

ECONOMIC AND GEOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF UZBEKISTAN AND XINJIANG

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Abstract: This article examines the economic and geographic characteristics of Uzbekistan and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It analyzes their strategic location, natural resources, economic potential, and transport significance in the Eurasian region. The study shows that both territories play an important role in regional trade, logistics, and economic integration. It also highlights key challenges such as water scarcity, environmental problems, and climate change that affect their sustainable development.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, economic geography, natural resources, transport, logistics, regional integration.

Uzbekistan and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region occupy an important position in the Eurasian space due to their strategic geographic location, rich natural resources, and historical trade routes. These regions historically formed a crucial part of the Silk Road, playing a significant role in the development of economic, cultural, and transport connections between the East and the West. In the context of globalization, their importance is further increasing through modern transport and logistics initiatives, particularly within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia and is considered one of the leading countries in the region due to its territorial size, demographic potential, and economic capacity. The country is rich in underground resources, possessing significant reserves of strategic minerals such as gold, copper, and uranium. At the same time, agriculture especially cotton production plays a vital role in ensuring food security and economic stability. Uzbekistan’s transport and geographic position serves as a key factor in developing transit connections among Central Asian countries.

Xinjiang, on the other hand, stands out as one of the largest and most resource-rich regions of China. Covering a vast territory, it holds substantial reserves of energy resources such as oil, natural gas, and coal, which contribute significantly to the national economy. Moreover, Xinjiang functions as a major gateway connecting China with Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. In particular, transcontinental trade carried out via railways and highways serves as a key driver of the region’s economic development.

Geographically, both regions are located in a continental climate zone, where limited water resources, climate change, and environmental challenges—such as the crisis of the Aral Sea have a significant impact on sustainable development. Therefore, efficient resource management, the implementation of “green economy” principles, and the adoption of innovative technologies have become critical priorities.

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that, in today’s globalized world, regional economic integration, the development of logistics systems, and participation in global value

chains have become key determinants of national competitiveness. In this regard, a comprehensive analysis of the economic and geographic characteristics of Uzbekistan and Xinjiang is essential for identifying their cooperation potential, enhancing investment attractiveness, and ensuring sustainable economic growth.

The main objective of this research is to systematically examine the economic and geographic characteristics of Uzbekistan and Xinjiang, and to conduct a comparative analysis based on their resource potential, transport and logistics capabilities, and economic development models.

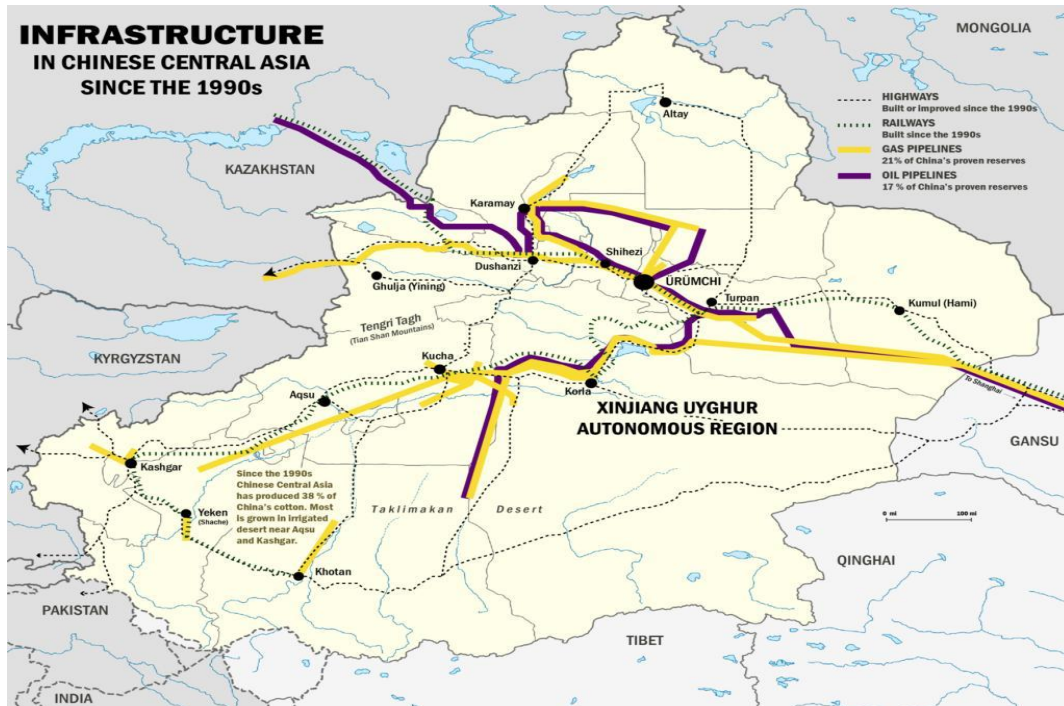


Figure 1. The role of the xinjiang uyghur autonomous region in the eurasian transport and logistics system¹

The map illustrates the rapid development of infrastructure in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region since the 1990s, where highways, railways, and oil and gas pipelines have emerged as key strategic sectors.

The analysis of the map indicates that Xinjiang has become an important transit hub in China's economic integration with Central Asian countries, particularly strengthening connections with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and other neighboring regions.

The expansion of pipelines and transport corridors for energy resource transmission has significantly enhanced the region's economic importance, transforming it into a strategic logistics node across Eurasia. At the same time, the development of infrastructure has contributed to increased trade volumes, industrial growth, and the intensification of regional economic activity.

Table 1

Economic and geographical comparison table between Uzbekistan and Xinjiang²

¹ By made author

² Researcher's work based on theoretical knowledge

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Uzbekistan</i>	<i>Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region</i>
<i>Geographic location</i>	Center of Central Asia	Northwestern part of China
<i>Area</i>	~448.9 thousand km ²	~1.66 million km ²
<i>Population</i>	~37 million	~25 million
<i>Climate</i>	Sharply continental	Sharply continental, largely desert areas
<i>Natural resources</i>	Gold, copper, uranium, gas	Oil, gas, coal
<i>Agriculture</i>	Cotton, wheat, fruits and vegetables	Cotton, livestock farming
<i>Transport significance</i>	Transit hub of Central Asia	China's gateway to Europe and Central Asia
<i>Strategic projects</i>	Transport corridors, logistics	"Belt and Road Initiative"
<i>Challenges</i>	Water scarcity, environmental issues	Desertification, water shortages

The table demonstrates that while Uzbekistan and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region share similar continental climatic conditions and resource endowments, their economic structures and development drivers differ significantly.

Uzbekistan's economy is more diversified with a strong emphasis on agriculture and mineral resources, whereas Xinjiang's development is largely driven by its vast energy reserves and strategic role in China's westward economic expansion.

At the same time, both regions possess high transport and logistics potential, positioning them as key transit hubs within Eurasian trade networks. This enhances their importance in regional integration processes and creates favorable conditions for expanding economic cooperation, increasing trade flows, and strengthening their roles in global value chains.

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