



THE IMPORTANCE OF LESSONS FROM SOVIET REPRESSION POLICIES IN ENHANCING THE SPIRITUALITY OF YOUTH

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the repressive policy of the Soviet regime, its socio-spiritual consequences, and the role of the lessons from this historical period in shaping youth spirituality in the context of modern globalization. The study demonstrates that an objective understanding of past ideological pressures and restrictions is a crucial factor in strengthening ideological immunity and preserving national identity among today's youth. It is scientifically substantiated that the lessons of historical memory serve as a spiritual shield against global cultural challenges. The article also highlights the importance of educating younger generations about the historical experiences of their nation in order to foster a sense of responsibility, patriotism, and respect for cultural heritage. Furthermore, it emphasizes that preserving historical truth and collective memory contributes to the development of a resilient and spiritually mature society capable of responding effectively to contemporary ideological and cultural influences.*

Keywords: *Soviet policy, lessons of repressions, globalization, youth spirituality, historical memory, ideological immunity, national identity.*

INTRODUCTION

The first quarter of the XXI century is characterized by unprecedented technological achievements, intense integration processes, and the rapid acceleration of global information exchange within human development. This universal socio-economic and cultural phenomenon, known as globalization, virtually erases national state borders while widely disseminating transformed cultural patterns alongside universal human values. In such a complex and menacing environment, the sustainable development, internal stability, and future of any society directly depend on the spiritual-moral image of the rising generation and their level of national self-awareness.

Youth spirituality is not merely a collection of individual moral norms; rather, it constitutes a fundamental social system that ensures the strategic security of the state and actively resists external ideological threats. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, youth policy and spiritual-enlightenment reforms are designated as among the most critical priorities of state policy. The task of strengthening the national idea and the spiritual foundation within society, while cultivating a high sense of patriotism among young people, is directly intertwined with the process of comprehending historical truth and drawing proper conclusions from the lessons of the past. Indeed, a generation detached from historical memory, oblivious to the hardships endured and the complex path traversed by its ancestors, is doomed to lose its cultural and national orientations in the global arena. In this regard, a profound scientific analysis of the repressive (qatag'on) policies of the Soviet regime and its consequences—representing one of the darkest and most tragic epochs experienced by the Uzbek people in the XX century—and the integration of these analytical findings into youth education carry urgent scientific and practical significance.

Research Objective and Methodology

This article aims to elucidate the core essence of the religious and political repressions carried out during the totalitarian system of the Soviet regime. It seeks to systematize the historical lessons emerging from these tragic processes and substantiate their functional importance in elevating youth spirituality and shaping a robust ideological immunity in today's age of globalization. Through the application of historical continuity, objectivity, and comparative-logical analysis methods, this study reveals the structural continuity and vital link between past lessons and contemporary social processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

In domestic historiography, the political maneuvers of the Soviet regime in the Turkestan region, along with the strategies aimed at the physical and spiritual elimination of the national intelligentsia, have been deeply analyzed in the research of Academician R. Rajapova and prominent historians such as Q. Rajabov, A. Salmonov, Sh. Xonqulov, S. A'zamxo'jayev, among others. While Sh. Xonqulov, through his long-standing investigations based on rich archival documents, illuminated the tragedy of the repression of Jadid movement representatives and the national clergy, Q. Rajabov elucidated the

chronological stages and specific regional characteristics of Soviet-era repressions. Furthermore, the multi-volume materials compiled by the staff of the “Shahidlar xotirasi” (Memory of Victims of Repressions) Public Fund and the State Museum of the Memory of Victims of Repressions have significantly enriched the source base of this field (Decree of the President of Uzbekistan, 2020).

Among foreign researchers, scholars such as Alexandre Bennigsen, Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, and Robert Conquest analyzed the aggressive assimilation and atheistic policies pursued by the Soviet empire toward Muslim peoples and religious institutions in their respective works. In their view, the Soviet regime regarded religion and national identity as the greatest existential threats to its authority, and therefore systematically sought to eradicate them. However, in past literature, the Soviet repression policy was predominantly studied from a purely historical perspective. Its lessons as a critical factor in elevating youth spirituality and protecting them from alien ideas under contemporary conditions of globalization have not been sufficiently investigated from a comprehensive socio-pedagogical, philosophical, and spiritual standpoint. This article aims precisely to fill this existing academic gap.

Research Methodology

A combination of modern and traditional methods of social sciences and humanities was effectively utilized in conducting this study.

- **First**, it relied on the core principles of historiography—objectivity and historicity. This enabled an evaluation of Soviet-era socio-political processes free from ideological biases, grounding the analysis in real archival data, periodical press reports, and official decrees.
- **Second**, through the comparative-historical analysis method, changes in the religious-ideological policy pursued by the Soviet regime across different decades (the 1920s–1930s, the post-war period, and the 1980s) and their subsequent consequences were examined. These historical analyses were compared with the ideological transformations in today’s globalization era, which revealed structurally similar mechanisms between past and present ideological pressures (such as propaganda, the removal of traditional boundaries/censorship, and virtual manipulation) (Salmonov, 2015).
- **Third**, systemic and sociological approaches were applied to analyze the degree of influence that historical memory elements exert on youth consciousness. Within the

framework of this research, a theoretical modeling method was utilized to determine the explicit correlation between the historical knowledge of young people and their spiritual-moral views.

MAIN PART

Strategic Dimensions of Soviet Totalitarian Repression

From its very inception, the Soviet totalitarian regime began implementing a comprehensive strategy to completely dismantle the national foundation, religious values, and social structure that had been shaped in the region over many centuries. This policy was not directed merely against political opposition, but against the psychology, faith, and cultural code of the people. In Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, this repressive mechanism was carried out in several key directions: the abolition of religious institutions, the confiscation of *waqf* properties, the forced alteration of national languages and scripts (shifting from the Arabic alphabet to Latin, and subsequently to Cyrillic), as well as the systematic physical liquidation of the clergy and Jadid intellectuals, who formed the progressive layer of society.

1. Administrative-Legal Pressure: The abolition of Sharia courts, the legal prohibition of traditional religious education, and the imposition of strict restrictions on the public performance of any religious rituals.

2. Economic Weakening: The seizure of *waqf* lands and properties, which were the primary financial source for mosques and madrasas, and the imposition of high, punitive taxes on religious personnel.

3. Atheistic Propaganda: The establishment of aggressive state-backed organizations such as the “League of Militant Atheists” (*Soyuz voinstvuyushchikh bezbozhnikov*), and the regular publication of materials mocking religion and its representatives in the periodical press (Rajabov, 2024).

4. “Physical Repression”: The execution by shooting or exile of thousands of religious scholars, muftis, mudarrises, and cultural figures under fabricated charges of being “counter-revolutionaries,” “pan-Turkists,” or “spies” during the period of the “Great Terror” in 1937–1938.

The most horrific consequence of these repressions was that the people were forcefully detached from their centuries-old religious and enlightenment heritage for several decades. As a result of the closure of madrasas, the synthesis of fundamental

Islamic and secular sciences ground to a halt. Books and rare manuscripts were burned or kept in classified, secret archives. This artificially created a profound spiritual vacuum (*vakuum*) in society. The Soviet Union attempted to fill this vacuum with communist ideology; however, this artificial idea could not penetrate the deep roots of the people, and consequently shaped a pervasive environment of spiritual crisis.

Looking at today's reality, the direct administrative prohibitions of the Soviet era have been replaced by the covert, hybrid ideological pressures of the age of globalization. Today's youth are constant, active participants in the internet, social networks, and the global media space. While this global arena offers unprecedented opportunities to young people, it also carries serious destructive ideas that threaten their spiritual world. These modern threats include "mass culture" (*ommaviy madaniyat*), consumer psychology, nihilism, disregard for national values, and most dangerously—religious extremism and radicalism (A'zamxo'jayev, 2000).

To visually structure the functional differences and methodological shifts in ideological pressures across different eras, Table 1 provides a comprehensive comparative characteristic of Soviet-era ideological enforcement and contemporary global spiritual threats.

Criteria	Soviet Ideological Pressure (XX Century)	Global Spiritual Threats (XXI Century)
Mechanism of Influence	Administrative prohibitions, physical punishment, coercion, and strict state censorship.	Covert manipulation, virtual attraction, and hybrid information attacks.
Primary Tools and Vehicles	State-controlled press, uniform ideological textbooks, and mandatory propaganda meetings.	Social media networks (TikTok, YouTube, Telegram), virtual games, and decentralized digital media.
Ultimate Objective	Complete eradication of national identity and religion to construct the artificial Homo Sovieticus («Soviet person»).	Erosion of the national mentality and converting the youth into passive consumers of «mass culture.»

Table 1. *Comparative analysis of historical and modern ideological attacks.*

As demonstrated by the analytical layout in Table 1, contemporary threats demand a significantly higher degree of vigilance and a more robust inner spiritual foundation

from today's youth. While the adversary and the vectors of pressure during the Soviet era possessed a clear administrative and tangible manifestation, modern threats infiltrate society under the guise of global information streams.

Consequently, young people detached from historical knowledge easily fall prey to the appeals of various religious-radical and extremist currents circulating on social platforms. These radical ideologies deceptively promise a form of "true Islamic justice." However, the actual historical experience endured by our nation demonstrates that genuine, enlightenment-driven Islam has always championed tolerance, science, and societal progress (Conquest, 1990).

The historical lessons derived from the repressive religious policies of the Soviet regime serve several critical functions in elevating contemporary youth spirituality:

- **Awakening the Value of Independence and Freedom:** When young people comprehend the immense sacrifices made by their ancestors for the right to practice their faith freely, speak and write in their native language, and celebrate national traditions, they cease to view today's peaceful life as a given. Instead, they recognize it as a supreme value that must be actively preserved and cherished (Shamsuddinov, 2003).

- **Cultivating Ideological and Pedagogical Vigilance:** The absolute failure of the totalitarian system's attempts to tear religion out of society—which resulted instead in spiritual impoverishment and deep social crisis—serves as a tangible historical lesson. Through this, the younger generation understands that any radical idea or externally imposed artificial ideology severely retards societal evolution. This understanding forms an *ideological immunity*—a personal worldview that acts as a cognitive filter against information attacks.

- **Providing a Sublime Moral Exemplar:** The life paths of our ancestors who fought to preserve their faith, national pride, and scholarly heritage despite severe religious persecutions (such as the *mudarrises* who taught secretly or the intellectuals who articulated the nation's grievances) serve as a school of fortitude. In the conditions of modern globalization, this enables the education of youth using national heroes as role models, counteracting the destabilizing aspects of Westernized mass culture.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Inoculating the lessons of the Soviet repressive era into the consciousness of the younger generation cannot be achieved by treating them as dry, detached historical facts.

The contemporary youth generation possesses unique visual and interactive characteristics regarding information consumption. Therefore, converting these historical lessons into a dynamic factor for elevating youth spirituality requires profound conceptual shifts within the educational framework:

1. Philosophical Contextualization of History: In academic history curricula, the topic of repressions must move beyond a mere compilation of statistics and dates. It should be taught through deep philosophical analysis, emphasizing human destinies, spiritual losses, and their direct long-term impacts on our contemporary society.

2. Digital Content Diversification: It is essential to increase the volume of modern, high-quality digital content on mass media and digital platforms that exposes the destructive nature of the Soviet anti-religious and anti-national policies while highlighting the resilience of our ancestors. This includes short-form documentaries, educational podcasts, and engaging literary-publicistic materials.

Ultimately, historical memory is not merely a passive journey into the past; it is an active instrument for constructing contemporary spiritual architecture and designing the future. The lessons of past repressive policies constitute the most effective vaccine protecting today's youth from both radicalism and cultural alienation (Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay, 1967).

FINAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, although the repressive policies of the Soviet regime inflicted immense structural damage on the socio-cultural and religious development of the Uzbek people, its severe lessons can serve as a vital spiritual-enlightenment resource in today's age of globalization. Restoring historical truth and deeply comprehending the totalitarian mechanisms directed against religion and spirituality constitute the foundation of a robust ideological immunity among the contemporary younger generation.

Based on the findings of our research, the following scientific and practical recommendations have been formulated to enhance the significance of Soviet religious policy lessons in elevating youth spirituality:

- **Curriculum Implementation:** Introducing specialized courses such as “*Historical Memory and Spiritual Stability*” within higher and secondary specialized educational institutions to teach the far-reaching consequences of repressive policies from a philosophical and sociological perspective.

- **Digital Outreach Strategy:** Regularly publishing interactive materials, infographics, and engaging multimedia content regarding Soviet-era repressions and the profound heritage of the national clergy across social media networks frequently utilized by youth (Telegram, Instagram, YouTube).

- **Immersive Museum Engagement:** Organizing systemic educational visits for youth to the State Museums of the Memory of Victims of Repressions, while strengthening mechanisms of emotional and spiritual impact through real human narratives rather than static exhibits alone.

Ultimately, the lessons drawn from the tragedy and resilience of our ancestors serve as the most reliable compass for the youth—preventing cultural alienation in a globalized world, preserving the purity of national identity and religious-enlightenment values, and guiding them in constructing the great future of Uzbekistan.

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