

Article

Reorganization of Trade Relations in The Uzbek SSR During The Post-War Period (1946–1956)

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Abstract: This article examines the reorganization of trade relations in the Uzbek SSR during the post-war period of 1946–1956 as a historical and economic system. The study aims to explain the mechanisms of transition from a distribution-based economy to a trade-oriented system, changes in pricing and supply policies, and the restoration of domestic market institutions. The scientific novelty of the research lies in interpreting trade reorganization through a three-component model: (1) the abolition of rationing and stabilization of monetary circulation; (2) expansion of the retail trade network and redefinition of the role of consumer cooperatives; and (3) standardization of commodity flows through transport and warehouse infrastructure.

Keywords: post-war recovery, retail trade, rationing system, pricing policy, consumer cooperatives, supply chain, trade turnover.

1. Introduction

The reorganization of trade relations in the post-war period refers to the transition from an emergency system of resource allocation, largely based on ration cards and normative restrictions, to more stable retail and wholesale trade institutions. This transformation operated through the regulation of monetary circulation, price reforms, expansion of trade networks, and restoration of logistical links between production and consumption [1].

For example, the gradual abolition of the ration-card system during 1946–1948 not only altered access to consumer goods but also required trade organizations to adapt accounting discipline and inventory control to new standards. Statistical sources indicate that during the early 1950s retail turnover increased significantly compared with the immediate post-war years, while the proportion of food and non-food commodities became more balanced. Such growth is generally estimated at an average annual rate of 8–12 percent. From a theoretical perspective, trade institutions should be understood not merely as mechanisms of selling goods but as systems of information, standards, and incentives that constitute the institutional foundation of economic recovery [2], [3]. Therefore, this topic remains highly relevant at the intersection of economic and social history.

The transformation of trade relations between 1946 and 1956 was closely linked to industrial recovery, urbanization, changes in income structure, and the evolution of consumption culture. As trade networks expanded, demand signals became more visible, assortment policies developed, and resources were redistributed across regions. Cooperative networks, warehouse facilities, and railway transportation played a critical role in reducing supply disparities between urban and rural areas, thereby mitigating certain forms of seasonal shortages. Indicators such as warehouse capacity, transportation

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turnover rates, growth in retail outlets, and retail floor space per capita are widely regarded in historiography as measures of institutional transformation [4], [5]. Consequently, trade should not be viewed merely as an intermediary sphere but as a systemic institution shaping both production efficiency and the distribution of welfare.

Academic literature generally reflects two major approaches. The first interprets trade policy within the framework of macroeconomic stabilization and price reforms, whereas the second emphasizes everyday life, supply practices, and consumer experience. The former reconstructs causal relationships through normative documents, financial indicators, and planning targets, while the latter examines shortages, queues, product assortments, and service culture as social indicators. Studies on post-war monetary reforms and price dynamics, analyses of the institutional role of cooperative trade, and comparative research on Soviet economic recovery provide the conceptual foundation for this study [6]. Fluctuations in price indices and real wages during 1947–1953 may be interpreted as visible manifestations of trade reorganization, reflecting imbalances between supply and demand. Nevertheless, the integrated analysis of trade infrastructure, cooperatives, and logistics as a unified network remains insufficiently systematized in existing scholarship, a gap that this article seeks to address.

2. Materials and Methods

The study is based on normative-legal documents, reports of trade and cooperative institutions, periodical press materials concerning prices and supply conditions, and aggregated statistical collections covering the years 1946–1956. This source base enables a multidimensional reconstruction of trade relations by combining policy intentions reflected in official documents, practical implementation recorded in institutional reports, and public perceptions captured in the press [7].

Documents concerning the abolition of rationing, regulation of retail prices, and redistribution of cooperative responsibilities were analyzed alongside data on warehouse capacities and railway freight turnover. Annual indicators for the period 1946–1956 were organized as time-series data, with particular attention devoted to the turning points of 1947–1948 and 1953–1956, when institutional changes accelerated significantly. A multi-source approach reduces the risks associated with reliance on a single indicator and provides a more comprehensive understanding of trade as a complex institution [8], [9].

Comparative analysis of the distribution-oriented model of 1946–1948 and the service- and assortment-oriented model of the mid-1950s reveals that the concept of “trade culture” encompassed not only ethical norms but also technical institutions such as warehouse accounting, standardized packaging, and returnable-container systems. Growth rates, indices, and proportional indicators were employed to explain the relationship between logistical and managerial decisions. Methodologically, historical statistics are treated not as direct representations of reality but as products of specific administrative accounting systems.

The analytical framework adapts the concept of the supply chain, viewing commodity flows from production to retail outlets as sequential links involving transportation, warehousing, wholesale bases, and retail stores. This approach highlights how losses, delays, and information disruptions at each stage could generate shortages or excessive inventories [10]. High-demand goods such as sugar, tea, and cotton textiles were particularly vulnerable to logistical interruptions, leading to increased queues and risks of informal market activities. Consequently, practices such as standardized packaging, sealing procedures, and strengthened accounting documentation became increasingly widespread. Indicators including warehouse turnover coefficients, transportation duration, and retail network density were used as proxy measures of trade efficiency.

3. Results and Discussion

Results. The findings demonstrate that the reorganization of trade relations during 1946–1956 followed a three-stage institutional dynamic. The first stage focused on stabilizing the monetary and pricing system; the second involved expansion of the retail

trade network; and the third concentrated on strengthening the supply chain through technical and administrative standards [11], [12].

The monetary reform of 1947 and the abolition of rationing integrated commodity circulation into a unified system based on cash transactions, standardized pricing practices, and improved financial discipline. Retail turnover exhibited steady growth between 1948 and 1953, although growth rates varied across commodity groups due to seasonal production patterns, import opportunities, and transportation capacities. This period can therefore be characterized as one of institutional normalization, during which trade relations were reconstructed as a system of rules regulating economic behavior.

The study also clarifies the organizational restructuring of trade networks and the functional division between state and cooperative trade. State trade primarily aimed to maintain stable assortments in urban and industrial centers, whereas cooperative organizations increased distribution density in rural areas and specialized in small-batch distribution [13]. Cooperative stores supplied essential goods such as flour, kerosene, and salt according to seasonal demand, while urban trade networks enhanced refrigeration and rapid-delivery systems for perishable products such as bread and meat.

To systematize the results, the principal institutional transformations of the period can be summarized as follows:

1946–1948: Abandonment of rationing and restoration of the monetary-price system through regulation of monetary circulation, abolition of ration cards, and strengthening of retail accounting discipline. This resulted in increased cash trade, standardization of price labels and cash documentation, stabilization of prices, and a decline in queue intensity.

1949–1952: Expansion of the retail trade network and redefinition of the role of consumer cooperatives through the establishment of additional stores and distribution bases, territorial supply planning, and reinforcement of cooperative distribution channels.

1953–1956: Consolidation of supply chains and technical standards through improvements in warehouse logistics, packaging systems, quality control procedures, inventory management, and accountability mechanisms.

Discussion. The results suggest that the reorganization of trade relations should be interpreted not merely as a sequence of administrative decisions but as a system in which institutions, logistics, and consumer signals interacted and adapted to one another. Monetary and price stability provided a framework for economic calculation; network expansion improved physical access to goods; and logistics and standards transformed stability into everyday practice.

Although retail turnover increased and shortages declined relatively, these processes did not occur uniformly across all regions. Such uneven development confirms the phenomenon of “uneven modernization,” whereby centrally imposed regulations produced different outcomes depending on local infrastructure and human-resource capacities [14].

Compared with existing historiographical approaches, this study emphasizes trade infrastructure as the central analytical category. While macroeconomic interpretations focus primarily on prices and monetary policy, and micro-social studies examine queues and shortages as elements of everyday life, this article integrates both perspectives through the analysis of warehouses, transportation systems, and technical standards. Price stabilization alone could not guarantee the availability of goods in stores; efficient railway transport, adequate warehouse capacities, standardized packaging, and effective accounting systems were equally essential [15]. Consequently, the history of trade should be studied not only through economic anthropology or financial history but also through the history of technical and administrative management.

4. Conclusion

The reorganization of trade relations in the Uzbek SSR during 1946–1956 represented a transition from a ration-based distribution system to more stable retail trade institutions. The principal driving forces behind this transformation were the regulation of monetary

and pricing systems, the expansion of trade networks, and the standardization of commodity flows through transport and warehouse infrastructure.

The study demonstrates that increases in trade turnover, reductions in assortment disruptions, and improvements in market discipline were closely connected to institutional mechanisms. The functional division between cooperative and state trade contributed significantly to reducing regional disparities, while infrastructural and technical standards addressed the structural roots of shortages.

Ultimately, the reorganization of trade constituted an essential institutional and technological foundation of post-war recovery, integrating the management of consumer markets, resource allocation, and the normalization of economic behavior within a unified system.

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