

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROOTS OF THE JADID MOVEMENT IN THE LATE
19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract: This article examines the socio-economic foundations of the Jadid movement that emerged in Central Asia at the turn of the 20th century. The study explores the historical and economic context that gave rise to a group of intellectuals, educators, and reformers—collectively known as Jadids—who sought to modernize Muslim society in Turkestan. By analyzing colonial policies, economic stagnation, the impact of Russian imperialism, and traditional educational system failures, the research reveals how these factors contributed to the development of a reformist ideology grounded in enlightenment, national revival, and economic progress.

Keywords: Jadidism, Central Asia, Russian colonialism, socio-economic history, modernization, education reform.

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century marked a turning point in the social and political history of Central Asia. Under the domination of the Russian Empire, traditional Muslim societies faced profound challenges in education, economy, governance, and cultural identity. In response to these changes, a group of reform-minded intellectuals emerged—known as the Jadids—who advocated for modernization through education, national consciousness, and economic self-sufficiency.

The term "*Jadid*" (from Arabic *usul-i jadid*, meaning "new method") symbolized a break from traditional scholasticism and a movement toward rational, secular education and social progress. This paper investigates the historical and economic roots of the Jadid movement, arguing that it was not only a cultural or educational phenomenon but a response to deep structural economic and political shifts occurring in the region.

The emergence of the Jadid movement cannot be fully understood without placing it within the broader context of colonial subjugation and cultural contestation in Central Asia. The Russian conquest of Turkestan in the 1860s and subsequent administrative integration of the region disrupted long-standing economic structures and social hierarchies. Traditional elites, particularly religious authorities (ulama) and landowners (beks), found their influence diminished under the new regime.

Meanwhile, the influx of Russian settlers, the spread of railway systems, and the imposition of new taxation and land ownership laws reshaped the economic landscape. As the Muslim population experienced increasing marginalization and poverty, a generation of educated reformers began to question the effectiveness of traditional institutions in addressing the needs of their communities. These reformers, inspired by developments in the Ottoman Empire, Crimea, and the Russian Muslim Volga regions, began to advocate for new educational models, economic revitalization, and social transformation.

Thus, Jadidism was not only a cultural movement but also a socio-economic response to a changing world—one that sought to preserve Islamic identity while embracing selective modernization. Understanding the roots of this movement requires attention to the lived realities of colonial rule, economic decline, and cultural negotiation.

This study is based on a critical review of historical literature, archival documents, and contemporary accounts from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Comparative-historical methodology was employed to examine:

- The socio-economic conditions of Turkestan under Russian colonial rule
- The traditional educational institutions (maktabs and madrasas) and their limitations
- The rise of Muslim reformist thought influenced by the Ottoman Empire, Crimea, and Tatar intellectuals
- The role of trade, craft production, and the agrarian economy in shaping reformist attitudes

Primary and secondary sources include works by Jadid thinkers such as Ismail Gasprinskiy, Munavvar Qori Abdurashidxonov, Mahmudxo‘ja Behbudi, and contemporary Russian colonial reports.

The research highlights the following key factors behind the rise of Jadidism:

- **Colonial economic policies:** The Russian Empire’s control over land, taxation, and trade routes led to economic marginalization of local Muslim populations. Indigenous elites lost economic power, creating a demand for new paths to socio-economic mobility.
- **Educational stagnation:** Traditional maktabs and madrasas focused on rote memorization of religious texts, offering no practical skills in science, economics, or languages. Jadids responded by establishing *new method* schools with a modern curriculum.
- **Urban merchant class growth:** The increasing role of local traders and small industrialists in the cities (such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent) provided economic support and social space for reformers.
- **Intellectual networks:** Ideas from Crimean, Tatar, and Ottoman reformers (e.g., Ismail Gasprinskiy) circulated through newspapers, books, and teachers, encouraging Central Asian Jadids to adopt similar modernization goals.
- **National awakening:** The decline of Islamic institutions under colonialism catalyzed the notion of cultural and national revival among Muslim intellectuals, closely tied to economic empowerment.

The roots of Jadidism lay not only in a desire for educational reform but also in the broader socio-economic transformations imposed by Russian colonial expansion. The economic dislocation of traditional elites and peasantry created a vacuum that reformist intellectuals sought to fill through education and public enlightenment. Their new schools taught subjects such as geography, mathematics, history, and Russian language—tools they believed necessary for the survival of the Muslim identity in a colonized world.

Moreover, Jadids saw economic development as a prerequisite for political and cultural independence. Their emphasis on entrepreneurship, vocational training, and women’s education

was revolutionary and challenged both the colonial authorities and conservative religious circles.

However, the movement faced significant resistance—from both colonial administrators wary of nationalist sentiments and conservative ulema who viewed reform as a threat to Islamic orthodoxy.

The Jadid movement's emphasis on education reform was both symbolic and practical. New-method schools (*usul-i jadid*) represented a clean break from the rote-learning systems of traditional madrasas. They aimed to produce literate, rational, and socially active citizens who could engage with both religious and secular knowledge. This reflected a growing awareness that without education in science, mathematics, history, and modern languages, Muslim communities would remain intellectually and economically subordinate.

Economically, the Jadids recognized the importance of fostering local enterprise and industrial growth. They encouraged the development of craft industries, trade associations, and cooperative ventures as a means to counteract the monopolistic practices of colonial economic structures. Many Jadid thinkers emphasized vocational education and economic literacy as essential components of national survival and empowerment.

In addition, the role of women in society became a critical issue for the Jadids. Recognizing that national progress depended on the education of all members of society, they advocated for the establishment of schools for girls and the gradual transformation of gender norms within Islamic frameworks. While this faced severe backlash from conservative circles, it marked a significant step toward social modernization.

Furthermore, Jadid publications, such as newspapers and journals, served as key instruments in spreading reformist ideas across urban centers in Central Asia. These publications helped to construct a shared sense of cultural and national identity, transcending tribal, regional, and linguistic differences. The use of the Turkic language in written discourse also contributed to the emergence of a modern national consciousness.

Nevertheless, the movement was not without its contradictions. While striving for modernization, many Jadids remained deeply religious and sought to reconcile Islamic values with modern science and rational thought. This dual commitment often placed them at odds with both the secularizing tendencies of the colonial authorities and the rigid dogmas of conservative religious figures.

In essence, the Jadid movement was a hybrid project—rooted in the Islamic tradition but oriented toward the future. It laid the foundation for the later nationalist movements that would challenge imperial rule and eventually shape the post-colonial trajectories of Central Asian states.

The Jadid movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries arose in direct response to the socio-economic and political upheavals experienced in Central Asia under Russian imperial rule. Its foundation was deeply rooted in the need to modernize society through education and economic progress. Jadids laid the groundwork for the future of national consciousness and

reform in the region, influencing political movements that would later emerge in the 20th century.

Future research should further explore the intersection of economic reform, gender issues, and the regional variations of Jadidism across the Muslim world.

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