

Central Asia

Section 3



MAIN IDEAS

1. The countries of Central Asia are working to develop their economies and to improve political stability in the region.
2. The countries of Central Asia face issues and challenges related to the environment, the economy, and politics.

Key Terms and Places

Taliban radical Muslim group that arose in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s

Kabul capital of Afghanistan

dryland farming farming that relies on rainfall instead of irrigation

arable suitable for growing crops

Section Summary

CENTRAL ASIA TODAY

Central Asia is working to recover from a history of invasions and foreign rulers. The region is trying to build more stable governments and stronger economies.

During the 1980s, Afghanistan was at war with the Soviet Union. In the mid-1990s, the **Taliban** took power. This was a radical Muslim group. It ruled most of the country, including **Kabul**, the capital. It based its laws on strict Islamic teachings. Most people disagreed with the Taliban. A terrorist group based in Afghanistan attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. As a result, U.S. and British forces toppled the Taliban government. Now people in Afghanistan have a constitution and more freedom. But some groups still threaten violence.

Kazakhstan was the first area in Central Asia that Russia conquered. It still has many Russian influences. Its economy suffered when the Soviet Union fell. But it is growing again, because of oil reserves and a free market. Kazakhstan has a stable democratic government. People elect a president and parliament.

What group ruled Afghanistan from the mid-1990s to 2001?

Underline the sentence that explains why Kazakhstan's economy is growing.

Section 3, continued

In Kyrgyzstan, many people farm. They irrigate or use **dryland farming**. This does not bring much money, but tourism may help the economy. In recent years, there have been government protests.

Tajikistan now has a more stable government, after ending conflicts between different groups. Today, the economy relies on cotton farming. But only about 5 or 6 percent of the land is **arable**.

Turkmenistan's president is elected for life and has all the power. The economy is based on oil, gas, and cotton farming. The country is a desert, but it has the longest irrigation channel in the world.

Uzbekistan's president is also elected and has all the power. The economy is based on oil and cotton. The economy is stable, but not really growing.

Why should Tajikistan look for other ways to support its economy?

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Central Asia faces challenges in three areas today: environment, economy, and politics.

The shrinking Aral Sea is a serious problem for Central Asia's environment. The seafloor is dry. Dust, salt, and pesticides blow out of it. Its environment also has leftover radiation from Soviet nuclear testing. People's health is a concern. Crop chemicals are also a problem for the environment, harming farmlands.

Central Asia's economy relies on cotton. This has hurt many of their economies. Oil and gas reserves may bring in more money one day. Today there are still challenges, such as old equipment, that need to be overcome for Central Asia's economy to grow.

Central Asia does not have widespread political stability. In some countries, people do not agree on the best kind of government. Some turn to violence or terrorism as a result.

Underline the main challenges that Central Asia's environment faces.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Analyzing Information Imagine you work for an organization that is helping Central Asia clean up its environment. Create a poster that will convince people to donate money to this cause.