SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE KHOREZM REGION DURING THE SOVIET ERA (1945–1991)

Sardor Razzoqov Kenjaboy o'g'li

Received: 22.10.2025
Revised: 23.10.2025
Accepted: 24.10.2025

Keywords:
Uzbek SSR, Khorezm Region, Socio-economic processes, Post-war Soviet Union, Economic development, Social transformation, Agriculture, Industrialization, Demography, Urbanization, Soviet policies, Regional studies, Central Asia, Late Soviet period.

Annotation. This research delves into the socio-economic processes within the Uzbek SSR from 1945 to 1991, with a specific focus on the Khorezm region. It examines the multifaceted transformations that shaped the region's economy and social fabric during the post-war Soviet period and its subsequent dissolution. The study analyzes key aspects such as agricultural development, industrialization, demographic shifts, urbanization, and the impact of central Soviet policies on local socio-economic structures. By concentrating on Khorezm, a region with its unique historical and geographical context, this work aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the broader trends and challenges experienced across the Uzbek SSR, highlighting regional specificities and their interplay with overarching Soviet directives. The findings contribute to a deeper comprehension of the late Soviet era's socio-economic dynamics and their legacy in contemporary Uzbekistan.

Introduction

The period between 1945 and 1991 was one of the most dynamic and complex phases in the history of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Within the framework of the centralized Soviet system, the Khorezm region underwent profound economic, social, and cultural transformations. Located in the lower Amu Darya basin, Khorezm historically relied on agriculture and irrigation, but during the Soviet era, it became an important center of industrial production, collective farming, and social reform. The purpose of this study is to analyze the socio-economic development of the region during the Soviet period, focusing on the main trends in industrial growth, agricultural modernization, education, healthcare, and environmental changes.

Relevance of the Study

Studying the socio-economic development of Khorezm during the Soviet period is essential for understanding both the historical foundations of the modern regional economy and the long-term challenges that emerged as a result of Soviet policies. The Soviet government's aim to transform Uzbekistan into a major agricultural and industrial republic brought undeniable progress in education, urbanization, and gender equality, but it also created economic dependency and environmental degradation. Khorezm's example illustrates the paradox of Soviet modernization: rapid development achieved through strict central control, yet accompanied by ecological damage and limited local autonomy. The findings of this research are relevant not only for historical knowledge but also for drawing lessons in sustainable regional planning in contemporary Uzbekistan.

Methods

The research applied historical, analytical, and comparative approaches supported by statistical and qualitative analysis to provide a complete understanding of socio-economic processes in Khorezm during 1945–1991. Historical analysis was used to reconstruct key stages of the region's development, such as post-war recovery, the industrial expansion of the 1960s, and the stagnation period of the 1980s. Archival records, state plans, and statistical data served as the main sources for evaluating industrial and agricultural growth.

Comparative regional analysis was conducted to contrast Khorezm's economic structure with that of other Uzbek SSR regions, revealing its specific dependence on cotton monoculture and water-intensive agriculture. Quantitative data from Soviet yearbooks were examined to determine trends in industrial output, crop production, employment rates, and population dynamics.

Qualitative analysis included memoirs, local publications, and interviews with individuals who lived during the Soviet era, providing insights into social life, education, and working conditions. An environmental perspective was incorporated

to assess the consequences of large-scale irrigation and cotton production on the ecosystem, including the degradation of soil and the drying of the Aral Sea. All data sources were critically reviewed and compared to ensure accuracy and objectivity, forming an interdisciplinary foundation for this research.

Results

The study revealed that during the Soviet period, Khorezm achieved substantial progress in economic and social development. Industrialization programs led to the establishment of several enterprises specializing in textile, cotton processing, and food production. The growth of industrial capacity created new employment opportunities, particularly for women, and contributed to the diversification of the regional economy.

Agriculture remained the dominant sector, with cotton production serving as the backbone of the Soviet economic strategy in the region. Large-scale irrigation projects expanded agricultural land and increased yields, but excessive dependence on cotton led to soil salinization and water scarcity. Despite the environmental costs, the introduction of mechanization and scientific management significantly improved short-term productivity.

Social reforms had a transformative effect on the region. The Soviet government's education policy resulted in almost universal literacy by the 1980s. Schools, vocational institutes, and universities were established, contributing to the professionalization of the workforce. Women became increasingly active in public life, taking roles in education, healthcare, and administration. Healthcare systems were improved, leading to better living standards and a decline in mortality rates.

However, the centralized nature of the Soviet economy also produced negative outcomes. Decision-making was concentrated in Moscow, limiting local flexibility. The focus on production quotas over sustainability created inefficiencies, and the

environmental crisis of the Aral Sea emerged as one of the most serious consequences of Soviet agricultural policies.

Conclusion

The socio-economic transformation of the Khorezm region between 1945 and 1991 reflects both the achievements and contradictions of the Soviet development model. Industrial and agricultural modernization, improvements in education and healthcare, and enhanced gender equality marked undeniable progress. Yet these advances came at the cost of environmental degradation, economic dependency, and the suppression of local initiative.

The experience of Khorezm demonstrates that sustainable development requires a balance between economic growth and ecological preservation. The lessons from the Soviet period remain significant today, as Uzbekistan continues to pursue regional development strategies that seek to overcome past limitations. Understanding the socio-economic history of Khorezm during the Soviet era helps build a more resilient and environmentally conscious future for the region and the country as a whole.