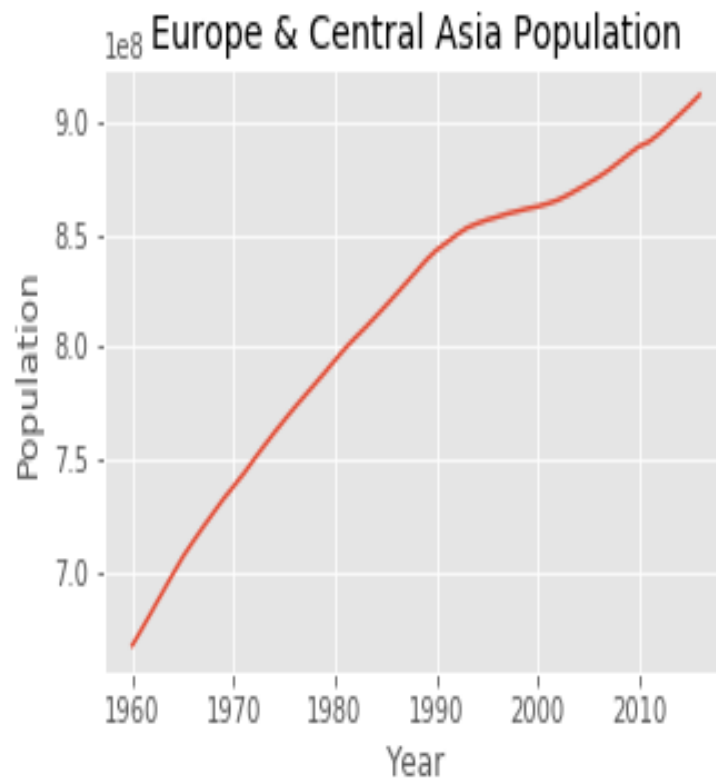


Europe & Central Asia



Central Asia stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west to China in the east and from Afghanistan in the south to Russia in the north. It is also colloquially referred to as "the stans" as the countries generally considered to be within the region all have names ending with the Persian suffix "-stan", meaning "land of". Central Asia is sometimes referred to as Turkistan. Central Asia has a population of about 70 million, consisting of five republics: Kazakhstan (pop. 18 million), Kyrgyzstan (6 million), Tajikistan (9 million), Turkmenistan (6 million), and Uzbekistan (31 million). Afghanistan (pop. 35 million), which is a part of South Asia, is also sometimes included in Central Asia. Central Asia has historically been closely tied to its nomadic peoples and the Silk Road. It has acted as a crossroads for the movement of people, goods, and ideas between Europe, Western Asia, South Asia, and East Asia. The Silk Road connected Muslim lands with the people of Europe, India, and China. This crossroads position has intensified the conflict between tribalism and traditionalism and modernization.