

Central Asia

Regarding Central Asia, the people who live in the last places - the people who are most neglected and least valued by the larger world - often represent the best of who we are and the finest standard of what we are meant to become.

This is the power that last places hold over me, and why I have found it impossible to resist their pull.

Greg Mortenson

Setting the Boundaries



- large, compact, remote region within the Eurasian landmass
- culture: **Turkic** languages, **Islam**, deep **historical bonds**, and similar environmental settings and economic conditions
- the only **landlocked** world region
- Until 1991, the region contained only two independent states, Mongolia and Afghanistan. Soviet Union's breakup added several independent states to the region.
- Historically, Central Asia has been weakly integrated into international trade networks. It has only recently re-entered global geopolitics.

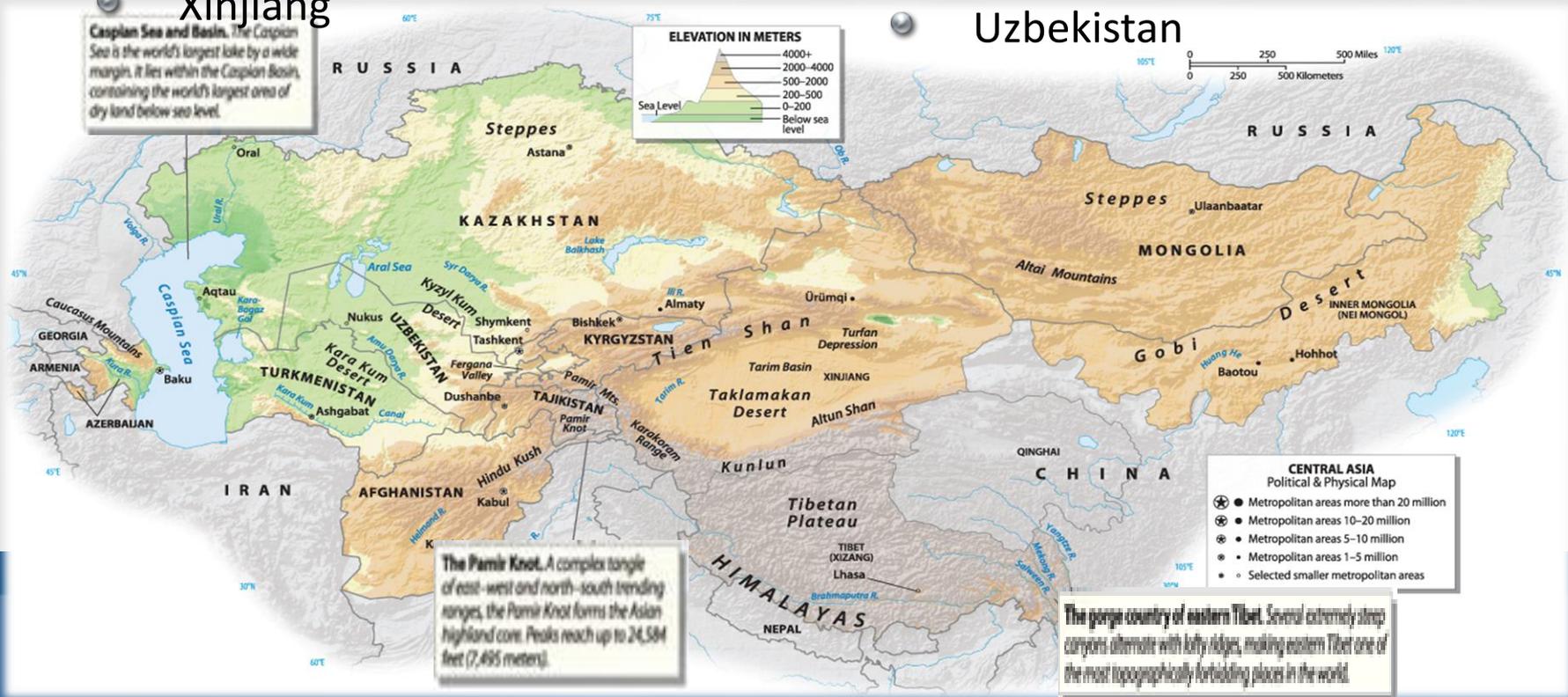


Milking a Yak in Mongolia

Setting the Boundaries



- Mongolia
- Afghanistan
- Two autonomous regions of western China
 - Tibet
 - Xinjiang
- Six former Soviet republics
 - Azerbaijan
 - Kazakhstan
 - Kyrgyzstan
 - Tajikistan
 - Turkmenistan
 - Uzbekistan



Physical Setting: Steppes, Deserts and Threatened Lakes



Central Asia's Physical Regions

● The Central Asian Highlands

- formed by collision of Indian subcontinent with Asian mainland
- **mountains:** Himalayas, Karakoram Range, Pamir Mountains
- **Pamir Knot:** a tangle of mountains where Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Tajikistan converge
- peaks over 20K ft: Hindu Kush, Kunlun Shan, Tien Shan
- **Tibetan Plateau:** source area of many of Asia's large rivers



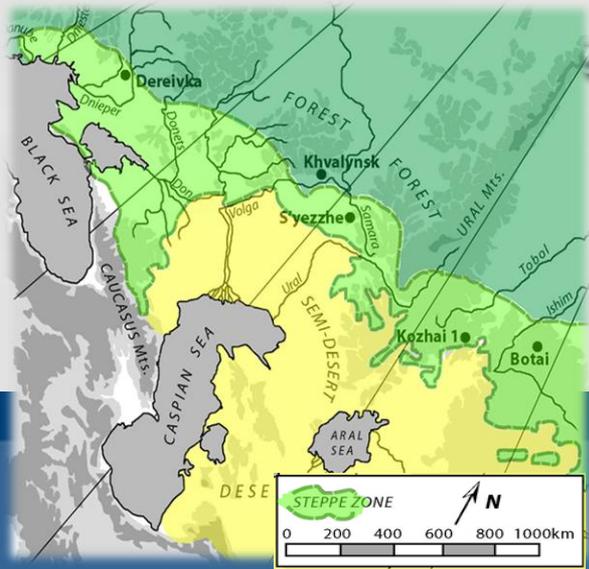
Physical Setting: Steppes, Deserts and Threatened Lakes



Central Asia's Physical Regions

• The Plains and Basins

- central desert belt
- Arid plains of the **Caspian and Aral Seas** to the west
- **deserts**: Kara Kum, Kyzyl Kum and Taklamakan in the Tarim Basin



northern strip of semiarid **steppe** (grassland) and **taiga** (coniferous forest)



Physical Setting: Steppes, Deserts and Threatened Lakes



Physical Setting: Steppes, Deserts and Threatened Lakes



The **Door to Hell** is a natural gas field in Derweze, Turkmenistan, that collapsed into an underground cavern in 1971, becoming a natural gas crater. Geologists set it on fire to prevent the spread of methane gas, and it has been burning continuously since then.

The crater is 226 feet in diameter and 98 feet deep.



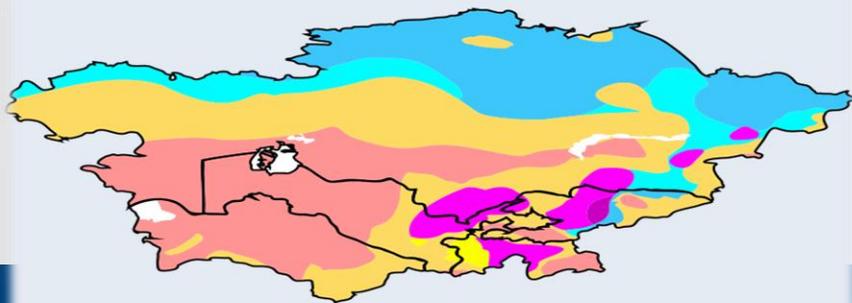
Physical Setting: Central Asia's Climate



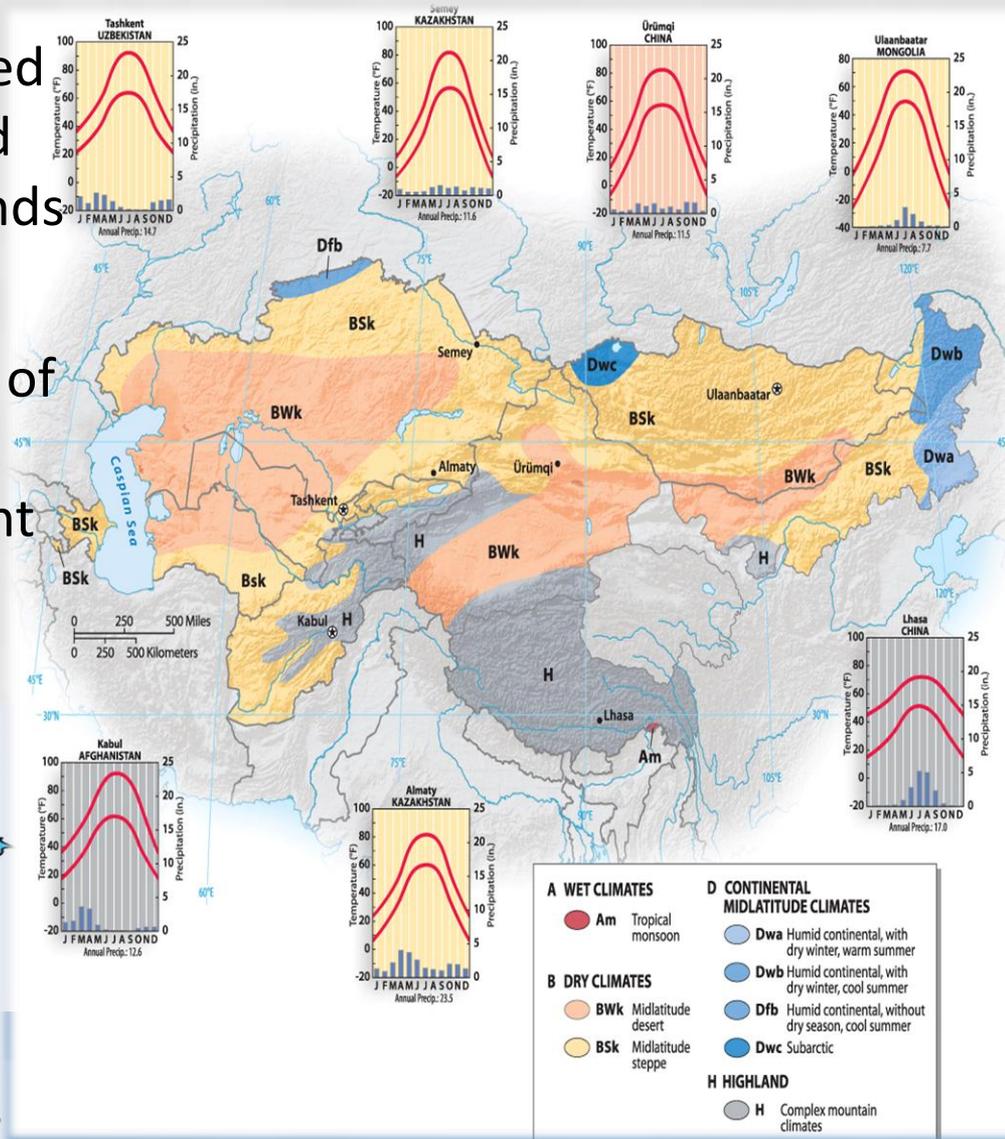
Central Asia is a **dry** region dominated by desert and steppe climates. Arid conditions prevail even in the highlands (H).

Central Asia is located in the interior of a large continent. Its **continental climate** is characterized by significant differences between summer and winter temperatures.

Central Asia map of Köppen climate classification



- Cold desert climate (BWk)
- Cold semi-arid climate (BSk)
- Warm mediterranean climate (Csa)
- Warm continental climate/ Humid continental climate (Dfa)
- Temperate continental climate/ Humid continental climate (Dfb)
- Warm continental climate/ Mediterranean continental climate (Dsa)
- Temperate continental climate/ Mediterranean continental climate (Dsb)



Physical Setting: Environmental Issues



- relatively **clean environment** due to isolation and low population density
- **desertification**
 - Gobi Desert has gradually spread southward.
 - desertification in northern Kazakhstan
- Much of the region has been **deforested**.

Dunes spreading into agricultural areas in western China



Forest cover according to FRA

- Closed forest
- Open and fragmented forest

1. Kazakhstan
2. Kyrgyzstan
3. Mongolia
4. Tajikistan
5. Turkmenistan
6. Uzbekistan



Physical Setting: Environmental Issues



- The booming **oil and gas industries** have created environmental problems.
- **dam building and water conflicts**
- shrinking and expanding lakes
 - **Caspian Sea**: world's largest lake ... construction of reservoirs on the Volga River is diverting water from Caspian Sea, reducing its volume and area.
 - **Aral Sea** and **Lake Balqash** shrinking ... size maintenance dependent on precipitation



Muynak, a town near the Aral Sea

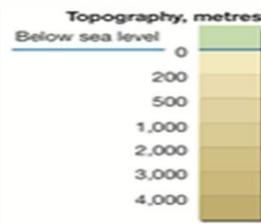


These two boats were beached by the shrinkage of the Aral Sea.

Physical Setting: Environmental Issues



Hazards in and around the Caspian



- Oil and gas drilling
- Projected off-shore pipelines
- Oil wells flooded and leaking
- Area under exploration for oil and gas (high potential)
- Polluted sea (oil, pesticides, chemicals, heavy metals or bacteriological pollution)
- Polluted soils and land degradation
- Soil salinisation
- Polluted rivers (industry and municipal sewage water)
- Land-based source of river pollution (mainly heavy industries)
- Identified poorly stored hazardous industrial waste site or polluting industrial activities
- Former nuclear testing site
- Main direction of sandstorm causing salt transfers toward arable lands of the Volga region

Sources: National Action Plan of Azerbaijan, 2002; National Action Programme on Enhancement of the Environment of the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan 2003-2012; Environmental Performance Review of Kazakhstan, UNECE, 2000; Environmental Performance Review of Azerbaijan, UNECE, 2003; Study for Safe Management of Radioactive Sites in Turkmenistan, NATO, 2005; Environment and Security: Transforming Risks into Cooperation, Case of Central Asia, UNEP/UNDP/OSCE, 2003; Global Alarm: Dust and Sandstorms from the World's Drylands, UNCCD, 2001



Physical Setting: Environmental Issues



Shrinking Aral Sea

The rivers that feed the sea are being diverted for irrigation. At least 60% of the sea's total volume has disappeared. grave environmental, economic and cultural damage

1957



The level of the Aral Sea in the late 1950s is customarily used as the reference to see how much water has been lost.

1982



In the early 1980s, the accelerating drop of the sea level is evident. Salinity is rising; fisheries are shrinking.

2000



The Aral Sea splits into North and South. Not only has it lost most of its water, but fishing is also nearly gone. The Kok-Aral Dam begins to allow waters in the North Aral Sea to rise.

2015



Despite expansion of the North Aral Sea, only some eight percent of the water volume of the late 1950s remains.



Physical Setting: Environmental Issues in Central Asia

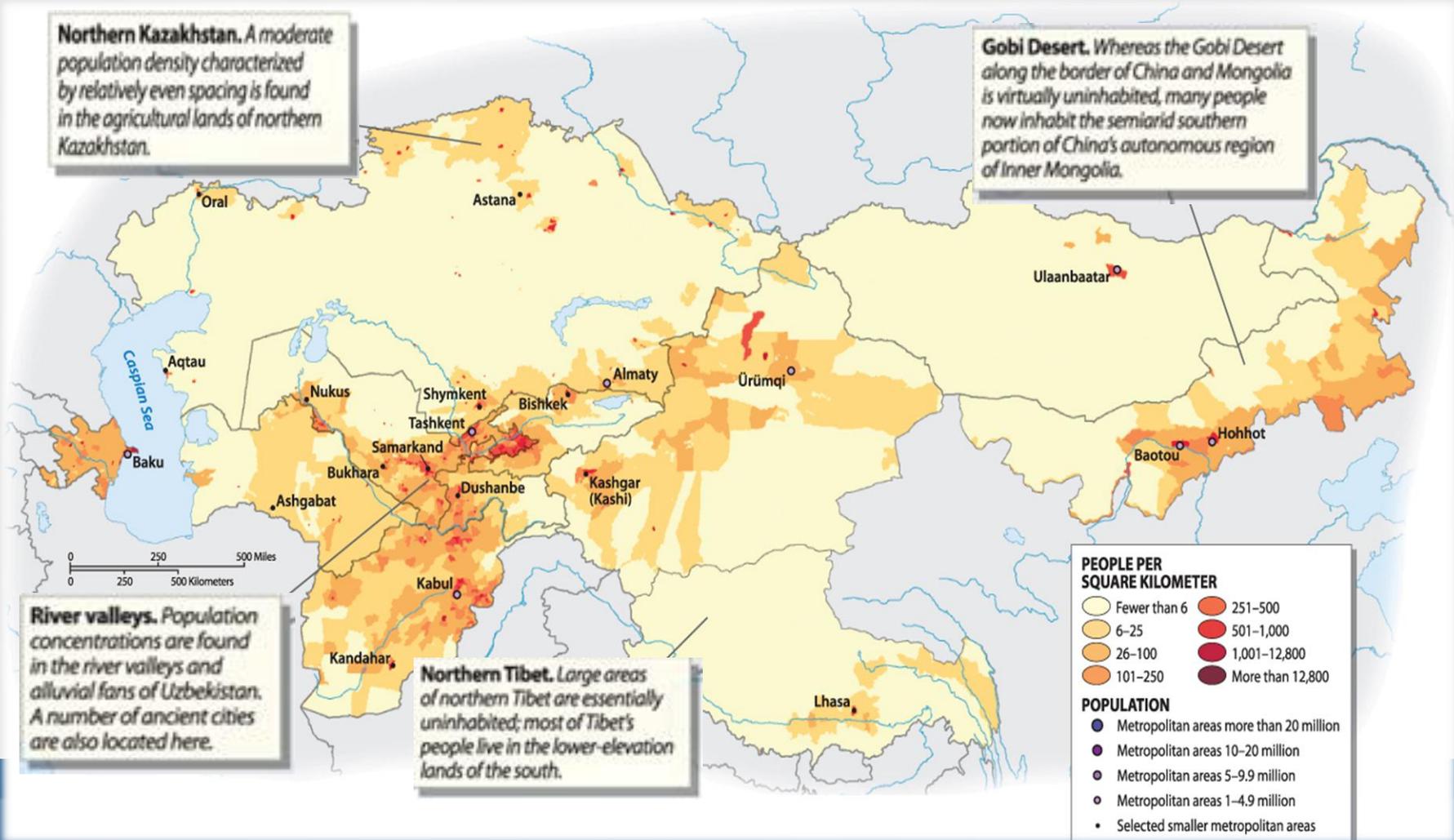
Aral Sea. This large lake has been virtually destroyed by the diversion of fresh water out of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers.

Northern Kazakhstan. "Virgin Lands Campaign" in 1950s resulted in the cultivation of steppe lands, leading to pronounced soil erosion.

Gobi Desert. The expansion of the Gobi Desert is causing major problems in China and Mongolia.



Population and Settlement: Densely Settled Oases amid Vacant Lands



Population and Settlement: Densely Settled Oases amid Vacant Lands



- Most of the region is **sparsely inhabited**.
 - Large areas are either too arid or too high to support much human life.
 - **pastoralists**: people who raise livestock for subsistence purposes (The yak is common in Central Asia.)
- **Highlands Population** and Subsistence Patterns
 - Only sparse vegetation can survive in this region.
 - **transhumance**: moving flocks from lowland pastures in the winter to highland meadows in the summer

Farming in Tibet is possible in only a few locations.



Kara Kum, Turkmenistan

Small farming village cut into the Tibetan landscape



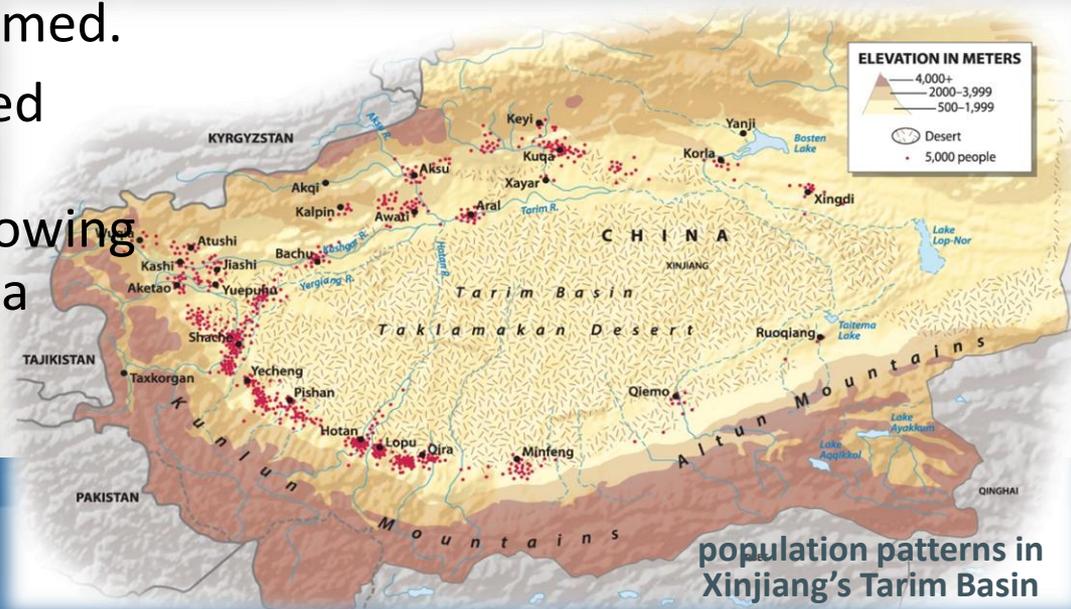
Population and Settlement: Densely Settled Oases amid Vacant Lands



- **Lowland Population** and Subsistence Patterns
 - Most of the population is concentrated in zone **where mountains meet the basins and plains.**
 - Water supplies are adequate and soils are neither salty nor alkaline.
 - Until the 20th century, almost none of this area had ever been plowed or farmed.

- **alluvial fans:** fan-shaped deposits of sediments dropped by streams flowing out of the mountains, a fertile area

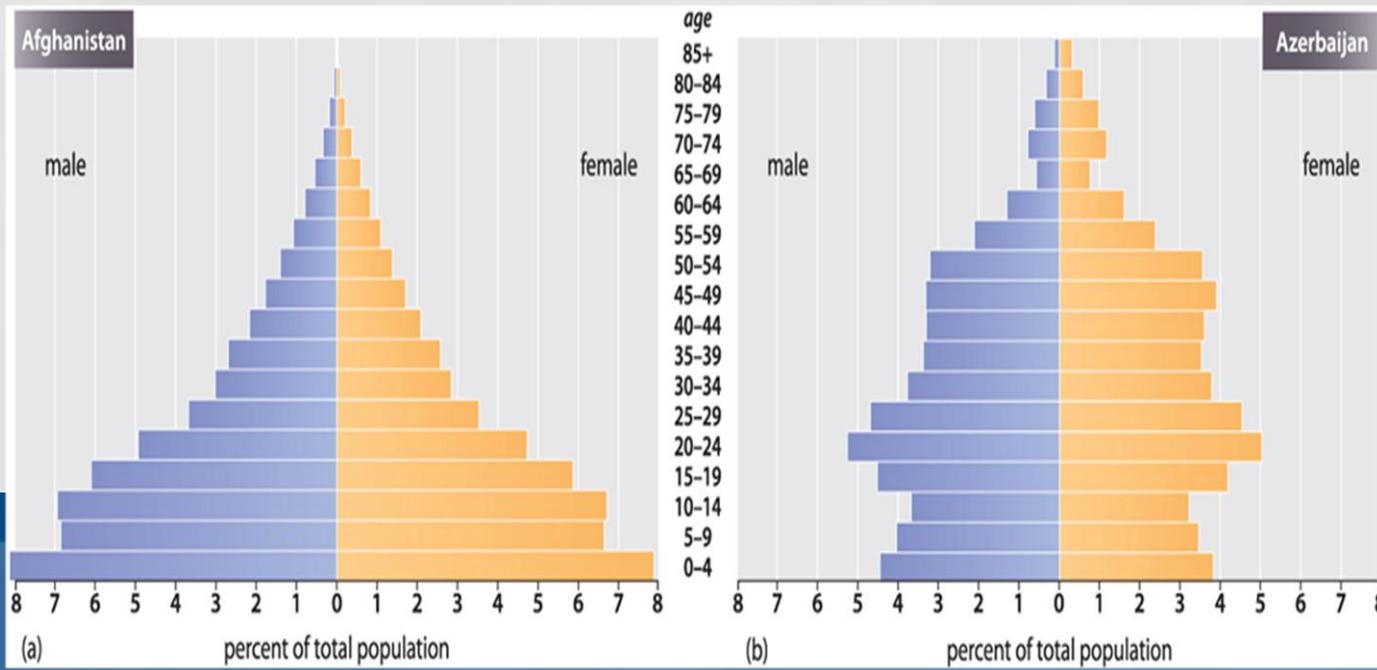
- **loess:** fertile, silty soil deposited by the wind



Population and Settlement: Population Issues



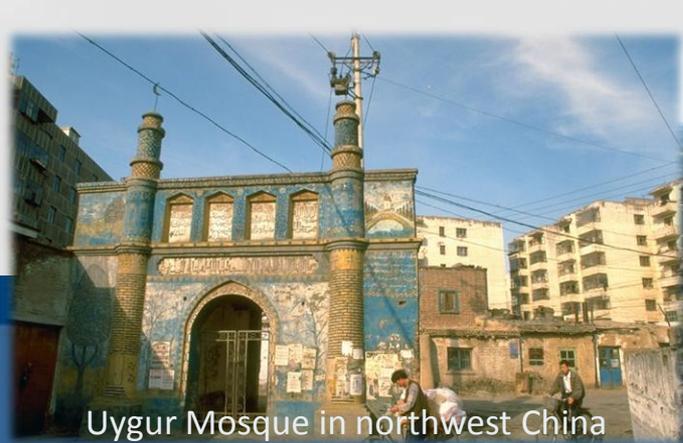
- Some portions of the region are growing at a moderate rate.
- Growth in western China is from **migration** of Han Chinese.
- Growth in former Soviet zone is from high levels of **fertility**.
- Higher fertility because of Islam? Low level of urbanization?



Population and Settlement: Urbanization in Central Asia



- **River valleys and oases** have been partially urbanized for millennia (Samarkand and Bukhara, Uzbekistan).
- **Conquest** of the region by the Russian and Chinese empires started a **new period of urbanization**.
 - contrast between lavish architecture, Soviet influence and modern design
- Today, urbanization increasing in northern Kazakhstan.
- In some areas, cities remain few and far between.



Uygur Mosque in northwest China



Astana, Capital of Kazakhstan



Islamic architecture in Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Population and Settlement: Population Indicators



Country	Population (millions) 2012	Population Density (per square kilometer)	Rate of Natural Increase (RNI)	Total Fertility Rate	Percent Urban	Percent <15	Percent >65	Net Migration (Rate per 1000) 2010–15 ^a
Afghanistan	33.4	51	2.8	6.2	23	46	2	4.0
Azerbaijan	9.3	107	1.3	2.3	53	22	6	0.0
Kazakhstan	16.8	6	1.4	2.6	55	25	7	-0.6
Kyrgyzstan	5.7	28	2.0	2.7	35	30	4	-6.4
Mongolia	2.9	2	1.6	2.5	63	27	4	-1.0
Tajikistan	7.1	49	2.3	3.3	26	37	3	-7.0
Turkmenistan	5.2	11	1.4	2.4	47	29	4	-1.0
Uzbekistan	29.8	29.8	1.9	2.6	51	29	4	-2.9

^aNet Migration Rate from the United Nations, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision Population Database*.
Source: Population Reference Bureau, *World Population Data Sheet, 2012*.

Cultural Coherence and Diversity: A Meeting Ground of Different Traditions



- There is an **historical cohesion** in Central Asia, perhaps due to its **isolated location**.
- In the past, this region has played a **pivotal role** in the evolution of Eurasia.
- Historical Overview: Changing Languages and Populations
 - **River valleys and oases** were early sites of sedentary, agricultural communities (8,000 BCE).
 - **Domestication of the horse** spurred nomadic pastoralism (4,000 BCE), provided military advantages over sedentary peoples.
 - **Tibetan kingdom** unified in 700 CE, but was short lived!

Steppe Pastoralism
in Mongolia



Cultural Coherence and Diversity: A Meeting Ground of Different Traditions



- Western Central Asia is largely **Muslim** and is often classified as part of Southwest Asia.
- In Mongolia and Tibet most people traditionally follow **Tibetan Buddhism**.
- **Tibet** is culturally linked to both South and East Asia.
- **Mongolia** is historically associated with China.

Cultural Coherence and Diversity: A Meeting Ground of Different Traditions



- Groups in Central Asia

- **Pashtuns**: Pashto-speaking people inhabiting southern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan, tradition asserts that they are descended from Afghana, grandson of King Saul of Israel ... sedentary farmers and animal husbandry or migratory herders and caravaners



- **Kazakhs**: nomadic Turkic people who mainly inhabit the northern parts of Central Asia, descendants of the Turkic and medieval Mongol tribes, one of the nations most severely affected by the Soviet famine of 1932–33 with 37% dying



Cultural Coherence and Diversity: A Meeting Ground of Different Traditions



- Groups in Central Asia

- **Hazaras:** Persian-speaking people who mainly live in an isolated region in central Afghanistan and Pakistan, the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan ... cherish education and hard work, but their Shi'ite Muslim faith and Asian features have long made them targets of discrimination and oppression



- **Azeris:** Turkic people forming the majority population of Azerbaijan and also living in Armenia and northern Iran, second most numerous ethnic group among the Turkic peoples ... majority adheres to secular lifestyles



Cultural Coherence and Diversity: A Meeting Ground of Different Traditions



- Groups in Central Asia
 - **Communists**: most of the region still uses the communist model, little history of or experience with democratic governance
 - **Taliban**: extreme fundamentalist Islamic political movement in Afghanistan currently waging jihad within that state ... consisted largely of students recently trained in madrassas in Pakistan

Who are the Taliban?



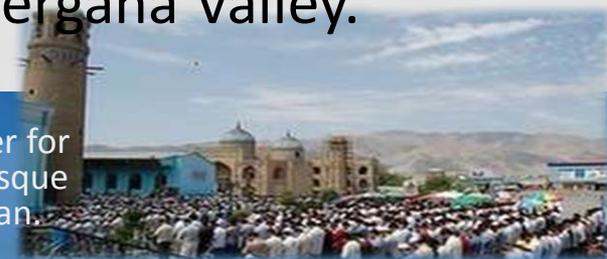
Cultural Coherence and Diversity: Religion



● Islam in Central Asia

- **Pashtuns** adopted a stricter interpretation of Islam.
- **Kazaks** are more lax in their interpretation of Islam.
- Most of the region's Muslims are **Sunni**.
- Shi'ism is dominant among the **Hazaras** and the **Azeris**.
- **Communists** in China, Soviet Union and Mongolia discouraged all religions (including Islam).
- **Islamic revival** underway as many return to their cultural roots.
- **Islamic fundamentalism** is a powerful movement in Afghanistan, parts of Tajikistan and the Fergana Valley.

Thousands of worshippers gather for Friday prayers at the central mosque in Khujand in northern Tajikistan.

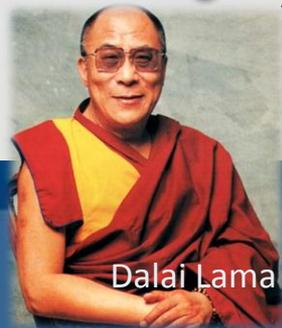


Cultural Coherence and Diversity: Religion



● Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism)

- In Mongolia and Tibet: a blending of Mahayana Buddhism and shamanistic features of the indigenous, pre-Buddhist religion, **Bön**
- an emphasis on **oral transmission** as more important than the printed word, an attitude of **reverence for the teacher** (guru), a **critical attitude** encouraged to promote abilities in analytic meditation (“One should test the Buddha's words as one would the quality of gold.”)
- Among its most unique characteristics are its system of reincarnating lamas and the vast number of deities in its pantheon.



Dalai Lama

Tibetan Buddhist monks



Le Kumbum de Gyantse monastery



Cultural Coherence and Diversity: Religion



- **Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism)**

- **Monasticism** is the foundation of Buddhism in Tibet, where over 6,000 monasteries existed before they were destroyed by China. About 750 in Mongolia were also destroyed.
- **theocracy**: religious state ... Tibet was a theocracy led by the Dalai Lama prior to the Chinese.
- **persecution of Tibetan Buddhists by the Chinese**
 - Chinese invasion (1951): Dalai Lama in exile, 6,000 monasteries destroyed and thousands of monks killed
 - By tradition, when the Dalai Lama dies, the state (formerly Tibet, now China) names his successor. Tibet's Buddhists will not accept anyone named by China and China will not accept anyone else.



Lamaist Buddhist Monasteries

Cultural Coherence and Diversity: Language



- Earliest languages in Central Asia were **Indo-European**. Replaced by **Altaic** (Turkish and Mongolian).
- **Tibetan**: 1.5 million speakers in Tibet; 3 million in western China
- **Mongolian**: 5 million speakers (include Buryat and Kalmyk)
- **Turkic** Languages: most widely spoken in the region
 - **Uzbek** (most widely spoken of the Turkic languages)
 - Uygur
 - Kazak
 - Azeri
 - Turkmen
 - Kyrgyz

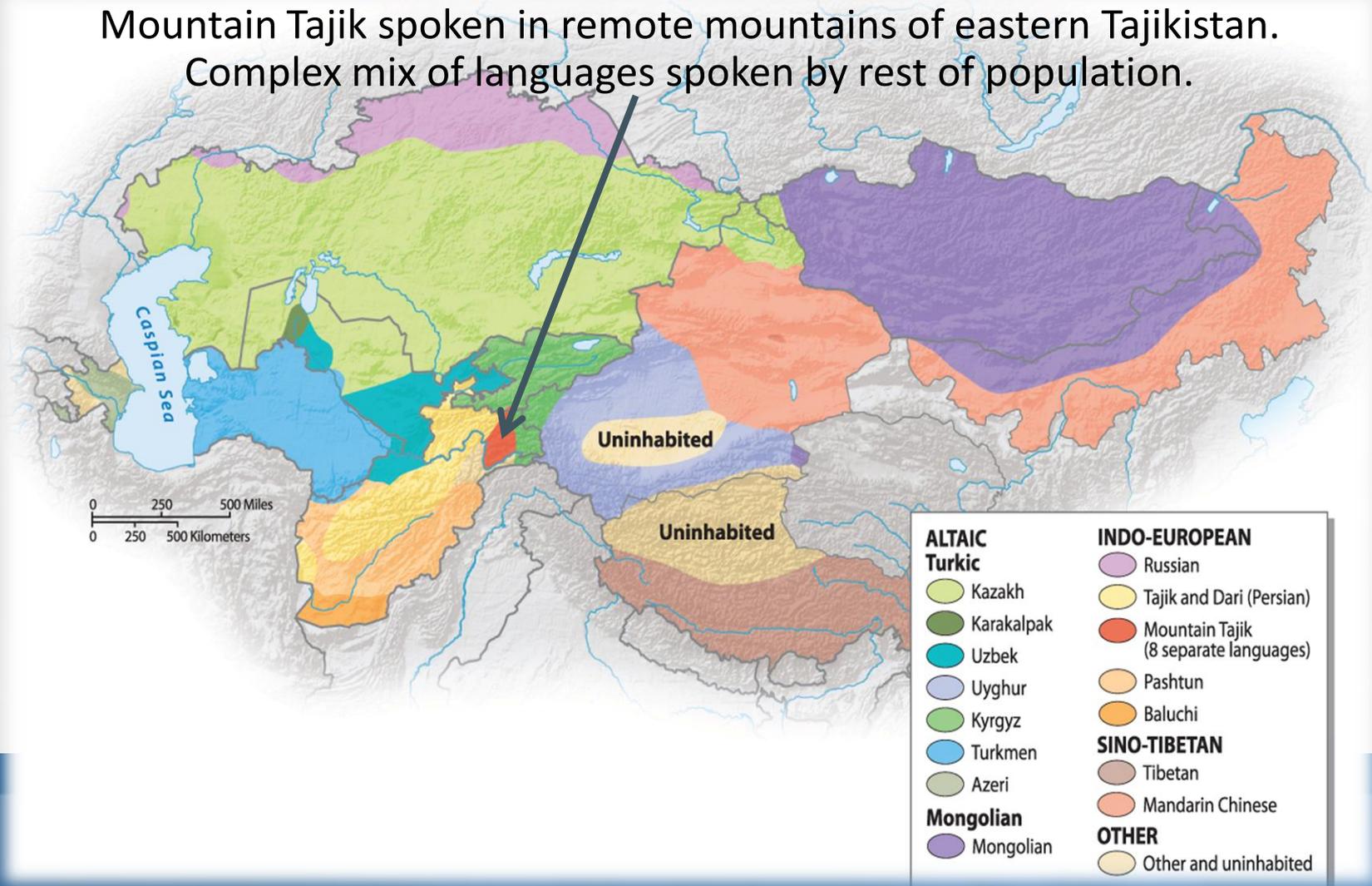


Cultural Coherence and Diversity: Language



Linguistic Complexity in Tajikistan

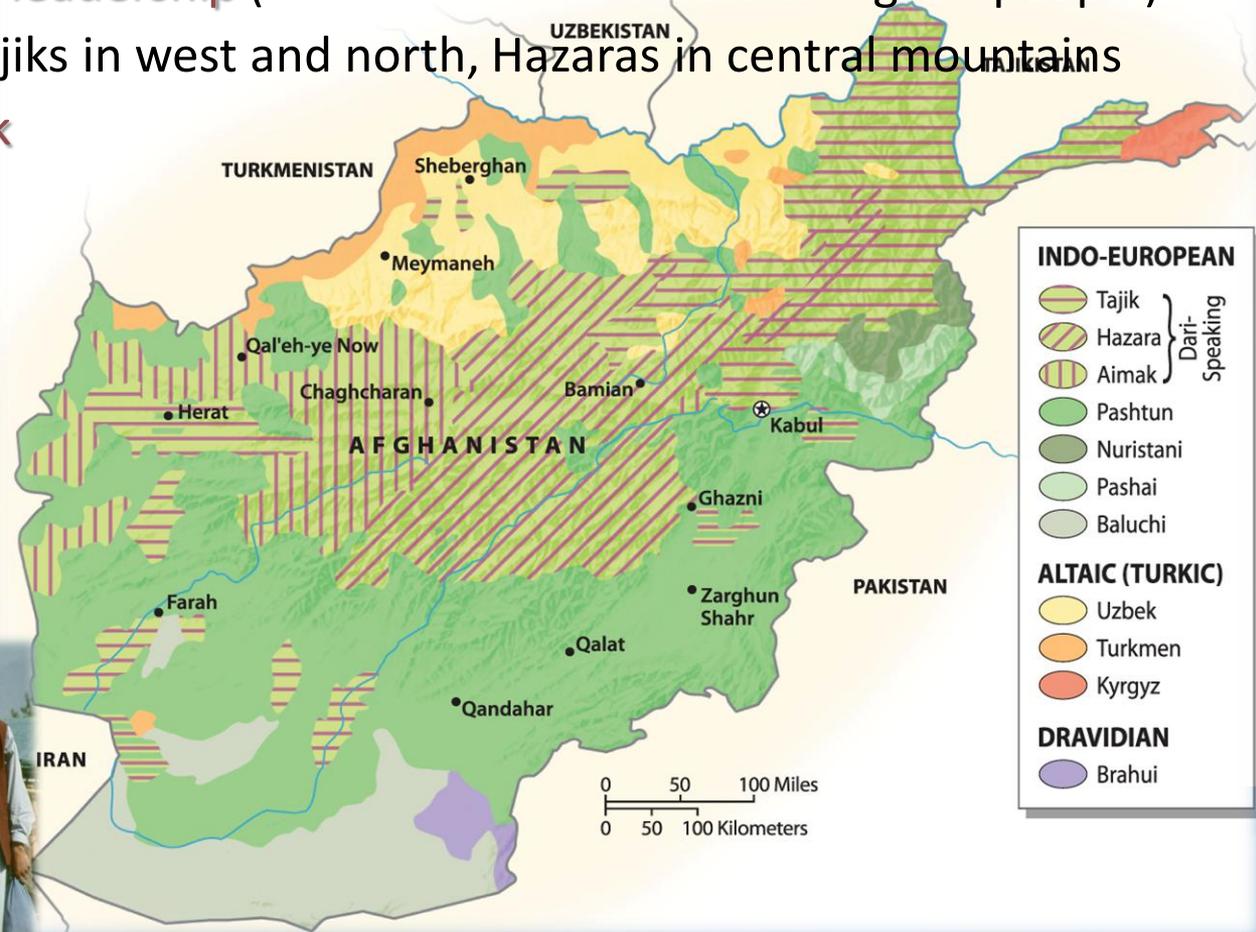
65% speak Indo-European Tajik (related to Persian).
Mountain Tajik spoken in remote mountains of eastern Tajikistan.
Complex mix of languages spoken by rest of population.



Cultural Coherence and Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Afghanistan



- **Afghanistan was never colonized** by outside powers. It became a state in the 1700s under **Pashtun leadership** (Pashtuns are 40%-60% of Afghan people).
- **Dari** speakers: Tajiks in west and north, Hazaras in central mountains
- 11% speak **Uzbek**



Afghan women in public

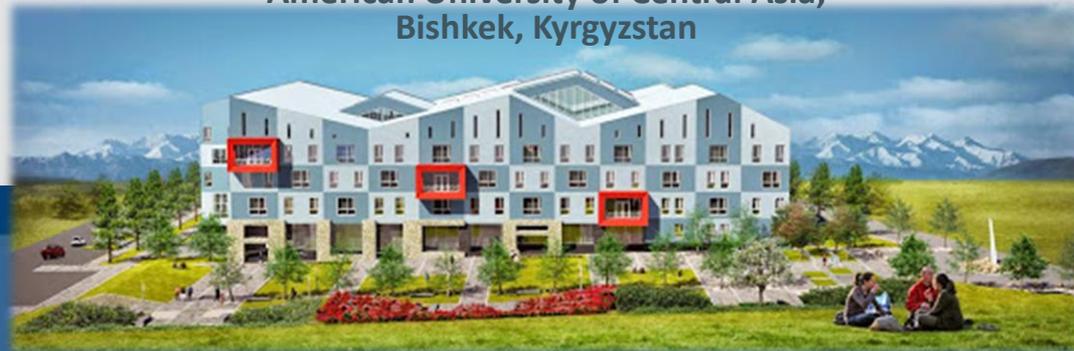


Cultural Coherence and Diversity: Global Context



- Western Central Asia's closest external cultural relations are with **Russia**. But Russian influence is **diminishing**. Russian was once the lingua franca in western Central Asia, but its use is declining.
- Relations of eastern Central Asian states are with **China**. But the increasing **migration of Han Chinese** into the eastern part of the region is a major issue.
- increasing use of **English**
- increasing influence of **US culture**

American University of Central Asia,
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



US-style restaurant in
Baku, Azerbaijan



Geopolitical Framework: Political Reawakening



- Partitioning of the Steppes
 - Before 1500, Central Asia was a **power center**.
 - **Mobile (horseback) armies** threatened sedentary states.
 - **Gunpowder and effective hand weapons** changed the balance of power.
 - Russia and China gained control of the region.
 - Manchu (Chinese) conquest (1644)
 - Russian Empire (1700s)
 - concern over British influence spreading from India and into the area



Mongols of the Golden Horde battle and annihilate a medieval Russian army.

Geopolitical Framework: Azerbaijan in Context



In 1918, Azerbaijan declared independence as the **Azerbaijan Democratic Republic** (ADR). The ADR was the **first modern parliamentary republic** in the Turkic and Muslim worlds. Among the important accomplishments of the Parliament was the **extension of suffrage to women**, making Azerbaijan the first Muslim state to grant women equal political rights with men.

Another important accomplishment of the ADR was the establishment of **Baku State University**, which was the first modern-type university founded in the Muslim East.

Twenty-three months after it declared its independence, in 1920, Soviet Russia invaded Azerbaijan on the grounds that it could not survive without Azerbaijani oil.

Baku State University



Geopolitical Framework: Azerbaijan in Context



Azerbaijanis did not surrender their brief independence quickly or easily. As many as 20,000 Azerbaijani soldiers died resisting the invasion but in the end, the Soviets claimed the newly-named **Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic**.

It would be 71 years (1991) before Azerbaijan was again an independent state.

The Strange State of Soviet Central Asia



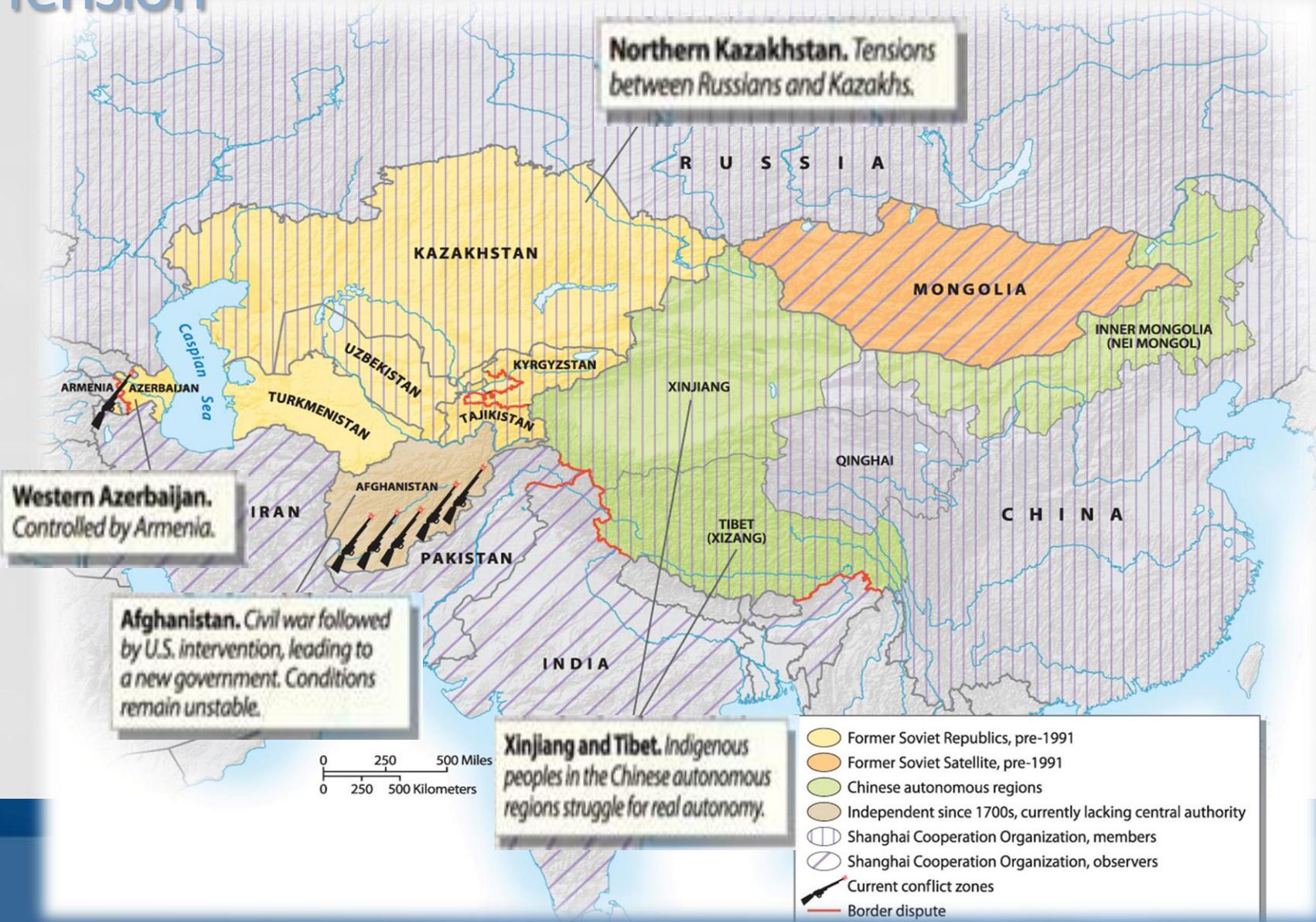
Red Army in Baku, May 1920

Geopolitical Framework: Political Reawakening



- Central Asia Under Communist Rule
 - **Soviet Central Asia**
 - Soviets inherited the Russian Empire's domain.
 - united the territories together into the Soviet Union
 - created a series of union republics (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan)
 - sowed the seeds of **nationalism**, the idea of **nation-states**
 - **The Chinese Geopolitical Order**
 - After China reemerged as a unified state in 1949, it reclaimed most of its old pre-communist Central Asian territories.
 - movement into Xinjiang and Tibet

Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



- Independence in Former Soviet Lands
 - It has been difficult for the 6 former Soviet Republics to become truly independent.
 - Cooperation with Russia on **security issues** is necessary.
 - **Authoritarian leaders** in these states have made the transition to democracy more difficult.
 - These states have opted to remain part of the **Commonwealth of Independent States** (a regional organization formed in 1991 during the breakup of the Soviet Union, whose participating states are some of the former Soviet Republics).
- **Ethnic strife** is common in these areas.



the end of Soviet rule in Central Asia:
toppled statue of Lenin in Tajikistan

Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



- Independence in Former Soviet Lands
 - **Tajikistan** (1992-97): civil war that involved various factions, often distinguished by clan loyalties ... resulted in over 100,000 dead and 1.2 million refugees, and completely devastated the state and economy
 - **Nagorno-Karabakh War** (1988-1994?): the Nagorno-Karabakh region (with an ethnic Armenian majority) of Azerbaijan fighting a secessionist war with Armenia's support and involvement ... by 1994 Armenia controlled most of the region and approximately 9% of Azerbaijan's territory outside the region ... cease fire in 1994 to allow peace talks but talks unsuccessful and cease fire frequently broken



Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Independence in Former Soviet Lands

The **Fergana Valley** is a fertile, warm valley in Central Asia spread across eastern **Uzbekistan**, southern **Kyrgyzstan** and northern **Tajikistan**, thanks to borders drawn by former Soviet Russia. The valley is conservative Muslim and ethnically diverse -- populated by ethnic Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz people, often intermixed and not matching modern borders.

None of these borders was of any great significance as long as Soviet rule lasted. The whole region was part of a single economy geared to cotton production on a massive scale, and the overarching political structures meant that crossing borders was not a problem.

Since 1991 this has changed, for the worse.



Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Uzbekistan (in which the valley's natural outlet lies) regularly **closes its borders** with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, causing immense difficulties for trade and for those who live in the region. Conflicts over water have contributed to the border disputes. Uzbekistan's location also gives it the ability to **shut off the water** used for irrigation outside its borders. Ethnic tensions, worsening economic conditions and political conflict have led to violence, with several hundred killed and up to 300,000 refugees fleeing the region.

Fergana Valley near the Kamchik Pass in Uzbekistan



Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Independence in Former Soviet Lands

War in Afghanistan (prior to September 11, 2001)

- 1978: Soviet-supported military revolutionary council seized power
 - New Marxist government's attempts to suppress religion led to armed rebellion.
 - Russian invasion
 - US and Saudi supported rebels
 - Soviets withdrew in 1989



anti-Marxist rebels in Afghanistan

Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



- **1995–1996: Rise of the Taliban**

- Taliban founded by young Muslim religious students.
- closely associated with the Pashtun ethnic group
- imposed an extreme interpretation of Islamic law consistent with Pashtun culture
- other Afghan ethnic groups protested

- **Radical Islamic Fundamentalism**

- In late 1990s, there was concern about possible spread of Taliban-style rule in the region.
- US intervention, NATO forces holding situation in check



US troops in
Afghanistan

Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



- The Roles of Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in Afghanistan
 - **Russia** has armed forces in Tajikistan and transportation routes cross Kazakhstan.
 - **Iran** is a major trading partner and offers access to ports.
 - **Pakistan** supported Taliban; now supports the US.
 - **Turkey** has close cultural and linguistic connections.

Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Strife in Western China

- **Chinese control of Xinjiang** (China's largest and most westerly region)
 - Historically, Xinjiang has been ethnically and culturally **Uyghur**.
 - In the 1990s, China began to encourage **Han Chinese** to migrate to the region.
 - Massive immigration resulted in a Xinjiang population that is now over 40% Han Chinese and has led to discrimination against the indigenous Uyghur.



Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Strife in Western China

- **Chinese control of Xinjiang**

- The Chinese government has curtailed Uyghur commercial and cultural activities, criminalized 'illegal religious' and 'separatist' activities, clamped down on peaceful expressions of cultural identity, banned Muslim civil servants from fasting during the holy month of Ramadan and stationed large numbers of troops in the region.
- The Han Chinese are given the best jobs and the majority do well economically.
- Uyghur opposition has escalated to violence on both sides and led to global accusations of human rights violations by the government.

Ethnic Tension in Xinjiang



Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Strife in Western China

- **Repression of Tibet** and local opposition to Chinese rule
 - Tibet declared its independence in 1913, setting up a **Lamaist theocracy** overseen by the Dalai Lama.
 - **China invaded** in 1951 and incorporated the region. Over the next decade, the Dalai Lama was forced into exile, 6,000 monasteries were destroyed and thousands of monks were killed.
 - Parts of the former state were divided up among neighboring provinces.
 - Tibetans continue to protest for independence even though the Chinese usually respond violently.



Chinese Invasion of Tibet: the Dalai Lama (2nd from lead) is shown escaping to India in 1959, when he was 23.

Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Strife in Western China

- **Repression of Tibet** and local opposition to Chinese rule



China has been repeatedly criticized for **human rights violations**. For example, in the 1960s, Chinese authorities forced Tibetan farmers to cultivate maize instead of barley, the traditional crop of the Himalaya region. The decision proved disastrous, resulting in the failing of the harvest and the starving of thousands of Tibetans.

- Historically, the population of Tibet consisted of primarily **ethnic Tibetans** but the government-sponsored migration of large numbers of **Han Chinese** into Tibet (with attractive bonuses and favorable living conditions) threatens to change Tibet's demographics and, ultimately, its culture.
- Currently, ethnic Tibetans have fallen to 44% of the population but are still the largest minority.

Geopolitical Framework: Current Geopolitical Tension



Strife in Western China

- **Border of China and India** still contested
 - In 1914 the Tibetan government signed the **Simla Accord** with Britain, ceding the **South Tibet region to British India**.
 - The Chinese government, refusing to acknowledge an independent Tibet, denounced the agreement as illegal.
 - In 1962, **China and India fought a brief war** over the disputed South Tibet region. Although China won the war, Chinese troops withdrew, effectively ceding South Tibet to India.
 - There are several other areas under dispute by China and India but there has been no overt action in recent decades.

mules carrying ammunition
over a mountain pass during
the 1962 Indo-China War



Geopolitical Framework: Global Context



- International Dimensions of Central Asia Tension
 - **US forces in Afghanistan** fighting terrorists (including Osama Bin Laden)
 - Formation of **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** (“Shanghai Six”) to provide counterbalance to US involvement in the region
 - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
 - **Pakistan seeking greater influence** in the region, especially (but not only) in Afghanistan



Economic and Social Development: Abundant Resources, Devastated Economies



The Post-Communist Economies

- Many of the Central Asian industries relied heavily on **subsidies and oil from the Soviet Union**.
- Today, no Central Asian state could be considered prosperous.
 - **Kazakhstan** is the most developed.
 - **Uzbekistan** has the second-largest economy.
 - **Kyrgyzstan** is aggressively privatizing former state-run industries.
 - **Turkmenistan** has a large agricultural base.
 - **Tajikistan** is the most troubled of the former Soviet republics.
 - In **Mongolia**, industries are not competitive enough in the global market and it has a meager agricultural base.
- The region's **main assets** include: oil and gas, cotton and other agriculture, mineral reserves and hydroelectricity potential.

Economic and Social Development: Abundant Resources, Devastated Economies



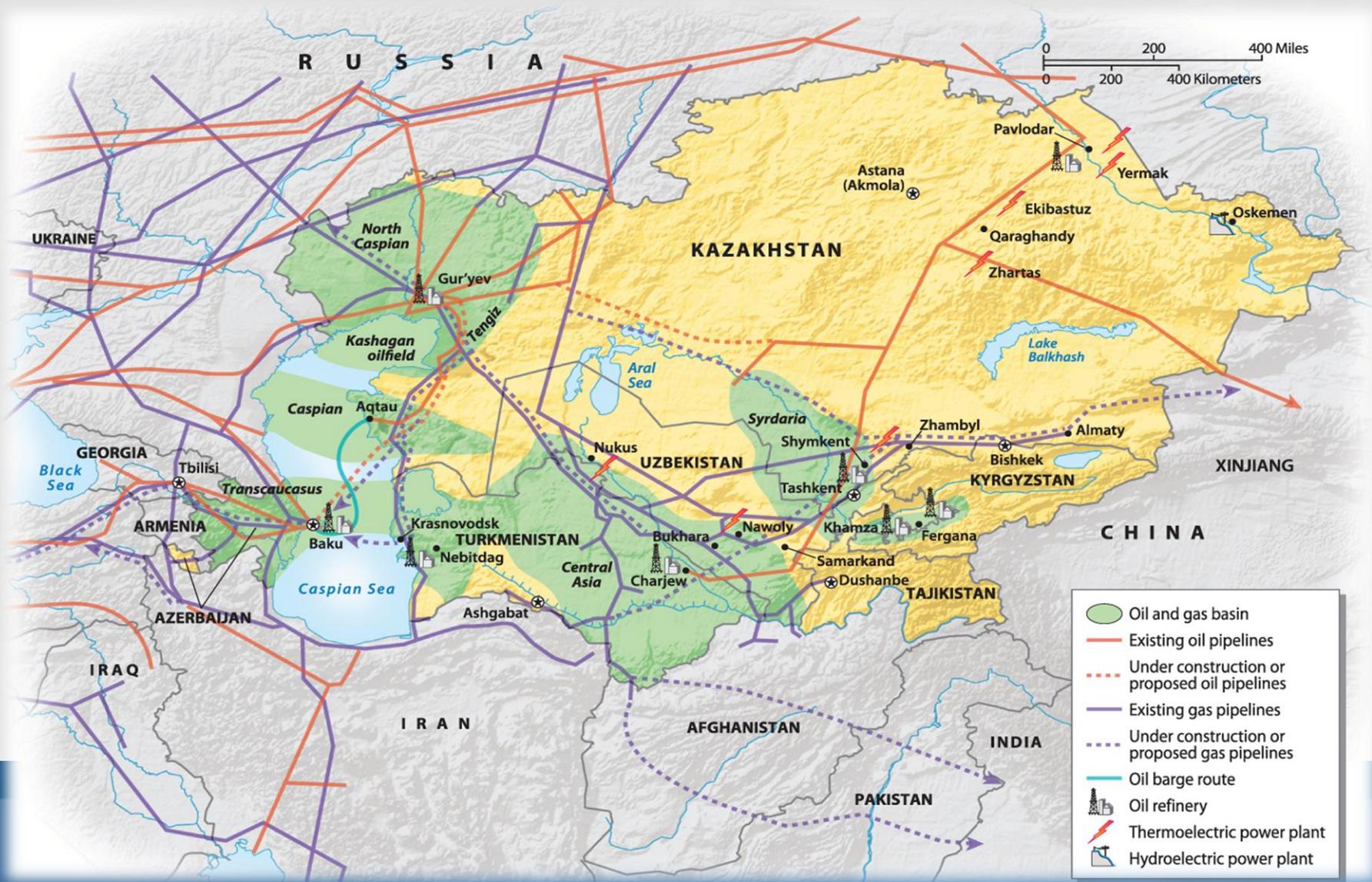
The Post-Communist Economies

- The Economies of **Tibet and Xinjiang** in Western China
 - Chinese portions of Central Asia have fared better than the rest of the region.
 - Tibet is one of the world's poorest places but Tibetans provide for most of their basic needs.
 - Xinjiang has large mineral wealth and oil reserves, and a productive agriculture sector as well.
- Economic Misery in **Afghanistan**
 - the **poorest state in the region** and one of the weakest economies in the world, with almost no economic development
 - suffered nearly continuous war starting in late 1970s
 - By 1999, it was the **world's largest producer of opium.**



Afghan opium production

Economic and Social Development: Abundant Resources, Devastated Economies



Economic and Social Development: Abundant Resources, Devastated Economies



- Central Asia is the only world region in which all of the states are **landlocked**. That has profound economic implications.
- Landlocked developing states have **difficult transit problems** that reduce their competitiveness in the world market. These problems include:
 - inadequate transport infrastructure
 - cumbersome customs and border crossing procedures
 - remoteness from major international markets
 - high transport and trade transaction costs
- These issues continue to put these states at **the margin of the global economy**.
- The establishment of a secure, reliable and efficient transit transport system is critical if Central Asia's landlocked states want to reduce transport costs and enhance the competitiveness of their exports in regional and global markets.

Economic and Social Development: The Global Economy



Central Asian Economies in Global Context

- The landlocked location of Central Asia has always kept it **isolated** to some extent. ([The Challenges Facing Landlocked Developing Countries](#))
- Overall, Central Asia is not well connected, but...
- Afghanistan is tied to the global economy through its export of **illegal drugs**.
- In former Soviet areas, most of the connections remain with **Russia**.
 - Former Soviet republics are developing ties with Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and China.
- The US and other Western states are drawn to the region by **oil and natural gas deposits** but construction of pipelines is necessary.



The Russian space program launching site is in Kazakhstan.

Economic and Social Development: The Global Economy

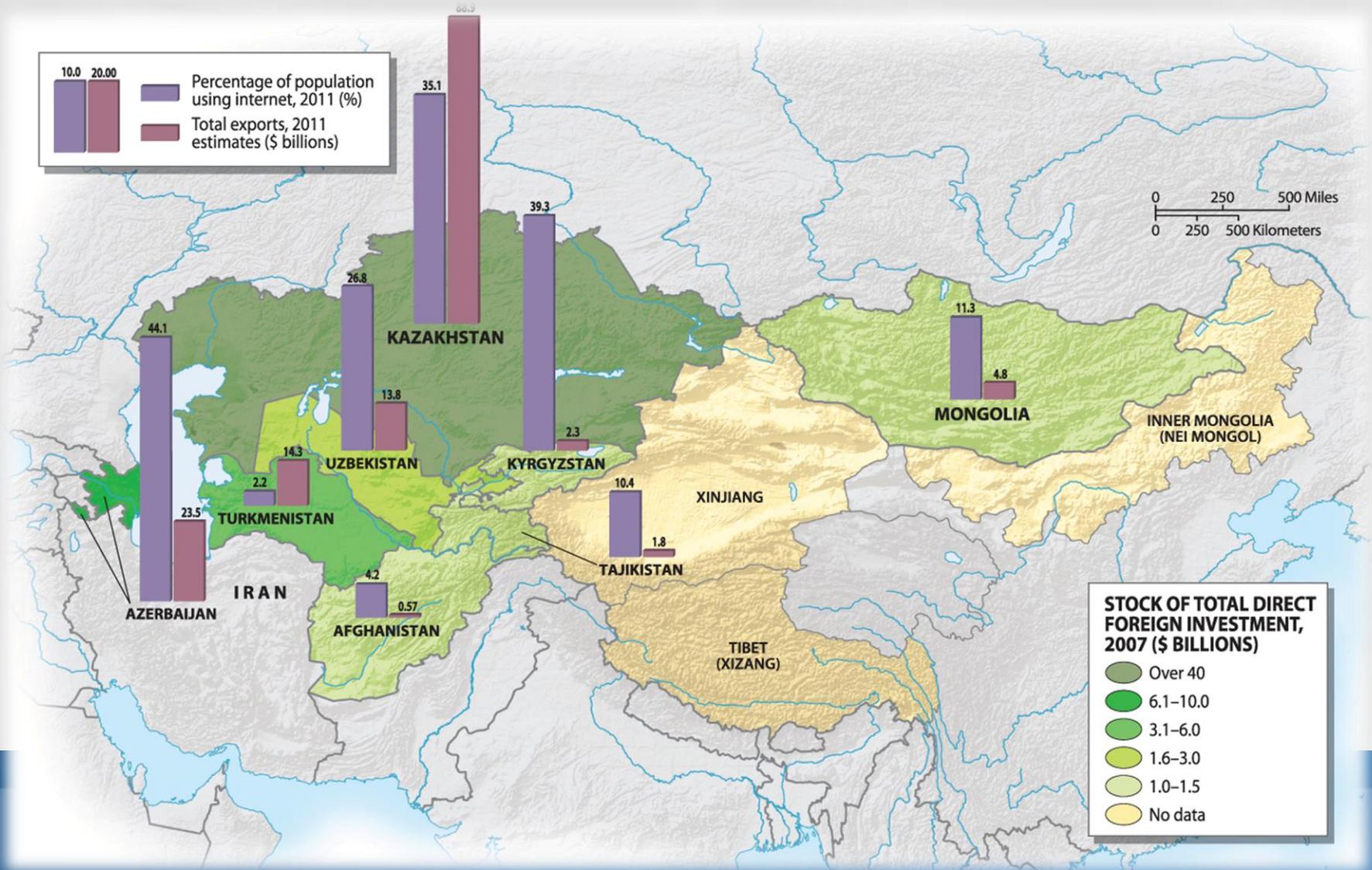


- Due to their oil industries, **Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan receive the bulk** of direct foreign investment in the region.
- Turkmenistan (another oil exporter) and Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan (more open economies) attract more investment than Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Afghanistan.
- Overall, the region is **not well connected** with the global economy.



oil development
in Azerbaijan

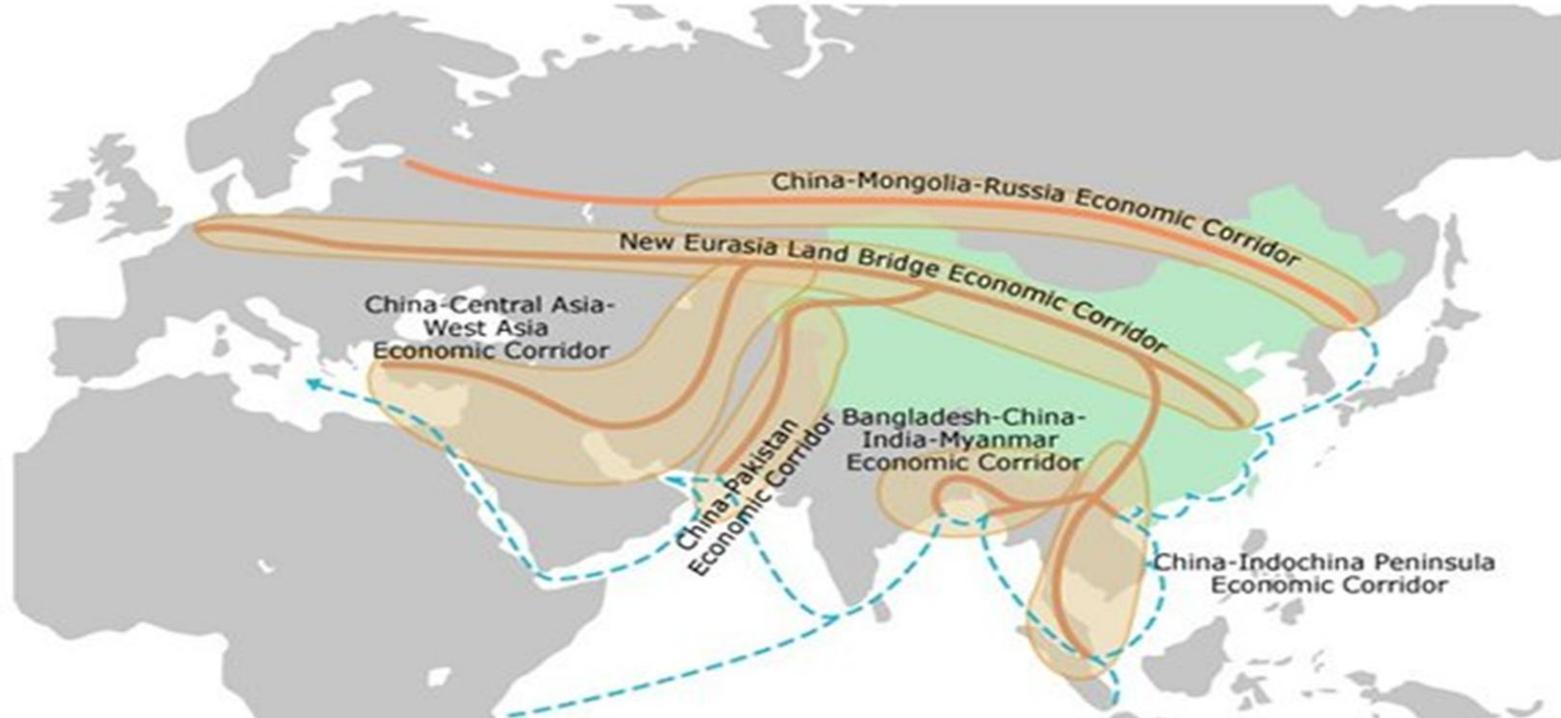
Economic and Social Development: The Global Economy



Economic and Social Development: The Global Economy



The Belt and Road Initiative: Six Economic Corridors Spanning Asia, Europe and Africa



...a significant **development strategy launched by the Chinese** government with the intention of promoting economic cooperation among states along the proposed Belt and Road routes. The Initiative has been designed to enhance the orderly free-flow of economic factors and the efficient allocation of resources, to further market integration and to create a regional economic co-operation framework of benefit to all.

Economic and Social Development: Social Issues



- The Status of **Women in Afghanistan**
 - average **life expectancy**: 45
 - high infant and child **mortality rates**
 - **literacy**: 21% of women (51% of males)
 - Women in traditional Afghani society (especially Pashtun) lead **constrained lives**.
 - The fall of the Taliban improved their situation some.
 - Many are nervous about their new government's willingness and ability to uphold their rights.



women in Afghanistan

Economic and Social Development: Social Issues



- The Status of **Women in the Former Soviet Republics**
 - more autonomy among women of the **northern pastoral** peoples
 - In **former Soviet republics**, women have education rates comparable to men.
 - In 2007, **Kyrgyzstan**, a traditionally male-dominated society, introduced a 30% gender quota in its parliamentary elections that is showing success.
 - **Tajikistan** has been relatively socially successful.
- Social Conditions in **Western China**
 - The conditions in this region of China tend to be **worse off socially** as compared to China as a whole.
 - Around 60% of the non-Han people of Xinjiang are illiterate.

Economic and Social Development: Development Indicators



Country	GNI per capita, PPP 2010	GDP Average Annual %Growth 2000–10	Human Development Index (2011) ¹	Percent Population Living Below \$2 a Day	Life Expectancy (2012) ²	Under Age 5 Mortality Rate (1990)	Under Age 5 Mortality Rate (2010)	Adult Literacy (% ages 15 and older)	Gender Inequality Index (2011) ^{3,1}
Afghanistan	1,060	11.3	.398	—	49	209	149	28*	0.707
Azerbaijan	9,270	17.1	.700	2.8	74	93	46	100	0.314
Kazakhstan	10,770	8.3	.745	<2	69	57	33	100	0.334
Kyrgyzstan	2,070	4.4	.615	21.7	69	72	38	99	0.370
Mongolia	3,670	7.2	.653	—	68	107	32	97	0.410
Tajikistan	2,140	8.6	.607	27.7	73	116	63	100	0.347
Turkmenistan	7,490	13.6	.686	49.7	65	98	56	100	—
Uzbekistan	3,110	7.1	.641	—	68	77	52	99	—

¹United Nations, *Human Development Report, 2011*.

²Population Reference Bureau, *World Population Data Sheet, 2012*.

*Additional data from the *CIA World Factbook, 2012*

³Gender Inequality Index—A composite measure reflecting inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market that ranges between 0 and 1. The higher the number, the greater the inequality.

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators, 2012*.

Economic and Social Development: Abundant Resources, Devastated Economies



- Central Asia is emerging as a separate entity for the first time in the modern era.
- The presence of **fossil fuels** is generating interest but construction of pipelines and other infrastructure is needed.
- For now, the entire region is **experiencing tough times**.
 - collapse of political and economic systems in early 1990s
 - warfare, armed conflict that damaged economies and infrastructure
 - **Afghanistan** is especially troubled and emerged as a focus of world interest in September 2001.
- The economies of Central Asia are gradually opening up to global connections, largely because of the substantial fossil fuel reserves in the region.
- It will take time to bring stability to Central Asia.



The End