

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET POWER IN TURKESTAN IN MODERN FOREIGN HISTORIOGRAPHY: NEW VIEWS AND APPROACHES (LATE 20TH – EARLY 21ST CENTURIES)

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Abstract: *This article analyzes how the political processes of the early twentieth century in Turkestan and the establishment of Soviet power are interpreted in modern foreign historiography. It examines new methodological approaches by Western and Eastern scholars regarding Soviet colonial policy, national liberation movements, the “Basmachi” movement, and the socio-political activity of the peoples of Turkestan. The application of postcolonial perspectives, new sources, and historical analytical methods in contemporary historical studies has strengthened the tendency to reassess Turkestan’s history in a more objective manner compared to earlier one-sided Soviet interpretations.*

Keywords: *Turkestan, Soviet power, foreign historiography, new approaches, postcolonial theory, colonialism, Basmachi movement, national movement, modernization, Jadidism.*

Introduction: The establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan was a significant political event in world history at the beginning of the twentieth century. During the Soviet historiographical period, this process was interpreted as a “revolutionary victory” and a “path to liberation for oppressed peoples.” In contrast, modern foreign historiography approaches this issue from entirely different perspectives, particularly through imperial and postcolonial frameworks. Methodological Changes in Western Historiography: In the second half of the twentieth century, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the opening of archives and the introduction of new sources on the history of Turkestan into academic circulation. ¹²²This provided Western scholars with access to previously unknown materials. For example, the American scholar Adeeb Khalid, in his 1998 work, interpreted the activities of Turkestan Jadids as a “struggle for cultural independence.” According to him, the early Soviet “national policy” aimed to control this movement by integrating it into the ideological system of the state. The British researcher Alexandre Bennigsen, in his studies, identified the political

1. Khakimov, Zokirjon. The Establishment of Soviet Power in Turkestan: Issues of Historical Analysis and Assessment. Tashkent: Akademiya, 2012.

activity of the Muslim population as a major “ideological threat” to Soviet power. He viewed the “Basmachi” movement not merely as a military or religious uprising but as a political struggle for national independence. The American historian Terry Martin, in his well-known 2001 work, described the Soviet Union as an “empire governed through national republics.” In his view, the policy of “national equality” in Turkestan, including the creation of Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and other republics, represented an imperial mechanism of governance in the form of formal equality. *New Approaches to the “Basmachi” Movement*: While Soviet historiography characterized the Basmachi movement as a counter-revolutionary phenomenon, modern foreign researchers interpret it as a national liberation and resistance movement. For example, Edward Allworth and Marie Broxup examined the resistance of Turkestan peoples within the broader global context of anti-colonial struggles. They considered the Basmachi movement as an effort to preserve national identity in Central Asia. At the same time, these studies also analyze internal contradictions within the movement, such as the interests of different tribes and local groups, external influences, and ideological affiliations.¹²³ This approach helps to understand the movement not as a unified “revolution” or “rebellion,” but as a complex socio-political process. *Evaluation of Soviet Modernization*: One of the new perspectives in modern foreign historiography is the critical assessment of Soviet modernization. For instance, Adrienne Edgar, in her work “Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan,” interprets Soviet modernization as a tool of cultural assimilation and social control. According to her, under the slogan of “modernity,” local traditions and identities were artificially transformed. Other scholars, including Martha Olcott and Robert Service, acknowledge certain positive developments during Soviet rule in areas such as education, healthcare, industry, and agriculture. However, they emphasize that these changes were primarily driven by the needs of the centralized economic system rather than the interests of the local population. *New Scientific Trends and the Problem of Objectivity*: At the beginning of the twenty-first century, post-Soviet academic schools began to emerge. Many researchers now strive to interpret the history of Turkestan from a local perspective. Their main directions include re-examining historical sources, restoring local historical memory, and providing a multifaceted assessment of modernization processes. Today, scholarly debates about Turkestan’s history are dominated by two main perspectives:

- 1) Soviet power as a source of modernization and development;
- 2) Soviet power as a new form of colonialism.

2. Abdullaev, Kamoliddin. *The History of Relations between Russia and Turkestan (19th–20th centuries)*. Tashkent: Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, 2005.

Both approaches have a certain degree of validity, and a comprehensive understanding of Turkestan’s history requires complex analytical methods that integrate these perspectives. Discussion: The establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan remains one of the most multifaceted and debated topics in modern foreign historiography. Since the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, new methodological approaches have emerged in the evaluation of historical events. In particular, postcolonial analysis has contributed to the formation of new scholarly interpretations of Turkestan’s history and its development during the Soviet period. Conclusion: Modern foreign historiography evaluates the establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan not as a one-sided revolutionary process, but as a complex and contradictory historical reality. New perspectives offered by Western scholars differ from official Soviet ideology by emphasizing the national consciousness of Turkestan’s peoples, their struggle for freedom, and their efforts to preserve cultural identity.

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