

## THE TERRITORY OF UZBEKISTAN AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

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**Abstract:** The Republic of Uzbekistan, a doubly landlocked nation in the heart of Central Asia, boasts a territory of significant geographical and geopolitical importance. Encompassing approximately 448,978 square kilometers, it is characterized by a remarkably diverse topography, which includes vast arid deserts, fertile river valleys, and formidable mountain ranges. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the territorial and administrative organization of Uzbekistan, delineating its twelve primary administrative divisions, one autonomous republic, and the capital city. It explores how the nation's physical geography—from the Kyzyl Kum Desert to the Fergana Valley—has historically influenced and continues to shape its economic activities, settlement patterns, and administrative governance. The intricate system of regions (viloyats), districts (tumans), and municipalities forms the backbone of the country's political and administrative machinery, ensuring the implementation of state policies and the delivery of public services across its varied landscape.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, Central Asia, administrative division, viloyat, topography, geography, Karakalpakstan, Tashkent, Samarkand, governance, Silk Road.

Uzbekistan occupies a pivotal position in Central Asia, sharing extensive borders with Kazakhstan to the north, Kyrgyzstan to the northeast, Tajikistan to the southeast, Afghanistan to the south, and Turkmenistan to the southwest. Its landlocked status is offset by its historical role as a central nexus for the legendary Silk Road, facilitating centuries of cultural, commercial, and intellectual exchange between the East and the West. This strategic location has rendered it a crucible of civilizations, influenced successively by Persian, Hellenistic, Islamic, and Russian empires, each leaving an indelible mark on its cultural and architectural heritage.

The country's territory is a study in contrasts. The western and central expanses are dominated by the Kyzyl Kum Desert, one of the largest deserts in the world, presenting a landscape of extreme aridity. In stark contrast, the eastern and southeastern frontiers are defined by the majestic spurs of the Tien Shan and Gissar-Alay mountain systems. Between these extremes lie the life-sustaining river basins of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, which feed the fertile oases of the Fergana Valley, Zeravshan Valley, and the plains surrounding Tashkent. These areas constitute the agricultural and demographic heartland of the nation.

**Topographical and Climatic Diversity:** The physiography of Uzbekistan is categorically divided into three major zones: the desert plains, the fertile valleys and oases, and the mountainous regions. The Kyzyl Kum Desert covers a substantial portion of the territory, characterized by sandy ridges, minimal precipitation, and specialized xerophytic ecosystems. The Ustyurt Plateau to the west further adds to the arid expanse.

Conversely, the Fergana Valley, nestled between mountain ranges and shared with neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, is an exceptionally fertile and densely populated basin. It serves as a primary hub for agriculture, particularly for the

cultivation of cotton, fruits, and grains. The climate is predominantly continental, featuring scorching, dry summers and cold, relatively moist winters. Temperature amplitudes are extreme, and precipitation is generally low, necessitating extensive and sophisticated irrigation systems, many of which date back to antiquity, to support the agrarian economy.

**The Administrative-Territorial Framework:** The governance of Uzbekistan is structured through a hierarchical administrative-territorial system, designed to manage the country's diverse regions effectively. According to the national constitution, Uzbekistan comprises 12 regions (viloyats), 1 autonomous republic (the Republic of Karakalpakstan), and 1 independent city (Tashkent).

- The Republic of Karakalpakstan: Located in the northwestern part of the country, this is the largest administrative division by area. It possesses a high degree of autonomy, with its own constitution and government, reflecting the unique cultural identity of the Karakalpak people. Its territory includes the desiccated basin of the Aral Sea, an area of significant ecological concern.
- The City of Tashkent: As the national capital, Tashkent functions as a separate administrative entity. It is the country's political, economic, scientific, and cultural metropolis, blending modern infrastructure with historic landmarks.
- The Regions (Viloyats): Each of the 12 regions is a distinct entity with its own administrative center and is headed by a governor (hokim) appointed by the President.

The regions are:

1. Andijan Region
2. Bukhara Region
3. Fergana Region
4. Jizzakh Region
5. Namangan Region
6. Navoiy Region
7. Kashkadarya Region
8. Samarkand Region

9. Syrdarya Region
10. Surkhandarya Region
11. Tashkent Region (surrounding, but distinct from, the capital city)
12. Khorezm Region

Each viloyat is further subdivided into districts (tumans), cities (shaharlar), and urban-type settlements (shaharchalar), which in turn comprise towns and villages (qishloqlar). This multi-tiered system ensures decentralized governance, allowing for tailored regional development strategies and more efficient local administration.

**Socio-Economic and Cultural Correlations:** The administrative divisions are not merely political constructs; they reflect profound socio-economic and cultural realities. For instance:

- Samarkand and Bukhara Regions are globally renowned for their unparalleled historical and architectural monuments, such as the Registan Square and the Po-i-Kalyan Complex, making them the epicenter of the nation's tourism industry.
- Tashkent City and Region form the industrial and logistical core of the country, hosting a significant portion of its manufacturing, higher education institutions, and financial services.
- The Fergana Valley regions (Andijan, Fergana, Namangan) are the agricultural powerhouses, renowned for their fertility and high population density.
- Navoiy Region is critical for its mining and natural resource extraction, particularly gold and natural gas.
- Karakalpakstan faces unique challenges related to the Aral Sea ecological crisis but also holds potential in energy and mineral sectors.

This regional specialization underscores the interdependence of Uzbekistan's administrative units and highlights the importance of a cohesive national policy that addresses both shared and unique regional challenges.

**In conclusion:** The territorial and administrative landscape of Uzbekistan is a complex and dynamic tapestry woven from threads of geography, history, and



demography. Its division into viloyats and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan represents a pragmatic approach to governing a nation of remarkable diversity. Understanding this structure is paramount for comprehending the country's internal dynamics, developmental trajectories, and its evolving role in the Central Asian region. As Uzbekistan continues to pursue economic reforms and strengthen its international partnerships, its well-defined administrative framework provides a solid foundation for sustainable growth and effective governance, ensuring that the legacy of this ancient land continues to thrive in the modern era.

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