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Map of Kazakhstan
Chapter 1 Profile

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

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

Facts and Figures

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

Area:
Total: 2,717,300 sq km (1,049,155 sq mi)
Land: 2,669,800 sq km (1,030,815 sq mi)
Water: 47,500 sq km (18,340 sq mi)

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

Climate:
Continental, cold winters and hot summers: arid and semiarid

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

Elevation Extremes:
Lowest point: Vpadina Kaundy -132 m (-433 ft)
Highest point: Khan Tangiri Shyngy (Pik Khan-Tengri) 6,995 m (22,949 ft)

Natural Hazards:
Earthquakes in the south; mudslides around Almaty

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

Population:
15,399,437 (July 2009 est.)

Age Structure:
0–14 years: 21.8% (male 1,717,469/female 1,643,920)
15–64 years: 70.2% (male 5,279,292/female 5,534,607)
65 years and over: 7.9% (male 426,494/female 797,655) (2009 est.)

Median Age:
Total: 29.6 years
Male: 28.1 years
Female: 31.3 years (2009 est.)
Population Growth Rate:
0.392% (2009 est.)

Net Migration Rate:
-3.3 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Urbanization:
Urban population: 58% of total population (2008)
Rate of urbanization: 1.2% annual rate of change (2005–2010 est.)

Sex Ratio:
At birth: 1.06 male(s)/female
Under 15 years: 1.04 male(s)/female
15–64 years: 0.95 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.54 male(s)/female
Total population: 0.93 male(s)/female (2009 est.)

Infant Mortality Rate:
Total: 25.73 deaths/1,000 live births
Male: 30.15 deaths/1,000 live births
Female: 21.06 deaths/1,000 live births (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy at Birth:
Total population: 67.87 years
Male: 62.58 years
Female: 73.47 years (2009 est.)

Total Fertility Rate:
1.88 children born/woman (2009 est.)

HIV/AIDS—Adult Prevalence Rate:
0.1% (2007 est.)

Nationality:
Noun: Kazakhstani(s)
Adjective: Kazakhstani

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

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

Languages: Kazakh (Qazaq, state language) 64.4%, Russian (official, used in everyday business, designated the “language of interethnic communication”) 95% (2001 est.)
Literacy:
*Definition:* age 15 and over can read and write
*Total population:* 99.5%
*Male:* 99.8%
*Female:* 99.3% (1999 est.)

Country Name:
*Conventional long form:* Republic of Kazakhstan
*Conventional short form:* Kazakhstan
*Local long form:* Qazaqstan Respublikasy
*Local short form:* Qazaqstan
*Former:* Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic

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

Capital:
Astana

Administrative Divisions:
14 provinces (*oblystar*, singular—*oblys*) and 3 cities * (qalalar, singular—*qala*); Almaty Oblasy, Almaty Qalasy*, Aqmola Oblasy (Astana), Aqtobe Oblasy, Astana Qalasy*, Atyrau Oblasy, Batys Qazaqstan Oblasy (Oral), Bayqongyr Qalasy*, Mangghystau Oblasy (Aqtau), Ongtustik Qazaqstan Oblasy (Shymkent), Pavlodar Oblasy, Qaraghandy Oblasy, Qostanay Oblasy, Qyzylorda Oblasy, Shyghys Qazaqstan Oblasy (Oskemen), Soltustik Qazaqstan Oblasy (Petropavlovsk), Zhambyl Oblasy (Taraz)
*Note:* administrative divisions have the same names as their administrative centers (exceptions have the administrative center name following in parentheses); in 1995, the Governments of Kazakhstan and Russia entered into an agreement whereby Russia would lease for a period of 20 years an area of 6,000 sq km enclosing the Baykonur space launch facilities and the city of Bayqongyr (Baykonur, formerly Leninsk); in 2004, a new agreement extended the lease to 2050

Independence:
16 December 1991 (from the Soviet Union)

National Holiday:

Constitution:
First post-independence constitution adopted 28 January 1993; new constitution adopted by national referendum 30 August 1995
Legal System:
Based on Islamic law and Roman law; has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction

Suffrage:
18 years of age; universal

Executive Branch:
Chief of state: President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev (chairman of the Supreme Soviet from 22 February 1990, elected president 1 December 1991)
Head of government: Prime Minister Karim Masimov (since 10 January 2007); First Deputy Prime Minister Umirzak Shukeyev (since 3 March 2009) and Deputy Prime Ministers Yerbol Orynbayev (since 29 October 2007) and Serik Akhmetov (since 3 March 2009)
Cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president
Elections: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term; election last held 4 December 2005 (next to be held in 2012); prime minister and first deputy prime minister appointed by the president, with Mazhilis approval; note—constitutional amendments of May 2007 shortened the presidential term from seven years to five years and established a two-consecutive-term limit; changes will take effect after Nazarbayev's term ends; he, and only he, is allowed to run for president indefinitely.
Election results: Nursultan A. Nazarbayev reelected president; percent of vote—Nursultan A. Nazarbayev 91.1%, Zharmakhan A. Tuyakbai 6.6%, Alikhan M. Baimenov 1.6%

Legislative Branch:
Bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (47 seats; 15 members are appointed by the president; other members are elected by local assemblies; members serve six-year terms, but elections are staggered with half of the members up for reelection every three years) and the Mazhilis (107 seats; 9 out of the 107 Mazhilis members are elected by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, a presidentially appointed advisory body designed to represent the country’s ethnic minorities; non-appointed members are popularly elected to serve five-year terms)
Elections: Senate—(indirect) last held October 2008; next to be held in 2011; Mazhilis—last held 18 August 2007 (next to be held in 2012)
Election results: Senate—percent of vote by party—N/A; seats by party—Nur Otan 16; Mazhilis—percent of vote by party—Nur-Otan 88.1%, NSDP 4.6%, Ak Zhol 3.3%, Auyl 1.6%, Communist People’s Party 1.3%, Patriots’ Party 8%, Ruhaniyat 4%; seats by party—Nur-Otan 98; note—parties must achieve a threshold of 7% of the electorate to qualify for seats in the Mazhilis
Judicial Branch:
Supreme Court (44 members); Constitutional Council (seven members)

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

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

International Organizational Membership:
Asian Development Bank (ADB), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC), Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRM), International Development Association (IDA), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCS), International Labor Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (ITSO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), Nonaligned Movement (NAM) (observer), Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), Organization of American States (OAS)
GDP (Official Exchange Rate):
$141.2 billion (2008 est.)

GDP—Real Growth Rate:
3% (2008 est.)
8.5% (2007 est.)
10.6% (2006 est.)

GDP—Per Capita (Purchasing Power Parity):
$11,500 (2008 est.)
$11,200 (2007 est.)
$10,400 (2006 est.)
Note: data are in 2008 U.S. dollars

GDP—Composition by Sector:
Agriculture: 5.8%
Industry: 39.4%
Services: 54.7% (2008 est.)

Labor Force—by Occupation:
Agriculture: 31.5%
Industry: 18.4%
Services: 50% (2005 est.)

Unemployment Rate: 6.9% (2008 est.)

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

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

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

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

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

Radio Broadcast Stations:
AM 60, FM 18, shortwave 9 (2008)

Television Broadcast Stations:
12 (plus 9 repeaters) (1998)

Internet Hosts:
36,417 (2008)

Internet Users:
1.901 million (2006)

Airports:
95 (2008)

Airports—with Paved Runways:
*Total:* 64
*Over 3,047 m (1.89 mi):* 10
*2,438 to 3,047 m (1.51 to 1.89 mi):* 26
*1,524 to 2,437 m (0.95 to 1.51 mi):* 16
*914 to 1,523 m (0.57 to 0.95 mi):* 4
*under 914 m (0.57 mi):* 8 (2008)

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

Roadways:
*Total:* 91,563 km (56,895 mi)
*Paved:* 83,717 km (52,019 mi)
*Unpaved:* 7,846 km (4,875 mi) (2006)
Pipelines:
Condensate 658 km (409 mi); gas 11,146 km (6,926 mi); oil 10,376 km (6,447 mi);
refined products 1,095 km (680 mi); water 1,465 km (910 mi) (2008)

Waterways:

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

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

Military Service Age and Obligation:
18 years of age for compulsory military service; conscript
service obligation—2 years; minimum age for
volunteers—N/A (2004)

Manpower Available for Military Service:
Males age 16–49: 4,176,731
Females age 16–49: 4,219,636 (2008 est.)

Manpower Fit for Military Service:
Males age 16–49: 2,888,931
Females age 16–49: 3,550,014 (2009 est.)

Manpower Reaching Militarily Significant Age Annually:
Male: 139,262
Female: 133,047 (2009 est.)

Military Expenditures:
0.9% of GDP (Ministry of Defense expenditures) (FY 2002)
Chapter 2 Geography

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

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

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

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Northern Steppes

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

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

Semi-Deserts and Deserts

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

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

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

**The Caspian Depression**

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

**Mountains of the East and Southeast**

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

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Climate

Kazakhstan’s climate is continental, meaning that it is determined by the surrounding land masses rather than air currents coming in off the oceans, which are too far away to be influential. As a result, the country is generally semi-arid to arid with hot summers and cold winters. Temperatures vary according to region but generally grow warmer as one moves from the northern steppes (near Western Siberia) to the southern deserts. For example, in northern and central Kazakhstan, average temperatures in January—typically the coldest month—range between -19° and -16°C (-2° and 3°F). In the south, a temperature range of -5° to -1.4°C (23° to 29°F) is average for that time. Likewise, average July temperatures in the north (20°C, or 68°F) are markedly cooler than those in the south (29°C, or 84°F). The region is also prone to extremes as temperatures may drop to -45°C (-49°F) in the winter and reach 45°C (113°F) in the summer.

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

Rivers

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

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

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

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

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

**Bodies of Water**

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

**Caspian Sea**

Kazakhstan’s western border is largely formed by the shoreline of the Caspian Sea, the largest inland body of water in the world. Covering some 386,400 sq km (149,200 sq mi), the Caspian is larger than the state of Montana. The sea lies within the Caspian Depression; its surface is roughly 27 m (90 ft) below sea level and it reaches a maximum depth of 1,025 m (3,360 ft).29 Kazakhstan shares the sea and its rich resources with the four other countries bordering its shores: Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan. Since these surrounding nations derive significant economic benefit from this common natural border, the Caspian Sea serves alternately as a source of political conflict and cooperation.

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

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

\textit{Aral Sea}

Once the world’s fourth-largest inland body of water covering some 68,000 sq km (26,300 sq mi), the Aral Sea has shrunk dramatically over the last several decades. The primary cause of the sea’s reduction has been the long-term diversion of water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, the sea’s primary sources. Large-scale diversion began in the late 1960s, when Soviet planners initiated massive irrigation-fed agricultural schemes in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. By the 1980s, irrigation levels had increased to the extent that the two once powerful rivers nearly disappeared before reaching the sea, leaving the Aral with less than 10% of its former annual water supply.\textsuperscript{34}

Shrinking quickly, the sea subsequently divided into two sections, a southern “Greater Sea” and a northern “Lesser Sea,” which together comprised less than half of the Aral’s former volume.

While the Soviet-created network of irrigated cotton plantations remains one of Kazakhstan’s biggest cash crops, it comes at high cost. The Aral Sea’s shrinkage proved disastrous to the local environment, economy, and population. As the moderately saline sea lost most of its freshwater input from the rivers, it became increasingly salty. The higher salt and mineral concentration made the water undrinkable and eradicated the native fish population. This, in turn, decimated the local fishing industry, which had already suffered as the sea’s reduction had separated its ports from the actual shoreline, leaving many boats stranded.\textsuperscript{35} Much of the population was forced to relocate.

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


After years of mostly failed attempts to address the sea’s ongoing reduction, Kazakhstan and the World Bank recently cooperated on a rescue program for what is now known as the North Aral Sea. Initiated in 2001, the project involved the construction of a large dam on the southern side of the North Sea. Completed in 2005, the dam accumulates the sea’s waters (which are received from the Syr Darya) and separates them from the South Aral Sea, which is said to be saltier and more heavily polluted. Corresponding with such efforts, the sea has been restocked with fish and a small fishing industry has reemerged. As of 2008, the North Aral Sea was reported to have a surface area of 3,300 sq km (1,275 sq mi) and a depth of 42 m (138 ft)—both substantial increases from measurements taken in 2003. In the meantime, the southern sea—now split into two sections—continues to shrink.

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

Lake Balkhash

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Astana**

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

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

**Shymkent (Chimkent)**

Shymkent is situated on ancient trade routes in the foothills of south-central Kazakhstan, just north of Uzbekistan. As the capital of the heavily populated South Kazakhstan oblast, or administrative division, it is home to approximately 526,000 people. In the 19th century, it was a major transit point for the overland trade between Central Asia and the West. The city has a rich history, with evidence of habitation dating back to the Bronze Age. Today, Shymkent is a bustling center of commerce and industry, with a growing population and a vibrant cultural scene.
century, the city was briefly a part of the Central Asian state known as the Khanate of Kokand (Khoqand), but it was soon overtaken by the Russians (in 1864). Shymkent grew rapidly during the Soviet era, when industry took root in the city. Today, it remains a major industrial hub, particularly for lead, cement, petroleum, chemicals, and food processing. It is also an important cultural center for the region and a transit point on the Turkistan-Siberia railway.54

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

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

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

**Atyrau**

Located in northwestern Kazakhstan, in the Caspian Depression, Atyrau is situated on the Ural River, just north of the Caspian Sea. With districts on both sides of the river, the city effectively straddles the European and Asian continents. Mikhail Guryev, a Russian trader, established the settlement in the 17th century as a fishing and trading post. The village, then known as Guryev, subsequently grew as residents exploited the Caspian Sea’s sturgeon stocks for caviar. Today, Atyrau is an important port city and a transshipment center for the regional oil industry. As oil extraction in the Caspian Sea and surrounding deserts has boomed, the city has experienced renewed growth and development. Situated below sea level, Atyrau has become increasingly vulnerable to flooding as the sea has risen in recent years. Its population is approximately 175,000.

**Environmental Issues**

**Nuclear Radiation**

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

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

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

Pollution

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

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

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

Desertification

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

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Natural Hazards

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

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

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

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

Chapter 3 History

Introduction
The steppes of Kazakhstan have long been home to nomadic pastoralists. Following seasonal migration patterns, early tribes roamed in search of pasture for their livestock. Over the centuries, the area served as a home or migratory route for diverse peoples, including powerful invading armies and merchants traveling on the Silk Road. Perpetual conquests meant that regional control was in constant flux. Various empires or tribal confederations were short-lived and soon replaced. The invasion of the Mongols in the 13th century\textsuperscript{91} laid the foundation for the emergence—two centuries later—of the Kazakh people, who soon became the dominant group in the region.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Turkic Tribes

In the 5th and 6th centuries, repeated attacks from the Altai Turks in the east weakened the domain of the Usun. Over the next few centuries, regional power shifted between various confederations of Turkic tribes. These included the Turkic Kaganate (the western portion of the Gokturk, or “Blue Turk,” empire) and, later, the Turgesh Kaganate, both of which were highly developed, stratified societies. During this time, settlements in southern Kazakhstan served as important northern outposts on the Silk Road. In the 8th century, Arabs took control of portions of the south, marking the entry of Islam into the region. Shortly thereafter, the Karluk, another group of allied Turkic tribes, established themselves in eastern Kazakhstan. The Persian Samanid dynasty took control of the far south in the 9th century. The region’s western territory was left to the Oghuz Turks, who ruled until the 11th century. Meanwhile, tribal federations of Turkic Kimaks and Kipchaks dominated the north and northwest.

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

The Mongol Empire

The Mongol Invasion

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

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

Mongol Rule

The Mongols heavily influenced regional culture through the 13th century. The local, mostly Turkic tribes adopted aspects of their language, legal code, and social and administrative structure. Broadly, their consolidated rule led to the unification of many previously disorganized tribes stretching from the Caspian Sea to the eastern coast of China. Following Genghis Khan’s death in 1227, the Mongol empire was divided amongst his male heirs. His grandson, Batu, received the territory west of the Irtysh River, which included southwestern Russia, Ukraine, and most of northern and western Kazakhstan. This regional khanate109 became known as the Golden Horde, and Batu expanded its domain in the following years. Southeastern Kazakhstan, including the area known as Jeti-su or Semirechye, fell under the domain of Chagatai, Genghis Khan’s second son. His territory, which extended southward through Central Asia and eastward into western China, became known as the Chagatai Khanate.110

Decline

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

109 “Khanate” is defined as a political entity ruled by a “Khan”—a title originating in Central Asia, reserved for a sovereign or military ruler.
descendent of Genghis Khan, emerged from the fractured Chagatai Khanate to wage brutal military campaigns throughout Central Asia and beyond. The Golden Horde soon dissolved, and after the death of Timur, two smaller powers developed in the Kazakhstan region in the early 15th century. The Nogai Horde, a confederation of Kipchak tribes, controlled the area north of the Caspian Sea. To the east and southeast, the Uzbek Khanate controlled the central steppes and the Syr Darya river basin.

**The Kazakhs**

*The Emergence of the Kazakhs*

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

**The Kazakh Khanate**

In the 16th century, as the Uzbek Khanate shifted its presence to the south, the Kazakhs gradually expanded their territory. The Kazakh Khanate formally organized under Qasim Kahn, who ruled from around 1511 to 1523. During this time, Qasim expanded the khanate’s domain, consolidated its political power, and incorporated additional regional tribes into the Kazakh

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115 The etymological roots of the name “Kazakh” are purported to come from the Turkic language with several possible meanings. The most often cited are the Turkish verb qaz which means “to wander,” and the term Qazak which means “free” or “independent.”
fold, including Kipchaks from the Nogai Horde, Mongols, and additional Uzbeks. By this
time, the Kazakhs had an estimated population of one million tribal members, who were
united through a common Turkish language, culture, and economy based largely on
nomadic pastoralism. While ethnically and culturally related to the nearby Uzbeks, the
Kazakhs were thereafter considered a distinct group. In the following decades, their
territory grew to include the Lake Balkhash region, the Syr Darya river basin, and the
central and northern steppes.119

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

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

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

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

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/313790/Kazakhstan
undertake what is known today as the Great Retreat or Great Disaster. Abandoning most of their assets, members of the Great Horde fled south into present-day Uzbekistan. The Middle and Lesser hordes moved to the northwest, where Russia had already established a presence.\footnote{122}

In 1731, Abul Khayr, leader of the Lesser Horde, pledged allegiance to the Russian Empire as part of a mutual effort to preserve Russian and Kazakh interests in the region amid the onslaught of the Kalmyks. (Fifteen years earlier, the Russians had begun constructing a series of forts along the northern edge of the steppes due to similar concerns.) Abul Khayr’s cooperation with Russia effectively ended the Kazakh Khanate.\footnote{123} In the following decade, the leaders of the Middle Horde, as well as a faction of the Great Horde, signed similar treaties with Russia. According to these agreements, the Kazakhs received protection in exchange for loyalty.\footnote{124} The other tribes of the Great Horde fell under the Kalmyks. However, the Kalmyks were finally defeated in the late 1750s—not by the Kazakhs, but by the Chinese forces of the Qing (Ch’ing) Empire, which thereafter expanded its territory westward to include portions of eastern Kazakhstan.\footnote{125}

**The Russian Empire**

**Russian Expansion into the Steppe**

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

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

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

Annexation

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

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

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

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previously absorbed much of the former Great Horde territory into its domain. After Russia’s conquest, however, that region, and the many Kazakhs within it, fell under Russian control. The Kazakh steppes were thereafter divided into Russian administrative regions known as oblasts.\footnote{Olcott, 1995.}

\textit{Settlement}

In the late 19th century, the Russian Empire ordered the resettlement of massive numbers of Russian and Ukrainian peasant farmers into the steppes of Kazakhstan. By 1917, nearly 3 million settlers had been relocated to the region, resulting in the large-scale appropriation, settlement, and agricultural development of Kazakh lands.\footnote{Olcott, 1995.} This influx of migrants changed the ethnic composition of the region and devastated the Kazakhs’ nomadic lifestyle and pastoral economy. Much of their traditional pastureland was transformed to cropland or otherwise made inaccessible. During the Russian imperial era, Kazakhstan also functioned as a site of “internal exile” for dissidents within the empire. The most famous of these banished nonconformists was the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, who was sent to live in Semipalatinsk (Semey) in the mid 19th century.\footnote{Fergus and Jandosova, 2003.}

\textit{Growing Unrest and the Fall of Imperial Russia}

In 1916, the Russian Empire called for the conscription of large numbers of Kazakhs into the Russian army for mobilization—largely in the form of labor support—against German forces in World War I. Already demoralized by economic hardship and the loss of their native lands, Kazakhs and other indigenous groups soon organized resistance to the draft. Led by such figures as Amangeldy Imanov, Kazakh resistance armies staged several attacks on Russian settlements, most notably the city of Turgai, which they temporarily held under siege. The Russian retaliation against the Kazakh rebellion proved devastating. According to some estimates, as many as 150,000 Kazakhs were killed in the resulting crackdown, and some 200,000 more fled to nearby western China to escape the violence.\footnote{Fergus and Jandosova, 2003.}

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

\footnote{Olcott, 1995.}
\footnote{Olcott, 1995.}
\footnote{Fergus and Jandosova, 2003.}
\footnote{Fergus and Jandosova, 2003.}
provisional leadership with their own Communist Party members. The Soviets named the greater area the Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic on 20 August 1920. In 1925, three years after the official establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), the region was reconfigured and renamed the Kazakh Autonomous Republic. It became a full Soviet Republic in 1936.

The Soviet Era

Early Soviet Policy in the Steppe

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

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

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

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

**Imprisonment, Exile, and Industry under Stalin**

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

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

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


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

The “Virgin Lands” Campaign and Industrial Expansion

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

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

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

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

*Kazakh Politics and Growing Nationalism*

The Kazakhs regained a sense of political representation within the Soviet structure when Dinmukhamed Kunayev, a Kazakh, took power as the First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party. He held that office from 1959–1962 and, more importantly, from 1964–1986. As the First Secretary, Kunayev was effectively in control of the Republic. He was also the first Kazakh to be elected as a full member of the Soviet Politburo, the central committee, and ultimate authority of the Soviet Communist Party, which in turn controlled the Soviet government. Kunayev was a loyal friend of Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader from 1964–1982, and he administered the republic in accordance with the demands of the central Soviet authorities. At the same time, he maintained support within the Republic, where he was seen as a strong representative of its interests. The standard of living generally increased during his rule, and his popularity extended to Kazakh and Slavic peoples alike. Under Kunayev, ethnic Kazakhs became increasingly involved in regional government, in part due to Kunayev’s nepotistic appointments of friends and family members. His rule corresponded with a period (beginning in the 1970s) in which Slavic migration to the Republic gradually decreased, with many non-Kazaks leaving the region. Meanwhile, the Kazakh population increased substantially, growing from 2.7 million in 1959 to 6.7 million in 1987. Both of these trends would continue in the coming years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Independent Era**

*Development and Policy under Nazarbayev*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Nazarbayev’s Consolidation of Power

In the immediate years following independence, Nazarbayev instituted moderate democratic reforms, including enhanced, although not unlimited, freedom of the press and freedom of religion. However, at the same time, his administration sought to tightly control the democratization process, claiming the need to distill ethnic tension between the nation’s Kazakh and Slavic constituencies.

In 1993, Kazakhstan adopted its first constitution, which invested the Kazakhstani Parliament with considerable power. In the following year, the country held its first multiparty legislative elections. Most of the winning candidates had received the support of the Nazarbayev administration, and foreign observers declared the elections unfair. In 1995, after Parliament attempted to slow Nazarbayev’s economic reforms, the nation’s Constitutional Court unexpectedly invalidated the 1994 election results. Nazarbayev subsequently dissolved Parliament and called for new parliamentary elections. Shortly thereafter, Nazarbayev held a referendum to extend his term as President until the year 2000, effectively bypassing the planned 1996 election. The referendum passed in April 1995 with overwhelming support. Later that year, Nazarbayev dissolved the Constitutional Court, and the government drafted a revised constitution that greatly expanded presidential powers. The constitution was adopted in August of that year.

Nazarbayev continued to tighten his grip on power in the coming years. He easily won the next presidential election, which was abruptly rescheduled from early 2000 to January 1999. He won another term in 2005, after the 2006 presidential election was held one year early. Foreign observers deemed both the 1999 and 2005 elections unfair. The latter election was held after the Nazarbayev government imposed various restrictions on opposition parties. This included the abolishment of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK), the most prominent opposition group, whose leaders had been previously arrested by the government. Shortly thereafter, two other opposition leaders

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

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

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

History Timeline

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1723 – After several decades of invasions, Kalmyk Mongols force the Kazakh hordes to flee their lands in southern Kazakhstan—an exodus known as the Great Retreat.
1731 – The Kazakh Khanate ends when the Lesser Horde signs a treaty of protection with the Russian Empire; the other hordes soon sign similar agreements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

December 1991 – The Soviet Union formally dissolves. Nazarbayev is elected as the first president of Kazakhstan, which officially declares its independence on 16 December.
1993 – Kazakhstan introduces its own currency, the tenge, and adopts its first constitution. Parliamentary elections are held for the first time the following year.

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

April 2009 – Nazarbayev prepares to build a nuclear fuel bank to consolidate regional materials. Proposed by the IAEA in 2005, the plan is supported by U.S. and Russia.
Chapter 4 Economy

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

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

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


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

\section*{Energy}

\subsection*{Oil}

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

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

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

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{oil_platform_in_caspian_sea.png}
\caption{Oil platform in the Caspian Sea}
\end{figure}

Kazakhstan— is scheduled for completion in 2011. Kazakhstan also maintains a pipeline running from Atyrau (near the Caspian Sea) to the Russian city of Samara; this pipeline taps into the expansive Russian delivery network. Finally, in an effort to reduce its dependency upon Russian networks, Kazakhstan is developing the Kazakhstan–Caspian Transportation System. In this network, a planned pipeline will link the Kashagan field with the Kazakhstani port city of Kuryk. From there, oil supplies will be transported on barges across the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan, where they will be pumped through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline to Turkey.

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

**Natural Gas**

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

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

\textit{Coal and Electricity}

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

In 2006, the most recent year with official data, Kazakhstan generated more electricity than it consumed.\textsuperscript{217} Most of the nation’s power plants are coal-fired, although Kazakhstan also possesses some hydroelectric facilities, primarily on the Irtysh (Ertis) River. The country’s transmission network is outdated, resulting in significant energy loss during distribution. The network is also divided into three distinct grids: two in the north and one in the south. The northern grids are connected to a regional network of coal-fired plants; these grids have exported electricity to Russia in recent years. However, the transmission grid in the south has been dependent upon electricity imports from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In 2004, the Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company began construction of an additional north–south power line in an effort to supply the south with reliable, locally produced energy; this project is ongoing.\textsuperscript{218}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{214} A short ton = 2000 lbs.
  \item \textsuperscript{216} Energy Information Administration. “Kazakhstan Energy Profile: Energy Data Series.” No date. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_time_series.cfm?fips=KZ
\end{itemize}
Industry and Natural Resources

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

In addition to fossil fuels, Kazakhstan possesses massive reserves of other mineral resources, the extraction and processing of which have contributed greatly to the nation’s industrial output. The country has major deposits of iron ore, lead, copper, chromite, gold, zinc, bauxite, manganese, and uranium. Its reserves of the latter resource are particularly rich; Kazakhstan is thought to possess roughly 20% of the world’s total uranium supply. Since the country initiated privatization, foreign investment in mineral extraction has been substantial. This has allowed widespread development or expansion of mining and metallurgical operations, many of which were initiated during the Soviet era and are in need of rehabilitation.220

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

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

Agriculture

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

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

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

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

**Banking and Currency**

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

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

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

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

**Foreign Trade and Investment**

The extraction of fossil fuels and minerals has driven Kazakhstan’s foreign trade over the last decade. Because of the high value and increasing volume of its oil exports, Kazakhstan has carried a trade surplus since 1999. In 2008, the country’s export values totaled approximately USD 71.2 billion. Imports totaled USD 37.9 billion, providing a USD 33.3 billion surplus. This positive trade balance represented a 100% increase from the previous year, with overall export values growing by nearly 50% from 2007 to 2008. (The economic downturn was expected, however, to stall such growth in the coming years.) Mineral products, including fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas, comprised roughly 73% of exports for 2008, with metals accounting for an additional 15.2%. Major imports for that year included machinery and equipment, metals, mineral products, and chemicals. Kazakhstan’s major export markets include Italy, Switzerland, China, and Russia. Its major sources of imports are Russia, China, Germany, and Ukraine. Kazakhstan’s largest trade partner is Russia, with whom it has carried a negative trade balance in recent years.

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

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however, as oil production is expected to grow substantially in the coming years with the further development of major oil fields.\(^\text{246}\)

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

**Tourism**

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

In recent years, Kazakhstan has also been the site of a small space tourism industry, with extremely wealthy patrons traveling to the International Space Station on spacecraft launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome. The program is operated by the Russian Federal Space Agency, which has leased the launch site from Kazakhstan until 2050.\(^\text{251}\)

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Transportation

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

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

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

Standard of Living

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

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

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

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

**Outlook**

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


that the country’s banks would not need additional aid in 2009. He also expected the inflation rate to fall below 8%; it had reached an estimated 18.6% the previous year. Meanwhile, the nation’s Economy Minister, Bakhyt Sultanov, forecasted minimal or flat GDP growth for 2009, despite the economy’s contraction in the first half of the year. Other forecasts predicted that renewed growth would not occur until 2010.

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

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Chapter 5 Society

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

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

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

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269 Final data from the 2009 census has yet to be released as of this writing.
north and in urban centers.\textsuperscript{272} In many cases, Kazakhstan’s ethnic minorities live near related populations in neighboring countries. For example, the nation’s Uzbek population is concentrated in south-central Kazakhstan (near Uzbekistan), while the Uyghur community is concentrated in the southeast, near the Xinjiang Province of western China. Although Kazakhs are now the nation’s predominant ethnic group, they were a minority in the region for much of the Soviet era. Following independence, the country’s ethnic composition changed significantly. One and a half million Russians moved out of Kazakhstan between 1992 and 2000; many others had already left during the final years of the Soviet era. Kazakhstan also lost about two thirds (600,000) of its German population and one third (300,000) of its Ukrainian community during this time. While the Germans received financial incentives from the German government to return to their native country, many Russians and Ukrainians left due to their perceived loss of economic opportunity in a nation increasingly dominated by Kazakhs.\textsuperscript{273}

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

\textbf{Languages}

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

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

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

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

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

Religion

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

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

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

**Traditions**

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

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

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

**Gender Issues**

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

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

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

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

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

Cuisine
Kazakhstan has two major styles of cuisine: Russian and Kazakh. Russian cuisine is common in urban areas and the northern steppes, where the Russian population is concentrated. It is influenced by the cuisine of Central Asia, and thus it overlaps with regional cuisine in some respects. Meats, fish, vegetables (often pickled), soups (hot or cold), and bread comprise a large share of the traditional Russian diet. A typical full-course meal begins with appetizers (zakuski) such as salads, cold meats, salted fish,
caviar, or pickled vegetables. Soups are also common starters; borscht (beet soup), shchi (cabbage soup), and solyanka (a thick vegetable stew made with meat or fish) are traditional varieties. Main courses generally consist of a fish or meat dish with bread. Pelmeni (meat-filled dumplings) and shashlyk (kebabs) are two common meat-based dishes. Popular varieties of fish include herring, sturgeon, pike, and salmon. Bliny (pancakes) are commonly eaten for breakfast or on special occasions. Black tea and vodka are popular beverages.306

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

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

Traditional Dress

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

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

The Arts

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

Oral and Musical Tradition

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

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

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

Literature

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

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


Textiles and Jewelry

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

Sports and Recreation

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

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

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

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Chapter 6 Security

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

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

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

Military and National Security

Structure of the Armed Forces

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

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

Reform Efforts and Issues Affecting the Military

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

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

Hazing is a widespread problem in the Kazakhstani military, with many such incidents reported each year. In 2007, for example, the deaths of three soldiers were attributed to military hazing, while another 115 non-lethal hazing incidents were documented. Several suicides that year were also linked to hazing.\textsuperscript{334} Reflecting a broader political and social issue, corruption is another major concern in the Kazakhstani military. Low wages, low morale, and a lack of training and discipline have been identified as contributing factors to this problem, which extends to high levels.\textsuperscript{335} Daniyal Akhmetov, the nation’s first civilian Defense Minister, was removed from office in mid 2009 amid a highly publicized crackdown on corruption. While Akhmetov was not immediately charged, his dismissal occurred in the wake of investigations into suspect defense contracts with foreign-based companies.\textsuperscript{336} Some observers saw his firing as a sign of internal power struggles within the Kazakh elite.\textsuperscript{337}

\textit{Defense Ties}

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


\textsuperscript{336} The Jamestown Foundation. \textit{Eurasia Daily Monitor}, Vol. 6, No. 120. McDermott, Roger. “Akhmetov Sacked as Astana Purses ‘Corruption’.” 23 June 2009. http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35162&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=2dcb63c33a


The Kazakhstani military has committed a unit of its Air mobile Forces to the CSTO’s fledgling military organization, the Collective Operation Reaction Force (CORF), previously known as the Collective Rapid Response Force.

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

U.S.–Kazakhstan Relations

With a history of cooperative relations, the U.S. maintains a strong strategic partnership with Kazakhstan. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was the first country to recognize Kazakhstan as an independent nation (in December 1991). Early relations between the two countries were marked by initial U.S. investment in the Kazakhstani energy sector and U.S. involvement in the removal of Soviet-era nuclear weaponry, materials, and infrastructure from Kazakhstani territory. As a result of the latter process, Kazakhstan obtained nuclear-free status in 1995 and garnered international support for voluntarily relinquishing such materials. The U.S. also assisted Kazakhstan in the sealing of 181 nuclear test tunnels, a process that was completed in May 2000.

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

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

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

Relations with Neighboring Countries

China

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

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Kazakhstan’s relations with China are largely founded on energy extraction and delivery contracts; these deals serve to meet the extensive energy demands of China, the world’s 2nd largest consumer of oil and 12th largest consumer of natural gas.\footnote{Energy Information Administration. “China Energy Profile.” 15 May 2009. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?ips=CH} Chinese companies, notably the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), have invested in numerous Kazakhstani oil fields over the last several years. This process has corresponded with the development of the Kazakhstan–China oil pipeline, which will connect oil fields in the Caspian Sea region to facilities on the Kazakhstani-Chinese border. This extensive, three-stage pipeline is partially under construction; its unfinished middle section—spanning central Kazakhstan—is scheduled for completion in 2011. In 2006, the eastern portion of the pipeline opened, allowing for the initial flow of Kazakhstani oil into China.\footnote{Energy Information Administration. “Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan: Oil.” February 2008. http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Oil.html} Chinese interests have also signed several natural gas deals with Kazakhstan; these projects include the construction of a major pipeline running from Turkmenistan to China via Kazakhstan. An estimated one third of the pipeline’s capacity will be filled by Kazakhstani natural gas exports.\footnote{The Jamestown Foundation. China Brief, Vol. 8, No. 21. Peyrouse, Sebastien. “Sino-Kazakh Relations: A Nascent Strategic Partnership.” 4 November 2008. http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34142}

In terms of security, Kazakhstan and China are linked through their strategic partnership agreement and the organizational framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Through the latter alliance, Kazakhstan has committed to combat what Chinese officials describe as the “three evil forces” of terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Cooperative efforts have included military exercises and information exchanges, as well as joint operations targeting cross-border drug trafficking.\footnote{The Jamestown Foundation. China Brief, Vol. 8, No. 21. Peyrouse, Sebastien. “Sino-Kazakh Relations: A Nascent Strategic Partnership.” 4 November 2008. http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34142}

Recent ethnic unrest in China’s western Xinjiang Province has highlighted cross-border security issues. In July 2009, ethnic riots between Uyghurs and Han Chinese broke out in Urumqi, the Xinjiang capital, resulting in at least 184 fatalities. Chinese authorities responded with a sweeping crackdown on the Uyghur community that provoked further unrest. These events raised concerns that the violence could spread throughout the greater region, including Kazakhstan, the home of the largest Uyghur population outside...
China. While describing the issue as China’s “internal affair,” the Kazakhstani government responded by restricting cross-border travel to Xinjiang and evacuating many of its citizens from the province. Shortly thereafter, ethnic Uyghurs held non-violent demonstrations in Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan

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

Although the two countries experienced tensions over monetary policy in the early independent era, their economic relations are now close. Kyrgyzstan, a poorer country with fewer resources, is the more dependent of the two. Kazakhstan is one of Kyrgyzstan’s leading trade partners, accounting for 18% of its exports and 12.9% of its imports in 2007. It is also one of Kyrgyzstan’s primary sources of foreign aid and investment. On the other hand, Kazakhstan is reliant upon Kyrgyzstan for water and electricity, the latter of which is produced via hydroelectric facilities. On these matters, the two countries are linked through the Chu-Talas Rivers Commission. Under the framework of the commission, Kazakhstan provides funds for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure on shared water resources in Kyrgyzstan.

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

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

\textit{Russia}

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

Economically, Russia and Kazakhstan are closely linked through trade and energy transshipment networks. Russia is Kazakhstan’s leading trade partner, particularly in terms of supply; it was the source of 36.3\% of Kazakhstan’s total import volume in 2008.\textsuperscript{367} Total trade between the two countries reached USD 16.6 billion in 2007, with a significant increase forecasted for 2008.\textsuperscript{368} While developing additional delivery routes, Kazakhstan remains dependent upon Russian transshipment networks for its oil exports. These exports are primarily shipped through the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) pipeline to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk or through the Atyrau-Samara pipeline that runs northward from the Caspian Sea to Russia. Russia is also the primary destination for Kazakhstan’s natural gas exports; these exports are processed at a refining plant that is jointly owned by Kazakhstani and Russian interests under a long-term agreement.\textsuperscript{369} Russia remains dependent upon Central Asian gas (including Turkmen gas

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

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


http://www.economist.com/countries/Kazakhstan/profile.cfm?folder=Profile-FactSheet

\textsuperscript{368} Tehran Times. “Kazakhstan Seeks to Export Oil Via Russia.” 24 September 2008. 

http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Full.html
imported via Kazakhstan) while it attempts to further develop its own massive natural gas reserves, which are largely located in remote Siberia.\(^\text{370}\)

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

**Turkmenistan**

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

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

Under Niyazov’s successor, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Turkmenistan has steadily improved its relations with Kazakhstan. These ties are primarily economic, with an emphasis on energy delivery networks. Kazakhstan is a principal transit country for Turkmenistan’s natural gas exports, a large share of which is shipped to Russia via the multi-branch Central Asia Center Pipeline (CACP) that runs through Kazakhstan. (Delivery along this network was stalled in 2009 by a burst pipeline and subsequent disagreements between parties.) In 2007, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan agreed to extend the CACP, with a new branch to be built along the Caspian Sea, running from Turkmenistan through western Kazakhstan. Known as the Caspian Coastal Pipeline, this branch is scheduled for completion in 2012. The extensive Turkmenistan-to-China natural gas pipeline also runs through Kazakhstan; the Kazakhstani section was completed in July 2009, with delivery operations scheduled for 2010. The latter is one of several pipelines—either planned or under development—that are designed to reduce Turkmen and Kazakhstani reliance on Russian delivery networks.

In addition to energy contracts, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have also cooperated on the development of their respective Caspian Sea shoreline properties, including the enhancement of regional transportation and communication networks. A border dispute between the two countries was solved in 2001, with boundary demarcation initiated in 2005. However, the two countries have yet to agree upon the definition of their Caspian seabed boundary.

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Uzbekistan

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

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

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

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invest in the Uzbekistani economy, they have often been hindered by its lack of market reforms.391

Uzbekistan is a fellow member of the SCO, CIS, and CSTO. Cooperative security efforts between the two countries have targeted cross-border drug trafficking and smuggling operations; religious extremism and terrorist activity have also been shared concerns.392 The two countries signed a border agreement in 2003, with demarcation beginning the following year.393

Water Security

Water security is a serious concern in Central Asia, where precious resources are shared among several countries with varying levels of need. Regional water policy has been affected by decades of Soviet development projects, which left a legacy of pollution and unsustainable water-use practices. Today, many regional residents are dependent upon impractical agricultural schemes established by the Soviets; these involved large-scale production of irrigation-intensive crops (e.g., cotton) in a region largely consisting of desert or semi-desert. (Uzbekistan is the most economically dependent of the Central Asian states on cotton production, and its agricultural operations account for more than half of the region’s annual water consumption.)394 The dramatic shrinkage of the Aral Sea, a result of the long-term redirection of its source waters, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, is the most well-known example of the disastrous effects of poor water policy in the region. Despite this lesson, irresponsible water use remains a major issue in Central Asia. The regional supply is also affected by an increasingly dry climate and the decaying Soviet-era infrastructure.395

The area’s major rivers provide a freshwater supply; the Central Asian states are classified as either “upstream” (the mountainous, higher-elevation countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) or “downstream” (the flatter, lowland countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan). As a downstream country, Kazakhstan is particularly susceptible to water insecurity. With most of its major rivers originating in surrounding countries, Kazakhstan is dependent upon its neighbors for more than 50% of

its water supply. Historically, its most pressing water issue has concerned the reduced downstream flow of the Syr Darya River and the corresponding shrinkage of the Aral Sea. A recent effort to dam the northern section of the Aral Sea has demonstrated some success in increasing its capacity, although the environmental and economic fallout of its reduction (and pollution) remains severe. More recently, similar concerns have arisen amid the large-scale diversion of water from the Ili and Irtysh Rivers in western China, where the Chinese government has encouraged expansive development. Such diversion projects have reduced the rivers’ downstream input into massive Lake Balkhash in southwestern Kazakhstan, which provides drinking water for more than 20% of the Kazakhstani population. In 2007, a conference between Kazakhstani and Chinese officials concerning the issue ended without compromise.

Another pressing issue concerns water-use practices in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, two countries that are rich in water resources—including the headwaters of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers—but poor in energy reserves. In recent years, these two countries have amassed their upstream water supplies during the summer months in order to release the water through their hydroelectric facilities in the cold winter months, when domestic demand for electricity is high. This practice reduces downstream output in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan during the agriculturally important summer months, while resulting in flooding during the winter months, when the rivers are frozen. Meanwhile, downstream irrigation operations are inefficient, placing greater demand on upstream resources.

Despite cooperative attempts to regulate water usage in the region—notably through the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), founded in 1993—the Central Asian states have made little multilateral progress in doing so. As noted, Kazakhstan has cooperated on a bilateral basis with Kyrgyzstan to establish the Chu-Talas Rivers

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Commission, which addresses two important rivers in southeastern Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{401} However, in April 2009, a “water summit” involving all of the Central Asian nations ended, again, without a comprehensive and proactive agreement.\textsuperscript{402} The current impasse concerns Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan’s plans to construct new hydroelectric dams to increase their domestic energy supply. Such projects have been resisted by the downstream countries, particularly Uzbekistan, a major energy provider to the two upstream countries.\textsuperscript{403} While regional cooperation remains lacking, Kazakhstan has demonstrated a proactive approach to addressing its water-supply issues. In addition to the Aral Sea reclamation project, it is also constructing a reservoir to collect the Syr Darya runoff released by its upstream neighbors during the winter.\textsuperscript{404}

**Issues Affecting Stability**

**Terrorism**

Terrorism remains a threat in Central Asia, where religious extremism, ethnic tension, poverty, and political repression are potential contributing factors to such activity. Of the Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been most affected by terrorist activity; each has suffered deadly bombings and incursions over the last decade.\textsuperscript{405} While Kazakhstan has been less affected by terrorism, cross-border insurgent operations are a shared concern among all Central Asian states. These issues have been addressed through a cooperative security branch under supervision of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The Regional Antiterrorism Center based in Tashkent is an additional mechanism through which SCO members—including Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—have developed joint policy.\textsuperscript{406}

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and a splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), are the primary terrorist organizations in the area.\textsuperscript{407} Responsible for terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as attacks on coalition troops in

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Afghanistan, the IMU is believed to have operatives in Kazakhstan. The IJU, whose activities have included bombings in Tashkent, just south of Kazakhstan’s border with Uzbekistan, may also have members in Kazakhstan.  

Religious Extremism

In recent years, the radical Islamist organization of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), or the Islamic Party of Liberation, has received greater attention in Kazakhstan than the IMU or IJU. The Kazakhstani government has classified HT as a terrorist group, although the U.S. has not done so. (As of early 2009, the U.S. had no evidence of the group’s participation in terrorist activities.) HT seeks to establish an international Islamic government that spans the Muslim world; its members have reportedly encouraged or supported the use of violence against Western interests. Kazakhstan’s intelligence agency, the KNB, has actively pursued the organization, arresting many of its members.

The KNB’s efforts are part of the government’s larger program to prevent the spread of religious extremism within and across the nation’s borders. Additional measures include a ban on religious-based political groups and regulations that require religious groups to register with the government. While religious extremism has contributed to instability in the greater Central Asian region, some observers have asserted that the Kazakhstani government has overplayed the domestic threats of extremism and terrorism as a means to maintain rigid state controls.

In Central Asia, such charges are not unique to Kazakhstan. Analysts have cautioned that Central Asian regimes may falsely label criminal activity as terrorism or use operations targeting Islamic extremism or terrorist activity as a “mask” for political or religious repression. Analysts have identified the potential radicalization of religious or political groups as one of the primary security threats affecting Kazakhstan. The government’s

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restrictions on media and religious freedoms, as well as its history of suppressing political opposition, are seen as factors that could lead to the radicalization of these groups.415

Ethnic Unrest
Kazakhstan has largely avoided the ethnic conflict that has affected other countries in the region. This threat appeared most severe during the first decade of the independent era, when tensions between the Russian and Kazakh communities mounted over issues such as nationality, official language policy, and access to economic opportunities. A large-scale outmigration of Russian and other non-Kazakh ethnic groups occurred during this time. In 1994, President Nazarbayev announced his decision to move the Kazakhstani capital from Almaty, in the southeast, to Akmola (now Astana), in the north-central region of the country; the move was widely interpreted as an effort to establish a strong governmental presence in a region heavily populated by non-Kazakh ethnic groups, namely Russians and Ukrainians. The official transfer occurred in 1997.416

In 1999, Kazakhstani authorities arrested 22 people, mostly ethnic Russians, on charges of plotting to form a separatist state in northeastern Kazakhstan. Fourteen of those arrested were later convicted in a trial criticized by foreign observers as lacking substantial evidence against the defendants.417 More recently, ethnic unrest among the Uyghur population in China’s nearby Xinjiang Province has posed a greater, although not severe, threat to regional security.

Corruption and Political Infighting
Corruption is widespread in Kazakhstan.418 Numerous recent U.S. Commercial Service reports have shown that business regulations and practices in Kazakhstan remain troubling.419 In 2008, Transparency International ranked Kazakhstan 145th out of 180 countries on its Corruption Perceptions Index, up from 150 in 2007.420 These practices have, in particular, concerned the lucrative energy industry, which brought huge sums of foreign investment into the country amid intense international competition for exploration


The case of Rakhat Aliyev, President Nazarbayev’s former son-in-law, reflects the related issues of corruption and political infighting in Kazakhstan. Previously married to Dariga Nazarbayev, the President’s daughter, Aliyev was a deputy foreign minister, wealthy businessmen, and media mogul while in good favor with the President. He also formerly served as the deputy head of the KNB, at which time he was in charge of the government’s anti-corruption campaign.\footnote{Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise. Olcott, Martha Brill. “Chapter 6: A Divided Society [p. 189].” 2002. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.} In 2007, he was ousted from his role as an ambassador amid charges of corruption and criminal activity, including kidnapping. In 2008, while he was exiled in Austria, Aliyev was tried and convicted of these charges in Kazakhstan. Later that year, in a second trial in Kazakhstan, he was convicted (again, in absentia) of plotting a coup against the Nazarbayev regime.\footnote{BBC News. “Kazakh Son-in-Law ‘Gets 20 Years.’” 26 March 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7315063.stm} In turn, Aliyev claimed that the charges were politically motivated, largely stemming from his desire to run for president in 2012, ostensibly against his former father-in-law, Nazarbayev. He also accused the Nazarbayev administration of rampant corruption.\footnote{The Wall Street Journal. Simpson, Glenn R. and Susan Schmidt. “Kazakhstan Corruption: Exile Alleges New Details.” 22 July 2008. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121667622143971475.html} As of early 2009, he remained in Austria while the Kazakhstani government pursued his extradition.\footnote{Forbes. Sidorov, Dmitry. “Justice in Kazakhstan.” 9 February 2009. http://www.forbes.com/2009/02/09/rakhat-aliev-kazakhstan-opinions-contributors_0209_dmitry_sidorov.html?partner=contextstory}

These events occurred amidst a political backdrop in which there is no clear successor to Nazarbayev, whose consolidated rule has largely determined the country’s development
throughout the entire independent era. Current legislation allows Nazarbayev to seek an unlimited number of terms as president, for which the next election will be held in 2012. In the meantime, the recent corruption purges have been widely interpreted as a sign of political infighting amongst the Kazakh elite; the campaign ostensibly allowed the government to remove political opponents while burnishing its anti-corruption image.

In any case, power struggles within the Kazakh elite could pose a threat to stability when the issue of choosing Nazarbayev’s successor is more immediate.

Outlook

In 2009, Kazakhstan prepared to assume the 2010 chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), an intergovernmental organization dedicated to fair elections, human rights, media freedom, arms control, and various other democratic and security issues. Announced in 2007, the selection of Kazakhstan for the role was groundbreaking, as the nation will be the first former Soviet republic and first non-European country to hold the chairmanship. The decision also sparked controversy, however, due to Kazakhstan’s corruption and democratization issues (including its substandard elections), which are seen as contradictions to the OSCE platform.

It also raised concerns that Russia would attempt to influence Kazakhstan in order to modify the scope of OSCE in line with its own agenda. However, with U.S. support, Kazakhstan has distanced itself from Russia’s “reform” proposals and committed to continue its own democratization process. Furthermore, Kazakhstan’s chairmanship is seen as an opportunity to focus OSCE’s efforts on the geopolitically strategic region of Central Asia, where issues such as energy security and drug trafficking have global ramifications.

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