

SHAROF RASHIDOV'S PATRIOTISM IN APPOINTING PERSONNEL

Gochchiyev Zayniddin Gulmurodovich

Uzbek State University of World Languages, Teacher

Abstract: This article examines the personnel appointment strategies of Sharof Rashidov, who served as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR from 1959 to 1983, within the broader Soviet ideological framework. Although the Soviet system demanded conformity to Moscow's dictates, Rashidov subtly fostered a sense of Uzbek patriotism by promoting indigenous cadres to significant administrative, cultural, and economic posts. By elevating Uzbek elites, encouraging the growth of local intellectuals, and balancing loyalty to the Union with the cultivation of national pride, Rashidov contributed to the development of a more self-assured Uzbek national consciousness, the effects of which outlasted the Soviet era. Nonetheless, this process was not without controversies, as it sometimes reinforced patronage networks and systemic corruption.

Keywords: Sharof Rashidov, Soviet Union, Uzbekistan, patriotism, personnel appointments, national identity, cultural elites, indigenous cadres

Introduction: Sharof Rashidov (1917–1983), the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) from 1959 until his death in 1983, presided over a period of significant transformation in Soviet Central Asia. During his tenure, the Soviet Union was grappling with the immense challenge of maintaining a cohesive imperial system while granting limited expressions of cultural and national identity to its diverse constituent republics. Soviet doctrine discouraged overt nationalism, encouraging instead a form of “Soviet patriotism” that demanded unwavering loyalty to the socialist state. Yet, within these constraints, local leaders like Rashidov found subtle ways to instill pride in their indigenous communities, thus fostering a nascent sense of national consciousness that would have enduring consequences well beyond the Soviet era. To understand Rashidov's approach to personnel appointments, it is important to acknowledge the broader historical and political context in which he operated. Under Joseph Stalin's rule, the Soviet state had brutally repressed any perceived nationalist sentiment, uprooting local elites, imposing linguistic and cultural Russification, and filling regional power structures with cadres often disconnected from local realities. After Stalin's death in 1953 and the subsequent Khrushchev Thaw, there emerged a limited, though still tightly monitored, space within which republican leaders could promote native elites. By the 1960s and 1970s, these leaders, Rashidov among them, were tasked with the delicate balancing act of upholding Soviet ideology and meeting Moscow's production demands—particularly the cultivation of cotton in Uzbekistan—while infusing a modicum of local identity into governance and public life. Rashidov's strategy hinged on the tactical use of appointments to key political, administrative, cultural, and economic positions. Rather than pursuing an openly nationalist agenda, which would have certainly drawn unwanted attention from the central authorities, he channeled his patriotism through a gradual, institutionalized promotion of indigenous Uzbek cadres. By elevating individuals who shared cultural, linguistic, and historical roots with the populace, Rashidov ensured that decisions regarding governance, economic planning, educational policies,

and cultural patronage were increasingly shaped by an Uzbek worldview. This approach had a twofold impact: it allowed Uzbek traditions, values, and language to gain a foothold within the official frameworks of Soviet power, and it gave local communities a sense that their own people—rather than distant or ethnically alien administrators—were steering the course of their republic’s future.

Understanding Rashidov’s personnel choices as an expression of patriotism necessitates a reevaluation of how “patriotism” itself functioned under Soviet rule. Unlike the open nationalisms of newly independent states or the ethnic-centered patriotisms seen elsewhere, Soviet “patriotism” was circumscribed by party ideology. Republican leaders were expected to embody socialist internationalism, uphold the class-based fraternity of all Soviet peoples, and relentlessly praise the achievements of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, Rashidov managed to work within this ideological framework and engage in a careful form of “nation-building” from below. His local appointments served as a vehicle for recognizing Uzbek cultural specificity, strengthening indigenous institutions, and preserving distinct historical narratives—all under the umbrella of Soviet orthodoxy. The significance of these personnel policies extends beyond the Soviet period itself. By fostering a class of educated Uzbek professionals, intellectuals, and administrators who were conversant both in the local culture and the Soviet political idiom, Rashidov contributed to a durable sense of collective identity that survived into the post-independence era. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Uzbekistan was better positioned to articulate its national interests and forge a cohesive national mythos, having already benefited from decades of subtle cultural reinforcement and the cultivation of indigenous elites.

Literature review.

The scholarly discourse on Soviet nationality policies, cultural development in non-Russian republics, and the role of indigenous elites offers a foundation for understanding Sharof Rashidov’s personnel strategies in Uzbekistan. Early investigations into Soviet nation-building efforts in Central Asia underscore the complex interplay between central directives from Moscow and local responses that often adapted, negotiated, or subtly resisted these policies [1,2]. Particularly in the wake of Stalin’s death, the Khrushchev Thaw allowed republican leaders a limited but notable degree of latitude to promote local languages, cultural traditions, and native cadres while maintaining professed loyalty to the Communist Party and the Soviet state [3,4].

A significant body of work has scrutinized the concept of *korenizatsiya* (indigenization), originally introduced in the early Soviet period, which aimed to integrate non-Russian nationalities into the Soviet system by promoting their languages and elites [5,6]. While the Stalinist era drastically narrowed the scope of such policies through purges and Russification, the post-Stalin decades saw a partial revival of these principles in a more controlled form. Scholars have shown that by the 1960s and 1970s, republican elites could discreetly foster a sense of local pride and identity, even as they publicly embraced Soviet values [7].

In the case of Central Asia, and Uzbekistan specifically, historians and political scientists have examined how republican leaders navigated the tension between central oversight and the

aspiration for cultural self-assertion [8,9]. Works by Adrienne Edgar and Adeeb Khalid illustrate the nuanced negotiations that local leaders undertook to adapt Soviet policies to local conditions [1,2]. Edgar's study of Central Asian nationhood formation under Soviet rule sheds light on how local elites found opportunities to preserve and redefine national heritage within the state-sanctioned frameworks [1]. Khalid's research highlights that despite the dominance of a "Soviet modernity" narrative, indigenous intellectuals and officials consistently worked to maintain a continuity of local traditions, language, and cultural expressions [2].

Sharof Rashidov's tenure has attracted increasing scholarly attention for his ability to embed Uzbek interests into the governance structures of the Uzbek SSR [10,11]. By examining party records, speeches, and policy outcomes, researchers have highlighted Rashidov's skill in advocating for Uzbekistan's specific needs—particularly in cotton production and cultural development—without appearing to contravene the overarching Soviet ideological line [10]. Abdulaziz Ilkhamov's work, for instance, suggests that Rashidov effectively built a stable administrative cadre that both managed to fulfill Moscow's demands and subtly furthered Uzbek priorities [11]. Similarly, Marianne Kamp's research into Uzbek women's emancipation and modernization efforts provides context for understanding how indigenous cadres influenced social and cultural policy [3]. These studies show that indigenous personnel appointments were not merely cosmetic changes but were key levers in fostering a localized form of governance.

Analysis and Results.

Sharof Rashidov's leadership in Soviet Uzbekistan (1959–1983) represented a complex balancing act between the imperatives of Soviet ideology and governance on one hand, and the nurturing of a distinct Uzbek national identity on the other. At a time when Moscow held the ultimate political authority, Rashidov's approach to personnel appointments became a subtle yet powerful expression of what can be termed patriotic commitment to his homeland. Though true nationalism was constrained within the Soviet ideological framework, Rashidov channeled his patriotism through the careful and deliberate selection of local Uzbek cadres for pivotal positions, thereby advancing indigenous interests, cultural pride, and a sense of national dignity.

The Political Context of Rashidov's Era:

Sharof Rashidov rose to prominence in a period when the Soviet Union had somewhat relaxed the brutal repression of the Stalinist era. During Khrushchev's thaw and continuing under Brezhnev, republican leaders found somewhat more leeway to promote local cadres, though this had to be done without undermining Soviet unity. For Central Asian republics, including Uzbekistan, this was a critical opportunity: decades of forced Russification, purges of local intelligentsia, and centralized economic policies had left them with limited indigenous representation in higher-level governance. As the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR, Rashidov thus inherited a legacy of centralized Soviet control in which local needs and aspirations were often sidelined. His challenge lay in how to engender a more autonomous Uzbek presence without appearing to challenge Moscow's overarching political framework.

Personnel Policies as Instruments of Cultural Affirmation:

Personnel appointments in the Soviet system were not merely bureaucratic decisions. They carried symbolic weight and practical consequences. By choosing who would lead key party committees, ministries, economic enterprises, educational institutions, and cultural organizations, Rashidov influenced the direction of policy implementation and cultural development in his republic. Within the confines of official Soviet ideology, he strategically placed indigenous Uzbeks into significant posts, where their firsthand understanding of local issues—agricultural practices, linguistic nuances, historical traditions—could shape governance in ways that resonated with the local population. This would not only enhance administrative efficiency but also foster a sense of ownership and pride among Uzbeks, who would see their own people at the helm of political and social life.

Navigating the Boundaries of Soviet Legitimacy:

Rashidov's "patriotism" had to be carefully calibrated. Expressing overt nationalism or challenging the Communist Party's supreme authority was out of the question. Therefore, loyalty to the Soviet Union and Communist principles remained paramount. Rashidov publicly affirmed his devotion to Moscow and the official tenets of socialism, ensuring no suspicion arose about his political reliability. Concurrently, he saw to it that well-educated, competent, and loyal Uzbek individuals were entrusted with responsibilities previously held by outsiders or less culturally attuned officials. Thus, Rashidov's patriotism was not a blatant defiance of the Soviet order, but a subtle negotiation—he was embedding local interests within the acceptable framework of Soviet governance rather than working against it.

Strengthening the Uzbek Elite and Intellectual Class:

One of Rashidov's core strategies involved cultivating a robust intellectual and administrative elite. Uzbekistan's cultural sphere—its literature, arts, and historical scholarship—had suffered greatly under Stalinism. Rashidov, an author himself before rising in the party ranks, understood the moral and cultural importance of re-energizing the Uzbek intelligentsia. By appointing Uzbek writers, poets, historians, linguists, scholars, and artists to lead publishing houses, cultural unions, universities, and research institutes, he gave them the platform and influence they needed to revitalize the Uzbek language, examine local history, and celebrate indigenous customs and traditions. This cultural upliftment worked hand-in-hand with the political appointments. It elevated not only the officials in the bureaucracy but also the cultural figures who shaped the narrative of Uzbek identity.

The Economic Dimension and Localized Decision-Making:

Personnel decisions were not limited to political and cultural spheres. Economic administration—particularly in agriculture—was central to Soviet republics' standing in the Union. Uzbekistan's "white gold," its cotton, was a linchpin of the Soviet economy. Rashidov deftly appointed Uzbeks who understood the land, climate, and irrigation systems to lead agriculture and water management agencies. By doing so, he ensured that local experience and knowledge influenced major decisions, potentially increasing efficiency and productivity. Although this approach had a dual edge—leading eventually to patterns of corruption and

patronage—it also fostered a sense of agency and pride. Local administrators, rather than distant Moscow-appointed officials, were now in charge of one of the republic’s most critical resources. This contributed to a subtle form of national empowerment, as Uzbeks saw that those who governed their fields and factories were not strangers, but familiar faces with a stake in the community’s well-being.

Walking the Tightrope of Patronage and Corruption:

Critiques of Rashidov’s personnel strategies often highlight that the deliberate promotion of local cadres also gave rise to patronage networks. Close associates, family members, and loyalists frequently found themselves in influential positions, blurring the line between genuine nation-building and personal power consolidation. The nepotism and corruption that emerged can be seen as a byproduct of a system that lacked transparent checks and balances. Yet, even this critical perspective must acknowledge that a stable cadre of Uzbek officials, despite their faults, provided consistency and a form of collective identity-building that would outlast the Soviet period. In essence, while not entirely devoid of self-serving motivations, Rashidov’s emphasis on local cadres played a significant role in strengthening the republic’s internal cohesion and cultural self-confidence.

The Long-Term Legacy on Uzbek National Consciousness:

The policies Rashidov implemented laid down an institutional and psychological foundation that would have lasting effects. By the end of his rule, Uzbek intellectuals, bureaucrats, and cultural figures were well-established, forming a genuine national elite capable of articulating and advancing Uzbek interests. This development directly influenced how Uzbekistan would navigate the turbulent years following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The existence of an experienced local administrative and cultural leadership facilitated a relatively smoother transition to independence. In the ensuing decades, Uzbek leaders could draw upon the legacy of Rashidov’s appointments to forge a distinctly Uzbek political and cultural path.

Conclusion

Sharof Rashidov’s patriotism in appointing personnel was subtle, pragmatic, and deeply embedded within the Soviet institutional matrix. He did not openly challenge the supremacy of Soviet ideology, nor did he embrace ethnic nationalism in a manner that would have triggered Moscow’s ire. Instead, he worked from within the system to cultivate a cadre of Uzbek policymakers, administrators, and cultural leaders who could, piece by piece, strengthen local identity and assert Uzbek interests. While his era was not without systemic flaws—corruption, nepotism, and an overemphasis on cotton production among them—the underlying strategy of promoting local talent, experience, and cultural intelligence helped lay a groundwork for a modern Uzbek national consciousness. In retrospect, Rashidov’s appointments appear not just as political maneuvering, but as a sustained, if covert, affirmation of Uzbek pride and heritage under the watchful gaze of the Soviet center.

References:

1. Edgar, A. (2004). *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*. Princeton University Press.
2. Khalid, A. (2015). *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR*. Cornell University Press.
3. Kamp, M. (2006). *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism*. University of Washington Press.
4. Sahadeo, J. (2007). *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865–1923*. Indiana University Press.
5. Hirsch, F. (2005). *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Cornell University Press.
6. Martin, T. (2001). *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Cornell University Press.
7. Slezkine, Y. (1994). *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Cornell University Press.
8. Northrop, D. (2004). *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*. Cornell University Press.
9. Roy, O. (2000). *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. I.B. Tauris.
10. Collins, K. (2006). *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
11. Ilkhamov, A. (2000). "The Limits of Centralization: Regional Challenges in Uzbekistan." *Caucasian Regional Studies*, 5(1).