

# UZBEKISTAN

## Karakalpaks

Activity: 1991-2020

### General notes

NA

### Movement start and end dates

- Karakalpak nationalists advocating autonomy began to organize in 1989 (thus still under Soviet rule) and in 1990 the Karakalpak government declared the republic an independent state (see Karakalpaks under Russia/USSR). The Karakalpak movement remained active when Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991. We code the Karakalpak self-determination movement as of 1991, but note prior nonviolent activity.
- Karakalpak was given autonomous status in 1993. Since then, “[m]ore nationalistic Karakalpaks demanded that the republic be given full independence, but such demands have been restrained by the fact that Uzbeks control the flow of water to Karakalpakstan” (Minority Rights Group International). The Free Karakalpakstan National Revival Party and Alga Karakalpakstan continue to advocate separatism.
- In 2014, Karakalpak nationalism gained new momentum as some nationalists urged international organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to reconsider loans to Uzbekistan until suppression of the Karakalpak culture is ended.
- The leader of Alga Karakalpakstan, Aman Sagidullayev, had to flee Uzbekistan in 2011, first to Kyrgyzstan, then to Norway. Since then, the movement has coordinated protests and other activities from abroad. In 2018, supporters of the Karakalpak movement were arrested before one of the scheduled protest. In 2019, Alga Karakalpakstan announced that it had created a Karakalpak government in exile (Alga Karakalpakstan 2019; Centre-1 2018; Minahan 2002, 2016; Mamashuly 2017; MRGI; Olmos 2020; Saidazimova 2008; UZ News 2008). [start date: 1989; end date: ongoing]

### Dominant claim

- According to Minahan (2002: 924), there are two rival factions within the Karakalpak national movement, with one calling for a federal relationship with Uzbekistan and the other, more radical faction, advocating independence. We code the dominant claim as territorial autonomy within Uzbekistan until 2011 since Radio Free Europe (2008) notes that the Karakalpak independence movement lacks support inside Karakalpakstan. After 2011, Alga Karakalpakstan, which claims independence increasingly became the most important organization (Alga Karakalpakstan 2019). [1991-2011: autonomy claim; 2012-2020 independence claim]

### Independence claims

- According to the above narrative, the first demands for independence were made in 1993. Independence became the dominant claim after 2011. [start date: 1993; end date: ongoing]

## **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Karakalpaks consists of the autonomous republic Karakalpakstan within the Republic of Uzbekistan (Minahan 1996: 277). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- Karakalpakstan was granted ASSR status in 1936, an upgrade when compared to its prior Autonomous Oblast status (Hanks 2000). In 1988 the Supreme Soviet introduced multi-candidate, contested elections at all levels of the Union, which can be read as a measure of decentralization given that it reduced the degree to which local leaders are appointed by the center. [1988: autonomy concession]
- In 1989 the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR adopted a language law that made Uzbek the official government language (Gleason 1997: 583-597). Karakalpakstan was granted to legislate on its language itself, a change confirmed in the 1990 all-union language law, which granted ASSRs (like Karakalpakstan) the right to establish their own official language (Suny 1993: 144; Grenoble 2003: 205-207; Gorbachev 1999: 99). There was also an autonomy concession in 1989 due to a limited devolution of powers to the regions (Solnick 1996: 224; Gorbachev 1999: 99). [1989: cultural rights concession, autonomy concession]

## **Concessions and restrictions**

- Uzbekistan's 1992 constitution upheld the special status of Karakalpakstan. Chapter 17 of the Uzbek Constitution of 1992 deals with the legal status of Karakalpakstan and acknowledges it as a "sovereign republic" that is granted its own constitution and separate judiciary. It is possible that the 1992 constitution delimited the powers of the Karakalpak entity (see Melvin 2001: 184), but the evidence is too scarce. Hence, we do not code a restriction.
- In June 2022, Uzbekistan's parliament proposed constitutional reforms that would eliminate the special status of Karakalpakstan (Putz 2022). However, the constitutional changes were scrapped following mass protests in the autonomous region (Eurasianet 2022).

## **Regional autonomy**

- EPR codes the Karakalpak as regionally autonomous while Hanks (2000) attributes Karakalpakstan "a unique political status" that cannot be found in any region of the country.
- Minority Rights Group International suggests that the actual autonomy of Karakalpakstan is minimal because Karakalpakstan leaders are either "loyal friends or conspicuous supporters" of

Uzbek President Islam Karimov (also see Radio Free Europe 2008). However, even if stating that the Karakalpaks' autonomy is rather limited, Minority Rights Group International notes that the Karakalpaks, due to the autonomy arrangement, have much greater protection of their rights and in the use of their language compared to other groups.

- Karakalpakstan's regional autonomy remained intact as of 2020 (Eurasianet 2022; Kaisar 2022).
- Based on this, the Karakalpaks are coded as regionally autonomous throughout. [1991-2020: regional autonomy]

### **De facto independence**

NA

### **Major territorial changes**

- Uzbekistan became independent in 1991, implying a host change for the Karakalpaks. [1991: host change (new)]

### **EPR2SDM**

<i>Movement</i>	Karakalpaks
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Karakalpak
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	70401000

### **Power access**

- According to EPR, the Karakalpaks do not have representation in the central government. [1991-2020: powerless]

### **Group size**

- We follow EPR. [0.025]

### **Regional concentration**

- Most Karakalpaks are located in Karakalpakstan. According to Minahan (2002: 921), the Karakalpaks form a relative majority in the Karalpak republic, but with 34% they do not form an absolute majority. We found no evidence suggesting that they would form an absolute majority in a smaller, spatially contiguous territory within the Karakalpak republic. [not concentrated]

### **Kin**

- According to EPR there are no kin groups (scenario 1:1). Minahan (2002: 921) reports "small Karakalpak communities" in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. While these are too small to be coded, the Karakalpak language is closely related to Kazakh, and some Kazakhs even consider the Karakalpaks as Kazakhs (see Minahan 2002: 921-922). Other than Kazakhstan, there are numerically significant Kazakh populations in China, and Russia. [kin in neighboring country]

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## **Tajiks**

Activity: 1991-2002

### **General notes**

NA

### **Movement start and end dates**

- The Tajik movement in Uzbekistan emerged when Uzbekistan was still part of the Soviet Union (see Uzbek Tajiks under Russia/USSR). The first report of separatist activity by Tajiks in Uzbekistan we found is in 1988, when in demonstrations in Samarakand and Bukhara (two mainly Tajik cities in Uzbekistan) demands were raised that majority Tajik regions be united with Tajikistan (Melvin 2000: 50). In November 1989, a meeting was organized by citizens of the Tajik region of Samarkand, where claims were raised for the autonomy of Tajiks in Uzbekistan, for the removal of borders between Bukhara and Samarkand, and for the establishment of an autonomous republic by the name of Sogdiana. The movement remained active in independent Uzbekistan (Marshall & Gurr 2003). However, in 1992, the movement began to disintegrate when its leaders were arrested, and little has been heard from the movement ever since (MAR). We code the Tajiks in Uzbekistan as of 1991 but note prior nonviolent activity. As the last noted separatist activity was in 1992, the end of the movement is coded as 2002 following our ten-year rule. We apply the ten-year rule since the movement appears to have continued for some time after the 1992 crack-down, but with limited visibility. [start date: 1988; end date: 2002]

### **Dominant claim**

- It is not fully clear what the dominant claim of the Tajik movement in Uzbekistan was. According to MAR: "At a meeting organized on 15 September by citizens of Samarkand, claims were raised for the autonomy of Tajiks in Uzbekistan, for the removal of borders between Bukhara and Samarkand [two regions in Uzbekistan with significant numbers of Tajiks], and for the establishment of an autonomous republic by the name of Sogdiana." MAR thus sees the Tajik movement as autonomist.
- In contrast, Minorities International speaks of a secessionist movement.
- Melvin (2000: 50) concurs with Minorities International, arguing that the Samarakand movement demanded that territories with a Tajik majority should be reunited with Tajikistan.
- With the sources we consulted it was important to establish which claim was the dominant one, thus we follow the rule that the most radical claim is coded (i.e., union with Tajikistan).
- Note that all sources concur that the movement was suppressed in the early 1990s and that separatist claims gave way to demands in the minority rights sphere (language, education). However, since we do not have a clear end date, we follow the ten-years rule and code the same claim throughout. [1991-2002: irredentist claim]

### **Independence claims**

NA

### **Irredentist claims**

- See above. Prior to 1991, the movement was not irredentist as defined here since the claim was internal to the USSR. [start date: 1991; end date: 2002]

## **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Tajiks consists of Samarkand and Bukhara, where, apart from Surxondaryo, the most Persian-speakers, i.e., Tajiks, are concentrated (Rezvani 2013: 371). More specifically, the Tajik movement starting in 1989 called for the removal of borders between Bukhara and Samarkand, and for the establishment of an autonomous republic by the name of Sogdiana (MAR). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- During the 1920s, the Soviet territories in Central Asia were sub-divided into several nationally defined republics, as part of a policy of ‘national delimitation’. Uzbekistan was awarded with full Union Republic status in 1924 (Gleason 1997: 573). Tajikistan became an ASSR in 1924, under the administration of the Uzbek SSR. In 1929, Tajikistan was separated from Uzbekistan and was awarded full Union Republic status (Atkin 1997: 605). However, a significant number of Tajiks lived outside the territory of the Tajik (A)SSR, and thus remained under Uzbek administration when Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were separated. Members of an ethnic group with an ethnically defined homeland generally enjoyed relatively little self-determination rights if they lived outside their homeland because they already had titular status in a different entity (Fumagalli 2007: 571). Thus, Tajiks outside the Tajik SSR were not granted territorial autonomy and were not endowed with any form of special protection (e.g., no language protection). Indeed, during Soviet rule, there was a policy of Uzbekization. For Tajiks in Uzbekistan, the policy of national delimitation thus constitutes a decrease of their self-determination status. Moreover, according to Melvin (2000: 50), from the 1960s education in Tajik was scaled down, and in 1989 a language law was introduced that made Uzbek the official language (Gleason 1997: 583-597). The requirement to speak Uzbek can be seen as a decrease in the protection of the Tajik language, at least relative to the Uzbek language, which was elevated to a pre-eminent status in Uzbekistan. According to MAR, Tajik leaders pointed out that the new language law disregards the linguistic and cultural interests of the Tajiks (though it has to be noted that most Tajiks are bilingual, see Melvin 2000: 50). Thus, the 1989 language law leads us to code a prior restriction. [1989: cultural rights restriction]

## **Concessions and restrictions**

- The 1989 language law was part of an Uzbekization policy, which was strengthened after independence. Both Minority Rights Group International and MAR note that there is a broader policy of discrimination against the Tajiks. To reflect this, we code a restriction in 1992, when president Karimov closed Samarkand University, where teaching was in Tajik, as well as a number of other Tajik schools. [1992: cultural rights restriction]
- In 2000, there allegedly were forced resettlements of Tajiks living along the Tajikistan-Uzbekistan border (Minority Rights Group International). Relocation policies are not coded (see codebook).
- Note: the regions’ competencies were curtailed and power centralized during the 1990s (Melvin 2001: 184). However, it is not clear whether (yet unlikely that) the Tajiks constitute a majority in

any of Uzbekistan's regions. According to Minority Rights Group International, most Tajiks are concentrated in the regions around the cities of Bukhara, closer to the border with Turkmenistan, and Samarkand, adjacent to Tajikistan. But the ethnic make-up of the respective regions (Oblasts) remains unclear. Note that reliable ethno-demographics of Uzbekistan are difficult to get by, especially because many Tajiks indicate Uzbek identity to avoid discrimination. But it seems unlikely that the Tajiks would control any of the existing regions. Hence, we do not code changes in the status of any of the existing regions as concessions or restrictions.

### **Regional autonomy**

NA

### **De facto independence**

NA

### **Major territorial changes**

- Uzbekistan became independent in 1991, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]

### **EPR2SDM**

<i>Movement</i>	Tajiks
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Tajiks
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	70404000

### **Power access**

- According to EPR, the Tajiks did not have representation in the central government. [1991-2002: powerless]

### **Group size**

- We follow EPR. [0.05]

### **Regional concentration**

- According to Minority Rights Group International, most Tajiks are concentrated in the regions around the cities of Bukhara, closer to the border with Turkmenistan, and Samarkand, adjacent to Tajikistan. The ethnic make-up of the respective regions (Oblasts) remains unclear, however. Reliable ethno-demographics of Uzbekistan are difficult to get by because many Tajiks indicate Uzbek identity to avoid discrimination. According to official figures, the Tajiks make up 5% of the population, but unofficial estimates run much higher. According to official figures, Tajiks tend to live in Uzbekistan's eastern parts, in particular in Samarkhand and Kashkadarya oblast. Even if the actual number of Tajiks is higher, it appears unlikely that the threshold for territorial concentration is met, given the Uzbek Tajiks' scattered settlement pattern (see GeoEPR). This is not more than an educated guess, however, for the named reasons. [not concentrated]



## Kin

- There are Tajiks in a number of other countries, in particular Tajikistan (approx. 6 million) and Afghanistan (approx. 5 million) (EPR, MAR). [kin in neighboring country]

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