THE HISTORY OF CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL GOVERNANCE OF THE UZBEK SSR

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Abstract. *This article provides a historical analysis of the stages of formation and development of the political governance system in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. In particular, it examines the introduction of the Soviet model of state administration in the republic, the relations between party and state institutions, the characteristics of the centralized governance policy, the administrative reforms of the 1950s–1980s, and the political changes that took place during the period of perestroika.*

Keywords: *Uzbek SSR, political governance, CPSU, Communist Party of Uzbekistan, Soviet system, centralized governance, perestroika, state administration, administrative reforms, political processes.*

INTRODUCTION. One of the major political developments of the twentieth century was the formation of national republics within the former Soviet Union and the establishment of the Soviet system of state governance in these republics. At the beginning of perestroika, the governing bodies failed to assess in a timely and critical manner the dangers posed by the increasingly negative trends in Soviet society and were unable to adopt the decisions urgently required by the difficult situation that had emerged in the country. In an effort to overcome this situation, the Communist Party raised the issue of perestroika and the acceleration of the country's socio-economic development. Perestroika was regarded as the decisive elimination of stagnation, the dismantling of mechanisms that hindered progress, and the creation of a reliable and effective mechanism for accelerating the socio-economic development of Soviet society 1. The strategy was primarily based on combining the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution with the planned economy that dominated the

1 Ражабов Қ. Ўзбекистон тарихи (1917–1991 йиллар). – Тошкент: Ўқитувчи, 2019.

country and mobilizing the full potential of socialism. Attempts were subsequently made to implement the policy of perestroika in all spheres of society. A new social environment gradually began to emerge. Values were reassessed. Glasnost, truthfulness, intolerance toward shortcomings, and the desire to improve existing conditions increasingly became guiding principles in evaluating events and developments.

MAIN PART. Efforts began to fundamentally transform the material and technical foundations of the national economy and to carry out its comprehensive reconstruction on the basis of scientific and technological progress. Changes were introduced into structural and investment policies. Major measures were undertaken to improve the mechanisms of economic management and administration 2 . New principles for increasing wages were developed and introduced into practice. The main restrictions on individual labor activity were removed. The results of the first year (1986) of the new five-year plan appeared to demonstrate that the new policy pursued by the party was producing positive results. National income increased by 4.1 percent, compared with the planned 3.9 percent, while the average annual growth during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan had been 3.6 percent. Industrial production grew by 4.9 percent, which was approximately one-third higher than the average annual growth during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan and was described as the highest rate of growth over the preceding nine years. Socialism was officially presented as having provided workers with broad political and socio-economic “rights” and personal “freedoms.” However, it was increasingly recognized that acceleration could be achieved only by fully activating the human factor and further developing democracy. This was regarded as the essence of the policy aimed at deepening the socialist self-government of the people. A process of democratization began in the country. Efforts were undertaken to democratize all spheres of social life. The activities of party organizations appeared to be becoming increasingly comprehensive. Glasnost,

2 Ўзбекистоннинг янги тарихи. 2-китоб. Ўзбекистон совет мустамлакачилиги даврида. – Тошкент: Шарқ, 2000.

criticism, and self-criticism were expanded. The mass media began to operate more actively. New public organizations were established. The participation of workers in public affairs and governance gradually expanded 3.

The development of democracy in production and the consistent introduction of genuine self-government were considered particularly important, with the aim of enabling every worker to feel like the true owner of the production process in which they participated. The Law on State Enterprises (Associations) envisaged the effective use of all forms of direct democracy. The introduction of procedures for electing managers of enterprises, workshops, departments, production units, farms, and work teams, as well as foremen and supervisors, was regarded as an important measure for developing democracy in production.

At the same time, it was assumed that the election of production managers would not undermine the principle of individual responsibility and leadership; on the contrary, it was expected to strengthen it.

The improvement and further democratization of the electoral system was recognized as a fundamental direction of democratization. The objective was defined as providing each voter with a greater opportunity to express their attitude toward several candidates and eliminating a number of formalistic elements from the voting procedure. Expanding intra-party democracy in the formation of governing bodies of party organizations at all levels became increasingly important. The democratization of society also raised, in a new way, the issue of monitoring the activities of party, Soviet, and economic bodies and their personnel. In this regard, particular importance was attached to increasing the level and effectiveness of “bottom-up” control and ensuring that every leader and official constantly felt accountable to voters, labor collectives, public organizations, the party, and the people as a whole.

As efforts were made to improve the social environment, the need to further develop glasnost, as well as criticism and self-criticism—regarded as proven

3 Ражабов Қ. Ўзбекистон тарихи (1917–1991 йиллар). – Тошкент: Ўқитувчи, 2019.

instruments of socialist democracy—was recognized. The mass media were understood to have an important role in this process. Condemning intolerance toward criticism and cases in which individuals were persecuted or directly silenced for criticizing the authorities, M. S. Gorbachev emphasized the need to support the efforts of the press to develop criticism and self-criticism. It was stated that there could be no areas in Soviet society that were closed to criticism. This principle was considered fully applicable to the press as well 4.

It was recognized that genuine democracy could not exist outside or above the law. In accordance with the decisions of the 27th Congress of the CPSU, extensive work was envisaged to prepare and adopt new legislation related to the development of the economy and culture and the strengthening of socialist self-government. Lawlessness, irresponsibility, and disorder were regarded as completely incompatible with socialist democracy. It was recognized that the effectiveness of genuine democracy depended on the breadth of its social foundation and on how effectively available reserves and opportunities were used to expand it. For this purpose, the need to increase the participation of the younger generation in implementing the objectives of perestroika and to promote non-party members and women to leadership positions was emphasized 5.

The Party was compelled to pay serious attention to the national aspects of its personnel policy. Although the successes of this policy were regarded as indisputable, contradictions existing in interethnic relations became increasingly visible under the conditions of glasnost. A consistent and persistent internationalist policy was considered the principal means of successfully countering manifestations of nationalism and chauvinism.

In defining a personnel policy consistent with the objectives of perestroika, the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee proceeded from the assumption that its

4 Ўзбекистоннинг янги тарихи. 2-китоб. Ўзбекистон совет мустамлакачилиги даврида. – Тошкент: Шарқ, 2000.
5 Ражабов Қ. Ўзбекистон тарихи (1917–1991 йиллар). – Тошкент: Ўқитувчи, 2019.

success would depend decisively on how quickly and deeply personnel understood the necessity of revolutionary changes and how creatively they implemented the Party's political course in practice.

It was officially claimed that during the years of socialist construction, the country had developed a powerful and highly qualified human-resource potential that was continuously replenished. All the "achievements" that had been attained were interpreted as the product of the creative efforts of Soviet people and the result of the dedicated work of the country's personnel.

At the same time, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) held on January 28, 1987, provided a relatively analytical assessment of mistakes made in working with personnel and shortcomings in personnel policy. The need to learn lessons from the past in order to prevent similar mistakes in the future was emphasized. Improving personnel policy was identified as one of the most important tasks of the new political course. It was stressed that this policy needed to become more active and consistent and to be closely linked with the major directions of the struggle to accelerate socio-economic development.

Personnel attitudes toward perestroika and their practical efforts to implement it were regarded as decisive criteria for evaluating personnel. In this process, economic managers of enterprises and associations, as well as administrative and managerial personnel, were assigned considerable responsibility. Under conditions of the transition from administrative methods of management to economic methods, the expansion of the independence of enterprises and associations, and the adoption of new approaches to foreign economic activity, it was considered essential to train these personnel to make full use of the rights and opportunities granted to them.

Strengthening the social orientation of personnel activities was also considered to be of fundamental importance. Ministries and government departments were expected to restructure their activities more rapidly, to abandon excessive interference

in minor matters and in the operational activities of associations and enterprises, and to focus their attention on scientific and technological progress, improving the economic management mechanism, and addressing major long-term issues related to the development of economic sectors.

To accelerate socio-economic development and improve services to the population, the role and responsibility of the Soviets of People's Deputies were expected to be strengthened in practice. Trade union personnel were required to adopt a more active position in resolving production-related and social issues. The initiative of Komsomol organizations was also expected to be developed in every possible way 6.

It was considered important to strengthen the ideological sphere with individuals who were theoretically and professionally well prepared, fully aware of the demands of the period, capable of working creatively, and able to effectively promote Party policy and persuade the population 7. Personnel of law-enforcement agencies were required to learn to work persistently under conditions of expanding democracy and glasnost, relying on the trust and support of the entire population. New requirements were also imposed on personnel of foreign-policy institutions in connection with the active international activities of the CPSU and the Soviet state. Particular attention was paid to military personnel responsible for the important task of protecting the peace and security of the Soviet people.

At the new stage of reform, the “personnel revolution” gained further momentum. The January 1987 Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee discussed the issue of fundamental changes in personnel policy. For the first time, the possibility of holding elections to the Soviets on an alternative basis was announced. The initiators of perestroika sought to broaden its social base and identify new managerial personnel who had previously been excluded from the Brezhnev-era elite. By 1990,

6 Ражабов Қ. Ўзбекистон тарихи (1917–1991 йиллар). – Тошкент: Ўқитувчи, 2019.
7 Ўзбекистоннинг янги тарихи. 2-китоб. Ўзбекистон совет мустамлакачилиги даврида. – Тошкент: Шарқ, 2000.

approximately 85 percent of senior personnel in the CPSU Central Committee and 70 percent of personnel at the republican level had reportedly been replaced.

Facing public dissatisfaction caused by the existing economic difficulties, M. Gorbachev, during his visit to Vladivostok in August 1986, accused the “middle level” of the administrative system of sabotaging perestroika. A mass replacement and rejuvenation of the state and party apparatus at the middle and lower levels subsequently began. In reality, M. Gorbachev himself did not initially possess a clearly defined program of perestroika. In the summer of 1987, elections to local Soviets were held. These elections permitted the nomination of several candidates for a single deputy seat.

One of the most important factors of perestroika was the policy of glasnost, reinforced by the resolution of the 19th All-Union Party Conference. The introduction of this principle into social practice revealed the depth of the crisis developing in public consciousness and provided an ideological basis for fundamental political changes. It also reflected the recognition that scientific, technological, and social problems could not be resolved without exposing shortcomings and deficiencies that hindered the realization of the “potential of socialism” in the spirit of glasnost. The easing of censorship over the mass media, the abolition of special collections in libraries, and permission to publish previously prohibited works were also envisaged as important components of the policy of glasnost. The works of writers whose creative output had previously been largely unknown to the general public suddenly entered the literary sphere. These included V. Nabokov, V. Khodasevich, A. Platonov, M. Bulgakov, O. Mandelstam, J. Brodsky, A. Galler, V. Nekrasov, V. Lyudiksev, A. Solzhenitsyn, A. Fitrat, and others. A. Rybakov’s novel Children of the Arbat, published in 1988–1989 and devoted to the political repressions of the 1930s, became particularly popular. Millions of people read the novel and regarded it as one of the most important works for critically examining the country’s past. In Uzbekistan, the

previously unpublished works of the talented writer Temur Pulatov, although written considerably earlier, were also published in both Russian and Uzbek. The spirit of glasnost also entered cinema and television. Tengiz Abuladze's anti-totalitarian feature film Repentance became an important cultural manifestation of this process. In 1987, television programs such as Vzglyad ("The View"), Pyatoe koleso ("The Fifth Wheel"), Do i posle polunochi ("Before and After Midnight"), and other programs appeared. The policy of glasnost significantly contributed to the development of journalism and political-publicistic writing. The mass media, particularly periodicals, increasingly began to expose previously concealed "dark spots" and shortcomings. The newspaper Moskovskie Novosti and major political and literary journals such as Novy Mir, Znamya, Oktyabr, and Druzhba Narodov occupied leading positions. Their circulation increased to unprecedented levels, while numerous independent and unofficial newspapers and journals began to appear. Historical journalism acquired particular significance, and the "blank spots" in Soviet history were increasingly revealed. The growing politicization of society was clearly reflected in the emergence of informal mass associations and public organizations, including Popular Fronts, political clubs, associations, religious-philosophical groups, environmental movements, national-cultural organizations, and human-rights movements and groups 8.

A society that had been conditioned to political indifference for decades began, within just a few months, to take an active interest in politics as a result of glasnost.

In 1987–1988, "workers' clubs" emerged with the aim of establishing social justice and improving labor legislation. Many activists of these increasingly politicized workers' clubs later became participants in various structures of the emerging labor movement and advocates of different political ideas.

It soon became apparent that the party apparatus was unable to control the ideological transformation that the authorities themselves had initiated or to keep the growing freedom of speech within the framework of "socialist pluralism." The

8 Ўзбекистоннинг янги тарихи. 2-китоб. Ўзбекистон совет мустамлакачилиги даврида. – Тошкент: Шарқ, 2000.

revision of the official version of Soviet history began, first and foremost, with an examination of the Stalinist period. In response to growing public demands and increasingly sharp criticism, a special commission was established under the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee to conduct an additional examination of materials relating to the political repressions of the 1930s and 1940s.

In his speech, M. S. Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, limited his criticism primarily to previous party leaders—Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev—while giving an overly favorable assessment of his own leadership activities. Instead of presenting a clearly defined program of perestroika, he advanced the idea of combining economic decentralization with democratic governance:

"The objective of the fundamental economic reform initiated in the country is to ensure, within the next two or three years, a transition from an excessively centralized, command-based management system to a democratic system of governance based primarily on economic methods and on an appropriate combination of centralism and self-government." Under the conditions created by the development of perestroika in the political and spiritual spheres, it became necessary to consolidate the positive factors emerging there with corresponding achievements in the economic sphere 9. According to Soviet policymakers, the economic system needed to become capable of effectively assimilating the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution, adapting to the constantly changing and developing needs of society, and responding rapidly to all forms of creative initiative 10.

In this context, beginning in the summer of 1987, a series of economic measures proposed by prominent economists, including L. Abalkin, A. Aganbegyan, T. Zaslavskaya, P. Bunich, and others, began to be implemented. The concept of "self-financing socialism" developed by these economists was aimed at increasing the

9 Ражабов Қ. Ўзбекистон тарихи (1917–1991 йиллар). – Тошкент: Ўқитувчи, 2019.
10 Ўзбекистоннинг янги тарихи. 2-китоб. Ўзбекистон совет мустамлакачилиги даврида. – Тошкент: Шарқ, 2000.

efficiency of the Soviet economic mechanism without fundamentally transforming the existing economic system. The proposed reforms were intended to expand the autonomy of enterprises on the basis of economic accounting and self-financing; strengthen the practice of electing enterprise managers; revive the private sector, initially through the development of cooperative enterprises; abandon the state monopoly in foreign economic activity and integrate the Soviet economy into the world market; decentralize management by reducing the number of sectoral ministries and administrative bodies and redefining their relations with enterprises; and develop various forms of economic activity in rural areas, including collective and state farms, agro-industrial complexes, lease-based cooperatives, farms, and other forms. The implementation of this economic program, with the completion of most reforms planned for 1990, initially proceeded through traditional administrative mechanisms supported by relevant laws and government resolutions. The practical implementation of the concept of "self-financing socialism" began with the USSR Law On the State Enterprise (Association), adopted on June 30, 1987. This law clarified relations between ministries and enterprises and granted enterprises greater economic independence, representing an attempt to create an environment conducive to competition. The role of central planning bodies was limited primarily to preparing control figures for economic development and determining state orders. Enterprises were permitted to sell products manufactured beyond the state order at freely determined prices. They were also granted the right to independently determine the number of employees, establish wage levels, and select economic partners. The right of labor collectives to elect enterprise administrations was also confirmed.

DISCUSSION. The political governance system of the Uzbek SSR was based on a centralized Soviet model that enabled the authorities to exercise control over virtually all political and economic processes in the republic. The predominance of the

Communist Party over state institutions meant that local interests were not always fully taken into account in the decision-making process.

At the same time, a certain degree of institutional experience in the field of public administration was developed during the Soviet period. Such aspects as the training of administrative personnel, the development of the system of state institutions, and the introduction of administrative management methods subsequently provided a certain foundation for the development of statehood.

CONCLUSION. The political governance system of the Uzbek SSR developed as an integral component of the Soviet model of government, with centralized administration and the leading role of the Communist Party constituting its principal characteristics. Although the reforms implemented during the 1950s–1980s were aimed at improving the system, they failed to eliminate its fundamental centralization. The policy of perestroika and the political processes that unfolded on the eve of independence contributed to the strengthening of ideas of national statehood in the republic. As a result, independent Uzbekistan gained the opportunity to establish a new model of state governance.

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