Sciental Journal of Education Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 4. 6, (2026)
ISSN Online: 2961-0389
***Website**: https://scientaljournals.com/index.php/SJEHSS/index*

Submitted: March 24, 2026/ Accepted May 28, 2026/ Published May 7 2026

EVACUATION PROCESSES IN UZBEKISTAN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR: HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE, SOCIAL ADAPTATION, AND HUMANITARIAN FACTORS

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Abstract:
The article analyzes evacuation processes in Uzbekistan during the Second World War from a historical perspective. It examines the scale of evacuation, the accommodation of evacuees, social adaptation, and humanitarian factors. Particular attention is given to the fate of children, educational institutions, and evacuated civilians. The study substantiates the significance of evacuation in the social history and historical memory of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Second World War, Uzbekistan, evacuation, social adaptation, humanitarianism, evacuated children, educational institutions, historical memory, home front, wartime society.

Introduction

During the Second World War, the relocation of populations, institutions, and industrial facilities from threatened regions to the eastern territories of the former Soviet Union acquired extraordinary strategic importance. This process should not be viewed merely as a transportation or administrative measure. Rather, it represented a complex socio-historical phenomenon that directly affected the demographic structure, labor resources, cultural environment, and everyday life of wartime society [4], [5; 124]. Central Asia, and Uzbekistan in particular, became one of the principal receiving regions in this process [4].

The relevance of the topic is primarily determined by the fact that, for a long time, the experience of evacuation in Uzbekistan was examined mainly within the broader context of military-economic history, without sufficient attention to issues of social adaptation, the fate of children, the reception practices of the local population, and humanitarian factors [2; 3], [6]. Contemporary historiography requires evacuation to be understood not merely as a "resettlement policy," but as a process associated with the creation of a new social environment, a "temporary social space," a culture of reception, and a shared mass experience [5; 124–125].

In this regard, the example of Uzbekistan is of particular importance. Archival materials and subsequent studies indicate that during the war years approximately one million people—and according to some estimates, even more—were evacuated to the republic, a very large

ISSN Online: 2961-0389
***Website**: https://scientaljournals.com/index.php/SJEHSS/index*

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proportion of whom were children [3; 250], [7]. As of 25 November 1941, it was reported that approximately 500,000 people had been evacuated to Uzbekistan, the majority of them children [3; 255], [7]. These figures demonstrate that evacuation exerted enormous demographic and social pressure on the life of the republic.

A second important issue concerns social adaptation. Challenges such as providing housing, food, and employment for evacuees, ensuring the upbringing and education of children, and integrating skilled specialists into the workforce had to be addressed within a very short period of time [3; 248], [9]. This process was implemented through the combined efforts of state institutions, local authorities, public organizations, and ordinary households. It was precisely in this sphere that the organizational and humanitarian dimensions of evacuation converged [6], [8].

Another important aspect of the topic is the opportunity to examine the humanitarian experience of wartime in connection with contemporary historical memory. In the address of the Head of State issued in April 2026 regarding preparations for May 9 – the Day of Memory and Honor – special attention was devoted to the care of veterans, support for elderly individuals living alone, commemorative activities, and respect for human dignity [1]. This demonstrates that in contemporary Uzbekistan, the history of the war, including the experience of evacuation, is becoming not merely information about the past but an active component of social and moral consciousness.

In his speeches dedicated to war and labor veterans, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasizes that the contribution of the multinational people of Uzbekistan to the victory over fascism is immeasurable and that the kindness and humanitarian spirit of the Uzbek people constituted an inseparable part of the history of that period [10; 3–5]. This perspective also provides the rationale for the present study: evacuation processes should be analyzed not as a supplementary topic within military history but as an independent subject that reveals the historical experience of Uzbek society, its culture of social adaptation, and its humanitarian potential.

From this perspective, the purpose of the article is to analyze, on the basis of historical sources, the scale, practical mechanisms, forms of social adaptation, and humanitarian factors of evacuation processes in Uzbekistan during the Second World War. In accordance with this objective, the following tasks were established: to determine the scale and directions of evacuation; to examine the practices of relocating populations and institutions; to highlight the fate of children, the educational sector, and the intelligentsia; to assess the participation of the local population and the humanitarian characteristics of the process; and to demonstrate the place of evacuation within contemporary historical memory.

Literature Review

The scholarly literature devoted to the study of evacuation processes in Uzbekistan during the Second World War may be conditionally divided into several groups. The first group consists of publications that examine the demographic, economic, and social processes that took place in the republic during the war within a broader historical context. In this regard, the monograph published in 2024 is of particular significance. It comprehensively covers the history of

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Uzbekistan during the war in relation to the front, the home front, evacuation, science, education, and cultural life, while treating evacuation as one of the central socio-historical processes affecting the republic. In particular, information concerning the population, children, and institutions relocated to Uzbekistan, their distribution across the republic, and their impact on local society significantly enhances the value of this work [1; 237–265].

The second group includes bibliographical and source-studies publications. The bibliographic index prepared by the National Library of Uzbekistan is particularly valuable because of its systematic classification of literature on the subject. It contains sources related to evacuation, the fate of children, healthcare, education, cultural life, and memory policy in separate thematic sections. This index not only demonstrates the scale and multidimensional nature of the problem but also provides opportunities for reinterpreting the topic through newly available sources [2; 3–4].

The third group consists of studies based on archival documents and newly published conference materials. Papers presented at the International Scientific and Practical Conference of 2025 are noteworthy for their detailed documentation of local aspects of evacuation processes, particularly the settlement of evacuees, the provision of support for children, and practices of humanitarian assistance. For example, A.Z. Togaeva notes that approximately 1.5 million people were relocated to the Uzbek SSR, more than 250,000 of whom were children. The study also presents archival evidence concerning the provision of food and household necessities to evacuated families, using the city of Karshi as a case study [3; 130–131]. In the article by U.S. Yerbutaeva, it is reported that on 3 December 1941 a special resolution was adopted regarding the reception and placement of evacuated children, while practices related to child care and upbringing in the Yangiyul and Andijan regions are also examined [4; 169–170]. These studies are significant because they shift the analysis of evacuation from the level of general statistics to the sphere of local social practices.

The fourth group comprises specialized studies within Russian historiography. M.P. Belenko's article analyzes the number, transportation routes, and demographic characteristics of civilians evacuated to the Central Asian republics. The author emphasizes that statistical discrepancies for the years 1941–1942 may reach 15–20 percent and therefore argues for a critical approach to demographic data. According to his assessment, more than 800,000 evacuees were relocated to Central Asia during the war years, with the largest shares received by the Kazakh and Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republics [5; 124–125]. This approach provides an important methodological basis for evaluating the demographic scale of evacuation.

M.N. Potemkina, in contrast, interprets evacuation not merely as population relocation or an administrative measure but through the concept of "historical space." The author demonstrates that the war disrupted the familiar living environment of Soviet citizens and created new spatial realities such as bomb shelters, freight railway carriages, and evacuation centers. Evacuees often perceived their new surroundings as unfamiliar and temporary [6; 124–125]. This perspective creates a theoretical framework for examining evacuation not only as an organizational process but also as a phenomenon of psychological and social adaptation.

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The fifth group includes specialized studies devoted to particular sectors or social groups. A.Yu. Atajanov's article focuses on the educational sector evacuated to Uzbekistan, including educational institutions, specialists, and the challenges associated with their relocation. The author notes that particular attention was devoted to preserving the educational system while simultaneously ensuring appropriate living and working conditions for evacuees [7; 770–771]. At the same time, the article by D. Todjiev and A. Davkarov examines issues of personnel policy, military and labor mobilization, and the allocation of labor resources in connection with evacuation mechanisms [8; 190–191]. These studies reveal the institutional consequences of evacuation alongside its social adaptation dimensions.

The sixth group encompasses memory policy studies and documentary commemorative publications. The illustrated volume *Uzbekistan during the Second World War*, published in 2024, represents an important source for introducing the public to the history of the war, memory infrastructure, and newly available archival evidence. Through a commemorative message from the Head of State, the publication provides precise data on wartime mobilization, casualties, labor contributions on the home front, evacuated populations, and displaced children. In particular, it notes that approximately 1.5 million evacuees and 250,000 orphaned children found refuge in Uzbekistan [9; 4–5]. At the same time, the publication demonstrates how the memory of the war is integrated into the contemporary national memory framework through initiatives such as Victory Park, the Glory and Honor Museum, the "Searching for My Grandfather" project, and a series of commemorative albums and publications [9; 5–10].

In his article *"The Organization of the Evacuation of the Civilian Population to the East (Using the Example of Uzbekistan in 1941–1942)"*, G. Bobadjanov examines the history of evacuation within the framework of an international memory project dedicated to the experiences of children and refugees, placing the case of Uzbekistan within the broader history of Soviet wartime evacuation. The inclusion of this study in scholarly and documentary materials devoted specifically to evacuation enhances its academic significance.

At the same time, certain gaps remain in the existing literature. First, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies on evacuation processes in Uzbekistan that integrate demographic scale, settlement mechanisms, social adaptation, and local reception culture into a single analytical framework. Second, while humanitarianism and tolerance are often emphasized in a journalistic manner within local sources, Russian historiography tends to focus primarily on demographic and institutional analysis. Consequently, the present article seeks to bridge the gap between these two approaches by combining the perspective of national historical experience with comparative scholarly analysis.

Research Methodology

This article has been prepared through a combination of classical and contemporary approaches to historical research. The object of the study is the evacuation processes that took place in Uzbekistan during the Second World War. The subject of the research includes the organizational mechanisms of evacuation, forms of social adaptation, practices of reception by

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the local population, the fate of children and institutions, and the historical significance of humanitarian factors.

Methodologically, the study is based primarily on the principle of historicism. This approach made it possible to examine evacuation processes within the context of the extraordinary political, demographic, and economic conditions of wartime. Particular attention was devoted to analyzing evacuation not through the lens of symbolic memory or later journalistic interpretations, but from the perspective of state decisions, population movements, settlement challenges, and the realities of everyday life during the years 1941–1945 [1; 237], [5; 124].

The research was conducted using a source-based approach. The study draws upon local monographs, bibliographic indexes, conference proceedings, commemorative albums, official documents, and Russian-language scholarly articles [1; 3], [2; 4], [3; 130], [5; 124], [6; 124], [9; 4]. Three criteria guided the selection of sources: first, their direct relevance to the topic; second, their factual reliability; and third, their suitability for comparative and critical analysis. This approach made it possible to examine the history of evacuation not from a single perspective but within the context of multiple layers of evidence.

The method of comparative analysis was employed to compare approaches found in Uzbek and Russian historiography. In local scholarship, evacuation is generally interpreted through the concepts of kindness, tolerance, and collective support, whereas Russian historiography places greater emphasis on demographic calculations, transportation routes, settlement mechanisms, and the institutional consequences of evacuation [5; 124–125], [6; 124–125]. This comparative approach made it possible to integrate both the socio-ethical and the organizational-historical dimensions of evacuation within a single analytical framework.

The study also employed a socio-historical approach as an important methodological instrument. This method enabled evacuation to be analyzed not only through the prism of state policy or official decisions but also through the experiences of individuals, family separation, the fate of children, relations with local communities, and issues related to housing, food supply, employment, and education [3; 130–131], [4; 169–170]. Accordingly, the relationship between the evacuated population and the host society is treated as one of the central elements of historical reality.

Through a systematic approach, evacuation processes were analyzed as an interconnected whole rather than as isolated components. Population relocation, settlement patterns, the placement of children in educational institutions, the reception of educational and scientific personnel, the redistribution of labor resources, and transformations in the local social environment were assessed as elements of a single process [7; 770], [8; 190–191]. This approach supports the argument that evacuation was not merely a short-term administrative measure but a phenomenon that generated profound social changes within wartime society.

Elements of content analysis were applied to official speeches, commemorative documents, and illustrated historical albums. Through this method, recurring concepts such as “kindness,” “tolerance,” “orphans,” “shelter,” “memory,” and “sacrifice” were identified and analyzed in order to determine how the experience of evacuation has been symbolized within contemporary

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memory policy [9; 5], [10; 3]. This method proved valuable for understanding how a historical event was subsequently transformed into a moral and commemorative narrative.

The study also paid particular attention to issues of reliability and accuracy. Due to discrepancies in the reported number of evacuees across different sources, statistical data were treated with critical scrutiny. For example, Russian historiography points to the possibility of errors of up to 15–20 percent in population records for the years 1941–1942 [5; 124]. Therefore, the article interprets statistical evidence not as absolute figures but within the context and limitations of specific sources.

Thus, the combined application of the principles of historicism, source analysis, comparative methodology, social history, systems analysis, and content analysis enabled a comprehensive and scholarly examination of evacuation processes in Uzbekistan during the Second World War. This methodological framework makes it possible to analyze evacuation not merely as a resettlement policy but as a complex phenomenon manifested through the interaction of historical experience, social adaptation, and humanitarian factors.

Analysis and Results

During the Second World War, evacuation processes in Uzbekistan represented far more than an administrative measure of population relocation. They constituted a comprehensive historical phenomenon that affected the social structure, demographic situation, and institutional life of the republic. Historical sources indicate that more than one million—and according to some estimates up to 1.5 million—people were relocated to Uzbekistan during the war years, a significant proportion of whom were children [1; 255], [3; 130], [11]. This situation demonstrates the necessity of viewing evacuation not simply as the removal of people from combat zones, but as a complex process involving the creation of a new social equilibrium, the provision of essential living conditions, and the accommodation and adaptation of displaced populations within host communities.

The initial stage of evacuation unfolded under conditions of considerable urgency and organizational difficulties. Russian historiography emphasizes that the system for registering evacuees in 1941–1942 had not yet been fully established, that information regarding population movements often arrived with delays, and that statistical discrepancies of up to 15–20 percent may be observed in some cases [5; 124], [5; 126]. Consequently, when assessing the scale of evacuation, it is methodologically more appropriate to focus on the direction, pace, and social impact of the process on receiving regions rather than on absolute numerical figures alone.

Uzbekistan’s role as a host region was closely connected with its demographic and infrastructural capacities. According to M.P. Belenko, Central Asia received no fewer than 820,000 evacuees during the war years, the majority of whom were relocated to the Kazakh and Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republics [5; 126]. This distribution was determined by transportation routes, existing urban infrastructure, and established population concentrations. Therefore, the evacuation of civilians to Uzbekistan was not accidental but formed part of a

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broader state strategy aimed at utilizing the resources and capacities of the eastern regions of the Soviet Union.

The proportion of children within the social composition of the evacuated population was of particular significance. Some sources indicate that of the 1.5 million people evacuated to Uzbekistan, more than 250,000 were children [3; 130], while other sources report that approximately 250,000 orphaned and displaced children were provided with shelter and care [9; 5], [11]. These figures demonstrate that the most difficult burden of evacuation was associated not only with material support but also with issues related to child accommodation, upbringing, education, and medical care.

In the reception and placement of children, governmental measures and local community initiatives complemented one another. The adoption of a special decree on 3 December 1941 concerning the reception and accommodation of evacuated children, the establishment of a reception center in Tashkent, and the expansion of childcare practices in the Yangiyul and Andijan regions demonstrate that the process possessed a well-developed organizational foundation [4; 169–170]. However, an important aspect of the issue is that it was not limited solely to the activities of state institutions. The fact that hundreds of families welcomed children separated from their parents by war illustrates the high level of social responsibility and humanitarian commitment within local society [1; 256], [12].

The adoption of fourteen children of different nationalities by Shohmad Shomahmudov and Bahri Akramova became a symbolic example of Uzbek compassion during the war years [1; 256], [9; 5]. However, this episode should not be interpreted as an isolated case but rather as a manifestation of a broader social environment. Archival and memoir materials contain extensive evidence regarding assistance provided to children, the provision of shelter, food distribution, and the creation of favorable living and educational conditions within local institutions [3; 130–131]. In this sense, humanitarian factors were not a supplementary component of the evacuation process; rather, they constituted one of the principal conditions that ensured both its social acceptance and its successful implementation.

The issue of social adaptation represented one of the most challenging aspects of the history of evacuation. For those arriving in a new region, adaptation to the local language environment, lifestyle, food, climate, and customs was far from easy. Potemkina notes that evacuees often perceived their new surroundings as an unfamiliar and temporary environment and that, during the initial period, mutual trust and communication were limited [6; 124–125]. However, the examples presented in her research clearly demonstrate that through children's games, everyday interactions, and social relationships, this "foreign space" gradually transformed into a shared living environment [6; 125]. This situation indicates that evacuation should be interpreted not merely as an administrative relocation but also as a process of social adaptation and mutual cultural learning.

Cooperation between local authorities and state institutions played an important role in the settlement of evacuees. In the case of the Executive Committee of the city of Karshi, special requests concerning the provision of food and household necessities for evacuated families were officially addressed and resolved [3; 130]. These data indicate that assistance to evacuees

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in the republic was not spontaneous but was organized through a system of institutional coordination. At the same time, the fact that some evacuees voluntarily returned to their places of origin and that additional requests for flour, food supplies, and other necessities were submitted in such cases demonstrates that wartime evacuation combined both planned and spontaneous forms of population movement [3; 130].

The evacuation process was not limited to the relocation of civilians but also encompassed the spheres of education and science. Evidence indicates that by November 1941, twenty-two research institutes, sixteen higher educational institutions, and two libraries had been transferred to Uzbekistan from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, with these numbers subsequently increasing [13; 1], [7; 770–771]. This demonstrates that the republic functioned not only as a safe haven for displaced populations but also as a center for preserving intellectual and educational potential during the war. Evacuated scholars, educators, and specialists exerted a significant influence on the cultural and intellectual environment of wartime Uzbekistan.

The relocation of educational institutions highlights the institutional dimension of social adaptation. Atajanov's research notes that particular attention was devoted to ensuring proper working, living, and educational conditions for evacuees, including educational institutions and their personnel [7; 770–771]. This suggests that evacuation served not only as a mechanism of survival but also as a means of preserving key social institutions. Without such measures, serious disruptions would have occurred in child upbringing, the continuity of the educational system, and the professional activities of specialists.

The institutional consequences of evacuation were also reflected in labor and personnel policy. The timely transfer of industrial facilities and labor resources to the eastern regions became one of the principal factors in preserving economic productivity, allocating workforce resources, and training the personnel required during the later stages of the war [8; 190–191]. As a result, social adaptation in Uzbekistan evolved into a multidimensional process connected not only with humanitarian concerns but also with labor, administrative, and personnel policies.

A noticeable difference can be observed between Uzbek and Russian historiography in their interpretation of evacuation. While Uzbek sources devote greater attention to kindness, tolerance, the adoption of children, and community assistance [3; 130–131], [4; 169–170], Russian studies tend to focus on issues of settlement, accommodation, transportation routes, public order, and adaptation to an unfamiliar environment [5; 124–126], [6; 124–125]. The most academically sound approach is not to contrast these perspectives but rather to integrate them. Evacuation was simultaneously a history of numbers, transportation, and settlement, as well as a history of human destinies, childhood memories, and the moral resources of society.

The experience of evacuation also occupies an important place in contemporary historical memory. Evacuation processes became not only a social practice during wartime but also an important source for understanding human dignity, tolerance, and historical heritage in modern Uzbekistan. It is noteworthy that the people of Uzbekistan provided refuge to approximately 1.5 million individuals and extended care and compassion to around 250,000 orphaned children. This experience has been incorporated into the national memory framework through memorial complexes such as Victory Park and the Glory and Honor Museum [9; 4–5].

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Conclusions and Recommendations

The evacuation processes that took place in Uzbekistan during the Second World War entered the history of the republic not merely as an emergency organizational measure but as an event of profound socio-historical significance. The arrival of evacuated civilians, children, educational and scientific institutions, as well as industrial and labor resources, created a new demographic, social, and cultural environment within the republic [1; 237], [5; 124]. In this regard, evacuation should be assessed not as a secondary issue within the history of the home front but as one of the central phenomena revealing the experience of social stability, institutional adaptation, and humanitarianism during wartime.

First, the scale and composition of the population evacuated to Uzbekistan generated enormous social challenges for the republic. The high proportion of children and the necessity of rapidly addressing issues related to housing, food supply, education, and healthcare transformed evacuation from a purely administrative decision into a process based on broad social mobilization [3; 130], [4; 169–170]. This demonstrates that cooperation among state institutions, local authorities, and the population played a decisive role during the war. Second, social adaptation emerged as one of the most significant issues in the history of evacuation. For people relocated to an unfamiliar environment, adaptation to a new language, customs, lifestyle, and living conditions was far from easy. However, the welcoming culture of the local population, the practice of integrating children into families, and the mobilization of educational and childcare systems contributed to transforming an initially unfamiliar environment into a relatively stable social space [6; 124–125], [7; 770–771]. Thus, the experience of evacuation demonstrates that social adaptation was not a spontaneous process but one largely sustained by collective humanitarian values.

Third, humanitarian factors constituted one of the principal historical characteristics that shaped the internal content of evacuation processes in Uzbekistan. Practices such as caring for orphaned children, providing shelter to evacuees, supplying food and household necessities, and accommodating educational and scientific personnel demonstrate that the culture of tolerance within the republic endured even under wartime conditions [3; 130–131], [9; 5]. In this respect, the history of evacuation serves as an important source for studying the moral potential and social cohesion of Uzbek society.

Fourth, contemporary historiography and memory policy provide opportunities to reconsider this issue within a new context. Demographic and institutional analyses in Russian scholarship, information on the fate of children in local sources, and materials related to commemorative publications and memory infrastructure make it possible to evaluate the history of evacuation from both scholarly and moral perspectives [5; 124–126], [9; 4–5]. This suggests that evacuation should be understood not only as an event of the past but also as an experience that enriches contemporary perspectives on memory and human dignity.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations may be proposed.

First, it would be advisable to establish a unified digital database incorporating documents, lists, archival materials, memoirs, and oral history interviews related to civilians, children, educational institutions, and scientific organizations evacuated to Uzbekistan during the

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***Website**: https://scientaljournals.com/index.php/SJEHSS/index*

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Second World War. Such a database would enable a more precise determination of the scale and composition of evacuation.

Second, the study of evacuation should be strengthened as an independent socio-historical problem rather than being treated solely as a supplementary topic within military history. In particular, greater attention should be devoted to specialized studies focusing on the fate of children, local reception culture, the participation of women and families, everyday life, and mechanisms of adaptation.

Third, comparative research on approaches in Uzbek and Russian historiography should be expanded. This would make it possible to integrate demographic and institutional analyses with studies of humanitarianism and collective memory within a unified scholarly framework.

Fourth, materials related to the history of evacuation should be more widely incorporated into higher education curricula, museum pedagogy, and the moral education of young people. Such efforts would contribute to understanding the history of war not only as a history of tragedy and loss but also as a school of compassion, tolerance, and social responsibility [9; 5], [10].

The evacuation processes in Uzbekistan during the Second World War constitute a complex and multidimensional phenomenon manifested through the interaction of historical experience, social adaptation, and humanitarian factors. This experience provides a solid scholarly foundation for understanding not only wartime society but also contemporary historical memory, collective solidarity, and concepts of human dignity.

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