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BUILDING A SPIRITUAL SPACE IN THE NEW UZBEKISTAN AND ITS MECHANISMS

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Abstract:

This article provides a scholarly analysis of the establishment of a spiritual space in the New Uzbekistan and its mechanisms. The paper also highlights that the concept of the New Uzbekistan aims to renew and develop all spheres of national life, including the spiritual and educational domain of society, which is becoming a priority direction of state policy.

Keywords: New Uzbekistan, state, human spirituality, ideology, society, development, worldview, strategy, community, citizenship.

The concept of the New Uzbekistan envisions the renewal and development of all spheres of national life. In particular, the spiritual and educational sphere of society has become a priority direction of state policy. As emphasized by our esteemed President, “If the body of society is its economy, then its soul and spirit is morality... In building the New Uzbekistan, we rely on two strong pillars. The first is a strong economy based on market principles. The second is a strong spirituality based on the rich heritage of our ancestors and national values.” Therefore, alongside political and economic reforms, the issue of elevating spiritual life is highlighted as being of paramount importance, with the “question of the national idea” gaining special significance.

In today’s era of globalization, foreign ideologies are increasingly influencing the



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consciousness of the younger generation, and threats to national identity and values are growing. There is a pressing need to develop an ideological immunity against the spread of immorality, individualism, and consumerist attitudes in society. In this context, the government of Uzbekistan is implementing extensive measures to elevate spiritual and educational work to a new level, aiming to build a New Uzbekistan and a vibrant spiritual space. It is emphasized that every citizen should become an active participant in the ongoing spiritual reforms, filling societal gaps in line with the common national interest.

In this regard, it is appropriate to analyze the political reforms, legal foundations, the involvement of state and societal institutions, and practical mechanisms for building a spiritual space in the context of the New Uzbekistan.

During the New Uzbekistan period, the country's political system is being renewed through deep reforms. The Action Strategy implemented during 2017–2021, followed by the Development Strategy for 2022–2026, ensures the consistent continuation of political modernization. Within these programs, extensive efforts have been made to democratize governance, strengthen the rule of law, and develop civil society institutions. Notably, the practice of open dialogue and direct engagement with the people has been established in Uzbekistan, embodying the principle that “the people should serve the state, not the state serve the people.”

As a result of these new political reforms, citizens' socio-political activity has increased. People are now exercising their constitutional rights more freely, actively participating in elections, and exerting influence over political processes. The 2023 referendum on the new Constitution and the presidential election demonstrated a shift in public consciousness, with citizens making free and impartial choices and uniting around capable leaders. These changes are the outcome of ongoing political reforms and modernization. Indeed, under the



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conditions of the New Uzbekistan, the principle of “social state” based on strong social justice and rule of law has been enshrined at the constitutional level. Consequently, the state power system is being transformed both legally and politically into an effective mechanism serving the interests of the people [1].

The essence of political reforms in the New Uzbekistan is particularly significant as it aims to ensure human rights and freedoms. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s guiding idea of “For the dignity of humans” has become the benchmark for all reforms. Mechanisms to enhance the accountability of state bodies and officials to the people have been strengthened, and the powers of parliament and local councils have been expanded. The President’s call that “all reforms and all actions will be undertaken together with society” is, in fact, a practical program aimed at ensuring citizen participation in political processes and transparency in state governance. As a result, the political system of the New Uzbekistan has undergone significant liberalization, increasing the role and influence of citizens in state administration.

Ensuring spiritual and educational development in the New Uzbekistan requires the establishment of a robust legal framework, which is of critical importance. The measures being implemented in this regard are particularly commendable. One of the key strategic documents aimed at developing the spiritual sphere is Presidential Decree No. PF-60 on the Development Strategy for 2022–2026. This decree places special emphasis on creating a “new spiritual space” in society, serving as a programmatic document designed to elevate this sphere to an entirely new and higher level. The Development Strategy identifies spiritual and educational reforms as a priority direction and sets out clear objectives for their implementation. In particular, under the slogan “Youth – Builders of the New Uzbekistan,” the Strategy aims to realize the Third Renaissance, constitutionally reinforcing this task [2].



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The legal foundation for reforms in the spiritual and educational sphere is not limited to strategic documents alone. In recent years, a number of laws, presidential decrees, and resolutions have been adopted to support this field. Notably, the legal status of the Institute of the Republican Council for Spirituality and Enlightenment has been strengthened – the President was appointed as the Chair of the Council, and regional branches were established. These developments indicate that spiritual and educational work has been elevated to a high level within state policy. Moreover, annual state programs include specific measures to enhance spirituality. For example, the “Year of Honoring Human Dignity and Active Mahalla” program outlines initiatives to promote a healthy spiritual environment through local communities (mahallas) and education [3]. An important component of the legal framework is the updated Constitution adopted in April 2023, which reinforced provisions related to culture and spirituality. Our Constitution declares Uzbekistan a social state and enshrines the state’s responsibility to preserve spiritual values, protect cultural heritage, and raise a well-rounded generation through education. Additionally, normative acts such as the Law “On State Policy Regarding Youth” and the Presidential Resolution “On the Comprehensive Improvement of the System of Spiritual and Educational Work” set clear tasks in this area. For instance, during a video-conference in January 2021, the President noted that many spiritual and educational issues were awaiting solutions and that reforms had not yet reached them, instructing the preparation of relevant draft decisions. These documents are accelerating the process of establishing the spiritual space of the New Uzbekistan on a solid legal foundation.

State institutions – including the Administration of the President, the government, the parliament, and local executive authorities – actively participate in shaping the spiritual space of the New Uzbekistan. Most importantly, under the personal



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initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the Republican Council for Spirituality and Enlightenment was established. The President chairs this Council, and regional and district branches operate under its guidance. The Council includes government members, sector specialists, and intellectuals, implementing a unified state policy in the field of spirituality and enlightenment. In this way, spiritual and educational activities are centrally coordinated and have become an integral part of state policy [4].

Executive authorities – ministries and agencies – are responsible for implementing the tasks set out in spiritual and educational programs. For example, the Ministries of Preschool and School Education, Higher Education, Science, and Innovation have introduced new curricula designed to integrate national ideas and spirituality into the education system and strengthen the upbringing of youth. The Ministry of Culture implements presidential initiatives aimed at developing national culture and arts, supporting theater and cinema.

Following the President's directives, Cultural Centers and Spiritual and Educational Hubs have been established in every district. These centers serve as local spaces where citizens can spend their free time meaningfully, engage with literature, art, and educational activities. The creation of this infrastructure is assigned to local authorities, with plans to establish a dedicated “spiritual sector” alongside the existing four sectors in each region. In practice, each region, district, and city has appointed a deputy or responsible official for spiritual and educational work, coordinating the activities of local Spiritual Councils [5].

The Parliament also plays a key role in promoting spiritual development. Both chambers of the Oliy Majlis regulate and oversee the spiritual and educational sphere through the adoption of new laws. For example, during the drafting of the new Constitution, provisions on civil society development, public morality, and education were carefully debated and incorporated. The Senate conducts hearings



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on the implementation of spiritual and educational policies at the regional level. Meanwhile, research institutes under the Academy of Public Administration and the Academy of Sciences conduct studies to scientifically and methodologically substantiate the “Third Renaissance” idea. Institutions such as the Strategic Reforms Agency and the Development Strategy Center under the President analyze the ideological and educational aspects of reforms and provide recommendations.

Crucially, heads of state institutions personally contribute to improving the moral environment in society. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev consistently emphasizes the importance of spirituality, stating that “spirituality is the foundation that determines the content and quality of all socio-political relations in society.” Based on this principle, officials at all levels – from ministers and governors to lower-level civil servants – are now evaluated not only by economic indicators but also by their contribution to the moral and ethical state of society. In this way, state institutions act in a coordinated manner, functioning as a unified system to build the spiritual space of the New Uzbekistan [6].

Civil society institutions and various public organizations also actively participate in ensuring spiritual and educational development. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted, “spiritual reforms should not remain the work of state institutions alone; every member of society, including non-governmental organizations, must be involved.” In line with this, the state emphasizes cooperation between governmental and public organizations. For instance, during the January 19, 2021, video-conference, discussions focused on strengthening collaboration between the state and non-state sectors in improving the system of spiritual and educational work, exploring ways to mobilize the potential of the non-governmental sector.

The role of the Mahalla institution in society is increasingly significant, becoming



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a local self-governing body and a hub for education and spirituality. Units of “Centers for Spirituality and Enlightenment” have been established within Mahalla citizen assemblies, and respected elders and intellectuals are tasked with youth upbringing. As emphasized by the President, elders – the senior generation – should serve as the main support for upbringing. At the same time, the President noted shortcomings, pointing out that “to reduce current social problems, the upbringing role of elders and public oversight is insufficient.” Based on this critique, local initiatives increasingly engage the elder generation to work with youth and families [7].

In addition, public organizations such as the Youth Union, Women’s Councils, the Mahalla Fund, and the Nuroniy Fund also lead spiritual and educational initiatives. For example, the Youth Union has organized numerous events under the slogan “Youth of the New Uzbekistan, Builders of the Third Renaissance,” fostering patriotism and a spirit of scientific pursuit among the younger generation. The Committee for Family and Women’s Affairs has strengthened efforts to improve the spiritual environment within families and promote education and professional development for women. Non-governmental and civil society organizations – such as the Society of Enlightenment Advocates, the Writers’ Union, and the Artists’ Union – also implement projects that enhance national spirituality within their respective fields.

Bloggers and active journalists raise spiritual issues in public discourse, shaping societal discussion. This trend is directly supported by the President and government, who encourage intellectuals to act boldly, particularly in times of heightened challenges, calling on them to be “devotees of spirituality” and actively engage in the public sphere. Civil society institutions and public associations thus serve as an integral pillar of the spiritual space of the New Uzbekistan, contributing to the holistic development of society in cooperation



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with the state [8].

The political will and legal foundations described above are implemented through practical mechanisms. These mechanisms include the methods, tools, and organizational measures applied directly in the spiritual and educational sphere. In the context of the New Uzbekistan, these mechanisms take diverse forms.

First, scientific and educational centers and institutions have been established. To study national and religious heritage deeply and acquaint the younger generation with the rich spiritual legacy of our ancestors, major centers such as the International Research Centers named after Imam Bukhari, Imam Termizi, and Imam Moturidi, as well as the Center for Islamic Civilization, have been created by presidential decrees and resolutions. These centers have become key pillars of the “Third Renaissance” concept outlined in the New Uzbekistan Development Strategy. For example, the Imam Termizi Center publishes popular brochures on the lives and legacies of scholars from Termez and conducts outreach for foreign visitors and youth. The Center for Islamic Civilization researches ancient manuscripts and organizes international scientific conferences, aiming to become a scholarly and educational hub not only for Uzbekistan but for the entire Muslim world [3].

Second, practical mechanisms are implemented through the education system. From preschool to higher education, curricula now integrate national ideas, patriotism, and spiritual values through interdisciplinary approaches. Weekly “Spirituality Hours” are conducted in general education schools, incorporating subjects such as the history of national independence, culture and arts, and fundamentals of religious studies – strengthening students’ ideological resilience. In higher education institutions, “Departments of Spirituality and Enlightenment” have been restructured, and each university and institute now has a vice-rector for spiritual affairs. These departments organize activities such as spiritual and



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educational events for students and faculty, roundtable discussions, reading competitions, and theater evenings [4].

Third, practical mechanisms have been introduced in the fields of culture, arts, and information. To develop theater and cinema, a state commissioning mechanism has been implemented, including a special fund to finance socially significant performances and films. Awards and competitions have been established to encourage new talent, such as the Mannon Uyghur Award and the “Builder of the Third Renaissance” competition. The library network is expanding, with a state program to open modern information-resource centers in every district, offering youth clubs and spiritual evenings. Special schools and centers are also being created to promote intangible cultural heritage, such as maqom music, bakhshi performance, and traditional crafts. These initiatives not only preserve cultural heritage but also familiarize the younger generation with national arts and provide meaningful engagement for their free time [5].

Regarding legal reforms, as noted above, amendments to the Constitution and the introduction of new legislative norms have become a solid guarantee for building the spiritual space. To ensure the implementation of normative legal documents, corresponding decrees and orders are systematically issued. For example, during the expanded session of the Council for Spirituality and Enlightenment in December 2023, the President announced significant initiatives across nine areas and assigned the preparation of specific implementation decisions. These areas – developing the national idea, women’s education, spiritual centers, theater and cinema, cultural centers, maqom and bakhshi music, music and dance, promoting reading, and popularizing sports – were accompanied by clear instructions for the relevant state bodies. The execution of these initiatives, in turn, requires the adoption of new legal documents, programs, and resolutions. Thus, legal reforms constitute an ongoing process, and as they are implemented, the spiritual and



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educational sphere also evolves.

Another important practical mechanism is public oversight and monitoring. To enhance the effectiveness of ongoing spiritual and educational work, groups of community representatives are organized to conduct local outreach while assessing public sentiment and needs. The Public Chamber under the Oliy Majlis and the National Human Rights Center facilitate public participation in education, culture, and information sectors. The President himself has established direct communication channels with the people – through public reception offices and online appeals – allowing societal spiritual issues to be raised and addressed promptly. For example, reports on problems affecting moral standards in communities – such as youth crime, unemployment, and domestic issues – are reviewed by sector heads, and authorities respond quickly to issues highlighted on social media. These mechanisms contribute directly to ensuring the moral well-being of citizens in the new societal context [6].

In conclusion, the creation and enhancement of the spiritual space is a primary priority in building the New Uzbekistan. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has closely linked the content of political and legal reforms with the task of raising the moral level of society, advancing the conceptual approach that “the ideology of the New Uzbekistan is based on benevolence and humanism.” Based on this principle, large-scale political reforms are being implemented to activate society, elevate public consciousness, and restore national values.

By “mechanisms for building the spiritual space,” we mean, as outlined above, the combination of strategic programs, laws and decrees, the cooperation of state institutions and civil society, and concrete practical measures. The New Uzbekistan state has created both a legal framework and organizational structures in this area; the next step is to ensure their effective functioning—that is, to translate reforms on paper into tangible outcomes. While significant



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achievements have been made, challenges remain, such as fully freeing public consciousness from remnants of old ideologies, educating youth as well-rounded individuals in the face of globalization threats, and strengthening ideological immunity against information attacks on the Internet.

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