THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE POST-WAR YEARS (1945-1965)

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Abstract. *This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the recovery and developmental processes of the national economy of Uzbekistan during the post-Second World War period (1945–1965). The study examines the adaptation to peacetime conditions of industrial enterprises evacuated to the republic during the war, the industrialization processes of the Fourth and Fifth Five-Year Plans, the consolidation of cotton monoculture and its ecological and economic consequences, the campaign for the development of new lands such as the Hungry Steppe (Mirzacho'l), the Central Fergana Valley, and the Qarshi Steppe, the formation of energy and transport infrastructure, as well as transformations in the socio-economic conditions of the population. The findings demonstrate that during this period Uzbekistan was shaped within the Soviet economic system as a region supplying raw materials, which gave rise to severe economic and ecological consequences for subsequent generations. At the same time, the study also records positive aspects such as the significant growth of industrial potential, the establishment of scientific and technical institutions, and the formation of qualified national cadres.*

Keywords: *post-war recovery, national economy, industrialization, cotton monoculture, development of virgin and fallow lands, Mirzacho'l*

(Hungry Steppe), irrigation, five-year plans, Soviet economic model, raw material region, kolkhoz, sovkhoz.

Introduction

The two decades that followed the end of the Second World War are recognized as a complex and contradictory period in the history of the national economy of Uzbekistan. This era is associated with the transition of the republic's economy from the wartime mobilization regime to the rhythm of peaceful life, the reorganization of industry and agriculture on new foundations, and the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects throughout the territory.

By 1945, Uzbekistan had already come to occupy an important place in the all-Union economic system. During the war, more than 100 large industrial enterprises had been evacuated to the republic, hundreds of thousands of people had been resettled there, and cotton cultivation and other branches of agriculture had been subordinated to the needs of the front. The post-war five-year plans envisaged adapting this potential to the new tasks of the socialist economy.

However, Uzbekistan's place within the Soviet economic system was largely defined at the level of a raw material supplying region. On the one hand, this ensured rapid development in industry and irrigation; on the other hand, it generated such problems as cotton monoculture, the drying up of the Aral Sea, soil degradation, and the one-sided structure of the population's employment.

The aim of this article is to systematically analyze the stages, main directions, achievements, and problems of the development of the national economy in Uzbekistan from 1945 to 1965. The structure of the article is as

follows: the second section presents a review of the literature relevant to the topic; the third section contains the main analysis and findings, presented in seven subsections; the concluding section provides the conclusions and directions for further research.

Literature Review

The topic of the post-war development of the national economy of Uzbekistan has been studied by Soviet-era and post-independence historiography from a variety of perspectives. In Soviet-era studies – for instance, in the works of K. Akramov, M. Vahobov, R. Aminova, and I. Iskandarov – this period was treated from the perspective of "the achievements of the socialist national economy" and was interpreted as a product of industrialization, collectivization, and the cultural revolution.

R. Aminova's works on the history of cotton growing and K. Akramov's monographs on the five-year plans are typical examples of this approach. They celebrated the expansion of cotton-sown areas, increases in yield, and the development of new lands, while remaining almost entirely silent regarding the ecological and social cost of these processes.

During the years of independence, new approaches to the subject have emerged. In the studies of M. Joraqulov, Sh. Mustafoyev, A. G'aniyev, Sh. Karimov, and R. Nurullin, the centralized nature of post-war economic policy, the subordination of local resources to all-Union interests, and the consequences of cotton monoculture have been analyzed in an objective manner. R. Nurullin's works on the history of irrigation and Sh. Mustafoyev's studies on the processes of industrialization constitute important sources in this field.

Among Western scholars, the works of P. Craumer, B. Rumer, S. Patnaik, and N. Lubin are particularly noteworthy. P. Craumer's monograph on Central Asian agriculture provides a deep analysis of the structural causes and consequences of cotton monoculture. B. Rumer's Soviet Central Asia (1989) substantiates the peripheral status of the region within the Soviet economic model on the basis of economic indicators. N. Lubin's studies on employment and ethnic division shed light on its social consequences.

On the question of the Aral Sea crisis and the ecological consequences of cotton policy, the works of P. Micklin, A. Yablokov, R. Ferguson, and N. Aladin are of considerable importance. They demonstrate the economic causes of the ecological catastrophe that arose as a result of the expansion of irrigation networks and the excessive withdrawal of water from the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. These sources constitute the theoretical and empirical foundation of the present article.

Analysis and Results

Post-War Recovery and the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1946–1950)

In March 1946, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted the "Five-Year Plan for the Restoration and Development of the National Economy of the USSR for 1946–1950." For the Uzbek SSR, this plan envisaged two main directions: first, the adaptation of industrial enterprises evacuated during the war to peacetime production; second, the restoration of agriculture, and especially cotton growing, to pre-war levels and the achievement of even higher indicators.

In the field of industry, such major enterprises as the Tashkent Agricultural Machinery Plant ("Tashselmash"), the Chirchiq Electrochemical Combine, and the Tashkent Textile Combine were brought to full operational

capacity. On the basis of part of the “Rostselmash” plant evacuated during the war, the Tashkent Agricultural Machinery Plant was established and specialized in the production of cotton-harvesting machinery.

The recovery process in agriculture proved considerably more complex. During the war years, a large part of the male population had been mobilized, horse and machinery resources had been depleted, and the irrigation networks had not been adequately maintained. In 1945, cotton production was almost twice as low as in 1940. However, by 1950 the cotton fiber yield exceeded 2.3 million tons, reaching an indicator that surpassed even the pre-war level.

The Deepening of Industrialization (1951–1958)

During the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1951–1955) and the subsequent years, the process of industrialization in Uzbekistan rose to a new stage. In this period, the share of heavy and chemical industry within the structure of the republic’s industry significantly increased. Such large enterprises as the Olmaliq Mining and Metallurgical Combine, the Bekobod Metallurgical Combine, the Quvasoy Cement Plant, and the Fergana Oil Refinery represent the most important construction projects of this period.

The Bekobod metallurgical plant, which began operations in 1949 (later renamed the “Uzbekistan Metallurgical Combine”), remained the only ferrous metallurgy enterprise in Central Asia. It supplied the entire region with steel and rolled products manufactured from local scrap metal. The commissioning of the Olmaliq copper-molybdenum deposit, in turn, was of strategic significance for the development of non-ferrous metallurgy.

Important steps were taken in the energy sector. In 1948, the construction of the Farxod Hydroelectric Power Station was completed. In subsequent years, a chain of hydroelectric stations was built along the Chirchiq River (Tavoqsoy,

Xo‘jakent), the Syr Darya, and other rivers. In 1956, a unified energy system capable of supplying electricity to the Tashkent–Chirchiq–Olmaliq industrial node was formed. This created the energetic foundation for the further expansion of the industrial network.

At the same time, the structure of the republic’s industry was one-sided. The greater part of industrial production was confined to the processing of cotton raw materials (cotton ginning, textile, and oil-pressing plants) and to the raw material stages of heavy industry. Finished consumer goods, machinery products, and highly processed commodities were imported mainly from the RSFSR, Ukraine, and other Union republics.

The Consolidation of Cotton Monoculture

In the post-war period, the specialization of Uzbek agriculture in cotton growing intensified continuously. Whereas in 1940 cotton-sown areas constituted approximately 50 percent of all irrigated lands in the republic, by 1965 this indicator had grown to 65–70 percent. While cotton fiber production stood at 2.3 million tons in 1950, by 1965 it exceeded 4 million tons.

The consolidation of cotton monoculture is explained by several factors. First, in the context of the Cold War, the demand for cotton as a strategic raw material for the USSR increased steadily. Second, the central authorities placed strict demands on the republican leadership to raise the cotton harvest every year. Third, for the local party and economic cadres, “fulfilling the cotton plan” became the principal indicator of professional success.

This process led to a number of negative consequences: other branches of agriculture – grain growing, horticulture, animal husbandry – were relegated to secondary status; the population’s need for foodstuffs was covered mainly through products imported from other republics; the deep exploitation of the

soil with a single crop led to declining fertility; and the excessive use of mineral fertilizers and pesticides inflicted serious damage on the environment.

The Development of New Lands and the Expansion of Irrigation Capacity

From the early 1950s onward, with the aim of expanding cotton production, a broad campaign for the development of new lands was unfolded. This process encompassed the Hungry Steppe (Mirzacho‘l), the Central Fergana Valley, Surxondaryo, and later the Qarshi Steppe. It was precisely in this period that the concept of “Uzbekistan as the cotton homeland” was ideologically consolidated.

The Mirzacho‘l development project attained a particular scale. Within the framework of the first phase, launched in 1956, an irrigation network was built on more than 300,000 hectares of new land, and dozens of new villages and townships were constructed. New districts – Yangiyer, Sirdaryo, Sayxunobod – were established. Youth from all parts of the Union were mobilized for this project, and hundreds of thousands of workers and engineering-technical personnel were drawn into the effort.

Major projects were also implemented in the field of irrigation. On the basis of the experience of the Great Fergana Canal, begun in 1939, such large irrigation structures as the South and North Mirzacho‘l Canals, the South Surxon Canal, and the Amu-Bukhara Machine Canal were constructed. During this period, the area of irrigated land in the republic significantly increased, reaching 2.7 million hectares by 1965.

However, the excessive withdrawal of water from the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya later became one of the principal factors leading to the catastrophic drying of the Aral Sea. Moreover, due to the insufficient

development of drainage systems, a substantial portion of the newly developed lands was damaged by salinization. By the end of the 1960s, the scale of this problem became clearly evident.

The Formation of Transport and Communications Infrastructure

In the post-war years, the republic's transport system was significantly expanded. New railway lines were built: Chorjuy-Qo'ng'irot, Tashkent-Angren, and Samarkand–Qarshi. In 1956, the Tashkent-Mary railway line was put into operation, ensuring direct communication between the southern regions and the center.

The network of automobile roads also expanded: by 1965, the length of hard-surfaced highways exceeded 18,000 kilometers. Such major arteries as Tashkent-Termez, Tashkent-Bukhara, and Tashkent–Andijan were modernized in accordance with contemporary requirements. In the sphere of air transport, Tashkent International Airport developed and became one of the largest aviation transport hubs in the Union.

In 1962, the Bukhara-Tashkent-Frunze gas pipeline was put into operation, which acquired strategic significance not only for satisfying industrial and municipal-domestic needs within the republic but also for the supply of natural gas to the central regions of the Union. The industrial-scale development of the Bukhara and Qashqadaryo gas fields began in this period and created an energy base for the subsequent decades.

Transformations in the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Population

Over the course of the twenty post-war years, the material and social conditions of the population of Uzbekistan changed significantly. Whereas in 1945 the population of the republic stood at approximately 6.2 million, by 1965

this figure exceeded 10.8 million. The high rate of demographic growth, the expansion of industry, and the development of new lands accelerated the process of urbanization: industrial cities such as Tashkent, Chirchiq, Olmaliq, Angren, and Navoiy were established or expanded.

The state allocated significant resources to the expansion of the educational, healthcare, and cultural-domestic service systems. New schools, hospitals, polyclinics, palaces of culture, and cinemas were built. The free education and healthcare services guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution significantly improved the indicators of the population's quality of life.

However, serious imbalances existed in the structure of the population's employment. The local population worked predominantly in agriculture and the cotton-ginning industry, while the qualified workers and engineering-technical personnel of heavy industry and machine-building enterprises consisted mainly of migrants brought in from other Union republics. As N. Lubin has shown, this phenomenon subsequently gave rise to the concept of "ethnic division of labor" and became a hidden source of social tension in the republic.

The earthquake that occurred in Tashkent on April 26, 1966, occupies a particular place in the history of the republic. It coincides with the end of the period under study and would fundamentally transform the urban appearance of the republic through the all-Union campaign for the reconstruction of Tashkent. Although this event lies outside the scope of the present research, it shapes important features of the subsequent period of national economic development.

Science, Education, and the Formation of Qualified Cadres

The post-war period is also characterized by important steps in the development of science and technology. Within the framework of the Academy

of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR, established in 1943, new institutes were created – the Institute of Cotton Growing, the Institute of Mechanics and Mathematics, the Institute of Chemistry, the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, the Institute of Irrigation – and they conducted research directly linked to the applied needs of the national economy.

Such institutions of higher education as Tashkent State University (from 1960), the Tashkent Polytechnic Institute, the Tashkent Agricultural Institute, and the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Land Reclamation were expanded and specialized in training cadres in new disciplines. During this period, the first generation of local technical intelligentsia was formed – agronomists, irrigation engineers, geologists, chemists, and mechanical engineers.

At the same time, the priority directions of science and technology were also defined within the framework of centralized planning. Fundamental research in the natural sciences and technical fields was tied mainly to cotton growing, irrigation, the study of mineral resources, and agrochemistry. The social sciences and humanities were conducted under strict ideological control.

Conclusion

The development of the national economy of Uzbekistan during 1945-1965 possessed a complex and contradictory character. On the one hand, the destruction of the war years was overcome, the industrial network significantly expanded, new lands were developed, and transport and energy infrastructure was formed. Such major industrial nodes as Olmaliq, Bekobod, Chirchiq, Fergana, and Navoiy became the strategic backbones of the republic's economy. The area of irrigated lands almost doubled, and cotton fiber production rose to record levels.

On the other hand, this development model consolidated the republic's status as a raw-material-supplying periphery within the all-Union division of labor. Cotton monoculture imposed a one-sided development on agriculture, restricted food self-sufficiency, and initiated the processes that led to declining soil fertility and the Aral Sea crisis. Because the higher stages of industrial processing were not developed within the republic, the greater part of value added was generated in the central regions of the Union.

Although significant positive transformations took place in the social life of the population – the expansion of education and healthcare services, urbanization, and the formation of qualified cadres – problems such as the "ethnic division of labor" and dependence on heavy manual labor persisted. These aspects occupied an important place in subsequent periods, particularly on the eve of independence, in the discussions concerning the economic sovereignty of the republic.

Future research should be directed at exploring in greater depth the regional and sectoral characteristics of the period under study, on the basis of local archival documents, kolkhoz and sovkhoz materials, statistical sources, and oral history. Moreover, a comparative analysis of the ecological and demographic consequences of the post-war economic model is of considerable scientific significance for the development of a sustainable development strategy in the present period.

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