

26. Central Asia

Location and physical borders

= CIS: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan

= very large region, markedly differentiated by natural conditions (Altai mts. Tian Shan range, Pamir, Karakum + Kyzylkum deserts, Caspian depression)



Main characteristics

- majority of economic activities provided in cities
- history influenced by prolonged *communist rule* (former USSR) => production cycles, e.g. raw materials => iron and steel production => air + soil pollution ⇔ extensive „communist“ production
- “russification” of the system (society), of all its parts (units)
- no connection with outer seas => few well-located harbours (none) ⇔ inland seas
- transformation of post-soviet (post-communist) regime => e.g. losses in agricultural yields
- lot of raw material reserves
- Aral sea = salinisation of surrounding areas (adjacent) plains
- lack of water in Central Asia

Raw materials

= *oil* + *natural gas* => extraction (drilling) + heavy industry (smelting/iron and steel industry) mainly in Kazakhstan, West-Siberian Plain (Eastern Russia), Azerbaijan = large reserves
= irrigation scheme = *Karakum Canal* to Ashgabat.

Population

Ferghana valley = largest concentration of population, mostly Muslim country, except of Armenia (Armenian Christians) and Georgia (Georgian Orthodox).

Caucasus = very population-diverse region

Problem regions: Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan area populated by Armenians) and North Osetiya (Georgia)

Characteristics of Central Asian countries

- located far from the world's oceans, little rainfall => arid region = cold and dry winters vs. hot and sunny summers.
- north part of central Asia = *steppes*
- countries used to be a part of the USSR
- *Nomads* living in tents) = herding animals, e.g. camels, goats, sheep => milk, meat and wool = quite subsistence nomadic farming
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Kazakhstan

Area: 2,716,998 km²

Population: 15,000,000

Capital: Astana 270,400

Religion: Muslim 47%, Russian Orthodox 44%, Protestant 2%

Life Expectancy: 66.07 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$6,300**

- large country (like Western Europe)
- large mineral reserves, fertile soils and quite stable government but industrial and agricultural pollution => environmental problems



Kyrgyzstan

Area: 198,999 km²

Population: 5,000,000

Capital: Bishkek 589,000

Religion: Muslim 75%, Russian Orthodox 20%

Life Expectancy: 67 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$1,600**

- Switzerland of Central Asia (Tien Shan)
- fertile river valleys and animal rearing



Tajikistan

Area: 143,001 km²

Population: 7,000,000

Capital: Dushanbe 528,600

Religion: Sunni Muslim 85%, Shi'a Muslim 5%

Life Expectancy: 64 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$1,000**

- *the poorest* of all the "Stans"
- production of silk and carpets



Turkmenistan

Area: 488,000 km²

Population: 4,800,000

Capital: Ashgabat 462,000

Religion: Muslim 89%, Eastern Orthodox 9%

Life Expectancy: 61 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$5,800**

- *the driest* of all the "Stans" ⇔ Karakum desert (>50°C)
- huge reserves of natural gas



Uzbekistan

Area: 447,001 km²

Population: 26,400,000

Capital: Tashkent 2,107,000

Religion: Muslim 88% (mostly Sunnis), Eastern Orthodox 9%

Life Expectancy: 64 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$1,700**

- *the most densely populated* of all the "Stans"
- *world's largest producer of cotton*



Characteristics of Caucasian countries

= protected naturally by Caucasus mts. => growing of tea, vines, nuts, tobacco, cotton

= high mountain pastures: grazing of sheep and cattle

- largest lake: Sevan
- highest mountain: Mt. Shkhara (Georgia), Mt. Ararat

Armenia

Area: 29,800 km²

Population: 2,991,360

Capital: Yerevan 1,254,400

Religion: Armenian Apostolic 94%, other Christian 4%

Life Expectancy: 71 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$3,500**

- no access to the sea



Georgia

Area: 69,700 km²

Population: 4,693,892

Capital: Tbilisi 1,253,000

Religion: Georgian Orthodox 65%, Muslim 11%, Russian

Orthodox 10%, Armenian Apostolic 8%

Life Expectancy: 75 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$2,500**

- advantageous location => controlling the goods, oil and natural gas transportation



Azerbaijan

Area: 87,000 km²

Population: 7,800,000

Capital: Baku 1,800,000

Religion: Muslim 93.4%, Russian Orthodox 2.5%, Armenian Orthodox 2.3%

Life Expectancy: 63 yrs.

GDP per capita: **\$3,400**

- vast oil and natural gas reserves

