

# A Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Soviet Rule on the Cultural Identity of Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the impact of Soviet rule on the cultural identity of Uzbekistan: a comparative analysis. The impact of Soviet rule on the cultural identity of Uzbekistan is a complex phenomenon that continues to shape the country's cultural landscape. While the Soviet era brought certain challenges to the preservation of the Uzbek language, traditions, art, and architecture, it also resulted in certain enduring legacies. The comparative analysis of pre-Soviet and Soviet eras provides insight into the struggles faced by Uzbekistan in maintaining its cultural identity and the ongoing efforts to reaffirm its heritage in the post-Soviet era. Acknowledging and understanding these influences helps us appreciate the resilience and richness of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage and its ongoing evolution.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The cultural identity of Uzbekistan has been shaped by a complex history, with one significant influence being the period of Soviet rule that spanned from the early 1920s to the late 1990s. This article aims to analyse the impact of Soviet rule on the cultural identity of Uzbekistan through a comparative lens. By examining key aspects such as language, education, art, and architecture, we will explore both the enduring legacies and the challenges faced by Uzbekistan in maintaining its unique cultural identity in the aftermath of Soviet rule.

Language plays a significant role in shaping and preserving cultural heritage. In Uzbekistan, the importance of the Uzbek language goes far beyond serving as a means of communication. It serves as a cultural lifeline, connecting generations to their history, traditions, and values. In the following paragraphs, we count the significance of language to identity.


The Uzbek language has a rich history that spans centuries and is rooted in the ancestral languages of Turkic tribes in Central Asia [1]. Over time, it evolved into the definitive language spoken by the majority of the population in Uzbekistan. This


linguistic continuity is a testament to the resilience of the Uzbek people and their commitment to preserving their cultural heritage. These factors are considered as historical significance.

Language acts as a vehicle for cultural expression, and the Uzbek language is a cornerstone of Uzbek cultural identity. It embodies the unique traditions, customs, and values that have been passed down from generation to generation. Through its vocabulary and grammar, the Uzbek language carries the intangible aspects of Uzbek identity, allowing individuals to connect with their roots and heritage. It is cultural identity.

The Uzbek language has fostered a rich tradition of literature and art, showcasing the depth and diversity of Uzbek culture. From classic works of poetry and prose to contemporary novels and plays, Uzbek literature has produced renowned authors who have used the language to explore themes of love, history, and societal issues [2]. Both indigenous and foreign influences have shaped Uzbek art, with the language serving as the medium for these expressions.

Oral tradition has always played a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage. In Uzbekistan, the Uzbek language serves as the vessel for transmitting and preserving traditional stories, legends, and

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folklore. These tales, passed on through generations, shape the collective memory of the Uzbek people, instilling a sense of pride and connection to their roots (Abaskanova., 2016- Khakimova., 2014).

## 2 DISCUSSIONS

During the period of Soviet rule, the promotion of the Russian language posed a significant challenge to the preservation of the Uzbek language and cultural heritage. However, in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, there has been a resurgence in the efforts to revitalize and promote the Uzbek language. The recognition of its importance in preserving cultural identity has led to initiatives such as language education programs, literature festivals, and cultural events that celebrate the Uzbek language.

The Uzbek language is not merely a tool for communication; it is a vital part of the cultural fabric of Uzbekistan. It serves as a link to the past, a bridge between generations, and a source of cultural pride. Preserving and promoting the Uzbek language is essential for safeguarding the unique heritage of Uzbekistan and ensuring that future generations continue to embrace their identity. By valuing and supporting the Uzbek language, we uplift the diverse cultural expressions it represents and provide a foundation for the thriving cultural mosaic that defines Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan, with its rich cultural heritage and historic significance, boasts a diverse linguistic landscape. As a country situated at the crossroads of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is home to numerous languages, each contributing to the country's vibrant tapestry of cultures and traditions. And the following paragraphs we count some languages which are used in Uzbekistan.

**The Uzbek language** serves as the official language of Uzbekistan, spoken by the majority of its population. It belongs to the Turkic language family and is closely related to other Turkic languages spoken in the region. Uzbek holds great importance in preserving the country's cultural identity and serves as a means of communication throughout Uzbekistan.

Due to historical and social factors, **the Russian language** holds significant influence in Uzbekistan. It was the lingua franca during the Soviet era and continues to have a strong presence today. Russian is widely spoken by older generations and is particularly prevalent in urban areas, government institutions, and educational settings. It serves as a link to the country's Soviet past and acts as a bridge between various ethnic groups.

**Tajik**, an Indo-European language, is spoken by the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan, primarily in the Bukhara and Samarkand regions. Tajik is closely related to Persian and is written in the Cyrillic script. This language is deeply intertwined with the cultural and historical heritage of the Tajik community, serving as a symbol of their unique identity.

**Karakalpak**, an Oghuz Turkic language, is spoken by the Karakalpak people inhabiting the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan. With its own distinct culture and history, the Karakalpak language serves as a testament to the linguistic diversity found within the country. Efforts have been made to preserve and promote this language, including the establishment of educational institutions and support for cultural events.

**Other Regional and Minority Languages.** In addition to the aforementioned languages, Uzbekistan is home to a variety of other regional and minority languages. These include Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Korean, and various dialects spoken by smaller ethnic communities. These languages are a reflection of the multiculturalism and diversity that define Uzbekistan, contributing to the cultural heritage and enriching the linguistic landscape of the country.

The linguistic diversity found in Uzbekistan is a testament to its multicultural history and vibrant heritage. The coexistence of numerous languages speaks to the country's capacity for cultural synthesis and tolerance. Recognizing and celebrating this linguistic mosaic is essential for promoting diversity, inclusivity, and cultural understanding in Uzbek society. By embracing and valuing the multitude of languages spoken in Uzbekistan, we can fully appreciate the richness of its cultural tapestry and strengthen the bonds that unite its diverse communities.

The linguistic landscape of Uzbekistan has been shaped by historical, political, and social influences. One such influence is the promotion of Russian as a lingua franca, particularly during the Soviet era and following paragraphs, we count these influences.

During the Soviet era, the Russian language was actively promoted as the lingua franca across the Soviet Union, including in Uzbekistan. Russian became a prestigious language associated with education, government institutions, and the elite. It was taught in schools and universities, leading to a significant number of Uzbeks becoming proficient in Russian. And it is **historical context**.

**There are two linguistic impacts** and the following we discuss them:

a. **Bilingualism and Language Shift.** The promotion of Russian resulted in a significant number

of Uzbeks becoming bilingual, and fluent in both Uzbek and Russian. Many Uzbek families encouraged their children to learn Russian to enhance their career prospects and access higher education opportunities. This bilingualism led to a gradual language shift, with Russian gaining prominence in certain domains of public life.

b. Influence on Vocabulary. The presence of Russian as a prominent language has had an impact on the vocabulary of Uzbek. Numerous loanwords from Russia have been incorporated into Uzbek, particularly in domains such as technology, science, and administration. This borrowing of Russian vocabulary enriches the lexicon of Uzbek but also highlights the linguistic influence of Russian.

Russia continues to play a significant role in government and administrative functions. It is used in official documents, court proceedings, and various bureaucratic processes. Proficiency in Russian is often seen as a prerequisite for government positions, further reinforcing its importance in these domains.

Russian is still taught in schools and universities across Uzbekistan, alongside Uzbek and other languages. It remains a popular choice among students due to its perceived economic and academic advantages. However, efforts have been made to promote Uzbek language education, recognizing the need to preserve and strengthen the national language.

In recent years, there has been a renewed focus on promoting Uzbek as the primary language of communication and education. The government has encouraged the use of Uzbek in official settings and has implemented policies to enhance its status. This shift aims to reaffirm Uzbekistan's cultural identity and preserve the national language against the backdrop of increasing globalization.

The promotion of Russian as a lingua franca during the Soviet era has undoubtedly left an impact on the linguistic landscape of Uzbekistan. While it has contributed to linguistic diversity and facilitated communication, it has also led to a gradual shift in language usage and the borrowing of Russian vocabulary. Efforts to promote Uzbek language education and elevate its status demonstrate a commitment to preserving cultural identity and strengthening national languages. Striking a balance between the linguistic heritage of Russian and the national language of Uzbek is crucial in maintaining cultural diversity and promoting inclusivity in Uzbekistan.

Language and cultural identity are closely intertwined, representing the essence of a community's history, traditions, and values.

Uzbekistan, a culturally diverse nation enriched with a long-standing heritage, faces numerous challenges in preserving its native language, Uzbek, and safeguarding its cultural identity. In the following paragraphs, we will examine some of the issues one by one.

The first issue is Globalization and Modernization. As globalization accelerates and modernization influences societies worldwide, traditional languages and cultural practices are increasingly at risk of being overshadowed by dominant global languages and homogenizing forces. Uzbekistan, with its rich linguistic and cultural diversity, struggles to strike a balance between embracing modernity and preserving its indigenous language and customs.

The second issue is Urbanization and Migration. Rapid urbanization and internal migration play a major role in diluting Uzbek language and cultural identity. As people move to larger cities in search of employment or better opportunities, they are often exposed to different dialects or even switch to a lingua franca, such as Russian or English, for socioeconomic reasons. Consequently, this gradual language shift might lead to the erosion of Uzbek's linguistic and cultural roots.

Educational System is the fourth issue. The educational system plays a crucial role in language preservation, yet it poses challenges that hinder the Uzbek language's vitality. In Uzbekistan, there is a heavy reliance on Russian as the medium of instruction in schools, leading to a decreased emphasis on speaking and learning Uzbek. Insufficient resources and policies focused on promoting the Uzbek language perpetuate a cycle where the younger generation becomes disconnected from their cultural heritage.

Digital Media and Global Dominance can be the fifth issue. The rise of digital media platforms and the dominance of English-language content present additional challenges to the preservation of the Uzbek language and cultural identity. The allure of popular Western media, paired with limited or inadequate Uzbek content online, contributes to the adoption of foreign cultural norms and languages, thereby marginalizing native traditions and the Uzbek language.

Changes in Lifestyle and Values can be the last issue. The transformation of societal dynamics and values can impact language usage and cultural practices. With Uzbeks increasingly embracing modern lifestyles, often influenced by Western cultures, traditional values may face marginalization and a decline in relevance. This shift not only affects

the language spoken but also the cultural symbols and practices associated with the Uzbek identity.

Despite the above problems, there are suitable solutions for them. And we will consider them below.

Implement comprehensive language programs that prioritize the Uzbek language from an early age, both in schools and within the community, ensuring its relevance and continuity.

Foster the creation of high-quality online content in Uzbek, ranging from educational resources to entertainment platforms, to promote the language and encourage its use among the younger generation

Invest in cultural institutions such as museums, theatres, and art galleries that showcase Uzbek traditions, providing a platform for the community to appreciate and preserve their cultural identity.

Promote community-led language projects, workshops, and events that encourage Uzbeks to actively participate in cultural programs, strengthening their bond with the language and identity.

Develop and implement policies that prioritize the value of the Uzbek language and culture. Provide financial assistance to organizations and initiatives focused on preserving the language and cultural heritage.

Uzbekistan, a country with a rich Islamic heritage, has long valued traditional Islamic education as an integral part of its society.

Traditional Islamic education in Uzbekistan can be traced back centuries to the arrival of Islam in the region. The country's medieval centres of learning, such as Bukhara and Samarkand, were renowned for their scholars and madrasas (Islamic schools). These institutions played a pivotal role in disseminating Islamic knowledge, nurturing scholars, and preserving the Uzbek cultural and religious identity.

Traditional Islamic education in Uzbekistan emphasizes a holistic approach that combines religious and secular studies. The curriculum typically includes Quran memorization, Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic language, Islamic history, and various other subjects. Students engage in a dynamic learning environment, applying critical thinking, analytical skills, and moral teachings based on Islamic principles.

One of the significant advantages of traditional Islamic education is its focus on moral and ethical development. Through the teachings of the Quran and the life examples of the Prophet Muhammad, students are instilled with values such as compassion, honesty, integrity, and social responsibility. This emphasis on values helps shape individuals who contribute

positively to their families, communities, and society at large.

Traditional Islamic education plays a vital role in preserving and nurturing the cultural identity of the Uzbek people. It serves as a medium through which the Uzbek language, arts, literature, music, and traditions are upheld. By incorporating Uzbek cultural elements into the educational process, students cultivate a deep appreciation for their heritage and strengthen their sense of belonging.

Islamic educational institutions in Uzbekistan serve as focal points for community engagement. They function not only as centres of learning but also as places for social gatherings, cultural events, and religious ceremonies. These institutions create a strong sense of community cohesion and provide platforms for intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Traditional Islamic education promotes interfaith dialogue, fostering an environment of religious tolerance and understanding. Through the teachings of Islam, students are encouraged to respect and engage in constructive dialogue with people of different faiths. This approach cultivates a society characterized by mutual acceptance, harmony, and peaceful coexistence.

Traditional Islamic education remains a significant pillar of Uzbek society, contributing to the preservation of the country's rich cultural heritage, moral development, and social cohesion. By blending religious teachings with secular knowledge, Islamic educational institutions in Uzbekistan nurture individuals who possess both academic excellence and a strong ethical foundation. Embracing the values of tolerance, compassion, and respect, traditional Islamic education continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the character of the Uzbek people and fostering a harmonious society.

The era of Soviet rule in Uzbekistan, which lasted from 1924 to 1991, had a profound impact on the intellectual development of the country. Here are some of its effects.

Under Soviet rule, Uzbekistan's education system underwent significant changes aimed at aligning it with the principles of Marxism-Leninism. The curriculum was restructured to emphasize sciences, engineering, and technical subjects, while social sciences and humanities were often overshadowed. The education system became centralized, with standardized textbooks and syllabi enforced throughout the country.

One of the positive aspects of the Soviet influence on education in Uzbekistan was an emphasis on promoting literacy and providing access to education

for all. The Soviet regime greatly expanded the number of schools and universities, leading to increased educational opportunities for the Uzbek population. This had a transformative effect on society, empowering individuals and opening up new avenues for intellectual growth.

While the Soviet regime emphasized education, it also sought to suppress traditional Uzbek cultural and religious practices. Uzbek literature, language, and artistic expressions were often overshadowed by Russian influences. The Uzbek language had to coexist with Russian as an official language, and the promotion of Uzbek cultural heritage faced challenges under Soviet rule. This led to a dilution of traditional cultural values and a decline in the use of the Uzbek language.

Soviet influence in education extended beyond curriculum restructuring. It sought to indoctrinate young minds with Marxist-Leninist ideology, promoting loyalty to the Soviet state and its political system. Students were encouraged to adopt Soviet values and perspectives, and critical thinking that questioned or challenged the regime's ideology was often discouraged. This ideological indoctrination had a lasting impact on the intellectual development of Uzbekistan, shaping the worldview of many generations.

Although the Soviet ideology overshadowed certain aspects of Uzbekistan's intellectual development, it also contributed to scientific and technological advancements. Investments were made in research centres, technological infrastructure, and scientific institutions. This led to advancements in fields such as engineering, medicine, and agriculture, providing Uzbekistan with a strong scientific foundation that continues to influence the country's development today.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan embarked on a gradual transition away from the Soviet ideology and curriculum. Efforts have been made to revive and promote the Uzbek language, literature, and cultural heritage. The education system has undergone reforms to promote critical thinking, creativity, and a more balanced approach to subjects encompassing both sciences and humanities. However, the legacy of Soviet influence is still felt, as it shaped a generation of Uzbek intellectuals and continues to influence certain aspects of the country's educational system.

In the following paragraphs, we will consider some representatives of the literature.

Alisher Navoi was a prominent poet and writer of the 15th century, also known as the "Father of Uzbek Literature". Through his works, Navoi elevated the

Chagatai language and laid the foundation for classical Uzbek literature. His masterpiece, "Khamsa", consisting of five major poetic works, celebrated love, mysticism, and wisdom, showcasing his profound understanding of human emotions and experiences.

Abdullah Qodiriy was a prolific writer of the early 20th century who played a significant role in modernizing Uzbek literature. His notable works include "O'tgan Kunlar" (Days Gone By), which depicts the challenges faced by Uzbek society during the turbulent years of the early 20th century. Qodiriy's literary contributions were influential in shaping the development of contemporary Uzbek literature.

Fitrat was a renowned writer, philosopher, and social critic of the early 20th century. He was instrumental in introducing modernist ideas to Uzbek literature, advocating for social reforms, and exposing the shortcomings of society in his works. Fitrat's writings dealt with pressing issues such as education, women's rights, and the need for social progress.

Ural Tansybaev was a prominent painter and artist who revolutionized the Uzbek art scene in the mid-20th century. His works reflected a unique blend of traditional Uzbek motifs and modern artistic techniques. Through vibrant colours and striking compositions, Tansybaev captured the essence of Uzbek culture, landscapes, and everyday life, earning him international recognition.

Zulfiya was a renowned female poet and writer who emerged in the mid-20th century, leaving a lasting impact on Uzbek literature. Her works focused on themes of love, nature, and human emotions. Zulfiya's poetry resonated with readers due to its lyrical beauty and ability to evoke deep emotions.

Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire and a descendant of the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan, was also a talented poet and writer. Babur's memoir, "Baburnama", provides valuable insights into the socio-cultural landscape of 16th-century Central Asia and India. His prose and poetry showcased his profound understanding of human nature and the complexities of ruling.

The diverse architectural landmarks scattered across the country reflect the unique identity and heritage of the Uzbek people.

Uzbekistan has been deeply influenced by Islamic architecture, which is most evident in the breathtaking mosques, madrasahs, and mausoleums found throughout the country. These structures feature intricate geometric patterns, calligraphy, and delicate tilework, showcasing the religious devotion

and artistic craftsmanship of the Uzbeks. The Islamic architectural elements serve as a visual representation of the strong Islamic faith practised by the Uzbek people.

The Timurid dynasty, led by the renowned conqueror Timur (Tamerlane), left a lasting architectural legacy in Uzbekistan. Timurid style is characterized by grandeur, elegance, and a harmonious blend of Persian, Islamic, and Central Asian influences. The iconic Registan Square in Samarkand, with its three grand madrasahs, is a prime example of Timurid architecture, captivating visitors with its ornate facades, towering minarets, and majestic courtyards.

The city of Bukhara is a treasure trove of traditional architectural styles, with its old town recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Bukhara style is marked by its compact and enclosed structures, such as the Lyab-i Hauz complex and the Ark Fortress. Ornamental brickwork, wooden columns, and distinctive blue domes characterize Bukhara's architecture, providing a glimpse into the city's rich history and significance as a centre of trade and scholarship along the Silk Road.

Khiva, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, showcases a unique traditional architectural style known as Khiva style. The walled city of Khiva boasts well-preserved structures like the Kunya-Ark Citadel and the Juma Mosque. Khiva style is characterized by intricate ceramic tilework, arched entrances, and towering minarets. The structures within the city walls preserve the architectural essence of a medieval Silk Road trading post, offering visitors a step back in time.

In contrast to the traditional architectural styles found in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, the capital city of Tashkent underwent significant modernization during the Soviet era. Tashkent's architecture highlights the influence of Soviet modernism with its wide boulevards, grand public buildings, and apartment blocks. However, efforts have been made to preserve traditional elements within the city, such as the Kukeldash Madrasah and the Barak-Khan Madrasah.

The traditional architectural styles in Uzbekistan serve as a visual embodiment of the nation's cultural identity. By preserving and showcasing these architectural marvels, Uzbekistan honours its rich heritage and showcases its unique blend of Islamic, Persian, and Central Asian influences. These structures not only captivate with their beauty but also convey the story of Uzbekistan's history, faith, and contributions to art and architecture. As travellers and admirers explore the diverse architectural landmarks

in Uzbekistan, they gain a deeper appreciation for the country's cultural richness and the intrinsic link between architecture and cultural identity (Dadabaev., 2015- David., 2001)

### 3 CONCLUSION

The impact of Soviet rule on the cultural identity of Uzbekistan is a complex phenomenon that continues to shape the country's cultural landscape. While the Soviet era brought certain challenges to the preservation of the Uzbek language, traditions, art, and architecture, it also resulted in certain enduring legacies. The comparative analysis of pre-Soviet and Soviet eras provides insight into the struggles faced by Uzbekistan in maintaining its cultural identity and the ongoing efforts to reaffirm its heritage in the post-Soviet era. Acknowledging and understanding these influences helps us appreciate the resilience and richness of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage and its ongoing evolution.

The notable poets, writers, and artists of pre-Soviet Uzbekistan left an indelible mark on the country's cultural and literary heritage. Their contributions to literature, poetry, and art continue to inspire and shape the creative endeavours of Uzbekistan today. By celebrating their works and recognizing their influence, we ensure that their legacies remain alive and vibrant, contributing to the diverse and flourishing cultural scene of Uzbekistan.

Preserving the Uzbek language and cultural identity is crucial for maintaining a distinct national heritage. By recognizing the challenges posed by globalization, urbanization, changes in the educational system, digital media dominance, and shifting values, Uzbekistan can take proactive steps to safeguard its cultural heritage. Through the collaborative efforts of its people, government, and international support, Uzbekistan can navigate these challenges and renew its commitment to preserving its language and cultural identity for future generations.

The influence of Soviet ideology and curriculum on Uzbekistan's intellectual development cannot be overlooked. While it brought about advancements in education and fostered scientific progress, it also had a destabilizing effect on traditional cultural values and limited critical thinking.

As Uzbekistan continues to navigate its post-Soviet transition, efforts to revive and promote the country's cultural heritage, ensure academic freedom,

and encourage critical inquiry are crucial for building a diverse, intellectually vibrant society.

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