

**Business and Politics in the Muslim World
Global Election Reports**

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This report is about the Uzbekistan Parliamentary elections that were held on 27 December 2009 and 10 January 2010 to elect the 150 members of the Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan, the lower house of the Oliy Majlis and the legislative elections in Comoros. First round voting took place on Dec. 6. Only two seats were won outright, with 22 constituencies requiring a run-off. Second round voting took place on Dec. 20. Preliminary results suggested that the representatives loyal to Ahmed Abdallah Sambi will control two-thirds of the seats in parliament.

Uzbekistan

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Republic of Uzbekistan

Capital	Tashkent
(and largest city)	41°16'N 69°13'E
Official languages	Uzbek
Government	Presidential republic
- President	Islam Karimov
- Prime Minister	Shavkat Mirziyoyev
Independence	from the Soviet Union
- Formation	1747
- Uzbek SSR	27 October 1924
- Declared	1 September 1991
- Recognized	8 December 1991
- Completed	25 December 1991
Area	
- Total	447,400 km ² 172,742 sq mi
Population	
- 2009 estimate	27,606,007
- Density	61.4/km ² 159.1/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$71.618 billion
- Per capita	\$2,634

1. Introduction

Uzbekistan, officially the **Republic of Uzbekistan** is a doubly landlocked country in Central Asia, formerly part of the Soviet Union. It shares borders with Kazakhstan to the west and to the north, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east, and Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to the south.

Once part of the Persian Samanid and later Timurid empires, the region was conquered in the early 16th century by Uzbek nomads, who spoke an Eastern Turkic language. Most of Uzbekistan's population today belong to the Uzbek ethnic group and speak the Uzbek language, one of the family of Turkic languages.

Uzbekistan was incorporated into the Russian Empire in the 19th century and in 1924 became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union, known as the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (Uzbek SSR). It has been an independent republic since December 1991.

Uzbekistan's economy relies mainly on commodity production, including cotton, gold, uranium, potassium, and natural gas. Despite the declared objective of transition to a market economy, Uzbekistan continues to maintain rigid economic controls, which often repel foreign investors. The policy of gradual, strictly controlled transition has nevertheless produced beneficial results in the form of economic recovery after 1995. Uzbekistan's domestic policies on human rights and individual freedoms are often criticised by international organizations. In Uzbekistan about 45% of the population live on less than US\$1.25 per day.

Geography

Uzbekistan has an area of 447,400 square kilometers (172,700 sq mi). It is the 56th largest country in the world by area and the 42nd by population. Among the CIS countries, it is the 5th largest by area and the 3rd largest by population.

Uzbekistan stretches 1,425 kilometers (885 mi) from west to east and 930 kilometers (578 mi) from north to south. Bordering Kazakhstan and the Aral Sea to the north and

northwest, Turkmenistan to the southwest, Tajikistan to the southeast, and Kyrgyzstan to the northeast, Uzbekistan is not only one of the larger Central Asian states but also the only Central Asian state to border all the other four. Uzbekistan also shares a short border (less than 150 km or 90 mi) with Afghanistan to the south.

Uzbekistan is a dry, landlocked country; it is one of two doubly landlocked countries in the world, i.e., a country completely surrounded by landlocked countries – the other being Liechtenstein. Less than 10% of its territory is intensively cultivated irrigated land in river valleys and oases. The rest is vast desert (Kyzyl Kum) and mountains.

The highest point in Uzbekistan is the Khazret Sultan, located at 4,643 meters (15,233 ft) above sea level, located in the southern part of the Gissar Range in Surkhandarya Province, on the border with Tajikistan, just north-west of Dushanbe (formerly called *Peak of the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party*).

The climate in the Republic of Uzbekistan is continental, with little precipitation expected annually (100–200 millimeters, or 3.9–7.9 inches). The average summer high temperature tends to be 40 °C (104 °F), while the average winter low temperature is around –23 °C (–9 °F). Major cities include Bukhara, Samarqand, Namangan and the capital Tashkent.

History

The first people known to have occupied Central Asia were Iranian nomads who arrived from the northern grasslands of what is now Uzbekistan sometime in the first millennium BC. These nomads, who spoke Iranian dialects, settled in Central Asia and began to build an extensive irrigation system along the rivers of the region. At this time, cities such as Bukhoro (Bukhara) and Samarqand (Samarkand) began to appear as centers of government and culture. By the 5th century BC, the Bactrian, Soghdian, and Tokharian states dominated the region. As China began to develop its silk trade with the West, Iranian cities took advantage of this commerce by becoming centers of trade. Using an extensive network of cities and settlements in the province of Mawarannahr (a name given the region after the Arab conquest) in Uzbekistan and farther east in what is today

China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the Soghdian intermediaries became the wealthiest of these Iranian merchants. Because of this trade on what became known as the Silk Route, Bukhoro and Samarqand eventually became extremely wealthy cities, and at times Mawarannahr was one of the most influential and powerful Persian provinces of antiquity.

Alexander the Great conquered Sogdiana and Bactria in 327 BC, marrying Roxana, daughter of a local Bactrian chieftain. The conquest was supposedly of little help to Alexander as popular resistance was fierce, causing Alexander's army to be bogged down in the region that became the northern part of Hellenistic Greco-Bactrian Kingdom. For many centuries the region of Uzbekistan was ruled by Iranian empires, including the Parthian and Sassanid Empires.

The Mongol conquest under Genghis Khan during the 13th century, would bring about a dramatic change to the region. The brutal conquest and widespread genocide characteristic of the Mongols almost entirely exterminated the indigenous Indo-Iranian (Scythian) people of the region. Their culture and heritage being superseded by that of the Mongolian-Turkic peoples who settled the region thereafter.

Following the death of Genghis Khan in 1227, his empire was divided among his four sons and his family members. Despite the potential for serious fragmentation, Mongol law of the Mongol Empire maintained orderly succession for several more generations, and control of most of Mawarannahr stayed in the hands of direct descendants of Chaghatai, the second son of Chinggis. Orderly succession, prosperity, and internal peace prevailed in the Chaghatai lands, and the Mongol Empire as a whole remained strong and united.

In the early fourteenth century, however, as the empire began to break up into its constituent parts, the Chaghatai territory also was disrupted as the princes of various tribal groups competed for influence. One tribal chieftain, Timur (Tamerlane), emerged from these struggles in the 1380s as the dominant force in Mawarannahr. Although he was not a descendant of Chinggis, Timur became the de facto ruler of Mawarannahr and

proceeded to conquer all of western Central Asia, Iran, Asia Minor, and the southern steppe region north of the Aral Sea. He also invaded Russia before dying during an invasion of China in 1405.

Timur initiated the last flowering of Mawarannahr by gathering in his capital, Samarqand, numerous artisans and scholars from the lands he had conquered. By supporting such people, Timur imbued his empire with a very rich culture. During Timur's reign and the reigns of his immediate descendants, a wide range of religious and palatial construction projects were undertaken in Samarqand and other population centres. Timur also patronized scientists and artists; his grandson Ulugh Beg was one of the world's first great astronomers. It was during the Timurid dynasty that Turkish, in the form of the Chaghatai dialect, became a literary language in its own right in Mawarannahr—although the Timurids also patronized writing in Persian. Until then only Persian had been used in the region. The greatest Chaghataid writer, Ali Shir Nava'i, was active in the city of Herat, now in northwestern Afghanistan, in the second half of the fifteenth century.

The Timurid state quickly broke into two halves after the death of Timur. The chronic internal fighting of the Timurids attracted the attention of the Uzbek nomadic tribes living to the north of the Aral Sea. In 1501 the Uzbeks began a wholesale invasion of Mawarannahr.

In the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire began to expand and spread into Central Asia. The "Great Game" period is generally regarded as running from approximately 1813 to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, a second, less intensive phase followed. At the start of the nineteenth century, there were some 2,000 miles (3,200 km) separating British India and the outlying regions of Tsarist Russia. Much of the land in between was unmapped.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Central Asia was firmly in the hands of Russia, and despite some early resistance to Bolsheviks, Uzbekistan and the rest of Central Asia became a part of the Soviet Union. On 27 October 1924 the Uzbek Soviet

Socialist Republic was created. On 31 August 1991, Uzbekistan declared independence, marking 1 September as a national holiday.

The country is now the world's second-largest exporter of cotton, and it is developing its mineral and petroleum reserves.

Provinces and districts

Uzbekistan is divided into twelve provinces (*viloyatlar*, singular *viloyat*, compound noun *viloyati* e.g., Toshkent *viloyati*, Samarqand *viloyati*, etc.), one autonomous republic (*respublika*, compound noun *respublikasi* e.g. Qaraqalpaqstan Avtonom *Respublikasi*, Karakalpakistan *Autonomous Republic*, etc.), and one independent city (*shahar*, compound noun *shahri*, e.g., Toshkent *shahri*). Names are given below in the Uzbek language, although numerous variations of the transliterations of each name exist.

Division	Capital City	Area (km ²)	Population (2008)	Key
Buxoro Viloyati	Buxoro (Bukhara)	39,400	1,576,800	3
Jizzax Viloyati	Jizzax	20,500	1,090,900	5
Navoiy Viloyati	Navoiy	110,800	834,100	7
Qashqadaryo Viloyati	Qarshi	28,400	2,537,600	8
Samarqand Viloyati	Samarqand	16,400	3,032,000	9
Sirdaryo Viloyati	Guliston	5,100	698,100	10
Surxondaryo Viloyati	Termez	20,800	2,012,600	11
Toshkent Viloyati	Toshkent (Tashkent)	15,300	2,537,500	12
Toshkent Shahri	Toshkent (Tashkent)	???	2,192,700	1
Fergana Valley Region				
Farg'ona Viloyati	Farg'ona (Fergana)	6,800	2,997,400	4
Andijon Viloyati	Andijon	4,200	2,477,900	2

Namangan Viloyati	Namangan	7,900	2,196,200	6
Karakalpakstan Region				
Xorazm Viloyati	Urganch	6,300	1,517,600	13
Qaraqalpaqstan Respublikasi	Nukus	160,000	1,612,300	14

The statistics for Toshkent Viloyati also include the statistics for Toshkent Shahri. The provinces are further divided into districts (*tuman*).

2. Politics

Constitutionally, the Government of Uzbekistan provides for democracy. The first elections of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) were held under a resolution adopted by the 16th Supreme Soviet in 1994. In that year, the Supreme Soviet was replaced by the Oliy Majlis. Since then Uzbekistan has been progressing well toward an electoral system, holding presidential and parliamentary elections on regular basis under a multi-party system. The third elections for the bicameral 150-member Oliy Majlis for five-year term, comprising of the Legislative Chamber and the 100-member Senate, were held on 27 December 2009, after the second elections that were held in December 2004-2005. The Oliy Majlis was unicameral up to 2004. Its strength increased from 69 deputies (members) in 1994 to 120 in 2004-5 and presently to 150.

The executive holds a great deal of power, and the legislature and judiciary have little power to shape laws. Under terms of a December 27, 1995 referendum, Islam Karimov's first term was extended. Another national referendum was held 27 January 2002 to extend the Constitutional Presidential term from 5 years to 7 years.

The referendum passed, and Karimov's term was extended by act of the parliament to December 2007. Most international observers refused to participate in the process and did not recognize the results, dismissing them as not meeting basic standards. The 2002 referendum also included a plan to create a bicameral parliament, consisting of a lower house (the *Oliy Majlis*) and an upper house (Senate). Members of the lower house are to be "full time" legislators. Elections for the new bicameral parliament took place on 26

December, but no truly independent opposition candidates or parties were able to take part.

Several political parties have been formed with government approval. Similarly, although multiple media outlets (radio, TV, newspaper) have been established, these either remain under government control or rarely broach political topics. Independent political parties were allowed to organise, recruit members and hold conventions and press conferences, but they have been denied registration under restrictive registration procedures.

The politics of Uzbekistan take place in a framework of a presidential republic, whereby the President of Uzbekistan is both head of state and head of government. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of parliament, Legislative Chamber and Senate. Positions in Uzbekistan's government are largely dependent on clan membership and politics, rather than on party membership.

The movement toward economic reform in Uzbekistan has not been matched by movement toward political reform. The government of Uzbekistan has instead tightened its grip since independence (September 1, 1991), cracking down increasingly on opposition groups. Although the names have changed, the institutions of government remain similar to those that existed before the breakup of the Soviet Union. The government has justified its restraint of public assembly, opposition parties, and the media by emphasizing the need for stability and a gradual approach to change during the transitional period, citing the conflict and chaos in the other former republics (most convincingly, neighboring Tajikistan). This approach has found credence among a large share of Uzbekistan's population, although such a position may not be sustainable in the long run.

Post-independence changes

Despite the trappings of institutional change, the first years of independence saw more resistance than acceptance of the institutional changes required for democratic reform to take hold. Whatever initial movement toward democracy existed in Uzbekistan in the

early days of independence seems to have been overcome by the inertia of the remaining Soviet-style strong centralized leadership.

In the Soviet era, Uzbekistan organized its government and its local communist party in conformity with the structure prescribed for all the republics. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) occupied the central position in ruling the country. The party provided both the guidance and the personnel for the government structure. The system was strictly bureaucratic: every level of government and every governmental body found its mirror image in the party. The instrument used by the CPSU to control the bureaucracy was the system of nomenclature, a list of sensitive jobs in the government and other important organizations that could be filled only with party approval. The nomenclature defined the Soviet political leadership, and the people on the list invariably were members of the CPSU.

Following the failure of the coup against the government of Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow in August 1991, Uzbekistan's Supreme Soviet declared the independence of the republic, henceforth to be known as the Republic of Uzbekistan. At the same time, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan voted to cut its ties with the CPSU; three months later, it changed its name to the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), but the party leadership, under President Islam Karimov, remained in place. Independence brought a series of institutional changes, but the substance of governance in Uzbekistan changed much less dramatically.

On December 21, 1991, together with the leaders of ten other Soviet republics, Karimov agreed to dissolve the Soviet Union and form the Commonwealth of Independent States, of which Uzbekistan became a charter member according to the Alma-Ata Declaration. Shortly thereafter, Karimov was elected president of independent Uzbekistan in the new country's first contested election. Karimov drew 86% of the vote against opposition candidate Muhammad Salih (also spelled "Salih" or "Salikh"), whose showing experts praised in view of charges that the election had been rigged. The major opposition party, Birlik, had been refused registration as an official party in time for the election.

In 1992 the PDPU retained the dominant position in the executive and legislative branches of government that the Communist Party of Uzbekistan had enjoyed. All true opposition groups were repressed and physically discouraged. Birlik, the original

opposition party formed by intellectuals in 1989, was banned for allegedly subversive activities, establishing the Karimov regime's dominant rationalization for increased authoritarianism: Islamic fundamentalism threatened to overthrow the secular state and establish an Islamic regime similar to that in Iran. The constitution ratified in December 1992 reaffirmed that Uzbekistan is a secular state. Although the constitution prescribed a new form of legislature, the PDPU-dominated Supreme Soviet remained in office for nearly two years until the first parliamentary election, which took place in December 1994 and January 1995.

In 1993 Karimov's concern about the spread of Islamic fundamentalism spurred Uzbekistan's participation in the multinational CIS peacekeeping force sent to quell the civil war in nearby Tajikistan - a force that remained in place three years later because of continuing hostilities. Meanwhile, in 1993 and 1994 continued repression by the Karimov regime brought strong criticism from international human rights organizations. In March 1995, Karimov took another step in the same direction by securing a 99% majority in a referendum on extending his term as president from the prescribed next election in 1997 to 2000. In early 1995, Karimov announced a new policy of toleration for opposition parties and coalitions, apparently in response to the need to improve Uzbekistan's international commercial position. A few new parties were registered in 1995, although the degree of their opposition to the government was doubtful, and some imprisonments of opposition political figures continued.

The parliamentary election, the first held under the new constitution's guarantee of universal suffrage to all citizens eighteen years of age or older, excluded all parties except the PDPU and the provincial-government Progress of the Fatherland Party, despite earlier promises that all parties would be free to participate. The new, 250-seat parliament, called the Oly Majlis or Supreme Soviet, included only sixty-nine candidates running for the PDPU, but an estimated 120 more deputies were PDPU members technically nominated to represent local councils rather than the PDPU. The result was that Karimov's solid majority continued after the new parliament went into office.

1992 constitution

From the beginning of his presidency, Karimov remained committed in words to instituting democratic reforms. A new constitution was adopted by the legislature in December 1992. Officially it creates a separation of powers among a strong presidency, the Oly Majlis, and a judiciary. In practice, however, these changes have been largely cosmetic. Although the language of the new constitution includes many democratic features, it can be superseded by executive decrees and legislation, and often constitutional law simply is ignored.

The president, who is directly elected to a five-year term that can be repeated once, is the head of state and is granted supreme executive power by the constitution. As commander in chief of the armed forces, the president also may declare a state of emergency or of war. The president is empowered to appoint the prime minister and full cabinet of ministers and the judges of the three national courts, subject to the approval of the Oly Majlis, and to appoint all members of lower courts. The president also has the power to dissolve the parliament, in effect negating the Oly Majlis's veto power over presidential nominations in a power struggle situation.

Deputies to the unicameral Oly Majlis, the highest legislative body, are elected to five-year terms. The body may be dismissed by the president with the concurrence of the Constitutional Court; because that court is subject to presidential appointment, the dismissal clause weights the balance of power heavily toward the executive branch. The Oly Majlis enacts legislation, which may be initiated by the president, within the parliament, by the high courts, by the procurator general (highest law enforcement official in the country), or by the government of the Autonomous Province of Karakalpakstan. Besides legislation, international treaties, presidential decrees, and states of emergency also must be ratified by the Oly Majlis.

The national judiciary includes the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, and the High Economic Court. Lower court systems exist at the regional, district, and town levels. Judges at all levels are appointed by the president and approved by the Oly Majlis. Nominally independent of the other branches of government, the courts remain under complete control of the executive branch. As in the system of the Soviet era, the procurator general and his regional and local equivalents are the state's chief prosecuting

officials and the chief investigators of criminal cases, a configuration that limits the pretrial rights of defendants.

Clan politics

Many upper-level positions in Uzbekistan's government are closely related to clan politics. The two dominant clans are the Samarkand clan and the Tashkent clan, which undergo fluctuating levels of favor within Karimov's administration. Traditionally, the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) has been staffed by members of the Samarkand clan, while the National Security Service (NSS) has been dominated by the Tashkent clan. Following the events at Andijan in 2005, the MOI has seen some of its influence and power shifted to the NSS, leading some outside observers to speculate that Karimov may be currently favoring the Tashkent clan.

Opposition parties and the media

Also passed in the 2002 referendum was a plan to create a bicameral parliament. Several political parties have been formed with government approval but have yet to show interest in advocating alternatives to government policy. Similarly, although multiple media outlets (radio, TV, newspapers) have been established, these either remain under government control, or rarely broach political topics. Independent political parties have been denied registration under restrictive registration procedures.

Despite extensive constitutional protections, the Karimov government has actively suppressed the activities rights of political movements, continues to ban unsanctioned public meetings and demonstrations, and continues to suppress opposition figures. The repression reduces constructive opposition even when institutional changes have been made. In the mid-1990s, legislation established significant rights for independent trade unions, separate from the government, and enhanced individual rights; but enforcement is uneven, and the role of the state security services remains central.

With the exception of sporadic liberalization, all opposition movements and independent media are essentially banned in Uzbekistan. The early 1990s were characterized by arrests and beatings of opposition figures on fabricated charges. For example, one prominent Uzbek, Ibrahim Bureyev, was arrested in 1994 after announcing plans to form

a new opposition party. After reportedly being freed just before the March referendum, Bureyev shortly thereafter was arrested again on a charge of possessing illegal firearms and drugs. In April 1995, fewer than two weeks after the referendum extending President Karimov's term, six dissidents were sentenced to prison for distributing the party newspaper of Erk/Liberty and inciting the overthrow of Karimov. Members of opposition groups have been harassed by Uzbekistan's secret police as far away as Moscow.

Executive branch

Main office holders			
Office	Name	Party	Since
President	Islam Karimov		14 March 1990
Prime Minister	Shavkat Mirziyoyev		12 December 2003

The president is elected by popular vote for a seven-year term in elections that cannot be described as free. Freedom House rates Uzbekistan as absolutely unfree in both political institutions and civil society.

The prime minister and deputy ministers are appointed by the president. In effect, the executive branch holds almost all power. The judiciary branch lacks independence and the legislature, which meets only a few days each year, has little power to shape laws.

The president selects and replaces provincial governors. Under terms of a December 1995 referendum, Islam Karimov's first term was extended. Another national referendum was held January 27, 2002 to yet again extend Karimov's term. The referendum passed and Karimov's term was extended by act of the parliament to December 2007. Most international observers refused to participate in the process and did not recognize the results, dismissing them as not meeting basic standards.

Legislative branch

The Supreme Assembly or National Assembly (Oliy Majlis) has 150 members in the Legislative Chamber, elected for a five-year terms and 100 members in the Senate; 84

members elected at the sessions of district, regional and city deputies, and 16 members appointed by the president.

3. Political Parties and Elections

POLITICAL CONTEXT

There are currently four registered political parties represented in the *Oliy Majlis*: the Liberal Democratic Party (41 seats), the People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (28), the National Revival Party “*Milly Tiklanish*”³ (29) and the Social Democratic Party “*Adolat*” (10). There are also 12 non-party members of parliament (MPs), who were nominated by initiative groups in the 2004 parliamentary elections.

During meetings, they defined their role as constructively supporting the authorities in their efforts to ensure the development of Uzbekistan. All voted in favour of the 2008 electoral reforms, and none of them expressed any election related concerns. Further, the authorities have systematically denied registration of other political movements, such as *Birlik* (Unity) and *Erk* (Freedom). As a result, voters do not enjoy a genuine choice of parliamentary candidates representing views significantly different to those of the government. A genuinely pluralistic field of candidates constitutes a fundamental element of any democratic elections.

The Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan was officially founded on 2 August 2008 and registered by the Ministry of Justice on 20 September of the same year. The movement is made up of non-governmental organizations and other activists, mainly from the ecology or health sector, and has no permanent membership. This movement will be given 15 reserved seats in the new parliament; this measure was explained by the importance of environmental matters in the current stage of development in Uzbekistan. All political parties supported this initiative.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The December 2003 Law on the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan (parliamentary elections law), as amended in December 2008, is the main piece of legislation regulating the conduct of parliamentary elections. The Constitution, together

with *inter alia* the Law on Political Parties, the Law on Financing of Political Parties, the Law on Guaranteeing Citizens' Suffrage and the Law on the Central Election Commission constitute other important elements of the legal framework for parliamentary elections.

The December 2008 amendments to the parliamentary elections law *inter alia* increased the number of seats in the lower chamber of parliament from 120 to 150, including 15 seats reserved for the newly-established Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan. The additional 15 members of parliament will be elected by a congress of the Ecological Movement to be held on 27 December, i.e. the day of the parliamentary elections. The delegates to the congress have been selected at regional conferences. The 15 members are to represent 14 regions of Uzbekistan and the Central Apparatus of the Movement. The remaining 135 seats are contested in single-mandate constituencies on the basis of a majoritarian system. There is a 30 per cent turnout requirement, based on the number of voters in the voter lists, for the first round of election to be valid. Any second round must be held two weeks after the first round, without a minimum turnout requirement.

Additionally, the possibility for voters to form initiative groups to nominate independent candidates for parliamentary elections was abolished by the December 2008 amendments. This change is in contravention of paragraph 7.5 of the Copenhagen Documents which provides citizens with the right to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination.

Among the novelties presented by the CEC as improvements are the enhanced possibilities of representatives of political parties contesting the elections to follow the vote count, as well as at their participation in the verification of signatures in support of candidates. The six-month time period for new parties to be entitled to contest elections after their registration was limited to 4 months; this change appears to be rather symbolic given the difficulties with registering new political organizations in Uzbekistan.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The upcoming parliamentary elections will be administered by three levels of election administration: the Central Election Commission (CEC), 135 District Election Commissions (DECs), and some 8,500 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).

The CEC is a permanent body of 15 members, elected by parliament. Their chairperson is elected from among the CEC members, upon the suggestion of the president. The CEC's competencies are delineated in article 11 of the parliamentary elections law. In addition to ensuring compliance with the law, the CEC also establishes electoral districts, forms DECs, registers candidates, channels campaign funding and approves ballot format.

DECs, one in each single-mandate constituency, were created on 16 October. Each has a chairperson, a deputy, a secretary, and no fewer than six other commission members. DEC members are nominated by regional authorities, with the CEC approving the nominations.

As noted in article 13 of the parliamentary elections law, DECs are responsible for establishing electoral precincts, facilitating the organization of candidates' campaign meetings, registering candidate proxies, and providing for the printing of ballots and their distribution to PECs.

PECs are to be established no later than 40 days before election day. They should consist of 5-19 members, including a chairperson, a deputy and a secretary. DECs form PECs upon nominations from local authorities. Some 8,500 PECs will be established, including some 50 at diplomatic missions for out-of-country voting. The competencies of PECs are included in article 15 of the parliamentary elections law. They include the compilation of voter lists, notification of voters of the date of elections and the preparation of polling stations, including the provision of ballot boxes and other election materials.

Election commissioners at all levels are prohibited from being members of political parties.

CANDIDATE NOMINATION AND VOTER REGISTRATION

Registered political parties can contest parliamentary elections upon the submission of 40,000 support signatures. The CEC, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior co-coordinated the verification of signatures and invited political parties to take part in the process. One party confirmed that it had taken part in the verification process and that

the outcome was satisfactory. By 18 October, all four parliamentary parties had successfully registered. They are now entitled to nominate candidates up to 45 days before the elections. Each party may nominate only one candidate in each of the 135 constituencies.

A gender requirement is also in place; no less than 30 per cent of candidates on any party's list must be female.

PECs are responsible for the compilation of precinct voter lists and for providing access to voters to verify and correct their data. Local authorities (called *Mahalla*) assist PECs in the collection of voter registration data. If a correction requested by a voter is rejected by a PEC, the voter can appeal to court. There is no national voter list database in Uzbekistan.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND ITS FINANCING

The conduct of the election campaign is strictly regulated by the CEC in order to ensure equality between all four registered political parties to present their platforms to the electorate. On 17 September, the CEC announced that the election campaign would begin on 22 September. Once parties and their candidates have been registered by the CEC, they may start organizing meetings with voters. According to article 27 of the parliamentary elections law, such meetings are organized by parties, but the venue and time must generally be agreed with PECs. Each candidate may register up to ten proxies to act on their behalf.

Annual subsidies for political parties are provided by the state, based on the number of parliamentary seats held. State financing for the campaign is also allocated to parties by the CEC, in line with their number of candidates. Parties can also raise campaign funds from party dues or from economic concerns owned by them. Donations to political parties are permitted outside the campaign period, with limits linked to the minimum wage. Any contributions made during an election campaign must be channeled through the CEC, which distributes it equally to all parties in the election. Parties must submit annual financial returns to the Finance Ministry, Justice Ministry and tax office. These returns must specify all party income, resources, and campaign expenditures.

THE MEDIA

In June 2008, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media expressed concern about cases of intimidation and harassment of non-governmental journalists. He called for the immediate freeing of all imprisoned for expressing critical views and the return of foreign media outlets to Uzbekistan as important first steps toward compliance with OSCE commitments. He also urged the authorities to liberalize media regulations and to allow for pluralism and political debate in the press. He called for privatization in the print media, the creation of a public-service broadcaster, easy registration and licensing of media outlets, and decriminalization of libel. Notwithstanding the large number of media outlets registered in Uzbekistan, there is a general lack of genuine pluralism of information and opinion. Private media are not considered truly independent and face difficulties operating due to stringent accreditation requirements. International news bureaus such as BBC, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Deutsche Welle have been forced to cease operations in Uzbekistan following the authorities' refusal to accredit them. International human rights and media monitoring organizations have also confirmed that independent media remains tightly controlled. The state National Television and Radio Company (NTRC) remains the main provider of TV and radio broadcasts, thus constituting the most important source of information regarding the election campaign.

According to article 27 of the parliamentary elections law, candidates for parliament are to enjoy equal rights in accessing the media. The law does not distinguish between state and private media. In practice, candidates' access to equal airtime is mainly provided by NTRC. Its coverage of the election campaign is regulated by an agreement with the CEC. This agreement covers a) newscasts, b) free airtime for candidates, c) campaign advertisements, and d) election debates between candidates. Although the Ecological Movement is not intending to field candidates in these elections, the NTRC stated that it may inform the electorate about the movement, on the basis of the CEC agreement.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

All election commission decisions can be appealed to the next higher level or to a court. Though the choice of institution is at the discretion of the plaintiff, once a petition has

been sent to a court, further appeals stay with the judiciary and cannot be sent back to an election commission. District courts are the first level of the judiciary, followed by regional courts, and the Supreme Court. Decisions of the CEC can also be appealed to the Supreme Court.

ELECTION OBSERVATION

According to article 6 of the parliamentary elections law, international observers, mass media and political parties nominating candidates have the right to be present at all events related to the preparation and conduct of elections. They are also to be admitted to polling stations on election day and during the vote count. Further, they enjoy the right to request and receive copies of election results, certified by the respective commission. In contravention of paragraph 8 of the OSCE 1990 Copenhagen Document, the election legislation does not foresee domestic non-partisan election observation. A total of 270 international election observers are expected for the elections, including delegations from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Co-operation Organization and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Summary of the 9 January 2000 Uzbekistan presidential election results		
Candidates - Parties	Votes	%
Islom Abdugʻaniyevich Karimov - Self-Sacrifice National Democratic Party		91.9
Abdulhafiz Jalolov - Uzbekistan People's Democratic Party		4.1
Total (turnout %)		
Source: NRC Handelsblad		

Summary of the 26 December 2004 and 9 January 2005 Supreme Assembly of Uzbekistan election results

Party	Votes	%	Seats
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Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party (O'zbekiston Liberal Demokratik Partiyasi)		34.	41
Uzbekistan People's Democratic Party (O'zbekistan Xalq Demokratik Partiyasi)		23.4	28
Self-Sacrifice National Democratic Party (Fidokorlar Milliy Demokratik Partiyasi)		.	18
Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party (O'zbekistan Milliy Tiklanish Demokratik Partiyasi)		.	11
Justice Social Democratic Party (Adolat Sotsial Demokratik Partiyasi)		.	10
Non-partisans			14
Total			120
Source: Exxun.com			

Administrative divisions

Uzbekistan is divided in 12 viloyatlar (singular - viloyat), 1 autonomous republic* (respublikasi), and 1 city** (shahri):

Andijon viloyati (Andijan)

Buxoro viloyati (Bukhara)

Farghona viloyati (Fergana)

Jizzakh Viloyati (Jizzakh)

Khorazm viloyati (Urganch)

Namangan viloyati

Nawoiy viloyati (Navoi)

Qashqadaryo viloyati (Qarshi)

Qoraqalpoghiston* (Nukus)

Samarqand viloyati (Samarkand)

Sirdaryo viloyati (Guliston)

Surkhondaryo viloyati (Termiz)

Toshkent Shahri** (Tashkent)

Toshkent viloyati (Tashkent)

note: administrative divisions have the same names as their administrative centers (exceptions and alternate spellings have the administrative center name following in parentheses)

Elections in Uzbekistan give information on election and election results in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan elects on national level a head of state - the president - and a legislature. The president is elected for a five year term by the people. The Supreme Assembly or National Assembly (Oliy Majlis) has 120 members in the Legislative Chamber, elected for a five-year terms and 100 members in the Senate; 84 members elected at the sessions of district, regional and city deputies, and 16 members appointed by the president. Most parties are excluded. Uzbekistan is a state dominated by the supporters of a head of state - the president - . Opposition parties are allowed, but are widely considered to have no real chance of gaining power.

Uzbekistan has the highest voting age in the world, at 25.

2007 Presidential election

Summary of the 23 December 2007 Uzbekistani presidential election results

Candidate	Votes	%
Islam Karimov (Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party)	13,008,357	90.77
Asliddin Rustamov (Uzbekistan People's Democratic Party)	468,064	3.27
Dilorom Toshmuhamedova (Justice Social Democratic Party)	434,111	3.03
Akmal Saidov (independent)	420,815	2.94
Valid votes	14,331,347	100.00
Invalid votes	434,097	2.94
Total votes (turnout 90.6%)	14,765,444	

Source: elections.uz

4. Uzbekistani Parliamentary

Election, 2009–2010

135 out of 150 seats in the Legislative Chamber of
Uzbekistan

27 December 2009 (2009-12-27) and 10 January
2010 (2010-01-10)

Turnout 87.8% (first round)

Party O'zLiDeP PDP

Last election 41 seats 28 seats

Party Milliy Adolat
Tiklanish

Last election 29 seats 10 seats

Parliamentary elections were held in Uzbekistan on 27 December 2009 and 10 January 2010 to elect the 150 members of the Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan, the lower house of the Oliy Majlis. Of these, 135 were directly elected from single member constituencies using the two-round system, while 15 seats were reserved for the country's Ecological Movement. Provincial and district councils were elected at the same time. Polls opened at 6 am Uzbekistan Time (0100 UTC) and closed at 8 pm UZT (1500 UTC). The Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party (O'zLiDeP) was reconfirmed as the largest single party in the Legislative Chamber, with 55 deputies. The other parties permitted to participate in the elections were the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (32 deputies), the Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party (Milliy Tiklanish, 31 deputies) and the Justice Social Democratic Party (Adolat, 19 deputies).

The elections were monitored by over 270 observers from 36 countries and representatives of four international missions. The election monitoring arm of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) did not send a full mission, saying none of its earlier recommendations had been implemented: an OSCE assessment mission observed voting at several polling places, but did not do comprehensive vote monitoring. Veronica Szente Goldston, Human Rights Watch Advocacy Director for Europe and Central Asia, said the pre-election situation in Uzbekistan has been marked by intense repression by the government: "Human rights are violated everywhere around the country, there is no political competition, all the parties that are running for this election are supporting the government."

Campaign

A candidate for election had to belong to a registered party and collect a minimum of 40,000 signatures. Several opposition politicians have alleged that all candidates also had to be approved by the government before they would be placed on the ballot. The four registered parties were:

Adolat (Justice Social Democratic Party), with 123 candidates and 10 seats in the outgoing legislative chamber;

Milliy Tiklanish (Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party), with 125 candidates and 29 seats in the outgoing legislative chamber;

People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDP), with 134 candidates and 28 seats in the outgoing legislative chamber;

Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party (O'zlidep), with 135 candidates and 41 seats in the outgoing legislative chamber.

The election campaign consisted of 15- to 20-minute television programs each day for four days, as well as a second program called "Election – Mirror of Democracy". Transcripts from these shows were reprinted in newspapers, and billboards also appeared touting the upcoming choice that Uzbeks had to make. The four parties have publicly criticized each other, mainly over social policy, while praising President Islam Karimov's achievements. Freedom House, a US-based human rights organization, says the discussions appeared on television for the first time, which was a positive development,

but that "We have some evidence from Uzbek activists that those debates were scripted. And even if not – these parties don't know themselves who they are, they have no ideology."

Ecological Movement

The Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan elected its 15 legislators at a congress, also held on 27 December, one from each territorial subdivision of Uzbekistan (Republic of Karakalpakstan, provinces and Tashkent city) plus one member from the Executive Committee of the Central Council of the Ecological Movement. Delegates to the congress were elected in equal numbers at the conferences of each of the territorial branches of the Ecological Movement.

Turnout

There were 17,215,700 eligible voters for the 2009 parliamentary elections. By 1 pm UZT, 57.3% (9,879,195 voters) had cast their vote, ensuring that the election would be valid under Uzbekistani election law (33% minimum turnout required). By 5 pm UZT, 79.4% (13,670,387 voters) had cast their votes. Final turnout for the first round (based on provisional figures) was 87.8% (15,108,950 voters).

On 24 December, all 16 million mobile phone users in Uzbekistan received an SMS informing them of the forthcoming elections. According to an Uzbek living in exile in the United States, "there are certain groups of the population which are under pressure and they are compelled to participate in the election – students, teachers, government employees."

For the second round on 10 January 2010, the electorate was 4,969,547. Of these, 16.3% (812,502 voters) were reported to have voted by 9 am UZT , just three hours after polling stations had opened. The final turnout (based on provisional figures) when polls closed at 8 pm UZT was 79.7% (3,960,876 voters).

6. Results

Preliminary results were announced by the Central Election Commission on 29 December. Results were declared in 96 out of the 135 electoral districts; in the remaining 39 districts, no candidate obtained an overall majority of votes, and so a second round of voting was held in 10 January 2010. Final results were announced by the Central Election Commission on 13 January 2010.

Summary of the 27 December 2009 and 10 January 2010 Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan election results

Parties	First round			Second round*			Total seats
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats	
Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party (O'zbekiston Liberal Demokratik Partiyasi)			33			20	53
Uzbekistan People's Democratic Party (O'zbekistan Xalq Demokratik Partiyasi)			22			10	32
Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party (O'zbekistan Milliy Tiklanish Demokratik Partiyasi)			25			6	31

Justice Social Democratic Party (Adolat Sotsial Demokratik Partiyasi)			16			3	19
Total			96			39	135
Total Valid Votes	15,108,950	(87.8%)		3,960,876	(79.7%)		
Registered Voters	17,215,700			4,969,547			
<p>*In 39 out of 135 electoral districts where no candidate polled more than 50% of the vote in the first round. 15 deputies to the Legislative Chamber were also elected by the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan in indirect elections. Source: Central Election Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan</p>							

The number of seats in the lower house of Uzbekistan's bicameral parliament was increased in December 2008 from 120 to 150, with 15 seats reserved for election by the country's Ecological Movement.

The third elections for the bicameral 150-member Oliy Majlis for five-year term, comprising of the Legislative Chamber and the 100-member Senate, started on 27 December 2009, with 517 candidates. According to the Uzbekistan's Election Commission, the following parties have been allowed to take part in these elections: Adolat (Social-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan) with 123 candidates, Milliy Tiklanish (Democratic Party of Uzbekistan) with 125 candidates, the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDP) with 134 candidates, the Liberal-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan with 135 candidates, and the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan.

On January 10, 2010 a second round of voting was held, because on the main election day on December 27, 2009 in 39 out of 135 electoral districts of the republic none of the candidates received more than 50 percent of the votes needed for a win. This second round was held for two candidates to deputies that got the largest number of votes in the

first round. The candidate who gets a simple majority of votes cast by the electorate who came to the polls is considered elected to the parliament.

At least 33 percent of the registered voters should vote to make this second round of the elections valid.

The election was monitored by over 270 observers from 36 countries and representatives of four international missions. Human rights activists described the election campaign as oppressed by the government.

7. Election Analysis

Election 2009: Uzbek President Solidifies Power by Orchestrating Third Parliamentary Poll

Uzbekistan's president Islam Karimov has orchestrated the third parliamentary election since independence from the USSR in 1991, allowing only four pro-presidential parties to compete, while banning the opposition.

Significance: Uzbekistan has held a legislative election for the 150-seat Oliy Majlis, the lower house of parliament; however, the polls failed to fill all the parliamentary seats, prompting a second round.

Implications: The stage-managed election has proved to be nothing but the incumbent president's show of power, failing international standards and exposing the extent of President Islam Karimov's authority in the country.

Outlook: Despite Karimov's reassurances of endorsing a new democratic parliament where the parties will engage in democratic competition for power, the election was a repeat of the 2005 legislative vote, with no presence of a real opposition party and near to total control of the pro-presidential forces during the election campaign. The election will only serve to deepen apathy amongst voters and to solidify Karimov's authoritarian power in the country.

On 27 December Uzbekistan, Central Asia's most populous country of some 28 million inhabitants, held its legislative election for the 150-seat Oliy Majlis, the lower chamber of parliament. Only four pro-presidential parties, along with an environmental movement, were allowed to take part in the election: the National Revival Party "Milly Tiklanish"; the People's Democratic Party (KhDP); the Social Democratic Party "Adolat"; and the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDPU). All four parties had the incumbent president Islam Karimov as their candidate during the 2007 presidential election and held parliamentary seats prior to the 27 December election. The Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, the only officially approved environmental party by law, introduced in 2008, is entitled to the 15 parliamentary seats. According to the head of the Central Elections Commission, Miraz-Ulugbek Abdusalomov, 270 observers from 36 countries and missions of four international organisations had monitored the election. The list did not include the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which had refrained from sending any of its monitors, citing the country's democratic shortcomings. The Commission also stated that the voter turnout stood high at 88% (about 17 million voters); however, the polls failed to fill one-third of the parliamentary seats: in 40 out of 135 districts no one managed to garner an absolute majority to be elected. Abdusalomov stated that the second round of the election will take place at a later date, but did not reveal when.

Karimov's Managed Democracy

Prior to the election President Karimov acknowledged that previous parliamentary elections held by Uzbekistan since it became independent in 1991 were not really democratic as there were no real political parties. However, Karimov had promised a marked difference in the 27 December election. He envisages that the new parliament will be a place where all the political parties will compete in democratic fashion and will bring changes and reforms to the country, securing the peaceful and democratic transition of power. Karimov's optimism is indeed shared by some of his fellow citizens and comes from a recent novelty in Uzbek politics: for the first time the participating parties were vocally critical of one another.

Although open criticism of some politicians is certainly a positive democratic development in this former Soviet Central Asian state, it is by no stretch able to cover up the fact that the country is ruled by an authoritarian former Communist leader and his clan, which has held the country in its firm grip since 1989 after gaining power prior to the 1991 independence. Nor can it obscure the fact that there are no registered opposition parties in Uzbekistan and that all four parties participating in Sunday's vote were carefully handpicked by Karimov, who, incidentally, was excluded from any of the aforementioned critical pre-election debates. Moreover, Uzbekistan continues to hold at least 6,000 religious and political prisoners. Its leadership's repressive measures have effectively excluded the country from the scope of cooperation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

President Karimov seems to promote the notion of a "controlled democracy", which effectively means that no real democratic competition is allowed that would threaten the position of the ruling clan. Unsurprisingly, the authorities were swift to expel the leader of the Birdamlik (Solidarity) Uzbek opposition movement, Bakhodir Choriev, who came back to the country in October this year after spending five years in exile. Choriev was forced by Uzbekistan's law enforcement officers to board a U.S.-bound plane soon after he announced his intention to relaunch his political activities in the run-up to the parliamentary election. He was warned to refrain from further political activities in Uzbekistan otherwise more serious measures would follow.

Outlook and Implications

The recent parliamentary election was a simple show of Karimov's absolute power in the country. The election of the parliamentarians from handpicked parties is set to create a rubber-stamping parliament. Uzbekistan has failed yet again to gain a legislature that could have introduced political and market-oriented reforms in this Central Asian country. The outlook for Uzbekistan's political opposition remains bleak. With the change of the U.S. and indeed European Union (EU) geopolitical goals, Uzbekistan's democratic shortcomings are likely to be ignored more in the future. The EU has already

lifted sanctions imposed on Uzbekistan after the violent government crackdown on demonstrators in Andizhan in 2005. This thaw in Western relations with Uzbekistan is likely to continue given that the former is currently more interested in the success of its military campaign in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan, with its strategic close location to the troubled region, is a safe corridor for the Western military logistical supply, a much-preferred route compared to volatile Pakistan. Although Karimov's authoritarian rule is providing stability in the country, which is known for its problems with fundamentalist Islamic groups such as Hizbut Tahrir, it is also sowing the seeds of the future political unrest that may ensue when Karimov leaves the presidential post.

COMOROS

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Comoros

Union of the Comoros

Capital	Moroni
(and largest city)	11°41'S 43°16'E / 11.683°S 43.267°E / -11.683; 43.267
Official languages	Comorian, Arabic, French
Demonym	Comorian(s)
Government	Federal republic
- President	Ahmed Abdallah M. Sambi
Independence	from France
- Date	July 6, 1975
Area	
- Total	2,235 km ² 863 sq mi
Population	
- 2005 estimate	798,000
- Density	275/km ² 712.2/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$754 million
- Per capita	\$1,157

1. Introduction

The Comoros officially the Union of the Comoros is an island nation in the Indian Ocean, located off the eastern coast of Africa, on the northern end of the Mozambique Channel, between northern Madagascar and northeastern Mozambique. The nearest countries to the Comoros are Mozambique, Tanzania, Madagascar, and the Seychelles.

It is the southernmost member state of the Arab League. At 1,862 km² (719 sq mi), (excluding Mayotte) the Comoros is the third-smallest African nation by area. And with a population estimated at 798,000, it is the sixth-smallest African nation by population—although it has one of the highest population densities in Africa. Its name derives from the Arabic word qamar ("moon").

The country officially consists of the four islands in the volcanic Comoros archipelago: Ngazidja, Mwali, Nzwani, and Mahoré , as well as many smaller islands. However, the government of the Union of the Comoros (or its predecessors, since independence) has never administered the island of Mayotte, which France still administers as an overseas collectivity. Mayotte was the only island in the archipelago that voted against independence from France, and France has vetoed United Nations Security Council resolutions that would affirm Comorian sovereignty over the island. In addition, a 29 March 2009 referendum on Mayotte's becoming an overseas department of France in 2012 was passed overwhelmingly by the people of Mayotte.

The archipelago is notable for its diverse culture and history, as a nation formed at the crossroads of many civilizations. Though in the contested island of Mayotte the sole official language is French, the "Union of the Comoros" has three official languages: Comorian (Shikomor), Arabic and French.

The "Union of the Comoros" is the only state to be a member of each of the African Union, Francophonie, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Arab League, and Indian Ocean Commission. However, it has had a troubled history since independence in 1975, marked by numerous coups d'état. About half the population live below the international poverty line of US\$1.25 a day.

History

Pre-colonial inhabitation

The first human inhabitants of the Comoro Islands are thought to have been African and Austronesian settlers, travelling by boat. They settled there no later than the sixth century AD, the date of the earliest known archaeological site, found on Nzwani, though some sources speculate that settlement began as early as the first century. The islands of Comoros became populated by a succession of diverse groups from the coast of Africa, the Persian Gulf, The Malay Archipelago, and Madagascar. Swahili settlers first reached the islands as a part of the greater Bantu expansion that took place in Africa throughout the first millennium.

Development of the Comoros is periodized into phases, beginning with Swahili influence and settlement in the Dembeni phase (ninth to tenth centuries), during which each island maintained a single, central village. From the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, trade with the island of Madagascar and merchants from the Middle East flourished, smaller villages emerged, and existing towns expanded. The citizens and historians of the Comoros state that early Arab settlements dated even before their known arrival to the archipelago, and Swahili historians frequently trace genealogies back Arab ancestors who had set travel from Yemen and the ancient kingdom of Saba' in Eden (thought to be the biblical Eden). Even though people are unsure if this is true.

Independence

The next 30 years were a period of political turmoil. On August 3, 1975, mercenary Bob Denard, with clandestine support from Jacques Foccart and the French government, removed president Ahmed Abdallah from office in an armed coup and replaced him with United National Front of the Comoros (UNF) member Prince Said Mohammed Jaffar. Months later, in January 1976, Jaffar was ousted in favor of his Minister of Defense Ali Soilih.

At this time, the population of Mayotte voted against independence from France in two referendums. The first, held in December 1974, won 63.8% support for maintaining ties with France, while the second, held in February 1976, confirmed that vote with an overwhelming 99.4%. The three remaining islands, ruled by President Soilih, instituted a

number of socialist and isolationist policies that soon strained relations with France. On May 13, 1978, Bob Denard returned to overthrow President Soilih and re-instate Abdallah with the support of the French and South African governments. During Soilih's brief rule, he faced seven additional coup attempts until he was finally forced from office and killed.

In contrast to Soilih, Abdallah's presidency was marked by authoritarian rule and increased adherence to traditional Islam and the country was renamed the Federal and Islamic Republic of Comoros. Abdallah continued as president until 1989 when, fearing a probable coup d'état, he signed a decree ordering the Presidential Guard, led by Bob Denard, to disarm the armed forces. Shortly after the signing of the decree, Abdallah was allegedly shot dead in his office by a disgruntled military officer, though later sources claim an anti-tank missile launched into his bedroom killed him. Although Denard was also injured, it is suspected that Abdallah's killer was a soldier under his command.

A few days later, Bob Denard was evacuated to South Africa by French paratroopers. Said Mohamed Djohar, Soilih's older half-brother, then became president and served until September 1995 when Bob Denard returned and attempted another coup. This time France intervened with paratroopers and forced Denard to surrender. The French removed Djohar to Reunion, and the Paris-backed Mohamed Taki Abdulkarim became president by election. He led the country from 1996, during a time of labor crises, government suppression, and secessionist conflicts, until his death November 1998. He was succeeded by Interim President Tadjidine Ben Said Massounde.

The islands of Anjouan and Mohéli declared their independence from the Comoros in 1997, in an attempt to restore French rule. But France rejected their request, leading to bloody confrontations between federal troops and rebels. In April 1999, Colonel Azali Assoumani, Army Chief of Staff, seized power in a bloodless coup, overthrowing the Interim President Massounde, citing weak leadership in the face of the crisis. This was the Comoros' 18th coup d'état since independence in 1975. But Azali failed to consolidate power and reestablish control over the islands, which was the subject of international criticism. The African Union, under the auspices of President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, imposed sanctions on Anjouan to help broker negotiations and effect reconciliation. The official name of the country was changed to the Union of the

Comoros and a new system of political autonomy for each island, plus a union government for the three islands.

Azali stepped down in 2002 to run in the democratic election of the President of the Comoros, which he won. Under ongoing international pressure, as a military ruler who had originally come to power by force and was not always democratic while in office, Azali led the Comoros through constitutional changes that enabled new elections. A Loi des compétences law was passed in early 2005 that defines the responsibilities of each governmental body, and is in the process of implementation. The elections in 2006 were won by Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi, a Sunni Muslim Cleric nick-named the "Ayatollah" for his time spent studying Islam in Iran. Azali honored the election results, thus allowing the first peaceful and democratic exchange of power for the archipelago.

Colonel Mohammed Bacar, a French-trained former gendarme, seized power as President in Anjouan in 2001. He staged a vote in June 2007 to confirm his leadership that was rejected as illegal by the Comoros federal government and the African Union. On March 25, 2008 hundreds of soldiers from the African Union and Comoros seized rebel-held Anjouan, generally welcomed by the population: there have been reports of hundreds, if not thousands, of people tortured during Bacar's tenure. Some rebels were killed and injured, but there are no official figures. At least 11 civilians were wounded. Some officials were imprisoned. Bacar fled in a speedboat to the French Indian Ocean territory of Mayotte to seek asylum. Anti-French protests followed in Comoros (see 2008 invasion of Anjouan).

Since independence from France, the Comoros experienced more than 20 coups or attempted coups.

2. Elections in Comoros

Elections in Comoros give information on election and election results in Comoros.

Comoros elects on federal level a head of state - the president - and a legislature. The president is elected for a four year term by the people. The federal presidency is to take it in turns between the three islands. The Assembly of the Union has 33 seats, 18 elected in single seat constituencies and 15 representatives of the regional assemblies. The existence of political parties in the Comoros is unclear.

2006 Presidential election

Summary of the 16 April and 14 May 2006 Comoros presidential election results

Candidates – Parties	Votes in the Anjouan Primary	%	Votes in the Union	%
Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi	14,568	23.70	99,112	58.02
Ibrahim Halidi - Movement for the Comoros (Mouvement pour les Comores)*	6,376	10.37	48,378	28.32
Mohamed Djaanfari	8,052	13.10	23,322	13.65
Caabi El-Yachroutu Mohamed	5,877	9.56	-	-
Nourdine Midiladji	5,221	8.49	-	-
Nassuf Ahmed Abdallah	3,276	5.33	-	-
Seven others	18,097	29.44	-	-
Total (Turnout 54.9% / 57.3%)	61,467		170,812	

Source: African Elections Database

* Halidi was also supported by:

Islands' Fraternity and Unity Party (CHUMA)

Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros (Convention pour le renouveau des Comores)

Djawabu Party (Parti Djawabu)

2004 Parliamentary election

Summary of the 18 and 25 April 2004 Assembly of the Union of the Comoros election results

Parties	Votes	%	Seats
Camp of the Autonomous Islands (Camp des Îles Autonomes)		.	12
Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros (Convention pour le Renouveau des Comores, CRC, Azali Assoumani)		.	6
Representatives of the regional assemblies		.	15
Total			33

Source: Voice of America

3. Comoros elections 2009

Election Date: December 20, 2009

Abstract: At stake: Assembly of the Union

At stake: Assembly of the Union

Background

Not all the Comoros Islands—Grande Comoro (Ngazidja), Anjouan, Mohéli, and Mayotte—are part of the country of Comoros, located off the coast of Mozambique. In 1975, Grande Comoro, Anjouan and Mohéli voted in favour of independence from France, while Mayotte residents decided to maintain their links with the European country. The independent islands are mainly Islamic, while Mayotte is predominantly Christian. The latter remains to this day an overseas French territory.

Comoros has withstood at least 20 coup d'états or attempted coups since attaining independence. The country is one of the poorest in the continent, and relies heavily on foreign aid.

On Aug. 3, 1997, Anjouan and Mohéli tried to return to French rule, as political leaders declared that independence had hurt the islands more than it had helped them. France, however, did not recognize the decision, and the two islands were forced to remain in the Union of Comoros. At the end of the year, then Comorian president Mohamed Taki unsuccessfully attempted to retake Anjouan by force. Several years of political instability ensued.

In December 2001, the country's administrative system changed as a new Constitution allowed each island to have a president. Financial and security issues would still be handled by the Union's head of state.

In May 2002, former military coup leader Azali Assoumani was elected federal president. Azali survived an attempted coup in February 2003.

In December 2003, the islands signed a power-sharing agreement granting each territory a semi-autonomous status.

Legislative elections took place in April 2004. Opponents of Azali garnered the majority of the votes.

In 2006, Islamic religious leader Ahmed Abdallah Sambi was elected president of Comoros with 58.14 percent of all cast ballots. Sambi vowed to defend Islam, as well as to fight against terrorism and organized crime.

In 2007, the island of Anjouan decided to carry elections disregarding an order by the federal government telling it to refrain from holding the ballot. African Union (AU) troops were deployed just two months before the ballot. Colonel Mohamed Bacar—who had been president of Anjouan since taking power by force in 2001—claimed victory in the ballot box.

Comorian armed forces joined efforts with AU troops in order to stop Bacar from forming what they saw as an illegitimate administration following an unlawful ballot. Anjouan was invaded in March 2008, and Bacar was ousted. The colonel fled by sea to the French territory of Mayotte, and was eventually granted asylum in the French island of Réunion. This decision sparked anti-French demonstrations in Comoros.

2009 Legislative Election

Description of government structure:

- Chief of State: President Ahmed Abdallah SAMBI *
- Head of Government: President Ahmed Abdallah SAMBI
- Assembly: Comoros has a unicameral Assembly of the Union with 33 seats.

* The presidency of Comoros rotates every among the elected presidents of the 3 main islands.

Description of electoral system:

- The President is elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies in his or her respective island to serve a rotating 5-year term.
- In the Assembly of the Union (*Assemblée de l'Union*), 15 members are elected by regional legislatures and 18 members are elected by absolute majority vote in single-member constituencies, all to serve 5-year terms.***

*** The electoral system for directly elected seats is two-round (TRS). There are no nationally mandated electoral rules for the seats filled by local assemblies.

Future elections

- Presidential
First Round - April 2011

Past elections

- Legislative Second Round - December 20, 2009
- Legislative First Round - December 6, 2009
- Referendum - May 17, 2009
- Referendum (Postponed) - March 22, 2009

- Presidential Second Round - May 14, 2006
- Presidential First Round - April 16, 2006
- Legislative Stage Two - April 25, 2004
- Legislative Stage One - April 18, 2004
- Presidential - April 14, 2002
- Referendum - December 23, 2001

A legislative ballot was supposed to take place in Comoros in April 2009. However, the ballot was postponed in order to accommodate a constitutional referendum. The democratic process re-scheduled for Dec. 6 and Dec. 20.

Comorian president Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, a former Islamic religious leader, called a referendum for May 17. The proposed changes to the constitution included extending the current presidential term for two years in order to allow for simultaneous elections in 2011; proclaiming Islam as the country's official religion; limiting the powers of the presidents of each island by downgrading them to governors, and allowing the federal president to dissolve the legislature and call elections. Voters approved all changes by a landslide vote of 93.9 per cent.

On Jul. 2, the government said legislative and local government elections would take place on Aug. 2. On that same day, a Yemenia Airlines plane crashed into the water just off of Grande Comoro, killing 152 people and leaving only one survivor, a teenage girl.

On Jul. 3, Sambi declared: "From today, our country is in a period of mourning for 30 days" for the victims of the crash.

Voting

First round voting took place on Dec. 6. Only two seats were won outright, with 22 constituencies requiring a run-off. Opposition candidate Said Ahmed Said complained about a possible fraud, declaring, "In numerous polling stations in Moroni, the voter lists have contained phantom names. In some cases a voter's registration number on the list has not corresponded to the number on his voter card."

Second round voting took place on Dec. 20. Preliminary results suggested that the representatives loyal to Ahmed Abdallah Sambu will control two-thirds of the seats in parliament.

Final results released on Dec. 21 gave the pro-presidential Baobab Party 16 of the 24 directly elected seats.

Political Players

President: Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambu

The president is elected to a four-year term by popular vote.

Legislative Branch: *L'Assemblée de l'Union* (Assembly of the Union) has 33 members; 24 members are elected to five-year terms by direct vote through a single-member district plurality system, and nine are appointed by the local assemblies of the three islands: Moheli, Anjouan and Grande Comore.

Assembly of the Union - Dec. 6 and Dec. 20, 2009

	Seats
Pro-presidential party (Baobab)	16
Allies of the president	3
Opposition	5
Representatives of the regional assemblies	9

Comorian legislative election, 2009

Legislative elections were held in Comoros on 6 and 20 December 2009; though originally set for July 2009, they were postponed until after a constitutional referendum was held. Elections were then scheduled to take place on 29 November. Finally, the first round of the elections was scheduled to take place on 6 December, while a second round

was slated for 20 December. The Comoros use a Two-round system, where there are 24 constituencies, each returning a single member to parliament. The remaining 9 seats are filled by appointees from the assemblies of the autonomous islands of the Comoros: Grande Comore, Mohéli and Anjouan. Each island assembly selects 3 members.

There are no real established political parties in the Comoros, but for this election, most candidates supporting president Ahmed Abdallah Sambi campaigned as the Baobab coalition, named after their identifying symbol, the Baobab tree.

The first round took place without incidents on 6 December, but a second round was needed because in most constituencies there was no clear victor (at least 50%+1 one vote). Only in 2 constituencies did the president's party achieve an outright majority in the first round. This round proceeded to take place as planned on 20 December.

4. Results

According to the preliminary results released on 21 December, president Ahmed Abdallah Sambi's allies won a majority of seats in the assembly. The opposition won 5 constituencies, 3 of which were on the island of Mohéli.

Summary of the 6 and 20 December 2009 Assembly of the Union of the Comoros election results

Parties	Seats
Presidential party (Baobab)	16
Allies of the president	3

Opposition	5
Representatives of the regional assemblies	9
Total	33
Source: Al Watwan	

Comoros Election Returns Show Ruling Coalition Headed for Big Win

Preliminary returns from Sunday's elections in the Comoros indicate the president's ruling coalition is heading for a landslide victory that could extend his rule. But some opposition leaders say voting was marked by irregularities. Official results from elections in the Indian Ocean archipelago will not be known until the Comoros constitutional court reviews them later this week. But preliminary results indicate that the coalition of President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi is likely to control two-thirds of the seats in parliament.

The coalition won outright two out of parliament's 24 elected seats during the first round of voting two weeks ago. And his coalition will name six out of nine other parliamentarians after winning a majority in local elections on the same day.

Each of Comoros's three islands nominates three members of parliament based on the local elections. And the presidency rotates among the three as part of a power sharing accord.

The parliament is due to vote whether to accept or reject a constitutional referendum in

which voters approved a measure to extend Mr. Sambi's four-year term to five years. He is due to step down in May.

The chairman of the mayor's association of Grande Comoros, Mohammed Mchangama told VOA that overall voting was peaceful. "There have been some minor incidents in the morning when the elections were starting, but it has been in very, very few places," he said.

But opposition leaders accused the government of doing little to prevent fraud and warned the country could plunge into chaos if there were any indications of vote rigging. International observers said they were pleased with the orderliness of the balloting, but added that they were concerned by what appears to have been a low voter turnout. Mr. Sambi was elected in 2006 in the first-ever peaceful transfer of power in a country that has experienced 19 coups and coup attempts since independence 34 years ago.

