



Uzbekistan: Negotiating Transition

Women's social adaptation in the post-Soviet period

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PART I: An Introduction to Uzbekistan

by Dr Angeline Low, UTS:CCS

PART II: Women, Civil Society and Islam in Uzbekistan

by Prof Gulkhumor Tuychieva, Tashkent Institute of Oriental Studies

PART III: The Social Innovators: Muslim Women Entrepreneurs In Uzbekistan

by Dr Angeline Low, UTS:CCS

PART I

An Introduction to Uzbekistan by Dr Angeline Low

The Soviet era (1924-1990) changed the status of women in Uzbekistan



- Emphasized the role of the Soviet state in *liberation of women* from the second-class citizens' position.
- The burning of the *paranji* Uzbeki women were made to unveil and their paranji burnt in a big bon fire. (IWD significant date for show of force)
- The *Hujun* – honour killings of women who unveiled.



The world is celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) in this month of March. Let's look at where IWD comes from:

IWD first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in Russia, North America and across Europe.

28th Feb 1909- Socialist Party of America first declared IWD

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**This 1932 Soviet poster dedicated to the 8th of March holiday that reflects the status of women at the time.**

The Russian text reads:

**"8th of March is the day of the rebellion of the working women against the kitchen slavery" and**

**"Down with the oppression and narrow-mindedness of the household work!".**

# Why study Uzbekistan?

And where on earth is

**UZBEKISTAN**

Photo Source: Prof Zulfiya Tukhtakhodjaeva

# The Caucasus and Central Asia



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•Source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uz.html>

# National Security

Like the rest of its neighbors and the western world at large, Uzbekistan's main concern is national security. Threats from two fronts:

## **1. Rise in Islamic fundamentalism**

2004 - bomb explosions in Tashkent and Bukhara - Islamic extremists (women suicide bombers involved)

## **2. Economic stagnation**

2005 – civil unrest in Andijon

# WE KNOW SO LITTLE

## Uzbekistan- A Country in Transition

- Uzbekistan: a double landlocked country, surrounded entirely by other landlocked countries.
- Independence from Soviet administration in 1991, joining the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) -- a grouping of former Soviet republics.
- Area: Slightly larger than State of California.
- Population: 27 million. Male 0.98: Female 1.00
- Natural Resources: natural gas, petroleum, coal, gold, uranium, silver, copper, lead and zinc, tungsten, molybdenum.
- Monoculture: world's second-largest cotton exporter and fourth largest producer of cotton.

•Source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uz.html>

## Uzbekistan- A Country in Transition

- GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$1,800 (2004 est.)
- Ethnic groups: Uzbek 80%, Russian 5.5%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%, Karakalpak 2.5%, Tatar 1.5%, other 2.5% (1996 est.).
- Religion: Muslim 88% (mostly Sunnis), Eastern Orthodox 9%, other 3%.
- Languages: Uzbek 74.3%, Russian 14.2%, Tajik 4.4%, other 7.1%.
- Literacy: 99.3%. Male 99.6%. Female 99.0%
- Median Age:22.36 years

Source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uz.html>

How far have the status of  
women in Uzbekistan advanced  
since the Soviet era?

# Uzbek Women in a Soviet School 1929



Figure 21. Uzbek women in a Soviet school, Tashkent, 1929. (Max Penson, courtesy Dina Khojaeva, collection Anahita Gallery, Santa Fe, N.M.)

# Uzbek Female Students 2009



# 1935

Uzbekistan's first female parachutist  
Basharat Mirbabeva



Figure 1. Basharat Mirbabeva, Uzbekistan's first female parachutist, Tashkent, 1935. (Courtesy ÖZRKFFHMDA.)

Source: Northrop, Douglas. (2004). *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (p.4)

# 1937

Australia's first female to jump from plane  
Jean Burns



Source: <http://www.nikylasmith.com/jeanburns>

# 1952-59

Uzbekistan's first female  
Deputy Prime Minister,  
Yadgar Siddikovna Nuridinova



Photographer unknown

# 2007-

Australia's first female  
Deputy Prime Minister,  
Julia Gillard



Source: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/member.asp?id=83L>

# PART I

## SUMMARY

The Soviet era (1924-1990) changed the status of women in Uzbekistan.

Women received education and were given the opportunity for equal participation in society and work.

Today many women in positions of leadership are products of the Soviet era

Angeline Low, 2009