



Uzbekistan — Va-PoReg Country Report

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06/15/1865 Start Part of Other Country [of Russia]: Tashkent was conquered in 1865 and fell under the control of the Russian Empire.¹ With the annexation of Kokand in 1876, all of present-day Uzbekistan became part of the Russian Empire.² At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russian Empire exerted full dominion over Central Asia. The region of Uzbekistan was partitioned into three distinct political entities: the khanates of Bukhara and Khiva, and the Governorate General (Guberniya) of Turkestan, with the latter being directly governed by the Russian Ministry of War.³ In this period V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent.

11/07/1917 Continuation as Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]: On 11/07/1917, following the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russian Soviet Republic (RSFSR) was proclaimed, replacing the Russian Empire.⁴ Uzbekistan, then a territorial part of the empire, remained under the new communist regime structure. This event constitutes a change in reference country rather than an independent regime change within Uzbekistan. The overarching regime type shifted from an autocratic monarchy to a communist ideocracy. The Russian Revolution of 1917 created instability and conflict in Turkistan. In response, Muslims held a National Congress in Kokand and formed an autonomous government led by Mustafa Chokayev. However, in February 1918, Red Army forces from Tashkent dissolved the government, leading to the Basmachi (Qorbashi) Revolt.⁵ On 10/08/1920 the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic was proclaimed on, the territory of which was mostly in Uzbekistan with parts in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Also the Turkestan ASSR, an autonomous republic of the RSFSR included territories of present-day Uzbekistan (Fedorenko 2015: 3).⁶ From 1900 to 1920, PCLI (V-Dem) considers political liberties to be absent. There is no data from 1921 onwards. LIED does not include Uzbekistan in its data before 1989. In this timeframe, V-Dem's JCE is classified as absent, indicating no judicial oversight of the executive. Concurrently, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which can be cautiously interpreted as indicating an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

12/28/1922 Continuation Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]: With the establishment of the USSR, Uzbekistan became a part of the Soviet Union.⁷ On 10/27/1924 the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was created, which included present-day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Fedorenko 2015: 3).⁸ In 1929, the Tajik and Uzbek Soviet socialist republics underwent a division, becoming distinct entities.⁹ Uzbekistan was governed by the Uzbek branch of the Soviet Communist Party, with the First Secretary of the Central Committee as the head of the party and the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet as the head of state. Universal suffrage was introduced in 1938.¹⁰ The natural resources of Uzbekistan, such as gas reserves, oil, minerals, and gold, were important to its economy and to the Soviet economy.¹¹ Extensive Russification accompanied policies of forced cotton monoculture, turning the republic into a main supplier of the USSR's cotton. Soviet authorities exploited regional and clan divisions to prevent the re-emergence of any independent political or ethnic unity.¹² Uzbekistan was also affected by the Great Purge, from 08/19/1936 to 11/17/1939, which saw intellectuals, "nationalists", and Uzbeks in government positions expelled, deported, or executed.¹³ In an attempt to restrengthen their control over Uzbekistan, Moscow announced in 1986 that the entire party and government leadership had been involved in corruption. This was then followed by another purge. Sentiments of betrayal by the government caused by this affair lead to a resurgence of nationalism among Uzbeks.¹⁴

There is no data on political liberties from LIED and V-Dem's PCLI, except for 1989, when LIED considers them absent, and 1990, when PCLI classifies them as not really present.

06/20/1990 End Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Electoral Autocracy: The Uzbek SSR adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty within its borders and therefore was a sovereign part of the USSR with its own legislation from 1990-1991, under the control of Karimov, the communist leader during Soviet rule.¹⁵ Despite the 1992 constitution's acknowledgment of multiparty democracy, Uzbekistan functioned as a de facto one-party system.¹⁶ Opposition parties like the nationalist Unity (Birlik) movement and the more moderate Erk faced continuous persecution, eventually being banned outright. There is a notable absence of genuine organized political opposition, and none of the parties can be seen as actively opposing the president. In fact, all five registered parties express support for the president's policies and, as a whole, do not present alternative plans or actions distinct from his agenda (OSCE 2019). Simultaneously, the government promoted the creation of new parties aligned with its policies. It's worth noting that all pro-government parties and organizations mentioned were established with the president's explicit approval (Lansford 2021). Following President Karimov's demise, the parliament appointed Mirziyoyev as the acting president of Uzbekistan on 09/08/2016. In the – non-competitive – he secured a full five-year term as president representing the Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party (O'zLiDeP).¹⁷ Uzbekistan has seen some reforms under the leadership of Mirziyoyev. These reforms include easing some restrictions on media and political expression, improving relations with neighboring countries, and making the political environment slightly more open. Despite these changes, the political landscape remains heavily skewed in favor of the ruling party, with limited space for opposition. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election observation mission found the 2021 presidential elections to be neither fair nor free, noting a lack of meaningful engagement among candidates and an absence of transparent electoral procedures.¹⁸ In June 2022 a flurry of constitutional amendments were released to the public which would allow president Mirziyoyev to run an additional two terms, which would be extended to 7 years, and give him a way to circumvent the term-limit all together.¹⁹ Mass protests against these reforms were met with repression and violence, with nearly two civilians killed. The amendments were passed in a heavily marred referendum in 2023 with an alleged 90.2% positive vote. In May 2023 President Mirziyoyev called for snap elections under the new constitution, in which he was re-elected with reported 87% of the vote, in a non-competitive, free, or fair election.²⁰ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since the country's independence LIED indicates the elections as not competitive. Furthermore, between 1990 and 1994 the elections score a not really cleanliness. From 1995 to 2016 there was no cleanliness at all. Since 2017 there is a switch back to not really cleanliness outcomes (V-Dem's CEI). For the first four years of independence the elections were not really free and fair. From 1994 to 2008 there was no freedom and fairness at all. Since 2009 the overall conditions returned to not really free and fair (V-Dem EF&FI). According to FH's classification for the assessed regime period, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. In addition to that per LIED political liberties were constantly absent. V-Dem's PCLI indicates not really political liberties from 1991 to 1992 and since 2019. For the remaining years no political liberties were achieved. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

Electoral Autocracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Grotz 2001b)

- ¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tashkent>
- ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Uzbekistan
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Uzbekistan#Entering_the_twentieth_century
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic
- ⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Uzbekistan/Russian-and-Soviet-rule>
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkestan_Autonomous_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union#Treaty_on_the_Creation_of_the_USSR
- ⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbekistan#History>
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Uzbekistan#The_Stalinist_period
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbek_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Uzbekistan
- ¹³ <https://scispace.com/pdf/soviet-use-of-corruption-purges-as-a-control-mechanism-the-13wrcbtidb.pdf>
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Uzbekistan#The_Stalinist_period
- ¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbek_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ¹⁶ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Uzbekistan_2011?lang=en
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavkat_Mirziyoyev
- ¹⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/uzbekistan/freedom-world/2022>
- ¹⁹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/uzbekistan/freedom-world/2023>
- ²⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/uzbekistan/freedom-world/2024>

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- Grotz, Florian (2001b): Uzbekistan, in: Nohlen, Dieter, Grotz, Florian & Hartmann, Christof (Hrsg.), *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 483–500.
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