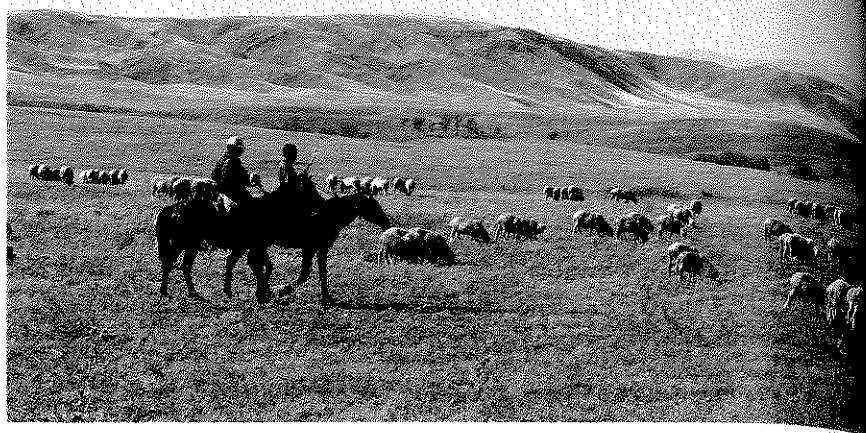


### Kazakh Herders

For centuries, the Kazakhs were mainly nomads, people who move from place to place. They raised sheep, goats, cattle, and horses for meat, wool, and hides. They traveled hundreds of miles each year in search of pasture for their herds. A few Kazakhs still follow this ancient way of life.



## 18.3 Kazakhstan: A Central Asian Giant

The nation-state of Kazakhstan is a Central Asian giant surrounded by other giants. To the southeast lies China. To the north lies Russia. To the west lies the Caspian Sea.

**An Arid Land with Many Resources** While much of Kazakhstan is too arid for agriculture, the northern region and some irrigated areas in the south yield abundant crops. Kazakhs also raise cattle, goats, poultry, pigs, and sheep.

Kazakhstan's greatest resource is its minerals. It has large deposits of coal, lead, copper, iron, and zinc. But Kazakhstan's most significant mineral resource is oil. Some of the world's largest oil reserves lie under the Caspian Sea, and oil production has become a major part of the country's economy. Because of Kazakhstan's prime location between the Caspian Sea and China, oil production promises to be even more important in the future. Construction of pipelines across Kazakhstan will allow oil to flow to the rapidly developing cities of China.

**Ethnic Conflicts Create a Split** The Kazakhs are the main ethnic group in Kazakhstan, making up about half of the nation's population. Russians, many of whom **immigrated** to Kazakhstan during the Soviet era, make up about a third of the population. Religious and cultural differences between Muslim Kazakhs and Christian Russians often divide the two groups.

To make things worse, the two ethnic groups have a serious north-south split. Most Russians live in northern Kazakhstan, where they work in the heavy industry developed under Soviet rule. Most Kazakhs live in the countryside in the south.

Meanwhile, Kazakhstan faces serious environmental problems. Under Soviet rule, poor irrigation methods damaged farmland, and **pesticides** seeped into the water supply. Factories released **toxic waste**. The Soviets also carried out secret nuclear weapons testing, and many people still suffer serious health problems as a result.

Looking ahead, Kazakhstan's survival will depend on several factors. One factor is using its resources wisely to promote economic growth. Another is solving its environmental problems and therefore improving the quality of life of its citizens. A third factor crucial to the success of Kazakhstan is calming the conflict among ethnic groups that divides the country. If it can succeed at meeting all three challenges, Kazakhstan may face a bright future.