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ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET POWER IN TURKESTAN. ARRANGEMENTS TAKEN BY THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES IN UZBEKISTAN AND THEIR COLONIAL ESSENCE

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Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqolada Turkistonda Sovet hokimiyatining o'rnatilishi jarayoni, uning siyosiy, ijtimoiy va iqtisodiy omillari ilmiy asosda tahlil qilinadi. Asosiy e'tibor 1917–1924-yillar oralig'ida Sovet hokimiyati tomonidan amalga oshirilgan choralar, xususan, milliy-davlat chegaralanishi, boshqaruv tizimining markazlashuvi, yer-suv islohotlari, sanoat va qishloq xo'jaligini qayta tashkil etish siyosatiga qaratilgan. Maqolada Sovet hokimiyatining O'zbekiston hududida olib borgan siyosati tashqi tomondan "modernizatsiya" va "ijtimoiy tenglik" shiorlari bilan bezatilgan bo'lsa-da, aslida mustamlakachilik mohiyatiga ega bo'lgani ochib beriladi. Shuningdek, mahalliy aholining siyosiy huquqlarining cheklanishi, milliy ziyolilarning ta'qib qilinishi va markaz manfaatlariga xizmat qilgan boshqaruv tizimi tanqidiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot tarixiylik va xolislik tamoyillariga asoslanib, Turkiston tarixining muhim va murakkab davrini yoritishga xizmat qiladi.

Annotation

This article analyzes the process of the establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan, its political, social and economic factors on a scientific basis. The main focus was on measures taken by Soviet authorities between 1917 and 1924, in particular, the policy of national-state delimitation, centralization of the management system, land-water reform, industrial and agricultural reorganization. The article reveals that although the policy of Soviet power on the territory of Uzbekistan is decorated externally with the slogans "modernization" and "social equality", it actually has a colonial essence. There is also a critical analysis of the limitation of the political rights of the local population, the persecution of the National intelligentsia and the management system that served the interests of the center. Based on the principles of historicism and objectivity, the study serves to highlight an important and complex period of Turkestan history.

Аннотация

В данной статье на научной основе анализируется процесс установления советской власти в Туркестане, ее политические, социальные и экономические факторы. Основное внимание уделялось мерам, предпринятым советской властью в период с 1917 по 1924 год, в частности политике национально-государственного размежевания, централизации системы управления, земельной и водной реформе, реорганизации промышленности и сельского хозяйства. В статье раскрывается, что политика советской власти на территории Узбекистана, хотя и внешне украшенная лозунгами "модернизация" и "социальное равенство", на самом деле имела колониальный характер. Он также критически анализирует ограничение политических прав коренного населения, преследование национальной интеллигенции и систему управления, которая служила интересам центра. Исследование основано на принципах историзма и объективности и служит для освещения важного и сложного периода истории Туркестана.

Kalit soʻzlar:

Turkiston, Sovet hokimiyati, mustamlakachilik siyosati, milliy-davlat chegaralanishi, Oʻzbekiston SSR, markazlashgan boshqaruv, yer-suv islohotlari, siyosiy repressiya.

Key words:

Turkestan, Soviet power, colonial policy, national-state delimitation, Uzbek SSR, centralized management, land-water reform, political repression.

Ключевые слова:

Туркестан, советская власть, колониальная политика, национально-государственное разграничение, Узбекская ССР, централизованное управление, земельная и водная реформы, политические репрессии.

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Introduction

The establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan represents one of the most complex and controversial periods in the modern history of Central Asia. Following the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, the region became a center of intense political struggle, where local national movements, traditional social structures, and external revolutionary forces confronted one another. The Bolshevik seizure of power was not a natural or peaceful process but rather the result of military intervention, political pressure, and the systematic elimination of alternative forms of authority. Although Soviet historiography long portrayed this process as a voluntary and progressive choice of the peoples of Turkestan, modern historical research demonstrates that it was largely imposed from above and served the strategic interests of the new Soviet state.

Turkestan occupied a special place in the plans of the Soviet leadership due to its rich natural resources, strategic geographic position, and economic

potential. Control over the region allowed the Soviet center to secure raw materials, expand its political influence, and strengthen its geopolitical position in the East. As a result, the policies implemented by Soviet authorities in Turkestan, and later in Uzbekistan, were aimed not at genuine self-determination but at consolidating centralized power. Under the slogans of socialism, equality, and internationalism, the Soviet government established a rigid administrative system that subordinated local institutions to Moscow and marginalized indigenous political elites. One of the key instruments of Soviet policy in the region was the national-territorial delimitation carried out in the early 1920s. Officially presented as a measure to ensure national development and cultural autonomy, this process in practice deepened administrative fragmentation and reinforced dependence on the central authorities. Alongside this, land and water reforms, collectivization, and industrial restructuring were introduced without regard for local historical

traditions, economic conditions, or social structures. These reforms disrupted traditional ways of life and intensified social tensions, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, the establishment of Soviet power was accompanied by widespread political repression. Representatives of the national intelligentsia, religious leaders, and supporters of alternative political movements were labeled as “counter-revolutionaries” and systematically persecuted. Any form of resistance or independent political thought was suppressed, reinforcing the colonial character of Soviet rule. Despite formal declarations of equality among nations, the real decision-making power remained in the hands of the central Soviet authorities, while Uzbekistan functioned largely as a peripheral territory supplying raw materials and labor. This article aims to examine the establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan and to analyze the measures taken by the Soviet authorities in Uzbekistan through the lens of colonial policy. By critically assessing political, economic, and social reforms, the study seeks to reveal the contradictions between Soviet ideological claims and historical reality. Understanding this period is essential for an objective evaluation of Uzbekistan’s past and for recognizing the long-term consequences of Soviet rule on the country’s political and social development.

The main part

1. Historical Background and the Establishment of Soviet Power in Turkestan After the October Revolution of 1917, Turkestan became one of the key regions where the Bolsheviks sought to expand their control. At that time, political power in the region was fragmented, with the presence of

traditional authorities, Muslim reformist movements (Jadids), national liberation forces, and remnants of the former imperial administration. The establishment of Soviet power did not occur through popular consensus but was largely imposed through military force and political coercion. The Red Army played a decisive role in suppressing resistance movements, including the Kokand Autonomy, which was violently crushed in 1918. This event marked the beginning of a new political order based on centralized Soviet control. The Bolsheviks justified their actions by claiming to liberate the peoples of Turkestan from colonial oppression and feudal exploitation. However, in practice, local participation in governance remained minimal, and key political decisions were made by Russian or Russified officials appointed by Moscow. Revolutionary committees and soviets were established, but they functioned primarily as instruments of the central government rather than genuine organs of local self-rule.

2. Administrative Centralization and National-Territorial Delimitation

One of the most significant measures taken by Soviet authorities was the national-territorial delimitation of Central Asia in 1924. Officially, this policy aimed to resolve ethnic issues and promote national development by creating ethnically defined republics. As a result, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was established. Despite its declared goals, the delimitation process served the interests of the Soviet center by weakening regional unity and strengthening administrative control. The new republics were tightly integrated into the centralized Soviet system, with limited political autonomy. The Communist Party held a monopoly

on power, and all major decisions were coordinated with Moscow. This structure ensured that Uzbekistan remained politically dependent on the center, reinforcing the colonial nature of Soviet rule. Local elites were allowed limited participation only if they demonstrated absolute loyalty to the Soviet ideology.

3. Economic Policies and Their Colonial Character Soviet economic policies in Uzbekistan were primarily designed to meet the needs of the central Soviet economy. The region was transformed into a major supplier of raw materials, especially cotton. The policy of cotton monoculture reshaped the agricultural sector, reducing food diversity and increasing dependence on imports from other regions of the USSR. Land and water reforms were implemented without considering local conditions, leading to inefficiency and social discontent. Industrial development in Uzbekistan focused mainly on extractive and processing industries that served the interests of the center rather than balanced local development. While industrialization was presented as a sign of progress, it reinforced economic dependency and limited the emergence of a diversified national economy. This economic model reflected a classic colonial pattern, where the periphery supplied raw materials while the center controlled production and profits.

4. Social and Cultural Transformation under Soviet Rule The Soviet authorities introduced sweeping changes in the social and cultural life of Uzbekistan. Education reforms, the promotion of literacy, and the secularization of society were officially portrayed as progressive achievements. However, these measures were accompanied by aggressive ideological control and the suppression of

traditional values, religious institutions, and cultural practices. Islamic education and religious leaders were marginalized, and mosques and madrasas were closed or repurposed. Language and cultural policies also reflected contradictions. While the Soviet government promoted national languages in the early stages, this support was limited and tightly controlled. Over time, Russification intensified, and Russian became the dominant language of administration, higher education, and scientific discourse. This undermined the development of an independent national culture and reinforced cultural dependency.

5. Political Repression and the Suppression of National Consciousness Political repression was a defining feature of Soviet rule in Uzbekistan. Members of the national intelligentsia, including Jadid reformers, writers, scholars, and political activists, were accused of nationalism and counter-revolutionary activity. During the 1930s, mass arrests, executions, and deportations eliminated much of the intellectual leadership of the nation. These actions not only destroyed individual lives but also weakened the foundations of national consciousness and historical memory. The suppression of resistance movements, including the Basmachi movement, further demonstrated the coercive nature of Soviet power. Although Soviet narratives described these movements as criminal or reactionary, they represented forms of resistance to external domination and the loss of political autonomy. The use of military force and terror to maintain control highlighted the colonial essence of Soviet governance.

6. The Long-Term Consequences of Soviet Policies in Uzbekistan The

policies implemented by the Soviet authorities had lasting consequences for Uzbekistan's political, economic, and social development. Centralized governance limited political pluralism and hindered the formation of independent state institutions. Economic dependency on cotton production created structural imbalances that persisted long after the Soviet period. Social and cultural disruptions weakened traditional institutions and interrupted the natural evolution of national identity. Despite certain achievements in infrastructure, education, and industrial capacity, these developments came at the cost of political repression, economic dependency, and cultural subordination. Therefore, the Soviet experience in Uzbekistan must be understood not only in terms of modernization but also as a form of colonial domination adapted to socialist ideology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan was not a voluntary or organic process but a complex and coercive transformation imposed by the Bolshevik leadership. Although Soviet ideology officially promoted principles of equality, self-determination, and social justice, the practical implementation of these ideas in Turkestan and Uzbekistan revealed deep contradictions. Political authority was concentrated in the hands of the central Soviet institutions, while local populations were largely excluded from meaningful participation in governance. This imbalance laid the foundation for a system that functioned in many respects as a colonial administration under a socialist framework. The measures implemented by Soviet authorities in Uzbekistan—such as administrative centralization, national-territorial

delimitation, economic restructuring, and ideological control—primarily served the interests of the Soviet center rather than the needs of the local society. Economic policies transformed Uzbekistan into a raw-material base, particularly through the expansion of cotton monoculture, which created long-term dependency and structural distortions in the economy. Social and cultural reforms, while contributing to literacy and modernization, simultaneously undermined traditional institutions, religious life, and national identity. Political repression further reinforced the colonial essence of Soviet rule. The systematic elimination of the national intelligentsia and the suppression of resistance movements destroyed alternative paths of development and weakened the historical continuity of Uzbek society. These policies not only silenced dissent but also reshaped collective memory, limiting the ability of future generations to critically understand their past. Ultimately, the Soviet experience in Turkestan and Uzbekistan must be evaluated through a balanced and critical historical perspective. While certain material and educational advancements were achieved, they were accompanied by profound political, economic, and cultural costs. Recognizing the colonial nature of Soviet policies is essential for an objective reassessment of this period and for understanding its lasting impact on Uzbekistan's statehood, national consciousness, and post-independence development.

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