

IMPROVING THE SOCIO-POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This article analyzes the measures aimed at the formation of civil society and the improvement of its institutions in New Uzbekistan. It also examines the mechanisms of democratization, the cooperation between the state and civil society, the achievements gained in this direction, and the existing challenges. Within the framework of the study, new mechanisms and models emerging in the process of developing civil society are analyzed, with a focus on elaborating scientific-theoretical and practical recommendations.

Keywords: civil society, non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs), New Uzbekistan, state reforms, People's Receptions, Virtual Receptions, public oversight, "Mening Fikrim" portal, "Tashabbusli Byudjet" project, civic initiative, digital democracy, crowdsourcing, open government, mechanisms of civic participation.

Introduction

The socio-political reforms implemented in New Uzbekistan are significant for their focus on the formation of civil society and the improvement of its institutions. An analysis of these processes shows that the state is consistently strengthening measures aimed at developing civil society institutions. In particular, the role of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs), public associations, and other civil society institutions in socio-political processes has been increasing.

The state pays special attention to strengthening the position and authority of these organizations in society, encouraging active participation of citizens, improving their living standards, and developing effective mechanisms to implement these goals in practice. This creates the need to further develop methods and tools that meet the needs of the general public while also taking into account the interests of public organizations.

Literature review and methods

The issues of civil society formation and improving the effectiveness of public administration have been widely covered in both local and international research. Since 2016, the reforms carried out in Uzbekistan have been aimed at developing civil society institutions, and a number of scholars have conducted research in this field. Their academic works serve as an important methodological basis for analyzing this topic.

1. The Impact of the Action Strategy on Civil Society The Action Strategy (2017–2021) played a significant role in ensuring openness in public administration and in forming a citizen-oriented approach. B. Toshev (2020), in his article "Public Oversight and Its Development Mechanism", analyzed the impact of the Action Strategy on social relations. According to him, this strategy introduced effective mechanisms to strengthen public oversight and to increase citizens' participation in governance. Political scientist S. Juraev (2019), in his study "The Social Impact of the Action Strategy", emphasized that the establishment of People's Receptions and Virtual

Receptions was an important step in strengthening communication between state bodies and the population. His research shows that these platforms have enabled state institutions to respond more quickly to the problems of citizens.

2. The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan and Civil Society The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan (2021–2025) is aimed at deepening ongoing reforms in the country. Sh. Ismoilov (2022), in his study “Constitutional Reforms and Civil Society”, highlighted the importance of public oversight and civil society institutions in public administration. According to him, this strategy has created favorable conditions for increasing citizens’ social activism, strengthening the accountability of state structures, and improving public oversight. This view is also supported by B. Nurmatov (2022), who, in his study “State and Society Relations in Uzbekistan”, emphasized that People’s Receptions and Virtual Receptions have improved the accountability and transparency of state institutions. In his conclusion, these institutions emerged as a new model of state-society relations, ensuring openness in public administration.

3. International Experience and Comparative Analysis The study of civil society development requires attention to international practice. Smith (2021) and Johnson (2020), in their research, emphasized that e-government platforms serve as effective tools for strengthening public oversight in countries with developed democracies. In the United States and the European Union, mechanisms for shaping state decisions through online petition platforms and crowdsourcing methods are widely used. The introduction of the “Mening Fikrim” portal and the “Tashabbusli Byudjet” project in Uzbekistan represents similar mechanisms. However, an analysis of these platforms shows that, in order to use them effectively, it is necessary to strengthen the legal framework and improve incentive mechanisms.

The literature review demonstrates that the reforms carried out since 2016 have had a significant impact on the development of civil society institutions. On the basis of the Action Strategy and the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan, state-society relations have entered a qualitatively new stage. Moreover, when comparing Uzbekistan’s experience with international models, it becomes clear that the further development of public oversight and the improvement of mechanisms for digital civic participation can make this process even more effective. In the future, aligning reforms with international standards, developing public oversight institutions, and making effective use of digital technologies will contribute to the sustainable development of civil society.

Discussion

The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan, announced by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, is a strategic document that marked the beginning of a new stage in the country’s development. One of its main objectives is to ensure the free activity of civil society institutions, to strengthen their participation in public administration, and to improve state support mechanisms. In this regard, the establishment of the Public Chamber and the effective organization of its activities have become one of the priority directions.

1. The Need to Strengthen Legal Foundations The legal status of civil society institutions and their relationship with the state must be firmly established by law. Currently, several problems remain in this regard:

The competencies of civil society institutions are not clearly defined in legislation;

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Cooperation mechanisms between state bodies and public associations are underdeveloped;

Funding sources for non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) are limited.

According to legal scholars, the inclusion of a special section on the status of civil society in the Constitution would further increase the role of these institutions in governance (Ismoilov, 2023). For instance, in France and Germany, civil society institutions are legally recognized as independent mechanisms. Similar reforms in Uzbekistan would serve to strengthen trust between the state and society.

2. Development Based on Science and Innovation An analysis of President Sh. Mirziyoyev's pre-election program and political speeches shows that one of the priority directions of development in New Uzbekistan is progress based on science and innovation. As emphasized by political scientist Robert Putnam, "In the context of post-industrial development, effective civil society institutions are able to adapt to rapid social changes and play an important role in public administration" (Putnam, 1993). This view is supported by international research. For example, in the United States, the National Civic League introduced a system of grants and subsidies to promote innovation in state-civil society relations. Developing similar mechanisms in Uzbekistan to strengthen the financial sustainability of NGOs is of great importance.

3. The Importance of Digitalization Processes The growing processes of digitalization worldwide are bringing state-civil society relations to a new stage. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the effective use of digital technologies led to the emergence of new forms of social cooperation. For example, the @mytaxisavob and "Yaqinlar" bot platforms played a significant role in organizing charitable activities. Through the Mening Fikrim portal, citizens gained the opportunity to propose their initiatives directly to the state. However, several problems remain in the current digitalization processes:

Civic participation through online platforms is still insufficient;

State bodies have not yet developed unified standards for the use of digital technologies.

Therefore, in order to increase digital participation, it is necessary to introduce new projects such as the "Smart Citizen" platform and transparent voting systems based on NFT technologies.

4. Effective Use of Crowdsourcing Technologies Crowdsourcing technologies play a crucial role in gathering public opinion and ensuring civic participation. This method is effectively used as a management tool by state institutions in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. In Uzbekistan, the "Tashkent Loves You" platform, launched in 2018, was one of the first projects to apply crowdsourcing methods. Within this project, more than 3,000 proposals were collected and implemented to improve the city's infrastructure. Likewise, the "Tashabbusli Byudjet" project has become an important tool for involving citizens in the allocation of budgetary resources.

The rapid development of socio-political processes in New Uzbekistan is strengthening the role of civil society institutions in public administration. Legal reforms, digitalization processes, innovations, and the broad application of crowdsourcing technologies remain among the main mechanisms for the development of civil society. In this way, Uzbekistan can build a strong legal and technological foundation for the development of civil society in line with international standards.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the reforms carried out in New Uzbekistan clearly demonstrate the state's commitment to supporting and developing civil society institutions. These processes have brought state–society cooperation to a qualitatively new stage, strengthening citizens' participation and influence in socio-political life.

However, several challenges remain in ensuring the effective implementation of these reforms:

The legal framework for civil society institutions needs further consolidation;

The financing opportunities of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) must be further improved;

Mechanisms for effective use of public oversight by citizens need to be more fully established.

In the future, the further strengthening of civil society institutions, the creation of new forms and models of state–society cooperation, as well as the broad application of innovative technologies, are expected to make a significant contribution to the socio-economic, political, and cultural development of society.

In this context, the following priorities will play a crucial role:

Accelerating digitalization processes;

Encouraging civic initiatives;

Improving mechanisms of public oversight;

Introducing transparent governance mechanisms that comply with international standards.

Thus, the main goal of the development of New Uzbekistan is to establish a stable model of state–civil society relations that prioritizes human dignity and the interests of society. This process will not only provide a solid foundation for the country's overall development but will also enhance integration into global socio-political processes.

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