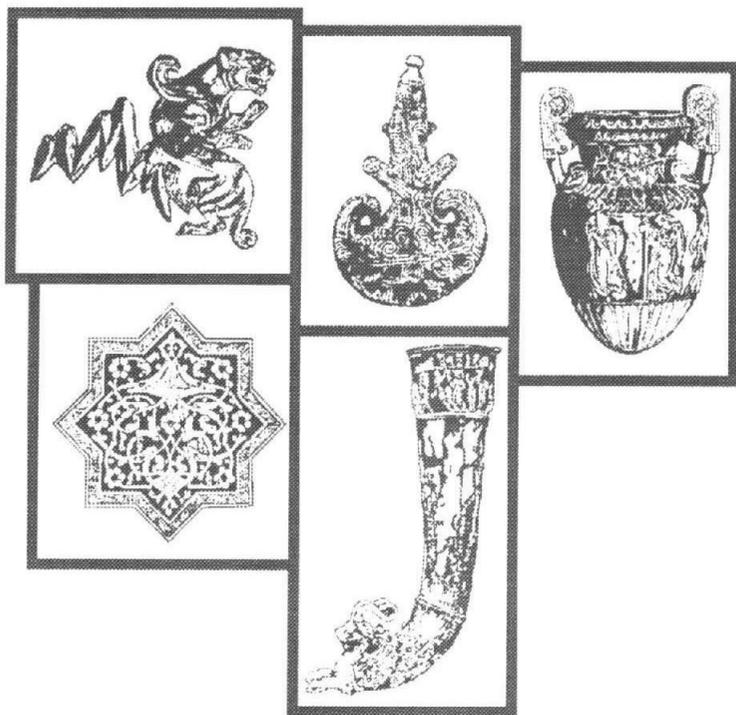
area handbook series

# Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan country studies



# Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan country studies

Federal Research Division  
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Edited by  
Glenn E. Curtis  
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## Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. The last two pages of this book list the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by historical and cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer  
Chief  
Federal Research Division  
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## Preface

At the end of 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union transformed the fifteen republics of that union into independent states with various capabilities for survival. Among them were the five republics of Central Asia: Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Until that time, Central Asia had received less attention from the outside world than most of the other Soviet republics, simply because it was the most remote part of the Soviet Union. Aside from their incidental coverage in the 1991 *Soviet Union: A Country Study*, the Central Asian republics have received no treatment in this series. Since their independence, these republics have attracted considerable attention in the West, largely because of the improved opportunities for exploitation of their rich natural resources, notably oil and natural gas. As the fourth of the six-volume subseries covering all the post-Soviet states, this volume brings new information about a region of enhanced relevance in the world's economy and geopolitical structure.

The marked relaxation of information restrictions, which began in the late 1980s and has continued into the mid-1990s, allows the reporting of much more complete information on Central Asia than what was available one decade ago. Scholarly articles and periodical reports have been especially helpful in accounting for most aspects of the five republics' activities since they achieved independence. The authors have provided a context for their current evaluations with descriptions of the historical, political, and social backgrounds of the countries. In each case, the author's goal was to provide a compact, accessible, and objective treatment of five main topics: historical background, the society and its environment, the economy, government and politics, and national security. Brief comments on some of the more useful, readily accessible sources used in preparing this volume appear at the end of each chapter. Full references to these and other sources used by the authors are listed in the Bibliography.

In most cases, personal names have been transliterated from the vernacular according to the transliteration system of the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN). Some names, such as Boris N. Yeltsin and Joseph V. Stalin, are rendered in the conventional form widely used in Western

sources. The same distinction has been applied to geographic names: the BGN spelling is used for the vast majority, but a few, such as the largest cities, Tashkent and Moscow, are given in their widely used conventional forms. Some geographical names regrettably are missing diacritics because the typesetting software being used cannot produce all the necessary characters (although they do appear on the maps). Organizations commonly known by their acronyms (such as the IMF—International Monetary Fund) are introduced by their full names, in both vernacular and English forms where appropriate. Adjectives derived from the name of a republic ("Kazakstani" and "Uzbekistani," for example) are used in all cases except where such a term denotes persons or groups of a specific ethnic origin. In the latter cases, the adjective is in the form "Kazak" or "Uzbek." The same distinction applies to the proper nouns for citizens of a republic ("Kazakstanis," for example) as distinguished from individuals of an ethnic group ("Kazaks").

A chronology at the beginning of the book combines significant historical events of the five countries. To amplify points in the text and provide standards of comparison, tables in the Appendix offer statistics on aspects of the five societies and national economies. Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided in the Appendix.

The body of the text reflects information available as of March 1996. Certain other portions of the text, however, have been updated beyond that point. The Introduction discusses significant events and trends that have occurred since the completion of research; the Country Profiles and the Chronology include updated information as available; and the Bibliography lists recently published sources thought to be particularly helpful to the reader.

*Table A. Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
<b>EARLY HISTORY</b>	
Fifth century B.C.	Bactrian, Soghdian, and Tokharian states dominate area of present-day Uzbekistan, including cities of Bukhoro (Bukhara) and Samarqand (Samarkand) and begin profit from trade on Silk Route. Province of Mawarannahr begins long period of prosperity in eastern Uzbekistan.
Fourth–third centuries B.C.	Kyrgyz tribes invade northern China.
329 B.C.	Alexander the Great captures Maracanda (Samarqand) in conquest of southern Central Asia from Persian Achaemenid Empire.
First century A.D.	Han Dynasty of China trades with Soghdians and Bactrians of Central Asia.
First–fourth centuries A.D.	Present-day Tajikistan ruled by Buddhist Kushans, who spread their faith to Soghdians.
ca. A.D. 500	Feudal society emerges in present-day Kyrgyzstan.
<b>EIGHTH–TENTH CENTURIES</b>	
750	Arabs complete conquest of Central Asia with victory over Chinese at Talas River, imposing Islam and new culture.
766	Turkic Qarluq confederation establishes state in present-day eastern Kazakhstan.
Eighth–ninth centuries	Under Arab Abbasid Caliphate, golden age of Central Asia; Bukhoro becomes a cultural center of Muslim world.
Late eighth–tenth centuries	Turkic Oghuz tribes migrate into Central Asia from Mongolia and southern Siberia.
Ninth century	Islam becomes dominant religion of all Central Asia.
840	Kyrgyz Khanate reaches greatest extent, defeating Uyghur Khanate in Mongolia.
Tenth century	Term <i>Turkmen</i> first applied to southern Islamic Oghuz tribes; Persian Samanid Dynasty replaces Abbasids, continues cultural activity of Mawarannahr.
Late tenth century	Seljuk Empire founded, based on Oghuz tribes, including Turkmen.
999	Turkic Qarakhanids overthrow Samanids, ending last major Persian state in Central Asia.
<b>ELEVENTH–SIXTEENTH CENTURIES</b>	
Eleventh century	Seljuks and Qarakhanids end dominance of Ghaznavid Empire in south Central Asia, dominating west and east, respectively.
ca. 1100	Persian replaces Arabic as standard written language in most of Central Asia, remains in official use through fifteenth century.
1130s	Turkic Karakitais conquer Qarakhanids; dominate region for 100 years.
Mid-twelfth century	Revolts by Turkmen hasten disintegration of Seljuk Empire; Turkmen begin settling present-day Turkmenistan, notably Merv on Silk Route.

*Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
1200	Khorazm (Khorezm, Khwarazm), split from Seljuk Empire, consolidates empire including Mawarannahr and most of Central Asia; cultural activity continues.
1219–25	Mongols conquer Central Asia, pushing Turkmen westward toward Caspian Sea, intensifying Turkification of Mawarannahr, reducing Iranian influence, and destroying cultural centers.
ca. 1250	Son of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan conquers Yenisey Kyrgyz, beginning 200 years of Mongol domination.
1380–1405	Timur (Tamerlane) unifies Mongol holdings in Central Asia, fosters last cultural flowering of Mawarannahr; Turkish first rivals Persian as literary language.
Fourteenth–sixteenth centuries	Turkmen tribes reorganize and consolidate.
Sixteenth century	Uzbek empire fragmented by fighting among khanates; decline of Silk Route.
1501–10	Uzbek nomadic tribes conquer Central Asia, establish Khanate of Bukhoro.
1511	Khan Kasym unites Kazak tribes.
Sixteenth–nineteenth centuries	Migration east and southeast of large nomadic Turkmen tribal groups descending from Salor group.
<b>SEVENTEENTH–EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES</b>	
Seventeenth–eighteenth centuries	Kazak nomads and Mongols raid and weaken Uzbek khanates; conflict with Iran isolates Uzbeks in Muslim world; Kyrgyz tribes overrun by Kalmyks and Manchus.
ca. 1700	Khanate of Bukhoro loses Fergana region; Quqon (Kokand) Khanate founded, based in Fergana Valley.
1726	Kazak Khan Abul Khair seeks Russian protection from Kalmyk invaders, beginning permanent Russian presence in Kazakhstan.
Mid-eighteenth century	Turkmen Yomud tribes invade Khorazm.
1753	Kyrgyz tribes become Chinese subjects with substantial autonomy.
1785	Kyrgyz seek Russian protection from Quqon Khanate.
Eighteenth–early nineteenth centuries	Three Uzbek khanates revived by strong dynasties, centralized states; British and Russians begin rivalry for Central Asia.
<b>NINETEENTH CENTURY</b>	
1820s	Kazak Great Horde is last of three hordes to come under Russian control.
1836–47	Under Khan Kene (Kenisary Kasimov), Kazaks rise up against Russian occupation.
1855–67	Yomud tribes rebel against Uzbek authority, which disperses the eastern Yomud.
1860s	Jacfidist reform movement founded.
1861	Abolition of serfdom in Russian Empire begins migration of Russian peasants to Kazakhstan.

*Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
1865–68	Russian conquest of Tashkent, Bukhoro, and Samargand; Khanate of Bukhoro becomes Russian protectorate.
1867	Guberniya (Governorate General) of Turkestan established as central Russian administration, eventually including (1899) present-day Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and southeastern Kazakhstan; remainder of Kazakhstan becomes Steppe District.
1869	Russians establish foothold in Turkmen territory at Krasnovodsk.
1870s	Russian cotton cultivation significantly expanded; Russians carry out punitive raids against Turkmen in Khorazm.
1873	Russians capture Khiva.
1876	Russians incorporate Quqon Khanate; all Uzbekistan and northern Kyrgyzstan in Russian Empire.
1881	Russians crush Turkmen resistance at Gokdepe fortress; Turkmen territory annexed into Guberniya of Turkestan.
1890s	Uzbek revolts against Russian rule quelled easily; large-scale Russian settlement begins in northern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, diminishing Kazak and Kyrgyz nomadism.
TWENTIETH CENTURY	
1900	Jadidism becomes first major movement of Central Asian political resistance.
1906–07	Central Asians have six seats in first and second Russian Dumas.
1907–17	Central Asians have no seats in third and fourth Russian Dumas.
1916	Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Uzbeks rebel against Russian land confiscation, conscription; many Kazaks, Kyrgyz flee to China.
1917	May Russian provisional government abolishes Guberniya of Turkestan; power divided among various groups, including Tashkent Soviet. November Bolshevik Revolution begins establishment of Soviet state.
1918	Bolsheviks declare Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, including most of present-day Central Asia in Russia; Bolsheviks crush autonomous government in Quqon; Jadidists and others begin decade-long Basmachi revolt involving elements from all five republics and mercenaries; Alash Orda establishes independent Kazak state.
1918–19	Widespread famine.
1920	Soviet General Frunze captures Ashgabat, ending anti-communist government there, and Bukhoro, ending khanate; Faizulla Khojajev becomes president of newly established Soviet Bukhoran People's Republic; Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic established, including Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

*Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
1921	Communists win in Russian Civil War, reduce power of Central Asian party branches.
1921-27	New Economic Policy (NEP) expands cotton cultivation in Central Asia.
1924	Soviet socialist republics of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan formed, with Tajikistan an autonomous republic in latter.
1925	Most Basmachi resistance in Tajikistan overcome; large-scale refugee movement from eastern Bukhoro; Kazak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Kazak ASSR) separated from Kyrgyz ASSR.
1927-34	Waves of communist party purges in all republic branches; Central Asian autonomy drives intensify purges there.
1929	Soviet Socialist Republic of Tajikistan established, northern territory added.
1929-34	Soviet collectivization induces widespread famine in Central Asia.
1930s	Khojayev, other Central Asian communist leaders executed in Stalin purges, replaced by Russians.
1936	Kazak and Kyrgyz ASSRs given full republic status in Soviet Union; Karakalpakstan transferred from Russia to Republic of Uzbekistan.
Late 1930s	Nomadic lifestyle ends for most Turkmen.
1941-43	Many European Soviet plants moved to Central Asia to avoid capture by invading Nazis.
1956-64	Rehabilitation of some Central Asian communist leaders purged by Stalin; Russification remains prerequisite for party advancement; Virgin Lands program restructures agriculture in Central Asian republics.
1959-82	Tenure of Sharaf Rashidov as first secretary of Communist Party of Uzbekistan.
1985	Election of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as first secretary of Communist Party of Soviet Union, heralding impact of Moscow reform programs in Central Asia.
1986	Widespread purge of Communist Party of Uzbekistan leadership begins after exposure of corruption in Rashidov regime; nationalism, anti-Russian feeling intensify.
December	Widespread demonstrations in Kazakstan after appointment of Gennadiy Kolbin as party leader in Kazakstan; Kazak opposition groups appear; unrest continues through 1989.
Late 1980s	Uzbekistani intellectuals begin forming opposition political groups.
1989	Uzbeks clash with Meskhetian Turks and Kyrgyz in Osh; Moscow names Islam Karimov first secretary of Communist Party of Uzbekistan.
	Political opposition group Agzybirlik formed in Turkmenistan; refused credentials.

*Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
	June Nursultan Nazarbayev named communist party head in Kazakstan.
1990	February Riots in Dushanbe protest communist housing policy in Tajikistan; state of emergency declared, opposition parties suppressed.
	June–August Violent conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and anti-communist demonstrations in Kyrgyz cities; opposition group, Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan, emerges.
	August Republic of Turkmenistan declares sovereignty within Soviet Union.
	October Saparmyrat Niyazov elected president of Turkmenistan, running unopposed.
	November Askar Akayev elected president of Republic of Kyrgyzstan, defeating communist incumbent.
1991	August Coup against Gorbachev government fails in Moscow; Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan declare independence from Soviet Union.
	September Tajikistan declares independence from Soviet Union; communist Rahmon Nabyev named president after ban of Communist Party of Tajikistan fails.
	October Turkmenistan declares independence from Soviet Union; Akayev elected president of independent Kyrgyzstan, running unopposed.
	November Communist Party of Uzbekistan reorganized, renamed People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan.
	December Nazarbayev elected president of Kazakstan, which declares independence from Soviet Union; five Central Asian states sign Alma-Ata Declaration formally establishing Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); Communist Party of Turkmenistan renamed Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, retains political domination; Uzbekistan elects new parliament and Karimov its first president.
1992	Five Central Asian states join Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Niyazov introduces "Ten Years of Prosperity" economic reform program for Turkmenistan.
	March Antigovernment riots begin in Dushanbe, escalate into civil war in April.
	May Turkmenistan adopts new constitution; Kazakstan and Uzbekistan sign treaties of friendship and cooperation with Russia.
	June Niyazov reelected president of Turkmenistan, running unopposed; Kyrgyzstan signs treaty of friendship and cooperation with Russia.
	Mid-year Five Central Asian states begin taking over former Soviet military installations on their respective territories.
	July Tajikistan signs treaty of cooperation and assistance with Russia, allowing Russian forces to clear anti-government forces from Tajikistan.

*Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description	
September	Tajikistan's president Nabyev forced to resign; coalition government takes power.	
November	Tajikistan's coalition government resigns, communist Rahmonov named head of state; opposition forces continue civil war.	
December	Uzbekistan adopts new constitution; Birlik, main opposition party, banned in Uzbekistan; Dushanbe falls to Tajikistani government forces.	
1993	"Cult of personality" of Niyazov extended in Turkmenistan with renaming of streets, buildings, and city of Krasnovodsk (Turkmenbashi). Repression of opposition and media increases in Uzbekistan; by December, only state organs can register.	
January	New Kazakstani constitution adopted, names Kazak official state language; Akayev requests government emergency measures to end Kyrgyzstan's drastic economic decline. Kazakstani government forms National Council for Economic Reform; government of Tajikistan makes criminal charges against opposition leader Hajji Akbar Turajonzoda.	
April	Chevron Oil finalizes joint venture to develop Tengiz offshore oil fields with Kazakstan.	
June	Tajikistan bans three major opposition parties; Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province ends claims of independence from Tajikistan.	
July	Kyrgyzstan signs military cooperation agreements with Russia; Afghan and Tajik rebels kill twenty-eight Russians in capturing border post in Tajikistan.	
September	Agreement for new ruble zone signed by Kazakstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; four Central Asian states, excluding Turkmenistan, join five other CIS states, including Russia, in economic union.	
November	Tenge becomes official currency of Kazakstan; Tajik rebels resume fighting in Gorno-Badakhshan.	
December	Turkmenistan signs treaty of cooperation, mutual assistance, and joint border security with Russia; Akayev dismisses Kyrgyzstani government of Tur-sunbek Chyngyshev after vote of no confidence; Kazakstan approves Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as non-nuclear signatory; Kazakstan's parliament dissolves itself.	
1994	January	Referendum approves extension of Niyazov's term as president of Turkmenistan to 2002.
March	First multiparty elections in Kazakstan (for parliament), dominated by Nazarbayev supporters.	
May-July	Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan join North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Partnership for Peace.	
June	Kyrgyzstan eases language, citizenship restrictions to slow emigration of Russians.	
September	Kyrgyzstani government resigns; parliament dissolved.	
October	Cease-fire begins in Tajikistani civil war.	

Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events

Period	Description	
November	Rahmonov elected president of Tajikistan, without participation of major opposition parties; plebiscite approves new Tajikistani constitution.	
December	New Majlis (assembly) elected in Turkmenistan, dominated by Democratic Party.	
December–January 1995	Uzbekistan's parliamentary elections dominated by People's Democratic Party.	
1995	Sporadic cease-fires, peace talks, and resumption of fighting in Tajikistan.	
February	Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan sign ten-year partnership and cooperation agreement with European Union (EU); parliamentary elections in Tajikistan boycotted by opposition; first of three election rounds for new bicameral parliament of Kyrgyzstan.	
March	Referendum extends Karimov's term as president of Uzbekistan to 2000; Kazakstani parliament resigns, Nazarbayev begins rule by decree.	
April	Referendum extends Nazarbayev's term to 2000.	
May	Tajikistan introduces new currency, Tajikistani ruble.	
June	Two Turkmen opposition leaders sentenced to prison terms.	
August	Kazakstan's new constitution approved by popular referendum.	
December	Parliamentary elections held in Kazakstan under protest by opposition parties.	
1996	February	Referendum extends presidential powers of Akayev; Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan sign extended customs union agreement with Belarus and Russia; Turkmenistan signs major natural gas sales agreement with Turkey.
March	After resignation of Kyrgyzstan's government, Akayev names new cabinet headed by Apas Jumagulov, prime minister of previous government.	
April	Directors of seventeen banks in Kyrgyzstan charged with illegal use of funds, triggering national bank scandal; Kyrgyzstan bans Itipak, Uygur separatist organization; Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan sign Shanghai border security treaty with China and Russia, pledging aid to China against separatists from Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.	
May	Kazakstan bans Russian newspaper <i>Komsomol'skaya pravda</i> for article by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn claiming parts of Kazakstan as Russian territory; to ease severe economic crisis, Kazakstani government cancels US\$300 million of agriculture sector's debts; Uzbekistan's Karimov threatens withdrawal from Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for Iran's "politicization" of ECO by criticism of Israel and United States; Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan support Karimov.	
June	Kazakstan opens widespread antinarotics offensive and amnesties 20,000 prisoners to relieve prison overcrowding; Tajikistan signs plan for energy export to Russia; Karimov makes official visit to	

*Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
July	<p>United States to improve bilateral and UN relations; Uygurs in Kazakstan continue protests against Shanghai treaty; Nazarbayev's threat to dissolve parliament gains passage of unpopular pension bill; chairman of Kazakstan's Supreme Court dismissed for corruption.</p> <p>Rahmonov of Tajikistan consolidates power by organizing National Security Council under presidential control and by antinarcotics campaign in rebel stronghold Gorno-Badakhshan, using nominally neutral Russian border troops.</p>
August	<p>Presidents of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan sign accord for creation of single economic market by 1998; UN-sponsored cease-fire of July is broken by heavy fighting in Tajikistan's central region, as rebels renew thrust toward Dushanbe.</p>
October	<p>Antigovernment United Tajikistan Opposition proposes National Reconciliation Council including 80 percent opposition and 20 percent government members; Tajikistan government rejects formula. Japan commits US\$140 million to upgrade three airports in Uzbekistan and US\$200 million for infrastructure and medical centers in Kazakstan; bilateral accords with Iran and Russia reaffirm Turkmenistan's "permanent neutrality."</p> <p>Turkmenistan's Nabiyev confers in Moscow with Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, reaching no agreement on natural gas deliveries to Russia or on ownership of Caspian Sea resources.</p>
October–November	<p>Rebel forces open corridors from Afghanistan into eastern Tajikistan, threatening to take full control of eastern and central regions; government forces offer weak resistance.</p>
November	<p>Acute energy shortage brings winter rationing of electric power and heat in Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.</p>
December	<p>Tajikistan's Rahmonov signs new cease-fire agreement with rebel coalition; ensuing peace agreement calls for reconciliation council to amend constitution; Kazakstan sells its first bond issue on the international bond market; Turkmenistan's 1996 inflation rate estimated at 140 percent, highest among Central Asian republics; Kazakstan and international consortium set terms for pipeline construction to export Kazakstan's Tengiz oil.</p>
1997	<p>January</p> <p>Kazakstan begins shipping oil from its Tengiz field by tanker across Caspian Sea for resale by Iran; 2 million tons to be shipped annually until new export pipeline completed; two Japanese firms agree to build \$US138 million telephone network in Uzbekistan; at meeting of Central Asian Economic Union, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan sign mutual defense treaty and discuss mutual convertibility of currencies; Topchubek Turgunaligev, head of opposition Erkin Party in Kyrgyzstan, sentenced to prison for embezzlement as political repression tightens.</p>

*Table A. (Continued) Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
January–March	Six rounds of peace talks between Tajikistan government and United Tajikistan Opposition yield significant agreements on reintegration of political and military organizations.
February	Japan signs US\$580 million agreement to build polypropylene plant in Turkmenistan.
March	Kyrgyzstan extends Russian border troop presence through end of 1997.
	Nazarbayev restructures Kazakstan's government, reducing power of Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin.
May	Terms set for pipeline connecting Tengiz oil field in Kazakstan with Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, to open September 1999.
June	Peace accord between Rahmonov government and United Tajik Opposition formally ends civil war in Tajikistan.
July	New National Reconciliation Commission scheduled to begin work on procedures for parliamentary elections to be held in Tajikistan by the end of 1998.
	Andijan-Osh-Kashgar Highway opens, connecting points in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan with China.
August	Kazakstan and Russia sign treaty easing conditions for Russians in Kazakstan, aimed at reducing emigration of Russian technical experts.
	Political negotiations in Tajikistan delayed by scattered fighting and disagreements over conditions.
September	United States forces join troops of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan in peace-keeping exercise in south-central Kazakstan, the first such combined exercise.







Figure 1. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Geographic Setting, 1996

## Introduction

IN 1991 THE FIVE SOVIET REPUBLICS of Central Asia—Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—were faced for the first time with the prospect of existence as independent states. In critical respects, they were unprepared for this event: their economies all had performed specific tasks in the Soviet system, mainly the supply of raw materials; only outdated Soviet-era political structures remained behind in the five republics, with no tradition of national political institutions; and the end of the union fragmented the armed forces units of the former Soviet Union that remained on the republics' territory. In the 1990s, the progress of the five republics toward resolving these problems has been quite uneven. The republics with the richest natural resources—Kazakstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—have developed the strongest economies—albeit with serious defects in each case—and have attracted substantial Western investment. In all cases, movement away from the Soviet model of strong, one-party central government has been extremely slow. Some degree of military autonomy has appeared in all republics save Tajikistan, which still is bedeviled by rebel forces and a porous southern border. At the same time, the strategic doctrine of all Central Asian countries remains based on protection from Russia's military.

The total area of the five republics is approximately 3.9 million square kilometers, slightly more than 40 percent of the area of the United States and less than one-quarter of the area of Russia (see fig. 1). The region stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west to China in the east, and from central Siberia in the north to Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan in the south. The area of the republics varies greatly: Kazakstan, by far the largest, occupies about 2.7 million square kilometers, more than two-thirds of the region. The smallest republic, Kyrgyzstan, occupies only 198,500 square kilometers. The Central Asian republics also feature quite different topographies, varying from the wide expanses of desert in primarily flat Kazakstan and Turkmenistan to the steep slopes and river valleys of mountainous Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (see fig. 2).

The region contains enormous natural and agricultural resources. All five republics have favorable agricultural regions

and some combination of attractive minerals and fuels. Their industrial bases include trained workers, and their populations have relatively high educational levels and literacy rates. Unfortunately, the moribund, highly inefficient system through which the Soviet Union exploited those resources has proved very difficult to disassemble. The Central Asians have suffered all the typical transitional ills of former communist states moving toward a market economy: erratic supply of critical industrial inputs, increased unemployment, sharply increased inflation, declining capacity utilization and output by industry, and acute shortages of goods. In response, all five governments have pledged meaningful reform, but obstacles such as unworkable government structure, ethnic rivalries, and a variety of social tensions have made all five move cautiously.

Central Asia has a rich history to which numerous tribes and nationalities have contributed over at least 2,500 years. A vital factor in the history of the southern part of the region was its location astride the most direct trade route between China and Europe, the so-called Silk Route, which began to develop in the heyday of the Roman Empire (see fig. 3). Cities such as Samarqand (Samarkand) and Bukhoro (Bukhara), founded by Iranians, became powerful cultural and commercial centers as East-West trade increased. That prosperity made part or all of the region the object of many conquests (including those by the Arabs in the eighth century A.D., several Turkic groups beginning in the ninth century, and the Mongols in the early thirteenth century). The Arabs and the Turks brought Islam to much of Central Asia. Meanwhile, the northern part of the region was inhabited by nomadic herding peoples, including the Turkic predecessors of the Kazaks and Kyrgyz, who also fell under the control of the Mongols.

In the sixteenth century, the Uzbeks established powerful khanates along the Silk Route. Those entities flourished until the nineteenth century, when they were overtaken gradually by the traders and settlers of the expanding Russian Empire. The Russians moved southward from the steppes of Kazakstan in search of trade and later of the cotton that could be grown in present-day Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In the ensuing decades, cotton became the vital economic magnet for increased Russian occupation, and large tracts of the region were devoted to that crop to supply Russia's domestic needs.

In 1917 the region passed from the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union, with little participation by its inhabitants. Full





Figure 2. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Topography and Drainage

Soviet control did not occur until the mid-1920s, as guerrilla bands continued to resist Soviet authority. In the 1920s, four of the five republics came into existence for the first time as Soviet authorities drew borders in anticipation of reordering all of Central Asian society. (Kyrgyzstan gained full republic status in 1936.) In the 1930s, the primarily agricultural region was traumatized by the forced collectivization campaign of Joseph V. Stalin's regime; episodes of widespread famine were common. (By 1900 the Kazak, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen nomads already had suffered massive disruption of their traditional lifestyles as a result of Russian settlers taking their grazing land for farms.)

Throughout the Soviet period, the Central Asian republics participated in the life of the union in a rather peripheral sense, and many phases of cultural life were unaffected by Soviet rule. Local communist parties suffered the same purges as those in other republics, but they exercised little political influence in Moscow. Regional economies were stunted by increased demands for production of cotton and other specifically assigned items. As was discovered in the 1980s, decades of Soviet intensive cultivation caused massive pollution, from which the region still suffers. Interrepublican animosities over access to scarce resources went largely ignored by Soviet authorities. The more liberal Soviet regime of Mikhail S. Gorbachev (in office 1985–91) saw increased airing of grievances that long had been withheld by the peoples of the Central Asian republics, but before 1991 no organized movement for independence had evolved from that discontent.

The five post-Soviet states of Central Asia still are defined by the arbitrary borders created in the early years of the Soviet era, and the demarcation among them still fails to correspond to the ethnic and linguistic situation of the region. Thus, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have substantial Uzbek minorities, and Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have large numbers of their respective neighbor's people. Kazakhstan has few Central Asian people of other nationalities; its largest minorities are Russian, Ukrainian, and German.

Until the 1990s, the Soviet Central Asian states were viewed from the outside world largely as parts of a single, homogeneous region. Since 1991, however, the Western world has begun to discover substantial differences in almost all aspects of those new nations. The West also has discovered the possibility of commercial gain from oil, natural gas, gold, and other

natural resources abundant in the region. The presence of these materials was known in the Soviet era, but they were accessible only by way of Moscow.

In responding to their neighbors in the new independence period, the policy makers of the five states have moved in two contrary directions: toward establishing common goals and greater unity in a regional grouping, and toward individual economic and political development and identification with countries outside the region. The philosophical ideal of Pan-Turkism, an ethnically based unity concept that originated among Central Asian intellectuals in the nineteenth century, still receives support, but relatively few concrete steps have been taken to realize the ideal. Furthermore, the people of Tajikistan are of predominantly Persian rather than Turkic origin. Meanwhile, Central Asians have placed special emphasis on ethnic self-differentiation as a belated reaction against the stereotyping of non-Slavs that was common practice in the Soviet Union. That ethnic generalization continues in the Russian Federation, which still exerts enormous influence in the Central Asian republics.

The most important single cultural commonality among the republics is the practice of Sunni Islam, which is the professed religion of a very large majority of the peoples of the five republics and which has experienced a significant revival throughout the region in the 1990s. Propaganda from Russia and from the ruling regimes in the republics identifies Islamic political activity as a vague, monolithic threat to political stability everywhere in the region. However, the role of Islam in the five cultures is far from uniform, and its role in politics has been minimal everywhere except in Tajikistan. For Kazaks, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen, whose society was based on a nomadic lifestyle that carried on many traditional tribal beliefs after their nominal conversion, Islam has had a less profound influence on culture than for the sedentary Tajik and Uzbek Muslims, who have a conventional religious hierarchy.

Regional economic cooperation, another type of unity that has received substantial lip service in the 1990s, has failed to materialize on a large scale. All five republics joined the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO—see Glossary) shortly after independence, and Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan established a limited common market in 1994. But Uzbekistan vetoed the membership of unstable Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan refused to join. Existing arrangements within





Figure 3. Central Asia in 1868

the free-trade zone have not significantly promoted large-scale commerce within the group of three. For all five republics, Russia remains the top trading partner because much of the emphasis in their agricultural and industrial infrastructures remains the same as when the republics had assigned roles in supplying Moscow. Those roles and dependence on Russian trade are changing slowly in the mid-1990s, however, as diversification occurs.

Several factors encourage economic rivalry rather than cooperation. Water, a crucial resource for agriculture and power generation, has been the object of bitter bilateral and multilateral disputes both before and after independence. In the 1990s, the republics at the headwaters of major rivers, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have chafed at apportionment of water consumption favoring downstream consumers Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan has complained about excessive water consumption by the Uzbekistanis upstream. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have come close to conflict over water in the Fergana Valley, where vital agricultural reform and land privatization programs are endangered by unresolved water disputes.

The republics still offer a similar range of commodities for trade. Their common emphasis on cotton, natural gas, and oil limits the potential for advantageous commerce within the group and fosters rivalry in trade with outside customers. Some of the commercial relationships that have developed—such as the sale of fuels to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan by the other three fuel-rich republics—have been one-sided and subject to shut-down in response to nonpayment or in attempts to gain economic and political leverage.

The five republics have several major problems in common. All remain in the economic, military, and political shadow of their giant neighbor to the north. In the mid-1990s, Russian policy makers, encouraged by a very vocal nationalist faction in the federation, speak openly of recapturing influence in the "near abroad"; Central Asia usually is the first region cited as an example. In the first two years of independence, the five republics remained in the ruble zone (see Glossary), their monetary activities restricted by the nonconvertibility of the old Soviet ruble that remained the currency of that grouping. In 1993 all but Tajikistan introduced new currencies with limited convertibility. Russia had attempted to keep Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in a new Russian ruble zone, but ruble distribution problems

and harsh conversion conditions forced those republics to follow the independent course of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The Tajikistani ruble (for value of the Tajikistani ruble—see Glossary) introduced in 1995 remained closely connected with its Russian counterpart. In 1996 Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan established a new customs union and other economic ties with Russia and Belarus, hoping to gain selected advantages while avoiding large-scale concessions that would increase Russian influence.

The Soviet legacy includes an economic infrastructure in which all republics depend heavily on other republics for vital inputs. A complex Soviet-designed system of pipelines and electric cables connects the five republics. Pending completion of Turkmenistan's new line to Iran, only one railroad line leading out of Central Asia connects the region with a destination other than Russia (the one line goes only to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in China). Heavy industry in all five republics also has depended heavily on local Russian skilled labor.

The Central Asian republics also suffer common geographic disadvantages. All are landlocked and located far from potential markets outside the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS—see Glossary) and the Middle East. Nations such as Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, through which goods must travel overland to reach Western markets, still are quite unstable, and others such as China and Russia are powerful neighbors with a history of taking advantage of weaker nations that need commercial favors. Kazakstan and Turkmenistan, both in need of a route to move oil and gas to Western customers, have been especially frustrated by Russia's failure to support new pipelines. The landlocked position also presents a national security obstacle.

Although the region is blessed with ample arable land, most of that land becomes useful only when irrigated. Large-scale irrigation, in turn, has taken a huge toll on the hydrological systems of the region—in the most obvious case, the system that feeds the fast-disappearing Aral Sea. Regional cooperation on the Aral Sea problem, recognized as one of the most serious environmental crises in the world, received much lip service and little action in the first half of the 1990s. By 1995 an estimated 36,000 square kilometers of the sea's bed had been exposed, and an estimated 3 million inhabitants of nearby Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakstan had developed

chronic health problems associated with that process. In October 1995, a United Nations (UN)-sponsored regional conference produced the Nukus Declaration, which resulted in the promise of intensified joint efforts to stabilize the sea and a pledge of US\$200 million from the UN and the World Bank (see Glossary) for regional development and aid.

When independence was declared in 1991, none of the five republics had experienced an independence movement or had a corps of leaders who had considered how such a change might be managed. Five years after independence, in four of the states political leadership remains in the hands of the same individual as in the last years of the Soviet Union: Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakstan, Askar Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, Saparmyrat Niyazov in Turkmenistan, and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan. President Imomali Rahmonov of Tajikistan was not president in 1991, but, like his cohorts, his roots are in his republic's pre-1992 political world. Political power in all five republics is based on clan and regional groupings that make national coalitions risky and fragile. Clan rivalries have played a particular role in the civil war of Tajikistan and in Akayev's difficulties in unifying Kyrgyzstan behind a reform program.

Although all the republics had adopted new constitutions by 1995, the three government branches prescribed by those documents are severely imbalanced in favor of the executive. In all five cases, the political opposition of the early 1990s has been virtually extinguished in the name of preserving stability and preventing the putative onset of Islamic politicization. Although the new constitutions of the republics specify independent judicial branches, the concept of due process has not been established consistently anywhere.

All five republics have suffered increasing rates of crime in the liberalized atmosphere of the postindependence years. Drug trafficking, official corruption, and white-collar crime have increased most noticeably. All republics lack the resources to equip and train qualified police and specialized forces, and their judicial systems are not sufficiently removed from their Soviet antecedents to deal equitably with new generations of criminals. Evaluation and quantification of crime in post-Soviet Central Asia have been hampered by changes in responsible agencies, by irregularities in reporting procedures, and by lack of control and responsiveness in law enforcement agencies, particularly in Tajikistan. Statistics for the years 1990 and 1994 from Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan show dramatic increases in

every type of crime, although those from the other three republics, where record keeping is known to be substantially less comprehensive, show considerable drops in many categories. In 1995 and 1996, Kazakstan and Uzbekistan set up new, specialized police units to deal with economic and organized crime.

## **Kazakstan**

By far the largest of the Central Asian republics, Kazakstan extends almost 2,000 kilometers from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of China in the east and nearly 1,300 kilometers from central Siberia in the north to eastern Uzbekistan in the south. Despite its size, in population Kazakstan is a distant second to Uzbekistan among the Central Asian republics. With the lowest birth rate and the highest emigration rate in the region, Kazakstan's population has remained virtually stable for the past ten years. Kazakstan has by far the largest non-Asian population (45 percent in 1994, equaling the Kazak population) and the smallest population of other Central Asian ethnic groups (for example, only 2 percent are Uzbek).

The largest minority in Kazakstan is its Russian population (36 percent in 1994), which until the 1990s was the plurality group. The status of the Russians, whose number includes many irreplaceable technical experts, has been one of Kazakstan's burning post-Soviet issues. The government has resisted making Russian an official second language, although Russian is understood by most Kazaks and used in most official communications. In May 1996, a treaty established the status of Kazak and Russian citizens in Russia and Kazakstan, respectively, ending a long disputed aspect of the nationality issue.

Of the five Central Asian republics, Kazakstan played the most important industrial role in the Soviet system because of the abundant coal and oil deposits in the northern sector of the republic, closest to Russia. Although the Soviet Union developed specific sectors of industry such as chemicals, metals, and military equipment, the republic also inherited an antiquated industrial infrastructure geared to feed materials into the Soviet economy. Energy industries, which also played a large part in the economy, have suffered from substantial reductions in Russia's post-Soviet demand, as have other industries that remain dependent on Russian markets.

In 1996 most of Kazakstan's economy was still state-owned and lacked fundamental restructuring, despite large-scale

privatization of smaller enterprises in the preceding years. Some large firms have been sold to solid international companies (such as the Republic of Korea's (South Korea's) Samsung, which now manages the Zhezqazghan Nonferrous Metallurgy complex and refinery), but many were awarded to unknown companies whose contracts later were cancelled. In June 1996, the government sold the country's largest oil refinery at Shymkent, Yuzhneftegaz, one of its largest oil enterprises, and the Vasilevskoye gold mine, one of the largest in the world, by public tender to foreign companies. Those sales, together worth an estimated US\$1 billion, were a major departure from previous policy and were aimed at improving the confidence of international investors.

In 1996 the healthiest parts of the economy were the oil, gas, and mineral extraction industries. However, infrastructural decay and slow structural reform have delayed the recovery of those sectors from post-Soviet lethargy. Many of the state enterprises concentrated in northern Kazakstan are far in debt and unable to pay wages to their workers. The transfer of the national capital from Almaty along the border of Uzbekistan to Aqmola in the industrial north, planned for 1998, is an attempt to revive that zone, as well as to retain the cadre of Russian technical experts who continue to leave the country.

Foreign investment in Kazakstan has been frustrated by complex bureaucratic rules, and the domestic consumer market is restricted by the very low average wage of US\$96 per month. The Western oil companies Chevron and Mobil have invested heavily in the Tengiz oil fields offshore in the Caspian Sea, but they have been frustrated by a long dispute with the consortium of Kazakstan, Oman, and Russia over the structure of a new delivery pipeline. The common customs regime established with Russia in 1995 has accelerated trade, but conditions favored Russia in the first year.

The Central Bank of Kazakstan, President Nazarbayev, and the Council of Ministers play a strong role in economic policy making. The bank has advocated market reform and inflation control the most strongly of the three. Experts rate Nazarbayev's economic initiatives as erratic. Government goals for 1996 included reducing inflation to 28 percent (the 1995 rate was 60 percent), reducing the budget deficit to about 3.3 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary); and limiting devaluation of the tenge (for value of the tenge—see Glossary) to a 10 percent decline against the dollar.

The exchange rate of the tenge against the United States dollar has improved steadily, allowing upper-class Kazaks to expand foreign goods purchases. For 1997 the Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts significant stabilization and recovery, with overall GDP growth of 1 percent and consumer price inflation of 45 percent. Substantial aid was expected from the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) in 1996. Full membership in the Islamic Development Bank, achieved in mid-1996, brought Kazakhstan additional aid for trade operations, personnel training, and infrastructure improvements.

Despite the abundance of fuel in Kazakhstan, in 1996 the republic continued to be plagued by its Soviet-era transportation system, which failed to connect population centers with distant hydrocarbon deposits within the country. As a result, in the winter of 1996–97 Almaty and other cities suffered severe shortages of electric power and heat.

In December 1996, Russia finally stopped blocking a multinational agreement to build an export pipeline that would allow Kazakhstan to sell its abundant oil directly to Western customers. Because the pipeline will not be available until 1999 or later, in 1997 Kazakhstan began shipping oil across the Caspian Sea for resale in Iran—a procedure that risked Western condemnation because of the ongoing economic embargo of Iran.

As the Soviet Union faced dissolution late in 1991, Nazarbayev was one of the last advocates of the union's preservation in some form. Since that time, he has pursued a careful foreign policy aimed at preserving both close relations with Russia and as much as possible of his nation's economic and political independence. In domestic politics, he nominally expanded some of the republic's democratic institutions, pushing through a new constitution and a popularly elected parliament. However, Nazarbayev also consolidated his executive power steadily in the mid-1990s. Parliaments were dissolved in 1993 and 1995, and Nazarbayev made numerous changes in the personnel and structure of his cabinets, all in an effort to obtain cooperation in his reform programs. In April 1995, a referendum overwhelmingly extended the president's term to 2000, canceling the 1995 presidential election. Decrees by Nazarbayev in December 1995 and April 1996 further extended the president's powers. Nazarbayev also dissolved the Constitutional Court in 1995 and replaced members of the Supreme Court in 1996.

Party politics in Kazakstan have not worked well, although a substantial opposition movement exists. Despite efforts by the ruling People's Unity Party (SNEK) to minimize opposition activity, the top three opposition parties gained twenty-two of sixty-seven seats in the lower house (Majilis) of parliament in the December 1995 elections, and another fourteen seats went to independent candidates. Indicating the inferior role of parliament in the Kazakstani government, however, was the lack of competition in those elections; only forty-nine candidates vied for the forty Senate (upper-house) seats being contested. In both houses, Kazaks outnumbered Russians, by forty-two to nineteen in the Majilis and by twenty-nine to fifteen in the Senate (the president appoints seven senators).

In the Soviet era, Semipalatinsk (now Semey) in northeast Kazakstan was the world's largest and most frequently used test site for nuclear weapons. During the long Cold-War period of nuclear weapons testing, an estimated 1.5 to 2 million people were affected by radioactive pollution in northern Kazakstan. Demonstrations against nuclear testing began in 1989, and a major environmental movement sprang from that opposition.

When the Soviet Union dissolved, Kazakstan was one of four republics possessing nuclear weapons and materials. In November 1994, the United States completed Project Sapphire, which involved the purchase and removal of more than 600 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium from Kazakstan, whose insecure storage facilities and possible nuclear sales to Libya and Iran had aroused international concern. In May 1995, the last of Kazakstan's nuclear weapons was destroyed, removing a major shadow from the Soviet past. The United States has promised aid in permanently sealing the Semey test site.

In the 1990s, Kazakstan's foreign policy has continued Nazarbayev's early support of a federation among the former Soviet states, now loosely united in the CIS. Because the country's industrial and energy bases are located close to Russia's southern border, experts have identified Kazakstan as the former Soviet republic most likely to experience Russian pressure toward reunification. Despite the strains caused by the uncertain status of the large Russian minority in his republic, Nazarbayev has maintained close relations with Russia; in early 1996, he brought Kazakstan into a new commercial confederation with Belarus, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan. In June 1996, Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin reiterated Kazakstan's full sup-

port for additional CIS integration (while preserving member-state sovereignty) and for the reelection of Boris N. Yeltsin as president of Russia. Meanwhile, Kazakstan worked with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to extend the activities of the Central Asian Economic Union, which was established in 1993. At the Bishkek summit of January 1997, a treaty of "eternal friendship" guaranteed mutual security assistance among the three member nations; the summit also discussed mutual convertibility of the three currencies.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

Kyrgyzstan, the second-smallest of the Central Asian republics in both area and population, is located between two giants: Kazakstan to its north and China to its south and east. The rural population, already the largest by percentage in Central Asia, is growing faster than the cities. Like Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan has a minority population of Russians (22 percent in 1994) whose accelerated emigration threatens the country's technological base. The country's legal and political systems give clear priority to the Kyrgyz majority, alienating not only Russians but also the large Uzbek minority concentrated in the Osh region of southwestern Kyrgyzstan. Friction persists over control of the scarce land of the Fergana Valley, which overlaps the territory of three republics: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The regime of President Askar Akayev (first elected in 1990) has attempted to balance sorely needed national reform programs with the demands of ethnic groups and clans that still exercise strong influence on the country's political and social structures.

Kyrgyzstan, ranked as the second-poorest republic in Central Asia, possesses a more limited range of natural resources than its neighbors. In the Soviet era, Kyrgyzstan contributed a specific group of minerals—antimony, gold, and mercury—to Moscow's economic plan. Of the three, only gold is a valuable asset in the post-Soviet world; it has attracted several Western investor companies. Kyrgyzstan has only limited amounts of coal and oil. The major energy resource is water power from the republic's fast-moving rivers. However, despite a government program of increased emphasis on hydroelectric power, Kyrgyzstan must import a large proportion of its energy supply. Kyrgyzstan's industry, which had been specialized to serve the Soviet military-industrial complex, suffered heavily when that demand disappeared; conversion has proven very difficult.

After independence, Kyrgyzstan suffered one of the worst economic declines among the CIS states (particularly in industrial output), despite a reform program that was deployed more rapidly than most others. Statistically, privatization was very effective, but because meaningful economic change did not occur after privatization, inefficient state enterprises continued to drag down the economy. Government and commercial corruption also diluted the effects of economic reform.

In the mid-1990s, official measurements of Kyrgyzstan's economic performance were very negative; they were, however, not completely accurate. By 1996 an estimated 30 percent of real GDP came from the "black economy"—independent, unregistered entrepreneurs selling their wares on the street or in private shops—while state-owned enterprises continued to go bankrupt or failed to pay their employees. However, even official GDP bottomed out in 1995; it dropped 6.2 percent after slumping by 26 percent in the previous year. The Economist Intelligence Unit forecast GDP rises of 1 percent in 1996 and 2.5 percent in 1997, the latter spurred by the opening of the Canadian joint-venture gold mine at Kumtor. In 1995 the volume of industrial production dropped 12.5 percent, and consumer goods production dropped 25.4 percent, but agriculture improved by 38.8 percent.

Other indicators are more positive, however. By early 1996, the inflation rate, which had reached 1,400 percent in 1993, was about 1 percent per month. The government's goal was to halve the end-of-1995 rate by the end of 1996. The exchange rate of the som (for value of the som—see Glossary) remained stable in 1996 at eleven to US\$1. The budget deficit remained high at about 12 percent of GDP, with foreign loans applied to make up the shortfall.

Foreign investment remained very sparse in 1996. Many joint ventures with Turkey have failed, and the sale of Kyrgyzstani firms to foreign investors has provided embarrassingly little revenue for the government. International loans continue, but Kyrgyzstan already has fallen behind in repayments to Russia and Turkey. Repayment of pending international debts inevitably will raise the national debt. Debt and the failure of foreign investment have forced Kyrgyzstan to rely more heavily on Russia. The customs union that Kyrgyzstan joined with Belarus, Kazakstan, and Russia early in 1996 will add to Moscow's power over Kyrgyzstan's trade policy.

At the same time, Kyrgyzstan's parliament has resisted reform legislation that would modernize the tax code and privatization of large state enterprises in energy, telecommunications, mining, and aviation. According to a government estimate, as many as 70 percent of privatized enterprises were bankrupt in 1996 because, under existing economic conditions, they simply lacked customers. A limited capital market includes the Kyrgyzstan Stock Exchange, which opened in early 1995, and some independent brokerage houses, but because there is no legal framework or government regulation for capital exchange, cash transactions were few in 1996.

Although President Akayev began his regime with ideals of multiparty democracy, strong opposition stymied his reform programs and moved him gradually closer to the authoritarian positions of his four Central Asian colleagues. Power struggles between the legislative and executive branches of government promoted Akayev's expansion of executive power. In the mid-1990s, two elections—the first reelecting Akayev by a huge margin in December 1995 and the second giving 95 percent approval in a referendum on extending his power in February 1996—were approved by international observers as free and fair, although the opposition claimed otherwise. The referendum empowers the president to conduct domestic and foreign policy and to name and dismiss cabinet ministers and judges without consulting parliament. The parliament retains approval rights over the presidential appointment of the prime minister, Supreme Court judges, and other officials, but the president may dissolve parliament if it fails three times to approve a nominee. Akayev had argued that centralizing presidential power was necessary to speed economic, political, and legal reform and to reduce the influence of regional political centers. In March 1996, he exercised his new power by securing the resignation of the government, naming four new ministers, and redesignating the positions of five others. He also reorganized local government to reduce the power of provincial leaders and assign them direct responsibility for enactment of national reforms.

In May 1996, a new government document described social conditions and listed goals for social programs in the ensuing years. Kyrgyzstan, which has made earnest efforts to maintain social support programs in the lean years of the 1990s, is emphasizing job creation and prevention of unemployment, reorganization of social insurance and pension systems, and

reforms in education and health care. The official unemployment figure in mid-1996 was 76,600; about 60 percent of the unemployed received unemployment benefits. The government goal is to keep unemployment below 100,000 while mounting a new, long-term job creation program. In 1996 a proposal was made for a government-controlled social fund to run a uniform state insurance and pension system that would remove the severe inequities of Kyrgyzstan's current system.

Meanwhile, nearly one-third of the population (1.257 million) are estimated to live below the poverty line, and the 14,000 refugees arriving annually from Tajikistan create additional social pressures. Kyrgyzstan became a preferred refugee destination when Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan tightened their migration controls in 1993.

In the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy has been shaped by the small country's reliance on Russia for national security. In 1996 President Akayev reiterated that Kyrgyzstan always would view Russia as a natural ally and partner. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan has appealed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO—see Glossary) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE—see Glossary) to replace the CIS force in Tajikistan and, in fact, to guarantee the security of the entire region—a position at odds with Russia's strong opposition to NATO influence anywhere in the former Warsaw Pact regions. However, in early 1997 Akayev backed Russia's opposition to NATO expansion in Europe. In 1996–97 Kyrgyzstan diversified its national security policy somewhat by participating in the Central Asian peacekeeping battalion under the aegis of the Central Asian Economic Union.

Difficult relations with Central Asian neighbors increase the need for an outside source of security. Uzbekistan, which has a 13 percent minority population in western Kyrgyzstan, has flexed its muscles by shutting off fuel supplies. Kyrgyzstan depends heavily on the Kazakstani capital, Almaty, for air traffic in the absence of a first-class domestic airport. Unresolved border issues and a continuing flow of civil war refugees have inflamed relations with Tajikistan. Greatly expanded trade relations with China also have brought large numbers of Chinese merchants who threaten to stifle domestic commerce in some Kyrgyzstani cities. Kyrgyzstan has expressed the need to balance its policy between China and Russia, and has praised China for its relative restraint in exerting influence over Central Asia.

## Tajikistan

Located on the western slopes of the Pamir Mountains, Tajikistan occupies one of the most rugged and topographically divided regions in the world. Possessing extremely convoluted frontiers, it borders Uzbekistan to the west, China to the east, Afghanistan to the south, and Kyrgyzstan to the north. Tajikistan is the smallest in area and third-largest in population of the Central Asian republics. Unlike the ethnically dominant groups of the other four republics, the Tajiks have a culture and a language based on Iranian rather than Turkic roots. Despite their differing cultural backgrounds, the Tajiks and the Uzbeks did not consider themselves separate until the Soviet Union's artificial demarcation of the republics in the 1920s. (Until 1929 the Autonomous Republic of Tajikistan was part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan.)

The Soviet Union brought Tajikistan significant advancement in education, industry, and infrastructure compared with the primitive conditions of 1917. In the mid-1990s, however, the country remained the most backward of the Central Asian republics, partly because of specifically focused Soviet development policies and partly because of topographical factors that enormously complicate exploitation of existing resources.

In the Soviet system, the Tajikistani economy was designed to produce cotton, aluminum, and a few other mineral products, including uranium and gold. Waged across a large portion of the republic, the civil war has caused great and lasting damage to the national economy. In 1994 damage to industry was estimated at about US\$12 billion. Production levels in all industries had dropped an estimated 60 percent in 1994 compared with 1990. Many Germans and Russians, a high percentage of the country's key technical personnel, fled the civil war. The rate of inflation was steep in 1992–93.

In 1996 Tajikistan's economy still was in desperate condition. It remains the least attractive of the former Soviet republics for foreign investment. Only the export of cotton and aluminum has brought significant profits. A joint cotton venture with the United Arab Emirates was scheduled to begin in mid-1996. In 1995 the Regar (Tursunzoda) aluminum plant produced 230,000 tons of primary aluminum, about half its capacity but enough to make aluminum the second-largest export product. As it was earlier in the 1990s, aluminum production has been limited by continued reliance on imported raw materials and

energy. Tajikistani industry remains handicapped in general by the country's inability to pay foreign energy suppliers.

Some movement toward economic reform was seen in 1996, although the unreliability of performance statistics makes evaluation difficult. Prime minister Yahyo Azimov, who took office in February 1996, has stressed the need for quick privatization and assistance from the IMF and the World Bank. In early 1996, controls were lifted on bread prices, a move that led to riots in some cities but that was considered a sign of commitment to market reform. The Azimov government set a 1996 budget deficit cap of 6 percent of GDP. In mid-1996 the World Bank was considering a loan of US\$50 million, but the IMF withheld aid pending improvement of foreign exchange and other conditions. The privatization target for the end of 1996 was 50 percent of total enterprises, after only 8 percent of the country's enterprises were privatized in the first four years of independence. The Economist Intelligence Unit forecast additional GDP reductions of 12.4 percent in 1996 and 10 percent in 1997.

In 1996 and 1997, Tajikistan attempted to join regional organizations that would improve its economic position. The customs union of Belarus, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia considered Tajikistan for membership, but the Central Asian Economic Union of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan refused Tajikistan's overtures.

Some improvements were made in 1995–96 in Tajikistan's woefully shabby infrastructure. The Daewoo firm of South Korea modernized the telephone system, and United States, German, and Turkish firms were scheduled to add new features. The Dushanbe Airport still needs modernization, although in the mid-1990s regular flights were established to Moscow, India, and some other points.

Especially in comparison with the stable regimes that have dominated the other republics since 1991, the political scene in Tajikistan has been unsettled from the day of independence onward. Throughout the 1990s, an old guard with roots in the Soviet era parried the efforts of various opposition groups to share or monopolize power. In 1992 a short-lived coalition government broke down, sending the country into a civil war that was won nominally when the old guard forces captured Dushanbe and named Imomali Rahmonov chief executive. But conflict persisted, based partly on the geographical and clan divisions of the country and partly on the political question of

reform versus reaction. Between 1993 and 1996, fighting flared, mostly in limited engagements, in several regions of Tajikistan and across the border in Afghanistan. In 1993 a multinational CIS force, dominated by Russian units, entered the country with the primary mission of enforcing the southern border, across which opposition forces had received substantial support. In early 1994, the UN arranged a first round of peace talks, and five more rounds followed over the next two years. None of the talks led to an agreement on peace terms, however.

In 1996 Tajikistan's political situation remained as unstable as it had been for the previous three years. The Rahmonov regime was unable to defeat rebel forces or to compromise enough to reach a satisfactory agreement with them. As it had in the previous three years, Russia failed to bring the government and the opposition to the peace table. Meanwhile, continued instability provided Russia the pretext for maintaining substantial "peacekeeping" forces in a key region of the former Soviet Union. The situation has led some outsiders to doubt the sincerity of Russia's efforts to bring peace to the area.

In early June 1996, the civil war in Tajikistan intensified once again, and observers saw similarities between Russia's military activity there and its occupation of Chechnya. Russian air attacks on opposition villages in south-central Tajikistan contravened the latest three-month extension of the UN-sponsored cease-fire (originally signed in 1994), which had been set in May. In a new campaign apparently coordinated with Moscow, Tajikistani troops moved with Russian air support eastward into the country's narrow central corridor toward opposition strongholds. Meanwhile, in May the Rahmonov regime refused to reconvene UN-sponsored talks as scheduled, and the UN Observer Mission in Tajikistan (UNMOT) was refused access to the combat zone. In August 1996, opposition troops moved close to Dushanbe amid intensified fighting that ended yet another cease-fire agreement.

In the fall of 1996, the government's military position was unfavorable as rebel forces drove from Afghanistan into central and eastern Tajikistan. In December Rahmonov signed a peace agreement with Sayed Abdullo Nuri, leader of the opposition Islamic Rebirth Party. The agreement called for a National Reconciliation Council that would be a forum to negotiate the terms of a permanent peace. In the months that followed, the Rahmonov government negotiated with the United Tajikistan

Opposition to reintegrate the political and military organizations of the two sides. Scattered fighting continued into the spring of 1997, however.

According to a Russian report in May 1996, the Tajikistani army was lacking 40 percent of its nominal officer cadre, and only 40 percent of those in service, many of them callups from the reserves, had a military education. The Tajikistani force was evaluated as inferior to its opposition in training and armament. Instances of troop mutiny reinforced that opinion, paralleling the situation in Afghanistan during the 1980s. In both Tajikistan and Afghanistan, Russian troops operated in a highly unstable civil war atmosphere, and the opposing sides were deeply divided within themselves.

As the civil war continued, the Rahmonov regime took steps to avoid internal sources of opposition. Although the new constitution approved in November 1994 contained substantial guarantees of human rights (also staples of all the Soviet-era constitutions), prescribed legislative and review functions for the legislature, and mandated an independent judiciary, in fact the country's governance amounted to one-man rule based on declarations of emergency executive powers extended from 1993 and 1994. The result has been imprisonment, exile, and assassination of opposition political figures and some foreign observers. Rahmonov won a decisive victory in the presidential election of 1994, with opposition only from a second hard-line politician of similar background, in what was generally labeled a rigged outcome. The unicameral legislature offers decisive majority support for Rahmonov's programs, and the judiciary is fully under the control of the president, who has the power to dismiss any judge. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, which accounts for nearly 45 percent of the republic's territory, has disputed status and is a main stronghold of separatist opposition forces.

Tajikistan's foreign policy increasingly has sought the economic and military security of close relations with Russia. In Tajikistan, the Russian minority enjoys a more liberal set of privileges than it finds in any other Central Asian republic. For example, Russians are allowed dual citizenship and Russian remains an official language. In April 1996, Rahmonov appointed the Russian mayor of Dushanbe, Yuriy Ponosov, as first deputy prime minister, continuing the policy of granting high government positions to ethnic Russians. Despite favorable treatment of the Russian minority, Russians have fled

Tajikistan steadily since 1992. In early 1996, only about 80,000 of the 500,000 Russians identified in the 1989 Soviet census remained. Most have complained that Russian government authorities did not afford them adequate aid or security in Tajikistan, leaving them no choice but to leave.

## Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan was known for most of its history as a loosely defined geographic region of independent tribes. Now it is a landlocked, mostly desert nation of only about 3.8 million people (the smallest population of the Central Asian republics in the second-largest land mass). The country remains quite isolated on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, largely occupied by the Qizilqum (Kyzyl Kum) Desert. Traditional tribal relationships still are a fundamental base of society, and telecommunications service from the outside world has only begun to have an impact. Like the Kazaks and the Kyrgyz, the Turkmen peoples were nomadic herders until the second half of the nineteenth century, when the arrival of Russian settlers began to deprive them of the vast expanses needed for livestock.

Agriculture contributes about half of Turkmenistan's GDP, whereas industry accounts for only about one-fifth. However, irrigation is necessary for nearly all the republic's arable land. In the early 1990s, government subsidies protected consumers from the shock of leaving the insulated Soviet system. Nevertheless, the standard of living protected by those subsidies had been among the lowest in the Soviet Union, and it deteriorated further in the 1990s. Although the Niyazov regime launched ambitious privatization programs in 1992 and 1993—with energy, transportation, agriculture, and communications to remain under state control—only minor progress had been made toward the programs' goals by the mid-1990s. Progress also has been quite slow in the reform of commercial and banking legislation.

Turkmenistan played a vital role in the Soviet system as a natural gas supplier. In the post-Soviet period, Russia remained the republic's top trade partner, with Turkey moving into second place in the mid-1990s. A crucial rail link with Iran also was an important commercial improvement.

The single most important mineral resource is natural gas; Turkmenistan's reserves may be among the largest in the world, with estimates as high as 15 trillion cubic meters. Nearly all the republic has been identified as potentially productive,

and important offshore reserves exist in the Caspian Sea. The second major resource is petroleum, of which Turkmenistan has an estimated 63 billion tons. However, the range of the republic's mineral resources is small: sulfur, mineral salts, and clays complete the list.

In the mid-1990s, Turkmenistan's economic policy continued to rely heavily on the West's demand for natural gas. But, for a nation isolated along the east coast of the Caspian Sea, gas sales depend strictly on pipeline movement. Existing lines, built to serve the Turkmenistan-Russia north-south axis, cannot fill this need. New lines moving from east to west have been planned, but all plans encounter strong geopolitical opposition from a regional power or from the United States. Until the pipeline problem is solved, Turkmenistan can sell gas only to the same customers it served in the Soviet era, who now are its impoverished fellow members of the CIS. Armenia and Ukraine, major CIS customers, have been chronically late in paying. In February 1996, Turkmenistan made a long-term agreement to sell as much as 15 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Turkey between 1998 and 2020. Turkey also received development rights for a field in Turkmenistan believed to contain 20 million tons of oil.

Many recent economic indicators can only be approximated because Turkmenistan has not issued precise statistics. The national currency, the manat (for value of the manat—see Glossary), was devalued in late 1995 from a ratio of 500 to US\$1 to 2,100 to US\$1; it has remained non-convertible. It is believed that inflation in 1995 exceeded 1,000 percent; the 1996 annual rate, 140 percent, still was the highest in Central Asia. Exports for 1995 were about US\$1.9 billion and imports about US\$1.5 billion in official estimates. However, Turkmenistan conducts much barter trade, and payment failures of gas customers further undermine the application of cash trade figures. For 1996 the Economist Intelligence Unit forecast a 5 percent reduction of GDP following a drop of 15 percent in 1995. It also forecast a reduction in inflation in 1996 to 800 percent and a further drop in the value of the manat to a rate of 3,000 to US\$1.

The state still strongly dominates the national economy. Little private enterprise occurs without some form of government approval or support, and about 90 percent of the work force is in state enterprises. In 1996 plans called for modernization of tax and business laws, including joint-venture conditions for

the oil and gas industries. Pending those developments, foreign investors face a mass of state bureaucracy.

Foreign investment has been small, and experts predict no short-term improvement, partly because of the republic's insufficient legal and bureaucratic infrastructure, and partly because the very small and impoverished population provides little market opportunity. (The official average monthly wage was US\$7 in early 1996.) The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and other international banks are funding a textile complex, and Ashgabat Airport will be modernized with a loan of US\$31 million from the British Export Credit Agency. However, for 1996 total direct investment was only US\$32 million, with another US\$61 million in joint ventures and US\$161 million in foreign loans.

Turkmenistan has pursued the most independent and pragmatic foreign policy of the five Central Asian republics. The overall goal has been to form advantageous regional relationships without becoming involved in regional conflicts such as the Tajikistani civil war. In December 1996, Turkmenistan passed legislation declaring permanent neutrality and prohibiting membership in any military or political-military alliance entailing responsibilities for collective action by its members.

President Niyazov has run the country's foreign policy personally; he has faced little pressure at home to orient policy in a particular direction. Thus, he has been able to form ties with diverse foreign nations, maintaining economic advancement as the primary goal. Through the mid-1990s, Iran has been the top regional partner, although national security relations with Russia also have been a high priority during that period. In 1995 Turkmenistan signed a series of bilateral agreements with Russia, expanding economic and political cooperation and proclaiming the two nations "strategic partners" through 2000.

Turkmenistan has explicitly avoided multilateral arrangements, most of them sponsored by Uzbekistan, with the other Central Asian republics. It refused membership in the Central Asian customs union established by Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan in 1994, and in the Central Asian Economic Union that sprang from the initial agreement. Turkmenistan also contributed nothing to the CIS peacekeeping force sent to Tajikistan by those three nations and Russia in 1993. Substantial tension has arisen with Uzbekistan over water consumption, competition on the world cotton market, the Uzbek minority population's potential for unrest, and resentment of Uzbeki-

stan's ambitions for regional leadership. By the end of 1995, tensions with Uzbekistan were so high that Turkmenistan boycotted all regional meetings. However, in January 1996 a meeting of the two nations' presidents produced a package of economic cooperation agreements, and new agreements on road and railroad transportation were discussed in the first half of 1996.

## Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is the third-largest of the Central Asian republics in area and the first in population (estimated at 23 million in 1994 and growing at the fastest rate in Central Asia). Uzbekistan is completely landlocked between Kazakstan to the north, Turkmenistan to the south, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east. It shares the Aral Sea, and hence the environmental problems of that area, with Kazakstan. The territory of modern Uzbekistan was at the center of the rich cultural and commercial developments that occurred in Central Asia over a period of two millennia, especially along the axis defined by the Silk Route between Europe and China. Included in Uzbekistan are the three chief Silk Route outposts of Bukhoro (Bukhara), Khiva, and Samarqand (Samarkand).

Besides the agricultural base that yields cotton, vegetables, and grain, Uzbekistan's economy is blessed with gold, several other valuable minerals, and substantial reserves of energy resources, especially natural gas. In the mid-1990s, the economy still is based primarily on agriculture, following substantial increases in irrigation-dependent output in the 1970s and 1980s. Cotton remains the most valuable crop, and Uzbekistan is the fourth-largest cotton producer in the world.

Uzbekistan has suffered from high inflation, mainly because the state has continued Soviet-era social protection programs, bank credits for unprofitable enterprises, budget deficits, and price supports that require expanding the supply of money. As inflation has redistributed wealth, many Uzbekistanis have suffered substantial losses of real income. By 1994 annual inflation reached 1,300 percent, but government restrictions in 1995 lowered the year-end figure to 77 percent.

Throughout the post-Soviet period, a primary goal of Uzbekistan's economic reform policy has been to avoid the disruptions associated with rapid transition. While proclaiming the eventual goal of a market economy, economic planners have moved very slowly in privatization and in the creation of a

Western-style financial sector that would offer economic incentives and encourage private entrepreneurial initiative. This strategy has succeeded in reducing the transition shocks experienced by other post-Soviet societies. Since independence, Uzbekistan's GDP has fallen about 20 percent, compared with the Central Asian average of 50 percent. Part of that moderation results from Uzbekistan's initially more favorable situation in 1992. Because the cotton monoculture gave Uzbekistan a commodity with sales value worldwide (in 1995 some 75 percent of cotton exports went outside the CIS) and because Uzbekistan was less dependent on foreign trade and imported energy supplies than the other Central Asian countries, the end of the Soviet Union imposed fewer economic hardships. The 1995 cotton crop, expected to set a record, was significantly below forecast levels, however. Meanwhile, in 1996 the republics of the region continued nominal efforts to improve the Aral Sea environmental disaster, amid significant doubts that Uzbekistan would sacrifice cotton irrigation water from Aral tributaries to achieve that goal.

In late 1995, the IMF lent the regime US\$260 million for economic reform, the first money accepted by Karimov from the IMF. In its evaluation at that time, the IMF noted that Uzbekistan's structural reform had been slow, notably in the banking sector, but that its tight monetary policy had slowed the economy's previous runaway inflation and liberalization of foreign exchange had been effective. Inflation for 1995 was 77 percent; the IMF year-end inflation target for 1996 was 21 to 25 percent; the exchange rate of the Uzbekistani som (for value of the som—see Glossary) fell from thirty to the United States dollar in 1995 to thirty-five to the dollar in 1996. The Economist Intelligence Unit forecast a 1996 drop in GDP of 1 percent, followed by growth of 1 percent in 1997. The projected budget deficit for 1996 was 3.5 percent of GDP, which conforms with IMF loan guidelines. An IMF credit of US\$124 million was granted in December 1995.

Uzbekistan's economy is one of the most stable in the Central Asian region, and foreign investment activity there has been the highest in the region. In December 1995, the United States Overseas Private Investment Corporation agreed to provide US\$500 million to convert the Soviet-era military industry, and United States oil companies committed US\$1.3 billion of long-term investments in the oil and gas industry. Uzbekistan is the regional distribution center for electronic and domestic

appliances from Dubai, based on a favorable tariff system that places no tax on most imports (a 15 percent tariff was levied on electronics in 1996). A large Daewoo (South Korean) television and videocassette plant in Tashkent is the most visible foreign electronics enterprise. The British Massey-Ferguson firm plans an agricultural machinery plant at some future date, and the British Quickstop supermarket chain opened outlets in Tashkent in 1996. Although some improvement has been made in Uzbekistan's tax and legal system, the dominance of the state bureaucracy continues to complicate foreign investment.

In 1996 the Karimov regime became noticeably less cautious in its approach to economic reform. Karimov criticized some bureaucrats for hindering execution of reform decrees, and the president began advocating private enterprise as the surest path to individual and national prosperity.

Overall foreign trade goals still include expanded commercial agreements with East Asia and the West, but by 1996 Uzbekistan had expressed willingness to join a customs union with Belarus, Kazakstan, and Russia, which already had reached a series of commercial accommodations early in 1996. Self-sufficiency in oil, gained for the first time in 1996, has freed Uzbekistan from dependence on Russia in a key area.

Uzbekistan's position as the only Central Asian state bordering all the other four has combined with other advantages (the largest population in the region and significant natural resources) to advance its claim as the leader and potential unifying force of the Central Asians. That putative role also has gained Uzbekistan considerable distrust among the other four republics, each of which has a significant Uzbek minority population and each of which has felt the impact of Uzbekistan's drive for supremacy in different ways. In 1992 Uzbekistani troops—the best-equipped in Central Asia—were instrumental in the triumph of Imomali Rahmonov's communist forces in Tajikistan, and since that time Uzbekistan has participated in the CIS force attempting to keep the peace in that country. In tandem with its drive for Western economic ties and privatization, in 1996 Uzbekistan intensified its promotion of regional economic and security agreements. Partly as a counterweight to Russia's influence in the region, Uzbekistan has encouraged broader activities by the Central Asian Economic Union, which it shares with Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan. In 1996 the most notable departure from dependency on Russia was establishment of the Central Asian peacekeeping battalion, which held an initial

exercise in the United States under the auspices of the NATO Partnership for Peace program. In January 1997, the economic union's members signed a treaty of "eternal friendship" that included mutual security guarantees.

The armed forces, which had inherited a substantial infrastructure from the Soviet period, were the best-equipped force in the region by 1996, after developing steadily in the interim years. In 1996, Uzbekistan's armed forces numbered 30,000 persons, including 25,000 ground and 4,000 air force troops. At that time, the government announced that ethnic Uzbeks constituted 80 percent of the country's armed forces, compared with 6 percent in the former Soviet force of 1992.

After independence, much of Uzbekistan's political structure remained essentially unchanged. Although some impetus had existed toward more democratic governance prior to independence, Karimov set the tone for political activity by winning a rigged presidential election in 1991. The new constitution approved in December 1992 prescribed a secular, multiparty democracy with full observance of human rights. However, the trial and harassment of opposition political figures and the restriction of the media began immediately; international protests in the next few years achieved scant results. Only two parties, Karimov's and a token opposition group, were permitted to participate in the parliamentary election of 1994. In March 1995, a rigged referendum extended the presidency of Karimov until 2000. Shortly thereafter, Karimov sentenced seven leaders of the political opposition to prison terms. Although the stable atmosphere fostered by Karimov's regime had tended to soften international criticism, Uzbekistan's human rights record still left much to be desired. In 1995 and 1996, however, a general improvement in government observation of human rights was noted; the government apparently has attempted to attract Western investors by responding to criticism of its handling of human rights cases. Two new political parties were formed and registered officially in mid-1995.

Uzbekistan's relations with Russia have been characterized by a combination of resentment and dependence, representing one of the few areas where the Karimov regime does not exercise full control. Although Karimov has strongly encouraged business activities by Western countries, especially Germany, he has been careful not to alienate Russia's commercial interests. In 1994 and 1995, Uzbekistan signed commercial treaties with

a variety of CIS countries, but Russia always was the primary partner in such deals.

The issue of dual citizenship for the Russian minority in Uzbekistan, strongly pressed by Russia in the early 1990s, has caused serious irritation, as did Russia's unsuccessful pressure for Uzbekistan to remain in the ruble zone in 1993. Like the other Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan has suffered a rapid loss of its Russian technocrat population. Since independence, an estimated 500,000 Russians (out of the 1.65 million in 1989) have left, and the emigration of Germans, Jews, and Koreans further depleted the republic's base of technical know-how.

Just beyond the borders of Central Asia, Uzbekistan has established new relationships with Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, based chiefly on economic exchanges. Stimulated by the economic stability of Uzbekistan, international lenders such as the EBRD and the IMF have offered fairly generous loans. The United States, conscious of human rights violations, has offered less generous assistance to Uzbekistan than to other Central Asian countries.

The republics of Central Asia emerged from the Soviet Union with a combination of assets and handicaps. Their geographic isolation has complicated establishment of commercial relationships, and even name recognition, in the West. The complete lack of democratic tradition has kept the republics from complying with Western legal and commercial standards, and the expression of political dissent has been erratic and sometimes costly to dissenters. Serious deterioration of the Soviet-era education systems in all five countries threatens to diminish the capabilities of the next generation to contribute to the national economies at a time when those economies may be ready to flourish. At the same time, ample natural resources hold out the prospect that at least the republics most blessed in this way—Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—may ultimately enrich their economies and hence the standard of living of their people. The prospect of full regional cooperation remains only theoretical, in spite of numerous bilateral and trilateral agreements. And relations with Russia, traditionally the dominant outside force in Central Asia's geopolitical situation, remain close and vital, although fraught with misgivings. In early 1997, the future of the region remained nearly as unclear as it was in 1991, the year of independence.

March 31, 1997

Glenn E. Curtis



## Chapter 1. Kazakstan



*Kazak belt buckle depicting snow leopard on a mountain*

# Country Profile

## Country

**Formal Name:** Republic of Kazakstan.

**Short Form:** Kazakstan.

**Term for Citizens:** Kazakstani(s).

**Capital:** Almaty, scheduled to move to Aqmola 1998.

**Date of Independence:** December 16, 1991.

## Geography

**Size:** Approximately 2,717,300 square kilometers.

**Topography:** Substantial variation according to region; Altay and Tian Shan ranges in east and northeast, about 12 percent of territory, reach elevation of nearly 7,000 meters; more than three-quarters of territory desert or semidesert, with elevations below sea level along Caspian Sea coast in far west.

**Climate:** Continental and very dry except in eastern mountains, where snowfall heavy; wide temperature variation between winter and summer.

## Society

**Population:** By 1994 estimate, 17,268,000; annual growth rate 1.1 percent in 1994; population density 6.2 persons per square kilometer in 1994.

**Ethnic Groups:** In 1994, Kazaks 45 percent, Russians 36 percent, Ukrainians 5 percent, Germans 4 percent, Tatars and Uzbeks 2 percent each.

**Languages:** Official state language a contentious issue; 1995 constitution stipulates Kazak and Russian as state languages. Russian primary language in business, science, and academia. Non-Kazak population exerts pressure against requirements for use of Kazak.

**Religion:** In 1994, some 47 percent Muslim (Sunni branch), 44

percent Russian Orthodox, 2 percent Protestant (mainly Baptist), with smaller numbers of Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, and Jewish believers.

**Education and Literacy:** Literacy in 1989 was 97.5 percent. Education, fully supported by state funds, hampered by shortage of facilities and materials and low pay for teachers; major program to restructure Soviet system in progress mid-1990s; primary language of instruction Russian at all levels.

**Health:** Soviet-era free health system declined drastically in early 1990s, mainly because of low funding. Drugs and materials in short supply, doctors underpaid and leaving medicine, child health care especially poor. Infant mortality and contagious diseases rising, mid-1990s.

## **Economy**

**Gross National Product (GNP):** Estimated 1993 at US\$26.5 billion, or US\$1,530 per capita. In 1994 estimated growth rate -25.4 percent. In early 1990s, growth hindered by Soviet-era specialization and centralization, slow privatization.

**Agriculture:** Large-scale misallocation of land in Soviet Virgin Lands program, emphasizing cultivation over livestock, continues to distort land use. Main crops wheat, cotton, and rice; main livestock products meat and milk. State farms continue to dominate, 1996; land privatization minimal.

**Industry and Mining:** Outmoded heavy industry infrastructure inherited from Soviet era, specializing in chemicals, machinery, oil refining, and metallurgy; coal, iron ore, manganese, phosphates, and various other minerals mined. Some light industry. Industrial productivity hampered by lost markets and enterprise debt.

**Energy:** Plentiful reserves of oil, coal, and natural gas make energy production dominant industrial sector. Offshore Caspian Sea fields, in early production stages, have huge capacity; extraction expanding with Western investment and new pipeline project. Natural gas fields, notably Karachaganak, will expand output in later 1990s. Thermoelectric power plants, main source of power, fueled by lignite mines. Kazakhstan remains net importer of energy and fuel, 1995.

**Exports:** Mainly raw materials: metals, oil and petroleum

products, chemicals, worth US\$3.08 billion in 1994; share of bartered goods, substantial in early 1990s, smaller in 1995 and mainly with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) partners. Cash sales to CIS partners increased substantially in 1995, partially replacing barter. Export structure shifting steadily to non-CIS partners, mid-1990s, as Western oil sales increase; non-CIS expansion needed to balance imports for industrial restructuring.

**Imports:** In 1994, worth US\$3.49 billion, mainly energy products, machinery, vehicles, chemicals, and food. Industrial machinery and technology imports will increase, energy products decrease, in late 1990s. Trade deficits with both CIS and non-CIS groups, 1994. Main trading partners Russia, Ukraine, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Italy, and China.

**Balance of Payments:** In 1994, deficit of US\$2.5 billion.

**Exchange Rate:** Tenge introduced November 1993 when Kazakhstan left ruble zone. Exchange rate sixty-four to US\$1, January 1996.

**Inflation:** Hyperinflation, 1993 and 1994, brought under better control with tightened loan policy; estimated 1995 annual rate 190 percent.

**Fiscal Year:** Calendar year.

**Fiscal Policy:** Centralized system; fundamental streamlining of tax code, 1995, emphasizing taxation of individuals over taxation of enterprises. Targeted 1995 budget shortfall 3.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

## **Transportation and Telecommunications**

**Highways:** In 1994, about 189,000 kilometers of roads, of which 108,000 kilometers gravel or paved. Road transport declining element of economic infrastructure; maintenance and truck fleet inadequate to expand service.

**Railroads:** Three railroad companies provide about 90 percent of national freight haulage, but infrastructure and equipment supply unreliable. In 1993, system had 14,148 kilometers of track, of which 3,050 kilometers electrified, concentrated in

north, mainly connecting with Russian system.

**Civil Aviation:** Kazakstan Airlines and six private companies use twenty airports, one of which (Almaty) has international connections. Regular flights to some major cities in CIS countries, Western Europe, Asia, and Middle East.

**Inland Waterways:** Two rivers, Syrdariya and Ertis, total 4,000 kilometers of navigable water; nineteen river transport companies, under state control. In 1992, 1.6 million passengers, 7 million tons of freight moved.

**Ports:** On Caspian Sea, Aqtau, Atyrau, and Fort Shevchenko, with limited commercial value.

**Pipelines:** In 1992, some 3,480 kilometers for natural gas, 2,850 kilometers for crude oil, and 1,500 kilometers for refined products. Systems mainly connected with Russian lines to north; new lines in planning stage, 1996, with Western aid, to connect with Europe and other international destinations.

**Telecommunications:** Limited service, inadequate to planned economic expansion. In 1994, seventeen of 100 urban citizens had telephones, heavily concentrated in Almaty. Most equipment outmoded, overburdened. All international connections through Moscow. Radio and television broadcasting government controlled; satellite television broadcasts from other countries; sixty-one domestic radio stations, one domestic television network, 1996.

## **Government and Politics**

**Government:** Strong presidential system, prescribed in 1993 constitution and reinforced by dismissal of parliament and beginning of direct presidential rule by Nursultan Nazarbayev, 1995. Presidential election delayed by referendum until 2000. New constitution, approved in August 1995 referendum, mandates bicameral parliament and increases presidential power. Parliamentary election for both houses held December 1995. Nineteen provinces and city of Almaty run by executives appointed by national president.

**Politics:** Close government control of legal political parties has not prevented numerous groups from forming. Participation in 1994 and 1995 parliamentary elections limited to approved parties, but 1994 parliament strongly opposed many of

Nazarbayev's programs. Election of 1994 declared invalid, and parliament dissolved in early 1995. Nazarbayev's People's Unity Party retained plurality in 1995 elections. Several Kazak and Russian nationalist parties with small representation in government.

**Foreign Policy:** Post-Soviet broad search for international support, role as bridge between East and West, under personal direction of President Nazarbayev. Critical balance of Russian and Chinese influence, careful reserve toward Muslim world outside Central Asia; proposal of Euro-Asian Union to replace CIS, 1994. Active diplomatic role in CIS crises (Nagorno-Karabakh, Tajikistan).

**International Agreements and Memberships:** Member of United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Partnership for Peace, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Asian Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, CIS, International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol).

## **National Security**

**Armed Forces:** Planned strength 80,000 to 90,000; 1996 army strength about 25,000, air force about 15,000, border troops 5,000 to 6,000, naval force in planning stage.

**Major Military Units:** Army has two motorized rifle divisions, one tank division, one artillery regiment. National Guard operates 25 percent of boats in Caspian Sea Flotilla. Air force has one heavy bomber regiment; one division with three fighter-bomber regiments; and single, independent reconnaissance, fighter, and helicopter regiments.

**Military Budget:** In 1995, estimated at US\$297 million.

**Internal Security:** System largely unchanged from Soviet period. National Security Committee, successor to Committee for State Security (KGB), performs intelligence and counter-intelligence operations. Ministry of Justice runs police (militia) and prison systems.







Figure 4. Kazakhstan: Administrative Divisions, 1996

**BY FAR THE LARGEST** of the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, independent Kazakhstan is the world's ninth-largest nation in geographic area. The population density of Kazakhstan is among the lowest in the world, partly because the country includes large areas of inhospitable terrain. Kazakhstan is located deep within the Asian continent, with coastline only on the landlocked Caspian Sea. The proximity of unstable countries such as Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan to the west and south further isolates Kazakhstan (see fig. 4).

Within the centrally controlled structure of the Soviet system, Kazakhstan played a vital industrial and agricultural role; the vast coal deposits discovered in Kazakhstani territory in the twentieth century promised to replace the depleted fuel reserves in the European territories of the union. The vast distances between the European industrial centers and coal fields in Kazakhstan presented a formidable problem that was only partially solved by Soviet efforts to industrialize Central Asia. That endeavor left the newly independent Republic of Kazakhstan a mixed legacy: a population that includes nearly as many Russians as Kazaks; the presence of a dominating class of Russian technocrats, who are necessary to economic progress but ethnically unassimilated; and a well-developed energy industry, based mainly on coal and oil, whose efficiency is inhibited by major infrastructural deficiencies.

Kazakhstan has followed the same general political pattern as the other four Central Asian states. After declaring independence from the Soviet political structure completely dominated by Moscow and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) until 1991, Kazakhstan retained the basic governmental structure and, in fact, most of the same leadership that had occupied the top levels of power in 1990. Nursultan Nazarbayev, first secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK) beginning in 1989, was elected president of the republic in 1991 and remained in undisputed power five years later. Nazarbayev took several effective steps to ensure his position. The constitution of 1993 made the prime minister and the Council of Ministers responsible solely to the president, and in 1995 a new constitution reinforced that relationship. Furthermore, opposition parties were severely limited by legal restric-

tions on their activities. Within that rigid framework, Nazarbayev gained substantial popularity by limiting the economic shock of separation from the security of the Soviet Union and by maintaining ethnic harmony, despite some discontent among Kazak nationalists and the huge Russian minority.

In the mid-1990s, Russia remained the most important sponsor of Kazakstan in economic and national security matters, but in such matters Nazarbayev also backed the strengthening of the multinational structures of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS—see Glossary), the loose confederation that succeeded the Soviet Union. As sensitive ethnic, national security, and economic issues cooled relations with Russia in the 1990s, Nazarbayev cultivated relations with China, the other Central Asian nations, and the West. Nevertheless, Kazakstan remains principally dependent on Russia.

Kazakstan entered the 1990s with vast natural resources, an underdeveloped industrial infrastructure, a stable but rigid political structure, a small and ethnically divided population, and a commercially disadvantageous geographic position. In the mid-1990s, the balance of those qualities remained quite uncertain.

## **Historical Setting**

Until the arrival of Russians in the eighteenth century, the history of Kazakstan was determined by the movements, conflicts, and alliances of Turkic and Mongol tribes. The nomadic tribal society of what came to be the Kazak people then suffered increasingly frequent incursions by the Russian Empire, ultimately being included in that empire and the Soviet Union that followed it.

### **Early Tribal Movements**

Humans have inhabited present-day Kazakstan since the earliest Stone Age, generally pursuing the nomadic pastoralism for which the region's climate and terrain are best suited. The earliest well-documented state in the region was the Turkic Kaganate, which came into existence in the sixth century A.D. The Qarluqs, a confederation of Turkic tribes, established a state in what is now eastern Kazakstan in 766. In the eighth and ninth centuries, portions of southern Kazakstan were conquered by Arabs, who also introduced Islam. The Oghuz Turks

controlled western Kazakstan from the ninth through the eleventh centuries; the Kimak and Kipchak peoples, also of Turkic origin, controlled the east at roughly the same time. The large central desert of Kazakstan is still called Dashti-Kipchak, or the Kipchak Steppe.

In the late ninth century, the Qarluq state was destroyed by invaders who established the large Qarakhanid state, which occupied a region known as Transoxania, the area north and east of the Oxus River (the present-day Syrdariya), extending into what is now China. Beginning in the early eleventh century, the Qarakhanids fought constantly among themselves and with the Seljuk Turks to the south. In the course of these conflicts, parts of present-day Kazakstan shifted back and forth between the combatants. The Qarakhanids, who accepted Islam and the authority of the Arab Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad during their dominant period, were conquered in the 1130s by the Karakitai, a Turkic confederation from northern China. In the mid-twelfth century, an independent state of Khorazm (also seen as Khorezm or Khwarazm) along the Oxus River broke away from the weakening Karakitai, but the bulk of the Karakitai state lasted until the invasion of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan in 1219–21.

After the Mongol capture of the Karakitai state, Kazakstan fell under the control of a succession of rulers of the Mongolian Golden Horde, the western branch of the Mongol Empire. (The horde, or *zhuz*, is the precursor of the present-day clan, which is still an important element of Kazak society—see Population and Society, this ch.) By the early fifteenth century, the ruling structure had split into several large groups known as khanates, including the Nogai Horde and the Uzbek Khanate.

### Forming the Modern Nation

The present-day Kazaks became a recognizable group in the mid-fifteenth century, when clan leaders broke away from Abul Khayr, leader of the Uzbeks, to seek their own territory in the lands of Semirech'ye, between the Chu and Talas rivers in present-day southeastern Kazakstan. The first Kazak leader was Khan Kasym (r. 1511–23), who united the Kazak tribes into one people. In the sixteenth century, when the Nogai Horde and Siberian khanates broke up, clans from each jurisdiction joined the Kazaks. The Kazaks subsequently separated into three new hordes: the Great Horde, which controlled Semirech'ye and southern Kazakstan; the Middle Horde, which

occupied north-central Kazakstan; and the Lesser Horde, which occupied western Kazakstan.

Russian traders and soldiers began to appear on the north-western edge of Kazak territory in the seventeenth century, when Cossacks established the forts that later became the cities of Oral (Ural'sk) and Atyrau (Gur'yev). Russians were able to seize Kazak territory because the khanates were preoccupied by Kalmyk invaders of Mongol origin, who in the late sixteenth century had begun to move into Kazak territory from the east. Forced westward in what they call their Great Retreat, the Kazaks were increasingly caught between the Kalmyks and the Russians. In 1730 Abul Khayr, one of the khans of the Lesser Horde, sought Russian assistance. Although Abul Khayr's intent had been to form a temporary alliance against the stronger Kalmyks, the Russians gained permanent control of the Lesser Horde as a result of his decision. The Russians conquered the Middle Horde by 1798, but the Great Horde managed to remain independent until the 1820s, when the expanding Quqon (Kokand) Khanate to the south forced the Great Horde khans to choose Russian protection, which seemed to them the lesser of two evils.

The Kazaks began to resist Russian control almost as soon as it became complete. The first mass uprising was led by Khan Kene (Kenisary Kasimov) of the Middle Horde, whose followers fought the Russians between 1836 and 1847. Khan Kene is now considered a Kazak national hero.

## **Russian Control**

In 1863 Russia elaborated a new imperial policy, announced in the Gorchakov Circular, asserting the right to annex "troublesome" areas on the empire's borders. This policy led immediately to the Russian conquest of the rest of Central Asia and the creation of two administrative districts, the Guberniya (Governorate General) of Turkestan and the Steppe District. Most of present-day Kazakstan was in the Steppe District, and parts of present-day southern Kazakstan were in the Governorate General.

In the early nineteenth century, the construction of Russian forts began to have a destructive effect on the Kazak traditional economy by limiting the once-vast territory over which the nomadic tribes could drive their herds and flocks. The final disruption of nomadism began in the 1890s, when many Russian settlers were introduced into the fertile lands of northern and

eastern Kazakstan. Between 1906 and 1912, more than a half-million Russian farms were started as part of the reforms of Russian minister of the interior Petr Stolypin, shattering what remained of the traditional Kazak way of life.

Starving and displaced, many Kazaks joined in the general Central Asian resistance to conscription into the Russian imperial army, which the tsar ordered in July 1916 as part of the effort against Germany in World War I. In late 1916, Russian forces brutally suppressed the widespread armed resistance to the taking of land and conscription of Central Asians. Thousands of Kazaks were killed, and thousands of others fled to China and Mongolia.

### **In the Soviet Union**

In 1917 a group of secular nationalists called the Alash Orda (Horde of Alash), named for a legendary founder of the Kazak people, attempted to set up an independent national government. This state lasted less than two years (1918–20) before surrendering to the Bolshevik authorities, who then sought to preserve Russian control under a new political system. The Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was set up in 1920 and was renamed the Kazak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1925 when the Kazaks were differentiated officially from the Kyrgyz. (The Russian Empire recognized the ethnic difference between the two groups; it called them both "Kyrgyz" to avoid confusion between the terms "Kazak" and "Cossack.")

In 1925 the autonomous republic's original capital, Orenburg, was reincorporated into Russian territory. Almaty (called Alma-Ata during the Soviet period), a provincial city in the far southeast, became the new capital. In 1936 the territory was made a full Soviet republic. From 1929 to 1934, during the period when Soviet leader Joseph V. Stalin was trying to collectivize agriculture, Kazakstan endured repeated famines because peasants had slaughtered their livestock in protest against Soviet agricultural policy. In that period, at least 1.5 million Kazaks and 80 percent of the republic's livestock died. Thousands more Kazaks tried to escape to China, although most starved in the attempt.

Many European Soviet citizens and much of Russia's industry were relocated to Kazakstan during World War II, when Nazi armies threatened to capture all the European industrial centers of the Soviet Union. Groups of Crimean Tatars, Ger-

mans, and Muslims from the North Caucasus region were deported to Kazakstan during the war because it was feared that they would collaborate with the enemy. Many more non-Kazaks arrived in the years 1953–65, during the so-called Virgin Lands campaign of Soviet premier Nikita S. Khrushchev (in office 1956–64). Under that program, huge tracts of Kazak grazing land were put to the plow for the cultivation of wheat and other cereal grains. Still more settlers came in the late 1960s and 1970s, when the government paid handsome bonuses to workers participating in a program to relocate Soviet industry close to the extensive coal, gas, and oil deposits of Central Asia. One consequence of the decimation of the nomadic Kazak population and the in-migration of non-Kazaks was that by the 1970s Kazakstan was the only Soviet republic in which the eponymous nationality was a minority in its own republic (see *Ethnic Groups*, this ch.).

### **Reform and Nationalist Conflict**

The 1980s brought glimmers of political independence, as well as conflict, as the central government's hold progressively weakened. In this period, Kazakstan was ruled by a succession of three Communist Party officials; the third of those men, Nursultan Nazarbayev, continued as president of the Republic of Kazakstan when independence was proclaimed in 1991.

In December 1986, Soviet premier Mikhail S. Gorbachev (in office 1985–91) forced the resignation of Dinmukhamed Kunayev, an ethnic Kazak who had led the republic as first secretary of the CPK from 1959 to 1962, and again starting in 1964. During 1985, Kunayev had been under official attack for cronyism, mismanagement, and malfeasance; thus, his departure was not a surprise. However, his replacement, Gennadiy Kolbin, an ethnic Russian with no previous ties to Kazakstan, was unexpected. Kolbin was a typical administrator of the early Gorbachev era—enthusiastic about economic and administrative reforms but hardly mindful of their consequences or viability.

The announcement of Kolbin's appointment provoked spontaneous street demonstrations by Kazaks, to which Soviet authorities responded with force. Demonstrators, many of them students, rioted. Two days of disorder followed, and at least 200 people died or were summarily executed soon after. Some accounts estimate casualties at more than 1,000.

Kunayev had been ousted largely because the economy was failing. Although Kazakstan had the third-largest gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) in the Soviet Union, trailing only Russia and Ukraine, by 1987 labor productivity had decreased 12 percent, and per capita income had fallen by 24 percent of the national norm. By that time, Kazakstan was underproducing steel at an annual rate of more than a million tons. Agricultural output also was dropping precipitously.

While Kolbin was promoting a series of unrealistic, Moscow-directed campaigns of social reform, expressions of Kazak nationalism were prompting Gorbachev to address some of the non-Russians' complaints about cultural self-determination. One consequence was a new tolerance of bilingualism in the non-Russian regions. Kolbin made a strong commitment to promoting the local language and in 1987 suggested that Kazak become the republic's official language. However, none of his initiatives went beyond empty public-relations ploys. In fact, the campaign in favor of bilingualism was transformed into a campaign to improve the teaching of Russian.

While attempting to conciliate the Kazak population with promises, Kolbin also conducted a wholesale purge of pro-Kunayev members of the CPK, replacing hundreds of republic-level and local officials. Although officially "nationality-blind," Kolbin's policies seemed to be directed mostly against Kazaks. The downfall of Kolbin, however, was the continued deterioration of the republic's economy during his tenure. Agricultural output had fallen so low by 1989 that Kolbin proposed to fulfill meat quotas by slaughtering the millions of wild ducks that migrate through Kazakstan. The republic's industrial sector had begun to recover slightly in 1989, but credit for this progress was given largely to Nursultan Nazarbayev, an ethnic Kazak who had become chairman of Kazakstan's Council of Ministers in 1984.

As nationalist protests became more violent across the Soviet Union in 1989, Gorbachev began calling for the creation of popularly elected legislatures and for the loosening of central political controls to make such elections possible. These measures made it increasingly plain in Kazakstan that Kolbin and his associates soon would be replaced by a new generation of Kazak leaders.

Rather than reinvigorate the Soviet people to meet national tasks, Gorbachev's encouragement of voluntary local organizations only stimulated the formation of informal political

groups, many of which had overtly nationalist agendas. For the Kazaks, such agendas were presented forcefully on national television at the first Congress of People's Deputies, which was convened in Moscow in June 1989. By that time, Kolbin was already scheduled for rotation back to Moscow, but his departure probably was hastened by riots in June 1989 in Novyy Uzen, an impoverished western Kazakstan town that produced natural gas. That rioting lasted nearly a week and claimed at least four lives.

### **The Rise of Nazarbayev**

In June 1989, Kolbin was replaced by Nazarbayev, a politician trained as a metallurgist and engineer. Nazarbayev had become involved in party work in 1979, when he became a protégé of reform members of the CPSU. Having taken a major role in the attacks on Kunayev, Nazarbayev may have expected to replace him in 1986. When he was passed over, Nazarbayev submitted to Kolbin's authority and used his party position to support Gorbachev's new line, attributing economic stagnation in the Soviet republics to past subordination of local interests to the mandates of Moscow.

Soon proving himself a skilled negotiator, Nazarbayev bridged the gap between the republic's Kazaks and Russians at a time of increasing nationalism while also managing to remain personally loyal to the Gorbachev reform program. Nazarbayev's firm support of the major Gorbachev positions in turn helped him gain national and, after 1990, even international visibility. Many reports indicate that Gorbachev was planning to name Nazarbayev as his deputy in the new union planned to succeed the Soviet Union.

Even as he supported Gorbachev during the last two years of the Soviet Union, Nazarbayev fought Moscow to increase his republic's income from the resources it had long been supplying to the center. Although his appointment as party first secretary had originated in Moscow, Nazarbayev realized that for his administration to succeed under the new conditions of that time, he had to cultivate a popular mandate within the republic. This difficult task meant finding a way to make Kazakstan more Kazak without alienating the republic's large and economically significant Russian and European populations. Following the example of other Soviet republics, Nazarbayev sponsored legislation that made Kazak the official language and permitted examination of the negative role of collectiviza-

tion and other Soviet policies on the republic's history. Nazarbayev also permitted a widened role for religion, which encouraged a resurgence of Islam. In late 1989, although he did not have the legal power to do so, Nazarbayev created an independent religious administration for Kazakstan, severing relations with the Muslim Board of Central Asia, the Soviet-approved oversight body in Tashkent.

In March 1990, elections were held for a new legislature in the republic's first multiple-candidate contests since 1925. The winners represented overwhelmingly the republic's existing elite, who were loyal to Nazarbayev and to the Communist Party apparatus. The legislature also was disproportionately ethnic Kazak: 54.2 percent to the Russians' 28.8 percent.

### **Sovereignty and Independence**

In June 1990, Moscow declared formally the sovereignty of the central government over Kazakstan, forcing Kazakstan to elaborate its own statement of sovereignty. This exchange greatly exacerbated tensions between the republic's two largest ethnic groups, who at that point were numerically about equal. Beginning in mid-August 1990, Kazak and Russian nationalists began to demonstrate frequently around Kazakstan's parliament building, attempting to influence the final statement of sovereignty being developed within. The statement was adopted in October 1990.

In keeping with practices in other republics at that time, the parliament had named Nazarbayev its chairman, and then, soon afterward, it had converted the chairmanship to the presidency of the republic. In contrast to the presidents of the other republics, especially those in the independence-minded Baltic states, Nazarbayev remained strongly committed to the perpetuation of the Soviet Union throughout the spring and summer of 1991. He took this position largely because he considered the republics too interdependent economically to survive separation. At the same time, however, Nazarbayev fought hard to secure republic control of Kazakstan's enormous mineral wealth and industrial potential. This objective became particularly important after 1990, when it was learned that Gorbachev had negotiated an agreement with Chevron, a United States oil company, to develop Kazakstan's Tengiz oil fields. Gorbachev did not consult Nazarbayev until talks were nearly complete. At Nazarbayev's insistence, Moscow surrendered control of the republic's mineral resources in June 1991. Gor-

bachev's authority crumbled rapidly throughout 1991. Nazarbayev, however, continued to support him, persistently urging other republic leaders to sign the revised Union Treaty, which Gorbachev had put forward in a last attempt to hold the Soviet Union together.

Because of the coup attempted by Moscow hard-liners against the Gorbachev government in August 1991, the Union Treaty never was signed. Ambivalent about the removal of Gorbachev, Nazarbayev did not condemn the coup attempt until its second day. However, once the incompetence of the plotters became clear, Nazarbayev threw his weight solidly behind Gorbachev and continuation of some form of union, largely because of his conviction that independence would be economic suicide.

At the same time, however, Nazarbayev pragmatically began preparing his republic for much greater freedom, if not for actual independence. He appointed professional economists and managers to high posts, and he began to seek the advice of foreign development and business experts. The outlawing of the CPK, which followed the attempted coup, also permitted Nazarbayev to take virtually complete control of the republic's economy, more than 90 percent of which had been under the partial or complete direction of the central Soviet government until late 1991. Nazarbayev solidified his position by winning an uncontested election for president in December 1991.

A week after the election, Nazarbayev became the president of an independent state when the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus signed documents dissolving the Soviet Union. Nazarbayev quickly convened a meeting of the leaders of the five Central Asian states, thus effectively raising the specter of a "Turkic" confederation of former republics as a counterweight to the "Slavic" states (Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) in whatever federation might succeed the Soviet Union. This move persuaded the three Slavic presidents to include Kazakstan among the signatories to a recast document of dissolution. Thus, the capital of Kazakstan lent its name to the Alma-Ata Declaration, in which eleven of the fifteen Soviet republics announced the expansion of the thirteen-day-old CIS. On December 16, 1991, just five days before that declaration, Kazakstan had become the last of the republics to proclaim its independence.

## **Physical Environment**

With an area of about 2,717,300 square kilometers, Kazak-

stan is more than twice the combined size of the other four Central Asian states. The country borders Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan to the south; Russia to the north; Russia and the Caspian Sea to the west; and China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to the east.

### **Topography and Drainage**

There is considerable topographical variation within Kazakstan. The highest elevation, Khan Tengri Mountain, on the Kyrgyz border in the Tian Shan range, is 6,995 meters; the lowest point, at Karagiye, in the Caspian Depression in the west, is 132 meters below sea level (see fig. 2). Only 12.4 percent of Kazakstan is mountainous, with most of the mountains located in the Altay and Tian Shan ranges of the east and northeast, although the Ural Mountains extend southward from Russia into the northern part of west-central Kazakstan. Many of the peaks of the Altay and Tian Shan ranges are snow covered year-round, and their run-off is the source for most of Kazakstan's rivers and streams.

Except for the Tobol, Ishim, and Irtysh rivers (the Kazak names for which are, respectively, Tobyl, Esil, and Ertis), portions of which flow through Kazakstan, all of Kazakstan's rivers and streams are part of landlocked systems. They either flow into isolated bodies of water such as the Caspian Sea or simply disappear into the steppes and deserts of central and southern Kazakstan. Many rivers, streams, and lakes are seasonal, evaporating in summer. The three largest bodies of water are Lake Balkhash, a partially fresh, partially saline lake in the east, near Almaty, and the Caspian and Aral seas, both of which lie partially within Kazakstan.

Some 9.4 percent of Kazakstan's land is mixed prairie and forest or treeless prairie, primarily in the north or in the basin of the Ural River in the west. More than three-quarters of the country, including the entire west and most of the south, is either semidesert (33.2 percent) or desert (44 percent). The terrain in these regions is bare, eroded, broken uplands, with sand dunes in the Qizilqum (red sand; in the Russian form, Kyzylkum) and Moyunqum (in the Russian form, Moin Kum) deserts, which occupy south-central Kazakstan. Most of the country lies at between 200 and 300 meters above sea level, but Kazakstan's Caspian shore includes some of the lowest elevations on Earth.

## **Climate**

Because Kazakstan is so far from the oceans, the climate is sharply continental and very dry. Precipitation in the mountains of the east averages as much as 600 millimeters per year, mostly in the form of snow, but most of the republic receives only 100 to 200 millimeters per year. Precipitation totals less than 100 millimeters in the south-central regions around Qyzylorda. A lack of precipitation makes Kazakstan a sunny republic; the north averages 120 clear days a year, and the south averages 260. The lack of moderating bodies of water also means that temperatures can vary widely. Average winter temperatures are  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the north and  $18^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the south; summer temperatures average  $19^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the north and  $28^{\circ}$ – $30^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the south. Within locations differences are extreme, and temperature can change very suddenly. The winter air temperature can fall to  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and in summer the ground temperature can reach as high as  $70^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

## **Environmental Problems**

The environment of Kazakstan has been badly damaged by human activity. Most of the water in Kazakstan is polluted by industrial effluents, pesticide and fertilizer residue, and, in some places, radioactivity. The most visible damage has been to the Aral Sea, which as recently as the 1970s was larger than any of the Great Lakes of North America save Lake Superior. The sea began to shrink rapidly when sharply increased irrigation and other demands on the only significant tributaries, the Syrdariya and the Amu Darya (the latter reaching the Aral from neighboring Uzbekistan), all but eliminated inflow. By 1993 the Aral Sea had lost an estimated 60 percent of its volume, in the process breaking into three unconnected segments. Increasing salinity and reduced habitat have killed the Aral Sea's fish, hence destroying its once-active fishing industry, and the receding shoreline has left the former port of Aral'sk more than sixty kilometers from the water's edge. The depletion of this large body of water has increased temperature variations in the region, which in turn have had an impact on agriculture. A much greater agricultural impact, however, has come from the salt- and pesticide-laden soil that the wind is known to carry as far away as the Himalaya Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. Deposition of this heavily saline soil on nearby fields effectively sterilizes them. Evidence suggests that salts, pesticides, and resi-

dues of chemical fertilizers are also adversely affecting human life around the former Aral Sea; infant mortality in the region approaches 10 percent, compared with the 1991 national rate of 2.7 percent.

By contrast, the water level of the Caspian Sea has been rising steadily since 1978 for reasons that scientists have not been able to explain fully. At the northern end of the sea, more than a million hectares of land in Atyrau Province have been flooded. Experts estimate that if current rates of increase persist, the coastal city of Atyrau, eighty-eight other population centers, and many of Kazakstan's Caspian oil fields could be submerged by 2020.

Wind erosion has also had an impact in the northern and central parts of the republic because of the introduction of wide-scale dryland wheat farming. In the 1950s and 1960s, much soil was lost when vast tracts of Kazakstan's prairies were plowed under as part of Khrushchev's Virgin Lands agricultural project. By the mid-1990s, an estimated 60 percent of the republic's pastureland was in various stages of desertification.

Industrial pollution is a bigger concern in Kazakstan's manufacturing cities, where aging factories pump huge quantities of unfiltered pollutants into the air and groundwater. The capital, Almaty, is particularly threatened, in part because of the postindependence boom in private automobile ownership.

The gravest environmental threat to Kazakstan comes from radiation, especially in the Semey (Semipalatinsk) region of the northeast, where the Soviet Union tested almost 500 nuclear weapons, 116 of them above ground. Often, such tests were conducted without evacuating or even alerting the local population. Although nuclear testing was halted in 1990, radiation poisoning, birth defects, severe anemia, and leukemia are very common in the area (see Health Conditions, this ch.).

With some conspicuous exceptions, lip service has been the primary official response to Kazakstan's ecological problems. In February 1989, opposition to Soviet nuclear testing and its ill effects in Kazakstan led to the creation of one of the republic's largest and most influential grass-roots movements, Nevada-Semipalatinsk, which was founded by Kazak poet and public figure Olzhas Suleymenov. In the first week of the movement's existence, Nevada-Semipalatinsk gathered more than 2 million signatures from Kazakstanis of all ethnic groups on a petition to Gorbachev demanding the end of nuclear testing in Kazakstan. After a year of demonstrations and protests, the test

ban took effect in 1990. It remained in force in 1996, although in 1995 at least one unexploded device reportedly was still in position near Semey.

Once its major ecological objective was achieved, Nevada-Semipalatinsk made various attempts to broaden into a more general political movement; it has not pursued a broad ecological or "green" agenda. A very small green party, Tagibat, made common cause with the political opposition in the parliament of 1994.

The government has established a Ministry of Ecology and Bioresources, with a separate administration for radioecology, but the ministry's programs are underfunded and given low priority. In 1994 only 23 percent of budgeted funds were actually allotted to environmental programs. Many official meetings and conferences are held (more than 300 have been devoted to the problem of the Aral Sea alone), but few practical programs have gone into operation. In 1994 the World Bank (see Glossary), the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary), and the United States Environmental Protection Agency agreed to give Kazakhstan US\$62 million to help the country overcome ecological problems.

## **Population and Society**

Total population was estimated in 1994 at 17,268,000, making Kazakhstan the fourth most populous former Soviet republic. As of 1990, 57 percent of the country's residents lived in cities. Because much of the land is too dry to be more than marginally habitable, overall population density is a very low 6.2 persons per square kilometer. Large portions of the republic, especially in the south and west, have a population density of less than one person per square kilometer. In 1989 some 1.4 million Kazaks lived outside Kazakhstan, nearly all in the Russian and Uzbek republics. At that time, an estimated 1 million Kazaks lived in China, and a sizeable but uncounted Kazak population resided in Mongolia.

## **Demographic Factors**

The birth rate, which is declining slowly, was estimated at 19.4 births per 1,000 population in 1994 (see table 2, Appendix). The death rate, which has been climbing slowly, was estimated at 7.9 per 1,000 population—leaving a rate of natural increase of 1.1 percent, by far the lowest among the five Cen-