

## The Role of Southern Regions in Uzbekistan's Economy and their Demographic Situation (1970-1990)

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**Annotation:** This article explores the role of Uzbekistan's southern regions — Qashqadaryo and Surxondaryo — in the economic and demographic development during the period of 1970 to 1990, when Uzbekistan was part of the USSR. It examines their contribution to agriculture and industry, utilization of labor resources, natural population growth, migration patterns, and urbanization processes. The research is based on Soviet statistical records, demographic data, and modern analytical approaches.

**Keywords:** Uzbek SSR, southern regions, Qashqadaryo, Surxondaryo, economy, demography, cotton production, migration, urbanization, Soviet period.

### Introduction

The period from 1970 to 1990 marks a significant phase in Uzbekistan's history, characterized by economic and social transformations under Soviet rule. The southern regions — Qashqadaryo and Surxondaryo — played a pivotal role in the economic structure of the Uzbek SSR due to their rich natural resources, favorable climate, and large labor force. These regions were especially prominent in agriculture, notably cotton farming and livestock, as well as in the energy sector through oil and gas production. At the same time, high population growth, internal migration, and urban expansion significantly impacted the regions' socio-economic landscape. This article aims to provide an in-depth analysis of these dynamics.

### Main Body

#### 1. Economic Potential: Agricultural and Industrial Directions

Between 1970 and 1990, the Qashqadaryo and Surxondaryo regions held the largest share in Uzbekistan's cotton production. Annual cotton output steadily increased, making these regions leaders in the republic's export capacity. The energy infrastructure was developed through oil and gas fields in Muborak, Sho'rtan, and G'uzor. With the launch of the Muborak Gas Processing Plant in 1974, the gas supply for the entire republic was stabilized.

Additionally, enterprises in light industry, food production, and construction materials operated actively in the region, which contributed to rising employment levels.

#### 2. Demographic Situation: Natural Growth and Migration

The southern regions recorded the highest birth rates in the Uzbek SSR. By the mid-1980s, Qashqadaryo had an annual population growth rate of approximately 3.2–3.5%. Alongside natural increase, migration processes were also observed. Many young people moved to industrialized areas such as Tashkent in search of work, which influenced the demographic structure of these regions.

#### ➤ Cotton Production:

In the 1980s, cotton yields were around 25–28 centners per hectare. Each year, over 800,000 to 1 million tons of raw cotton were delivered.

➤ Energy:

In 1974, the Muborak Gas Processing Plant was commissioned. The Shoʻrtan and Gʻuzor oil and gas fields provided a major part of the republic's gas supply.

➤ Industry:

Factories producing construction materials (cement, bricks), food products, and light industry goods (cotton processing, oil production) were active.

➤ Agriculture:

Main crops included cotton, grain, vegetables, and orchards.

### 3. Urbanization and Infrastructure Development

Between 1970 and 1990, the cities of Qarshi and Termez expanded significantly. New residential areas, industrial zones, and transport infrastructure (bus routes and railway stations) were developed. The number of schools, technical colleges, vocational institutions, and hospitals increased. The opening of Qarshi State University marked a new stage in training qualified personnel for the southern regions.

### 4. Labor Market and Economic Activity

The population of the southern regions was mainly engaged in agricultural work. Each year, thousands of workers were mobilized during the cotton harvest season, highlighting the influence of seasonal employment on the local economy.

At the same time, a shortage of permanent jobs in industrial enterprises occasionally caused social discontent, which in turn spurred migration movements.

#### Demographic Indicators (1970–1990)

##### Natural Growth (per year):

| Region      | 1970s | Late 1980s |
|-------------|-------|------------|
| Qashqadaryo | 2.9%  | 3.5%       |
| Surxondaryo | 3.1%  | 3.7%       |

##### Estimated Population:

| Region      | 1970     | 1990       |
|-------------|----------|------------|
| Qashqadaryo | ~900,000 | ~1,700,000 |
| Surxondaryo | ~800,000 | ~1,600,000 |

### Conclusion

From 1970 to 1990, the southern regions played a distinct role in the economy of the Uzbek SSR as centers of agriculture and energy production. Cotton farming, the oil and gas industry, the food sector, and light industry served as the foundation for the regions' development. Natural population growth, urbanization, and internal migration processes directly influenced the social and political balance. This historical experience became an important factor in shaping Uzbekistan's development strategies in the post-independence period.

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