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THE SOVIETIZATION OF AZERBAIJAN: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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СОВЕТИЗАЦИЯ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА: ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ ПЕРСПЕКТИВА

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Abstract. The Sovietization of Azerbaijan, spanning from the early 1920s to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, was a transformative period that significantly impacted the country's political, social, economic, and cultural landscape. This paper explores the multifaceted process of Sovietization and its enduring legacy on Azerbaijan's development. Politically, Sovietization entailed the establishment of authoritarian rule, characterized by one-party dominance and the suppression of political dissent. Socially, it led to both advancements in education and healthcare and the suppression of cultural and religious freedoms, contributing to tensions within Azerbaijani society. Economically, Sovietization fostered the development of heavy industry and infrastructure but also resulted in environmental degradation and economic inefficiencies. Understanding the complexities of Sovietization is crucial for comprehending contemporary Azerbaijani realities and ongoing efforts towards political reform, economic development, and social progress.

Аннотация. Советизация Азербайджана с начала 1920-х годов до распада Советского Союза в 1991 году была периодом преобразований, который существенно повлиял на политический, социальный, экономический и культурный уклад страны. Исследуется процесс советизации и его непреходящее наследие в развитии Азербайджана. В политическом плане советизация повлекла за собой установление авторитарного правления, характеризующегося доминированием одной партии и подавлением политического инакомыслия. В социальном плане она привела как к прогрессу в образовании и здравоохранении, так и к подавлению культурных и религиозных свобод, что способствовало напряженности в азербайджанском обществе. В экономическом плане советизация способствовала развитию тяжелой промышленности и инфраструктуры, но также привела к ухудшению состояния окружающей среды и экономической неэффективности. Понимание сложностей советизации имеет решающее значение для понимания современных азербайджанских реалий и продолжающихся усилий по проведению политических реформ, экономическому развитию и социальному прогрессу.

Keywords: Sovietization, Azerbaijan, authoritarianism, social transformation, economic development.

Ключевые слова: советизация, Азербайджан, авторитаризм, социальная трансформация, экономическое развитие.

The Sovietization of Azerbaijan represents a pivotal chapter in the nation's complex history, marking the transition from an independent state to a constituent republic within the Soviet Union. This period, which began with the Red Army's invasion in April 1920, brought significant political,

social, and economic transformations. The imposition of Soviet rule led to the suppression of nationalist movements, the restructuring of the economy according to socialist principles, and the profound impact of Stalinist purges on the Azerbaijani intelligentsia and political elite. Despite these tumultuous changes, the Soviet era also saw substantial industrialization, educational advancements, and cultural development. Understanding the Sovietization of Azerbaijan provides crucial insights into the broader dynamics of Soviet imperialism and the enduring legacies that continue to shape the region's contemporary identity and geopolitical landscape.

The period from 1917 to 1920 was one of profound upheaval and transformation for Azerbaijan. The collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, precipitated by the February Revolution and the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, created a significant power vacuum. This upheaval allowed various national movements within the vast empire to pursue their long-suppressed aspirations for self-determination. In the tumultuous environment of the Caucasus, where ethnic and political tensions had simmered for years, the disintegration of centralized Russian authority provided a unique and unprecedented opportunity for Azerbaijan to assert its independence and define its national identity [1].

As the Russian Empire fragmented, Azerbaijani political groups and intellectual leaders seized the moment to push for autonomy and sovereignty. The chaos following the Bolshevik-led October Revolution further weakened the remnants of imperial control, emboldening Azerbaijani leaders to take decisive action. On May 28, 1918, amidst the backdrop of regional conflict and the collapse of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, Azerbaijan declared its independence, establishing the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). This historic declaration marked the birth of the first secular democratic republic in the Muslim world, setting the stage for a brief but significant period of nation-building, political experimentation, and cultural renaissance.

The establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) on May 28, 1918, was a monumental achievement, but the nascent state faced a myriad of daunting challenges that threatened its stability and existence. Internally, the ADR grappled with significant political divisions. The government, led by the Musavat Party, had to navigate a complex landscape of competing political factions, each with its own vision for Azerbaijan's future. This internal discord often hampered cohesive policy-making and weakened the central authority's ability to effectively govern the diverse and multi-ethnic population of Azerbaijan. Economically, the ADR struggled with severe difficulties. The disruption of traditional trade routes due to regional conflicts and the disintegration of the Russian Empire's economic infrastructure left the new republic in a precarious financial situation. Efforts to modernize the economy and build a sustainable economic base were hampered by a lack of resources, capital, and technical expertise. These economic hardships were further exacerbated by food shortages and the impact of the ongoing global turmoil following World War I. Externally, the ADR faced existential threats from multiple fronts. Territorial disputes with neighboring Armenia led to armed conflicts, particularly over regions with mixed ethnic populations such as Nagorno-Karabakh. Additionally, the presence of White Russian forces, who opposed Bolshevik control and sought to re-establish a centralized Russian state, posed a constant military threat. The strategic importance of Baku's oil fields also attracted the attention of British forces, who intervened to secure the region's resources and counteract Bolshevik influence. This intervention added another layer of complexity to the ADR's struggle for survival, as the British had their own strategic interests that did not always align with Azerbaijan's aspirations for independence. These internal and external challenges collectively created an environment of instability and uncertainty, making the task of consolidating the ADR's sovereignty exceedingly difficult [2-6].

The rise of the Bolsheviks in Russia marked a revolutionary shift in the country's political and social landscape, profoundly influencing the trajectory of the former Russian Empire's territories, including Azerbaijan. Emerging from the broader socialist movement that had been gaining momentum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Bolshevik faction, led by Vladimir Lenin, advocated for a radical restructuring of society based on Marxist principles. Their ideology called for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship, and the creation of a classless, stateless society through the mechanisms of socialist revolution [7].

The Bolsheviks gained prominence in the chaotic environment following the February Revolution of 1917, which had dismantled the autocratic rule of Tsar Nicholas II but failed to resolve Russia's deep-seated issues. Capitalizing on widespread discontent with the provisional government's inability to address the war-weary population's demands for "Peace, Land, and Bread," the Bolsheviks orchestrated the October Revolution of 1917. This insurrection led to the seizure of power in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg) and the establishment of Soviet rule, marking the beginning of a new era in Russian and world history. Under Bolshevik leadership, the new Soviet government set out to implement sweeping changes based on their communist ideology. These changes included the nationalization of industry, the redistribution of land to peasants, and the dismantling of traditional political and social structures. The Bolsheviks sought to spread their revolutionary ideals beyond Russia, aiming to inspire and support socialist movements worldwide. Their ascendance to power and subsequent policies had far-reaching implications for the regions formerly under Russian imperial control, including Azerbaijan, as they aimed to extend Soviet influence and integrate these areas into a new socialist state framework [8].

Activities of the Azerbaijani Bolsheviks within the ADR and Their Efforts to Gain Support. The Azerbaijani Bolsheviks, influenced by the broader revolutionary fervor sweeping through the former Russian Empire, played a crucial role in shaping the political dynamics within the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). Despite the ADR's declaration of independence and its commitment to establishing a democratic and secular state, the Bolsheviks actively sought to undermine the new government and promote their own communist ideology.

Underground Activities and Propaganda. The Azerbaijani Bolsheviks operated largely underground, as the Musavat Party-led government viewed them as a significant threat. They established clandestine networks and cells across major cities, particularly in Baku, the economic and industrial heart of Azerbaijan. Through these networks, they disseminated propaganda that highlighted the shortcomings of the ADR government, such as economic hardships, internal political divisions, and the ongoing conflicts with neighboring states. The Bolsheviks promised an alternative vision of a socialist state that would bring about equality, social justice, and economic prosperity for the working class and peasants.

Mobilizing the Working Class and Peasantry. A key strategy of the Azerbaijani Bolsheviks was to mobilize the working class and peasantry, who were disillusioned by the ADR's inability to address their immediate needs. In Baku, the Bolsheviks garnered significant support among the industrial workers, who were crucial to the city's oil economy. They organized strikes, demonstrations, and labor unions, emphasizing workers' rights and the benefits of Soviet socialism. In rural areas, Bolshevik agitators worked to gain the support of peasants by advocating for land reforms and the redistribution of property, tapping into the widespread discontent over land ownership and agrarian policies.

Forming Alliances and Building a Military Wing. The Azerbaijani Bolsheviks also sought to form alliances with other revolutionary and leftist groups within the region. They collaborated with Armenian and Georgian Bolsheviks, as well as with the broader Soviet apparatus, to strengthen their position. Furthermore, they began to build a military wing, organizing armed groups that could

challenge the ADR government's forces. These efforts culminated in several uprisings and armed confrontations, contributing to the overall instability within the republic.

Exploiting External Support and Regional Conflicts. Externally, the Azerbaijani Bolsheviks received significant support from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). The Bolshevik leadership in Moscow viewed Azerbaijan as a critical region due to its strategic location and vast oil resources. Consequently, the RSFSR provided financial aid, arms, and logistical support to the Azerbaijani Bolsheviks. Additionally, the regional conflicts with Armenia and the presence of British forces in Baku presented opportunities for the Bolsheviks to position themselves as the champions of national sovereignty and anti-imperialism, further bolstering their support base.

The collapse of Azerbaijan democratic republic: The Red Army invasion of Azerbaijan in April 1920 marked a significant turning point in the region's history, ultimately leading to the establishment of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and the end of the short-lived independence of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). The invasion was part of the broader Soviet campaign to expand its influence and consolidate power in the territories formerly under the Russian Empire.

The invasion was preceded by a period of political instability and internal conflict within Azerbaijan. The ADR, which had declared independence in 1918, struggled to maintain control over its territory amidst competing political factions and external pressures. The Bolsheviks, who had been actively working to undermine the ADR government and promote their communist ideology, saw an opportunity to seize power and establish Soviet control over Azerbaijan. In coordination with local Bolsheviks, the Red Army launched a coordinated military campaign to invade Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani Bolsheviks, who had been organizing underground cells and mobilizing support among the working class and peasantry, played a crucial role in facilitating the invasion. They coordinated with the Red Army to ensure strategic targets were captured and resistance from ADR forces was minimized. Simultaneously, in the capital city of Baku, local Bolsheviks initiated the re-establishment of the Baku Commune, a revolutionary government that had briefly existed in 1918. The Baku Commune uprising aimed to seize control of key infrastructure and institutions within the city, further weakening the ADR's grip on power and creating a favorable environment for the Red Army's advance.

The collapse of the ADR government was swift and decisive. Faced with the combined military might of the Red Army and internal insurrection from the Baku Commune, the ADR's defenses crumbled rapidly. Government officials and military leaders fled or were captured, and the central authority disintegrated.

On April 28, 1920, the ADR officially surrendered to the Bolsheviks, marking the end of Azerbaijan's brief period of independence. The Red Army's entry into Baku was met with minimal resistance, as the pre-invasion activities of the local Bolsheviks had significantly undermined the ADR's defensive efforts. Following the fall of the ADR, the Bolsheviks wasted no time in establishing the Azerbaijan SSR. The new Soviet government, under the leadership of Azerbaijani Bolsheviks like Nariman Narimanov, began implementing communist policies and restructuring the political, economic, and social systems to align with Soviet principles. Land reforms were initiated, industries were nationalized, and efforts were made to promote socialist ideology through education and propaganda. Overall, the Red Army invasion of Azerbaijan in April 1920, facilitated by the strategic uprising of the Baku Commune and the internal weaknesses of the ADR government, led to the swift Sovietization of the region. The establishment of the Azerbaijan SSR marked the end of Azerbaijan's brief independence and the beginning of its integration into the Soviet Union, fundamentally altering its political landscape and setting the stage for significant transformations in the years to come [11].

The establishment of the Soviet regime in Azerbaijan following the Red Army invasion and the collapse of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) brought about a new set of challenges for the Bolshevik leadership. Two significant challenges faced by the new Soviet regime were the suppression of anti-Soviet uprisings and the establishment of Communist Party control over the government and society.

Suppressing Anti-Soviet Uprisings. Despite the apparent success of the Red Army invasion and the establishment of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), pockets of resistance persisted throughout Azerbaijan. Anti-Soviet sentiment, fueled by nationalist fervor and resentment towards Bolshevik policies, manifested in various forms of uprisings and rebellions.

Armed Resistance: Some Azerbaijani nationalists and former supporters of the ADR government refused to accept Soviet rule and took up arms against the new regime. These armed resistance movements, often organized locally and operating in remote regions, posed a significant challenge to Soviet authority. Guerrilla warfare tactics were employed, targeting Soviet officials, military installations, and infrastructure.

Peasant Uprisings: Peasants, particularly in rural areas, also rose up against Soviet rule, primarily in response to collectivization policies and requisitioning of agricultural produce. The forced collectivization of land and the seizure of grain and livestock by Soviet authorities provoked widespread discontent among the peasantry, leading to sporadic uprisings and acts of sabotage.

Nationalist Movements: Ethnic minorities, such as the Lezgins and Talysh people in the northern and southern regions of Azerbaijan respectively, also resisted Soviet rule. These groups, who had aspirations for greater autonomy or independence, saw the Bolsheviks as foreign occupiers and sought to assert their own national identity and sovereignty.

Establishing Communist Party Control. Another significant challenge faced by the new Soviet regime was the establishment of Communist Party control over the government and society. The Bolsheviks sought to centralize power and implement their revolutionary agenda, but faced resistance from entrenched interests, bureaucratic inertia, and rival political factions.

Political Consolidation: The Bolsheviks moved quickly to consolidate their control over key institutions of power, including the government, military, and judiciary. They purged perceived counter-revolutionary elements and installed loyal Communist Party members in positions of authority. Party cells were established at all levels of government to ensure adherence to Soviet directives.

Ideological Indoctrination: Efforts were made to indoctrinate the population with communist ideology through education, propaganda, and mass mobilization campaigns. Schools and universities were restructured to promote Marxist-Leninist principles, while cultural institutions were subjected to ideological scrutiny and censorship. The Communist Party sought to create a new generation of loyal citizens who would embrace socialism and reject bourgeois values.

Repression and Control: Repression played a central role in maintaining Communist Party control over society. Political dissent was ruthlessly suppressed through arrests, imprisonment, and executions. The secret police, such as the Cheka and later the NKVD, operated with impunity, rooting out perceived enemies of the state and enforcing obedience to Soviet authority.

Nariman Narimanov: Nariman Narimanov, a prominent Azerbaijani communist leader, played a crucial role in facilitating the Sovietization process in Azerbaijan. As a key figure within the Bolshevik Party, Narimanov wielded significant influence and power during the early years of Soviet rule in the region. His leadership within the Azerbaijani Bolshevik movement allowed him to navigate the complexities of Soviet politics and effectively implement Bolshevik policies in Azerbaijan. Narimanov advocated for national autonomy within the framework of the Soviet Union, recognizing the importance of preserving Azerbaijani identity while advancing Soviet interests. His

pragmatic approach to governance struck a balance between promoting socialist ideology and accommodating local sensitivities, which helped legitimize Soviet rule in Azerbaijan [11].

Under Narimanov's leadership, significant cultural and educational reforms were implemented to propagate Marxist-Leninist ideology and promote loyalty to the Soviet regime. He championed literacy and education, particularly among rural and disadvantaged populations, while supporting the development of Azerbaijani language and literature. Additionally, Narimanov oversaw the collectivization of agriculture, the nationalization of industry, and the establishment of state-controlled economic planning mechanisms. Despite facing opposition, he remained committed to advancing Bolshevik policies and consolidating Soviet control over the economy and society.

Narimanov's legacy as a key figure in the Sovietization of Azerbaijan remains complex. While he played a crucial role in shaping Azerbaijani history during the early years of Soviet rule, his tenure is subject to debate and interpretation. Some view Narimanov as a pragmatic leader who mitigated the worst excesses of Soviet rule, while others criticize his actions for contributing to the erosion of Azerbaijani national identity and autonomy. Nonetheless, his influence and contributions to the Sovietization process underscore the complexities of Azerbaijani history and the enduring legacy of Soviet influence in the region [11].

The Soviet government implemented a comprehensive set of economic policies in Azerbaijan aimed at transforming the economy in line with socialist principles and consolidating state control over key sectors. Central to these policies was the nationalization of industries, particularly the oil sector, which held strategic importance due to Azerbaijan's vast oil reserves. By nationalizing industries such as oil extraction, refining, and transportation, the state sought to centralize economic decision-making and maximize its control over vital resources. This move allowed the government to direct revenue from the oil industry towards industrialization efforts and social programs, while also ensuring that the nation's oil wealth remained firmly under state control. In addition to nationalization, another significant economic policy implemented by the Soviet government was the collectivization of agriculture. This policy aimed to modernize farming practices, increase agricultural productivity, and facilitate the transition to large-scale, industrialized agriculture. Individual farms were merged into collective and state farms, known as kolkhozes and sovkhozes, respectively. Despite facing resistance from some peasants, collectivization was aggressively pursued, often through a combination of incentives and coercion. While the policy aimed to improve agricultural efficiency, it also led to significant disruptions and upheaval in rural communities [12].

The implementation of these economic policies fundamentally reshaped Azerbaijan's economy and society. Nationalization and collectivization brought about profound changes, transforming the country's economic structure and social fabric. However, these policies also led to challenges and tensions, as they often met with resistance from various segments of the population. Peasants, in particular, were wary of surrendering their land and traditional way of life to state-controlled collectives. Despite these challenges, the Soviet government remained steadfast in its commitment to socialist transformation, viewing nationalization and collectivization as essential steps towards building a more equitable and prosperous society. Over time, the effects of these economic policies became deeply ingrained in Azerbaijan's economy and society, shaping its development trajectory for decades to come. The legacy of nationalization and collectivization continues to be felt today, underscoring the enduring impact of Soviet-era economic interventions on the country's economic structure, social dynamics, and political landscape.

The implementation of Soviet economic policies in Azerbaijan, including the nationalization of industries and the collectivization of agriculture, had profound social consequences that reshaped the country's class structure and disrupted traditional ways of life. These policies fundamentally

altered the distribution of wealth and power within Azerbaijani society, leading to the transformation of the class hierarchy. The nationalization of industries resulted in the emergence of a new bureaucratic elite and technocratic class, composed of party officials, state administrators, and managers of state-owned enterprises. Meanwhile, the collectivization of agriculture led to the consolidation of agricultural resources under state control, effectively eroding the economic autonomy of individual farmers and redistributing land and resources among collective farms and state agricultural enterprises. As a result, traditional agrarian elites, such as landowners and wealthy farmers, saw their influence diminish, while the bureaucratic and managerial class associated with the state apparatus grew in prominence.

Furthermore, the implementation of Soviet economic policies had a profound impact on traditional ways of life in Azerbaijan, particularly in rural areas where agriculture was the primary means of livelihood. The collectivization of agriculture disrupted centuries-old patterns of land ownership and agricultural practices, as individual farms were merged into collective and state farms. This led to significant social and cultural upheaval, as peasants were forced to abandon their traditional roles as independent farmers and adapt to the collective farming model imposed by the state. Many rural communities experienced dislocation and hardship as they grappled with the challenges of collectivization, including resistance from some peasants who resisted surrendering their land and traditional way of life to state-controlled collectives. The upheaval caused by collectivization also had broader social repercussions, contributing to increased migration from rural to urban areas as peasants sought alternative livelihoods and opportunities outside of agriculture [9]

Moreover, the social consequences of Soviet economic policies extended beyond the agricultural sector, affecting all aspects of Azerbaijani society. The nationalization of industries and the centralization of economic decision-making under state control led to the emergence of new social hierarchies based on party affiliation, bureaucratic rank, and access to resources. This resulted in increased social stratification and inequality, as those with connections to the ruling party or positions within the state bureaucracy enjoyed privileged access to goods, services, and opportunities, while others faced restrictions and limitations. Additionally, the promotion of socialist ideology through education, propaganda, and mass mobilization campaigns sought to instill a sense of collective identity and loyalty to the state, further shaping social norms and values in accordance with Soviet principles. Overall, the social consequences of Soviet economic policies in Azerbaijan were far-reaching, profoundly influencing the country's social structure, cultural identity, and collective consciousness. Soviet rule in Azerbaijan had a profound and lasting impact on the country's development, particularly in the areas of heavy industry, infrastructure modernization, and educational advancements.

Firstly, Soviet policies prioritized the development of heavy industry in Azerbaijan, aiming to transform the country into an industrial powerhouse within the Soviet Union. This focus led to significant investments in sectors such as oil and gas, petrochemicals, metallurgy, and machinery production. The establishment of large-scale industrial complexes and factories laid the foundation for Azerbaijan's industrialization, creating employment opportunities and driving economic growth. The legacy of this industrial focus can still be seen today, with Azerbaijan's economy retaining a strong emphasis on heavy industry, particularly in the energy sector, which continues to be a major contributor to the country's GDP.

Soviet rule brought about the modernization of infrastructure in Azerbaijan, with significant investments in transportation, telecommunications, energy, and urban development. Roads, railways, and ports were constructed or expanded to facilitate the movement of goods and people, connecting Azerbaijan to other parts of the Soviet Union and beyond. The development of energy

infrastructure, including the construction of power plants and pipelines, helped to meet growing energy demands and fuel industrial growth. Urban areas underwent extensive redevelopment, with the construction of housing complexes, public buildings, and amenities improving living standards for urban residents. Many of these infrastructure projects laid the groundwork for further development in independent Azerbaijan, contributing to the country's continued economic growth and connectivity with regional and global markets. Lastly, Soviet rule brought significant advancements in education and literacy to Azerbaijan. The Soviet government prioritized educational reforms, expanding access to schooling and promoting literacy among the population. Schools and universities were built across the country, providing free education and opportunities for higher learning. The curriculum was standardized, with an emphasis on science, technology, and vocational training to meet the needs of the expanding industrial sector. As a result, literacy rates in Azerbaijan increased significantly during the Soviet era, laying the groundwork for a more educated and skilled workforce. The legacy of these educational advancements can be seen in Azerbaijan's strong emphasis on education today, with investments in human capital development remaining a key priority for the government [10].

Negative aspects of Sovietization: The process of Sovietization in Azerbaijan brought about several negative aspects that had long-lasting repercussions on the country's political, cultural, and environmental landscape. Firstly, Sovietization led to the severe suppression of political and religious freedoms. The Bolshevik regime implemented authoritarian policies aimed at consolidating control over society, stifling dissent, and eradicating opposition. Political opponents were systematically silenced through censorship, imprisonment, and even execution, creating a climate of fear and intimidation. Similarly, religious institutions and practices were targeted, with mosques and religious schools closed, clerics persecuted, and religious expression restricted. This suppression of political and religious freedoms not only violated basic human rights but also undermined the diversity and pluralism of Azerbaijani society, leaving a legacy of mistrust and resentment towards state authority.

Secondly, Sovietization brought about Russification policies aimed at imposing Russian language, culture, and identity on non-Russian nationalities within the Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan. These policies sought to homogenize diverse ethnic groups and suppress local languages and cultures in favor of a unified Soviet identity. As a result, Azerbaijani language and culture faced marginalization, with Russian becoming the dominant language of administration, education, and media. This Russification process not only eroded Azerbaijan's linguistic and cultural heritage but also contributed to tensions and resentment among the Azerbaijani population, exacerbating ethnic and cultural divisions within society.

Additionally, Sovietization resulted in significant environmental damage in Azerbaijan, particularly in the exploitation of natural resources and industrial development. The rapid industrialization promoted by the Soviet regime prioritized heavy industry over environmental conservation, leading to widespread pollution, deforestation, and degradation of ecosystems. The extraction and processing of natural resources, such as oil and gas, resulted in environmental contamination and habitat destruction, posing long-term threats to biodiversity and public health. Furthermore, the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects, such as dams and reservoirs, disrupted natural water systems and exacerbated water scarcity issues in certain regions. The environmental legacy of Sovietization continues to impact Azerbaijan today, with ongoing challenges in addressing pollution, preserving natural habitats, and promoting sustainable development.

The negative aspects of Sovietization in Azerbaijan, including the suppression of political and religious freedoms, Russification policies, and environmental damage, have had profound and

lasting consequences on the country's social, cultural, and environmental fabric. While the Soviet era brought about significant changes and developments in Azerbaijan, it also left a legacy of repression, marginalization, and environmental degradation that continues to shape the country's challenges and aspirations in the present day.

In conclusion, the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, spanning from the early 1920s to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, left an indelible mark on the country's history and development. This period brought about profound changes across political, social, economic, and cultural spheres, reshaping the fabric of Azerbaijani society in significant ways. Politically, Sovietization entailed the establishment of a centralized authoritarian regime, with power concentrated in the hands of the Communist Party and its leadership. The suppression of political dissent and the imposition of one-party rule stifled pluralism and democratic governance, leaving a legacy of political repression and authoritarianism that continues to shape Azerbaijan's political landscape [12].

Socially, Sovietization brought about both positive and negative transformations. While it led to advancements in education, healthcare, and gender equality, it also entailed the suppression of cultural and religious freedoms, the imposition of Russification policies, and the erosion of traditional values and identities. These social changes created tensions and divisions within Azerbaijani society, contributing to ongoing debates over national identity and cultural heritage.

Economically, Sovietization led to the development of heavy industry and infrastructure, but also resulted in environmental degradation, resource mismanagement, and economic inefficiencies. The legacy of Soviet economic policies continues to impact Azerbaijan's economy today, shaping patterns of development, resource allocation, and economic governance.

Overall, the Sovietization of Azerbaijan was a complex and multifaceted process that had far-reaching implications for the country's political, social, and economic trajectory. While it brought about significant changes and developments, it also left a legacy of challenges and legacies that continue to shape Azerbaijan's present-day realities. Understanding this historical period is essential for comprehending the complexities of contemporary Azerbaijani society and its ongoing efforts towards political reform, economic development, and social progress.

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