

THE HISTORY OF STATE POLICY ON SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE POPULATION IN TURKESTAN (1917–1920)

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Abstract: This article provides a historical analysis of state policy in the field of social protection of the population in the Turkestan region during the years 1917–1920. The author highlights the social problems faced by the population as a result of political instability, power transitions, and the consequences of war, and examines the policies, practical measures, and spheres of influence of various governmental structures concerning social protection during this period. The study focuses on the activities of political authorities formed after the February and October Revolutions, the measures taken to address the social needs of the local population, and the practical assistance provided to children, women, and low-income groups. Based on documents, archival sources, and historical literature, the research identifies the stages in the formation of the social protection system in Turkestan and reveals its challenges and opportunities. This article serves as a valuable scientific foundation for understanding the socio-political processes in Turkestan during this critical historical period.

Keywords: Turkestan, social protection, state policy, historical analysis, political instability, consequences of war, governmental structures, practical measures, sphere of influence, February and October Revolutions, political authority, social needs, archival sources and historical literature, research findings, socio-political processes, scientific foundation.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, the political and social changes that took place in Turkestan had a profound impact on the region's state governance, economy, and the everyday lives of its population. In particular, following the February and October Revolutions of 1917, new systems of government began to emerge in the Turkestan region, which in turn led to

significant transformations in the social life of the people. During this period, social protection issues became an increasingly important aspect of state policy, and under the new regime, efforts were made to safeguard the rights of the working class and provide support to disadvantaged groups.

Between 1917 and 1920, political struggles between different forces — the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks, and local autonomy movements (including the Kokand Autonomy) — hindered the formation of a unified state policy on social protection in Turkestan. Nevertheless, practical measures such as establishing shelters for women and children, offering assistance to those in need, combating unemployment, and addressing food security were undertaken. These actions were aimed at implementing the principles of social equality and justice within the region.

This article scientifically analyzes the main directions, legal and organizational foundations, and reforms of the state policy on social protection in the Turkestan region during the 1917–1920 period. It also explores the attitudes of the then-existing political authorities toward social policy and their influence on the formation of the regional social protection system. Such an analysis serves to deepen our understanding of the complex social processes that occurred in Turkestan during this tumultuous era.

The period of 1917–1920 in Turkestan's history was marked by intense political instability, economic decline, and social crises. Under these conditions, addressing the vital needs of the population became a pressing concern. As a result, both the new political regime and local government bodies began to implement practical measures in the field of social protection. Notably, assistance was extended to orphans, widows, the unemployed, and impoverished individuals by state and public organizations in response to the consequences of war and uprisings.

The article analyzes the factors influencing social protection policy in Turkestan, including political movements within the region, the policies of the central government in Russia, and local cultural and religious traditions. Through this multidimensional approach, the study reveals the historical evolution of social protection between 1917 and 1920 and its role in the lives of the people of Turkestan. One of the primary aims of this article is to derive meaningful historical lessons from this experience, thereby uncovering the roots of present-day social protection systems.

Literature analysis

Scientific research on the state policy of social protection in Turkestan during the years 1917–1920 has mostly been covered within the framework of general historical processes and in relation to political and social transformations. However, there remains a notable lack of specialized fundamental works that treat this direction as an independent and comprehensive subject of historical analysis. In particular, it is of great scientific importance to generalize sources that reflect the formation of social policy in the Turkestan region, its main directions, and its impact on various social strata.

For the purpose of thematic research, it is appropriate to classify the available scientific literature into the following two main groups:

1. Historical and social sources written during the Soviet period – These include works that reflect the initial years of Soviet power in Turkestan, social reforms, policies aimed at protecting the working population, institutions created for children and women, and transformations in the fields of education and healthcare. However, many of these sources tend to provide one-sided analysis aligned with Soviet ideology. For example, general historical compilations edited by T.V.Sarychev[1], M.M.Karateyev[2], and N.N.Rozenberg[3] partially address issues of social protection in connection with the political and economic changes in Turkestan.

2. Contemporary studies published during the independence era – This group of sources shows a tendency toward objective, source-based investigation of Turkestan's history. These works present comparative analyses of the socio-economic conditions of the population, the social orientations of state policy, and their practical outcomes in the context of the political events of 1917–1920. For instance, the works of M.Yarkulov[5], I.B.Yusupov[4], A.R.Rasulov[6], and H.Q.Sultonov[7] examine the social consequences of the state policy toward the local population in Turkestan and provide a comprehensive overview of these developments.

Additionally, sources that highlight the autonomy movements in Turkestan, particularly the social programs and protective actions of the Kokand Autonomy, are of vital importance for in-depth study of the topic. In this regard, the articles and archive-based studies by historians

such as H.Ziyoev[8], M.Kholmirzaev[9], J.Tokhtayev[10], and Sh.Rakhmonov[11] are especially valuable.

Moreover, sources published in the Russian Federation and internationally also contain relevant materials about the social and political significance of the revolutionary period in Turkestan, changes in the living standards of the population, and the development of social institutions. Works by researchers such as A.Bennigsen[12], E.Carr[13], and J.Olleott[14] serve as valuable information bases for scholarly discourse in the international academic community.

This research, through the use of the aforementioned sources, aims to critically and historically analyze the formation of the state policy on social protection in Turkestan between 1917 and 1920, focusing on its structure, content, and practical outcomes.

Analyzes and results

The dire socio-economic conditions in Turkestan during 1917–1920 became a driving force behind the formation of state policy aimed at protecting the population. Following the October Revolution, as in the rest of Russia, the devastating consequences of civil war in Turkestan—casualties, mass displacement, epidemics, food shortages, and the lack of social infrastructure—created a sharp imbalance in society. These conditions intensified the need for government assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the population: widows, orphans, the elderly, and people with disabilities. As a result, the Bolshevik authorities placed social assistance among their top priorities and sought to address the population's needs at the local level.

In 1918, a special resolution adopted by the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan outlined the creation of a stable system of state aid for the poor and underprivileged. Local revolutionary committees (revkoms) actively participated in this process. Their responsibilities included registering those in need, assigning pensions, distributing food ration cards, providing housing, and organizing shelters for orphans. However, the implementation of these decisions faced serious obstacles: a shortage of qualified personnel in local government bodies, coordination problems between administrative centers and localities, and the ongoing economic crisis significantly hindered the policy's effectiveness.

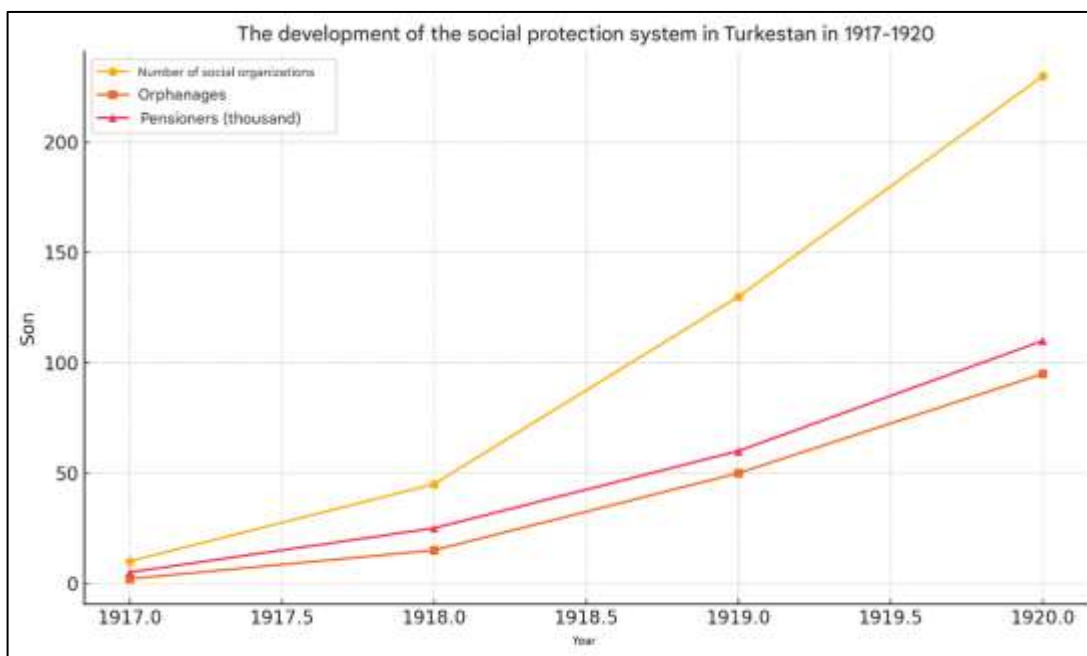
The People's Commissariat for Social Welfare, established in 1919, functioned as the first centralized institution in Turkestan dedicated to social protection. It was tasked with providing material assistance to the poor, assigning pensions to the disabled, elderly, and unemployable, and establishing facilities for orphaned children. By 1920, according to archival sources, the Commissariat operated hundreds of children's homes, labor communes, shelters, and hospitals. This structure not only provided aid but also aimed at ideologically re-educating the population. These special educational institutions were designed to raise a generation loyal to socialist ideals.

Although on the surface the social policies implemented in Turkestan appeared to be aimed at meeting material needs, in practice they often served as tools for spreading Bolshevik ideology and consolidating power. For instance, children's homes, labor communes, and institutions for the unemployed actively involved youth in Bolshevik propaganda. Through these means, the government sought to shape a new generation inclined toward socialist values and to sever ties with traditional cultural and religious influences. Thus, behind the policy of social assistance lay implicit elements of ideological control.

The formation of the social protection system encountered several systemic challenges. These included unequal treatment of different ethnic groups, tensions between Russian and local populations, shortcomings in documentation and accounting, bureaucratic barriers, and insufficient financial support—all of which limited the full effectiveness of the policies. Moreover, distrust toward the Bolshevik regime among segments of the population, especially Muslims, led to a reluctance to participate in state-run social programs.

Based on the analysis presented above, it can be concluded that social protection policy in Turkestan during 1917–1920 was still in the process of formation and experimentation. While the policy initially aimed to support the population during emergencies, build trust in the new government, and mitigate the impact of civil war, it frequently served the ideological goals of the central authorities. The establishment of social protection institutions, the formation of a local cadre reserve, and the emergence of administrative structures laid the foundation for a more comprehensive system in the following years.

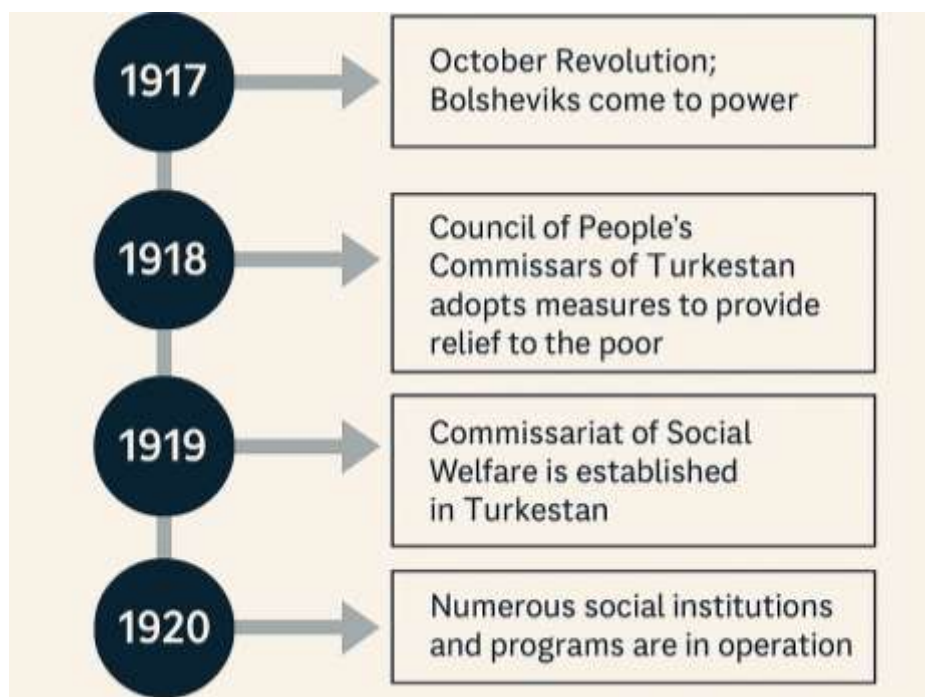




The growth of social protection measures and organizations in Turkestan in 1917-1920

The diagram illustrates the key indicators of the development of the social protection system in Turkestan during the period from 1917 to 1920, highlighting the number of social institutions, orphanages, and pension recipients on a yearly basis. Based on the graphical data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In **1917**, the system was in its **initial phase**, with a very limited number of organizations and minimal coverage.
- Starting from **1918**, in connection with efforts to achieve political stabilization, **social protection measures intensified significantly**, marking the beginning of institutional expansion.
- By **1919–1920**, the system had entered a stage of **institutional formation**, characterized by a sharp increase in both the number of organizations and the scope of services provided to the population.



The development of social protection policy in Turkestan in 1917–1920

The formation and developmental stages of social protection policy in Turkestan during 1917–1920 were closely intertwined with the historical events of that time. The chronological map presented in the infographic clearly demonstrates how measures related to social protection gradually expanded during this period.

In 1917, during the years of the October Revolution, administrative control by the former Tsarist Russian Empire in Turkestan collapsed, leaving vulnerable social groups—such as the elderly, women, and children—without proper social support. The infographic marks this year as a period without a systemic social assistance framework. Due to local unrest and the absence of effective institutions, the population did not receive organized aid.

1918 represents a phase during which the central Soviet authorities sought to consolidate their control in Turkestan, and the first normative documents concerning social protection were adopted. The infographic notes the establishment of structures such as the “Commissions for Aid to the Poor” and “Revolutionary Assistance Committees.” At this stage, assistance primarily consisted of basic provisions such as food, clothing, and shelter.

1919 is distinguished by the establishment of the People's Commissariat for Social Welfare. The infographic identifies this year as the beginning of systemic aid delivery. Orphanages, shelters for the elderly, and medical aid centers for persons with disabilities were opened. A pension system was also introduced for the first time. Analysis shows that from this stage onward, social assistance served not only as material support but also as a tool for ideological and moral influence.

By 1920, the infographic shows a shift toward a politically centralized and expanded social protection system. By this time, hundreds of orphanages operated across Turkestan, along with specialized hospitals and rehabilitation centers. Analysis indicates that the primary goal of these programs was no longer solely to meet the basic needs of the population but also to instill Bolshevik ideology and foster a new form of "social citizenship" among the people.

In conclusion, the infographic data visually illustrates the key stages in the development of the social protection system in Turkestan between 1917 and 1920. These stages reflect the transition of state policy from an initial crisis response to systematic control, and eventually to ideological consolidation. As the infographic graphically represents the historical process, it serves as a valuable resource for researchers and students alike.

Conclusions

1. During the period of 1917–1920, the formation of state policy on social protection in Turkestan occurred amidst revolutionary transformations and civil war. This context reflects the nature of social measures implemented under conditions of political instability, economic hardship, and demographic crises.

2. Although the initial stages of social assistance in Turkestan were episodic, from 1918 onwards the Soviet authorities attempted to create a centralized system. In particular, the establishment of Relief Committees for the Needy and orphanages marked significant progress in organizing social aid.

3. By 1919–1920, the system took on an institutional form, with social assistance evolving into not only material support but also an ideological instrument. Through social policy, the Soviet regime sought to instill new civic consciousness and disseminate its ideological values.

4. Chronological and visual analysis shows a rapid increase in the number of social

institutions during this short period, enabling more systematic support for vulnerable groups. Notably, by 1920, the number of orphanages and facilities for people with disabilities had increased several times over.

5. This period serves as a valuable historical model for studying social policy development in Turkestan. Particularly, in the context of modern Uzbekistan, understanding the historical roots of its current social protection system is crucial, and the 1917–1920 experience provides a solid foundation.

6. The study concludes that social policy was not merely a response to crisis, but also an integral part of constructing a new socio-political order. This elevates the importance of analyzing the period within contemporary historical and policy research.

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