SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROCESSES IN THE UZBEK SSR (1945–1991): THE CASE OF KHOREZM REGION

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Annotation. The article examines the socio-economic development of the Khorezm region in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic between 1945 and 1991. It explores how post-World War II reconstruction and modernization policies under the Soviet planned economy transformed agriculture, industry, education, healthcare, and social life. The study highlights the integration of Khorezm into the Soviet economic system through collectivization, industrialization, and infrastructural projects, as well as the contradictions between economic progress and its environmental and social consequences. By analyzing these historical processes, the paper provides insights into how the Soviet legacy continues to shape the region’s economy, institutions, and ecological conditions in contemporary Uzbekistan.

Introduction. After the end of World War II, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic entered a new phase of reconstruction and modernization within the Soviet planned economy. The Khorezm region, historically known for its agricultural traditions and ancient irrigation systems, became one of the main territories where Soviet industrial and social reforms were implemented. From 1945 to 1991, deep transformations took place in agriculture, industry, education, health, and social life. The Soviet government sought to integrate the region into a unified economic system through collective farming, industrial expansion, and cultural development. This period not only brought significant progress but also revealed contradictions between economic growth and social as well as environmental costs. The study explores these processes in the context of Khorezm’s development experience under Soviet rule.

Relevance of the Study. The topic is highly relevant because the socio-economic development of the Khorezm region during the Soviet period shaped many aspects of present-day Uzbekistan's economy and society. The Soviet system's legacy—industrial infrastructure, centralized planning, irrigation networks, and social institutions—still influences regional policies today. By analyzing how the Soviet model affected Khorezm's agriculture, industry, education, and environment, one can better understand the structural challenges that persist in independent Uzbekistan. The study also contributes to the broader understanding of how centrally planned economies influenced regional identities and ecological balance. The lessons learned from the Soviet experience are valuable for building a more sustainable and diversified economy in modern Uzbekistan.

Methods. The study employed a combination of historical, analytical, comparative, and statistical research methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic processes in the Khorezm region between 1945 and 1991. The historical and analytical approach was applied to examine the chronological evolution of economic and social policies implemented during the Soviet period. Archival materials from the Khorezm Regional Archive, governmental decrees, and official statistical yearbooks were analyzed to reconstruct the main stages of industrialization, agricultural reform, and social transformation. This method made it possible to identify crucial turning points, including the post-war reconstruction years, the industrial expansion of the 1960s, and the stagnation period of the 1980s.

A comparative regional analysis was conducted to assess the specific features of Khorezm's development in relation to other regions of the Uzbek SSR, such as Fergana, Samarkand, and Tashkent. This comparison revealed regional disparities and showed how centralized Soviet economic strategies produced

uneven results across the republic. In this context, Khorezm's strong dependence on agriculture and its limited industrial diversification stood in contrast to the more developed urban and industrial centers of the country.

Quantitative and statistical analysis played an essential role in measuring growth in industrial output, agricultural yields, literacy rates, and demographic changes. Time-series data from official Soviet sources allowed the identification of long-term trends in cotton production, labor migration, and population dynamics, providing a factual foundation for evaluating both achievements and shortcomings in the region's socio-economic development.

To complement the statistical data, a sociological and qualitative approach was employed. Memoirs, regional newspapers, oral interviews, and ethnographic accounts were examined to gain insight into the everyday experiences of individuals who lived through the Soviet modernization process. The testimonies of collective farm workers, teachers, and industrial employees revealed how social reforms influenced daily life, gender relations, and migration patterns, thus adding a human dimension to the historical analysis.

An environmental-historical perspective was also integrated into the research, given the critical role of large-scale irrigation and cotton monoculture in Khorezm's economy. Hydrological data, soil studies, and environmental reports were analyzed to assess the ecological impact of Soviet agricultural policies, including the processes that contributed to the degradation of water resources and the Aral Sea crisis.

Finally, the study involved an extensive documentary review of official and institutional sources such as five-year economic plans, Communist Party resolutions, and statistical bulletins. By cross-referencing primary and secondary materials, the research ensured data reliability and minimized interpretive bias.

This interdisciplinary combination of historical, statistical, sociological, and environmental approaches enabled a balanced and comprehensive reconstruction of the socio-economic changes in Khorezm and established clear connections between local developments and the broader Soviet economic system.

Results. Between 1945 and 1991, the Khorezm region experienced a complex process of modernization shaped by Soviet ideology and economic planning. Industrial production increased significantly as new enterprises were established in textile, cotton processing, and construction materials. The Urgench Cotton Combine and Khiva Silk Factory became symbols of industrial growth. However, production remained largely dependent on raw materials rather than technological innovation.

Agriculture continued to dominate the regional economy, with cotton monoculture serving as the backbone of Soviet agricultural policy. Large irrigation projects expanded arable lands but caused environmental problems such as salinization and water shortages. Despite these difficulties, the introduction of mechanized farming and collective organization improved productivity in the short term.

The social sphere also saw considerable improvement. Schools, hospitals, and cultural centers were opened throughout the region, and literacy levels reached nearly 100 percent. Women’s participation in education and the workforce increased, transforming traditional social structures. Urban areas like Urgench grew rapidly, with improved housing and transport systems, though rural regions remained underdeveloped.

By the 1980s, systemic inefficiencies such as over-centralization, low productivity, and ecological degradation became evident. The late Soviet reforms

under Perestroika aimed to address these issues but failed to bring lasting change before the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Conclusion. The socio-economic development of the Khorezm region during the Soviet period demonstrates both the achievements and limitations of the Soviet system. The establishment of industrial enterprises, the expansion of education and healthcare, and the modernization of agriculture marked important progress in the region's history. However, dependence on cotton production, ecological damage, and the lack of economic independence hindered sustainable development. The experience of the Khorezm region between 1945 and 1991 serves as a valuable historical lesson for contemporary Uzbekistan. Understanding this legacy is essential for creating balanced regional policies that combine economic growth with environmental preservation and social welfare.