WORLD FORUM ON ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND DIGITAL LITERACY

SPIRITUAL POLICY IN A RENEWING UZBEKISTAN AND PROSPECTS FOR STRENGTHENING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Mamarayemova Guljahon Farhodovna

“Family and Gender”

guljahonfarhodovna222 @gmail.com

Abstract : This article analyzes the theoretical and practical aspects of the formation of spiritual policy and strengthening intergenerational relations within the framework of socio-political reforms implemented in Uzbekistan since 2016. Based on the theory of socialization, the concept and methodology of social capital, the study assesses the impact of spiritual policy on intergenerational unity in a multidimensional system. The article analyzes the Development Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, constitutional reforms, and state policy and documents related to youth. The results show that the harmony between official institutions and civil society mechanisms, the preservation of national identity in the digital environment, and the revival of the teacher-disciple tradition in modern forms are important factors for an effective spiritual policy.

Keywords: *spiritual politics, intergenerational relations, national identity, social capital, youth policy, social policy, reforms, development strategy.*

Аннотация: В данной статье анализируются теоретические и практические аспекты формирования духовной политики и укрепления межпоколенческих связей в рамках социально-политических реформ, проводимых в Узбекистане с 2016 года. На основе теории социализации, концепции и методологии социального капитала в исследовании оценивается влияние духовной политики на межпоколенческое единство в многомерной системе. В статье анализируются Стратегия развития Республики Узбекистан на 2022–2026 годы, конституционные реформы, а также государственная политика и документы,



касающиеся молодежи. Результаты показывают, что гармония между официальными институтами и механизмами гражданского общества, сохранение национальной идентичности в цифровой среде и возрождение традиции «учитель-ученик» в современных формах являются важными факторами эффективной духовной политики.

Ключевые слова: духовная политика, межпоколенческие связи, национальная идентичность, социальный капитал, молодежная политика, социальная политика, реформы, стратегия развития.

INTRODUCTION. In modern state practice, spiritual policy is increasingly important not only as a means of managing the cultural sphere, but also as a strategic tool for the socio-psychological integration of society. This issue has become even more urgent during the comprehensive reforms that Uzbekistan has been implementing since 2016: the demographic structure of society, digitalization processes, and the impact of globalization have radically changed the nature of intergenerational relations. Given that today more than 60 percent of the population in the country is under 30 years of age, the issue of ensuring the continuity of values between the younger and older generations is of crucial importance for social stability.

The relevance of the topic is determined by several main factors. First, the institutional reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan - constitutional changes, youth policy, restructuring of the education system - are giving new content and authority to spiritual politics. Second, the widespread use of the digital environment and social networks is changing the forms of intergenerational communication, which requires a reconsideration of the effectiveness of traditional methods of upbringing. Third, labor migration flows and urbanization processes are weakening the function of the family in maintaining intergenerational ties and imposing new tasks on state and civil institutions.



LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BASIS: Spiritual politics is interpreted differently in the literature of social sciences. A number of researchers understand it as a purposeful activity aimed at forming a national identity and popularizing the idea of the state. In this approach, spiritual politics mainly serves the formation of an “imagined community” - a national community. However, this interpretation, assuming a passive acceptance of politics, does not sufficiently take into account the factor of active participation of citizens. From the point of view of social capital theory, spiritual politics is assessed as an effort aimed at expanding social trust and cooperation networks, strengthening “bridging capital” - connections between generations. Putnam proved in his research that political stability and civic activity are directly related to the level of social capital. This approach is especially important in the conditions of Uzbekistan: the mahalla institution is the basis of traditional social capital, and spiritual politics plays a leading role in adapting it to modern conditions.

In Central Asian studies, scholars such as Fumagalli, Heathershaw, and Laruelle have examined the relationship between moral politics and national identity construction in post-Soviet states. Their work suggests that states in authoritarian transition often use moral politics as a means of strengthening legitimacy, but this approach can limit social innovation in the long run. Uzbekistan, however, has been partially diverging from this trend since 2016, attempting to strengthen civil society and pave the way for values-based democratization.

In the issue of intergenerational relations, Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development and Bronfenbrennen's ecological systems theory serve as an important methodological basis. These theories show that human socialization is formed on the basis of a multi-layered interaction between family, community, and state institutions. In this framework, intergenerational relations are interpreted as the main channel for the “vertical transmission” of knowledge and values - the transfer from generation to generation. Mannheim characterized the concept of generation not

as a biological, but as a socio-historical phenomenon. In his opinion, the values and worldview of a generation are formed through a common historical experience. In the conditions of Uzbekistan, this idea is important: the experience of the Soviet era, the differences between the independence generation and the digital generation also reflect deep socio-psychological contradictions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: The system of institutions implementing spiritual policy in Uzbekistan has expanded significantly over the past decade. While the central link, the Center for Spirituality and Enlightenment, is responsible for national ideology and cultural programs, the Youth Affairs Agency, established in 2017, has taken on the task of working directly with the younger generation. The expansion of the activities of the El-yurt Umidi Foundation in 2019, the establishment of youth centers at universities, and the renewal of the legal framework of the mahalla system indicate the consistency of political will. However, the system has a number of structural problems. The first problem is the risk of fragmentation: the coordination mechanism in the field of spiritual policy between different agencies is not sufficiently developed, which leads to duplication or contradiction of programs. The second problem is the weakness of the monitoring system: the results of spiritual policy are often measured by qualitative indicators (number of events, number of participants), making it difficult to assess deep social changes. The third problem is the limited participation of civil society: policy is formed mainly in a “top-down” direction, and the real influence of independent civil society organizations and academic circles is limited.

When analyzing the current state of intergenerational relations in Uzbekistan, two trends that simultaneously contradict each other are noticeable: the closeness of formal values and the disconnection of real life. On the one hand, according to the 2023 survey of the Uzbekistan Statistics Agency, 87.3 percent of the population consider the family to be the most important value. This figure is also 84.1 percent

among young people aged 18–29, which means that the younger generation has retained respect for the family. A sense of patriotism, hospitality, and attention to education also remain common values for representatives of all generations. On the other hand, labor migration has a serious negative impact on intergenerational relations. According to 2024 data, about 2.5 million labor migrants work outside Uzbekistan, and 72 percent of them are men aged 20–40. This situation has led to the fact that in many rural families, the upbringing of children is mainly the responsibility of grandparents, disrupting full-fledged intergenerational cooperation within the family. In urban families, the process of urbanization is reducing the close geographical location of family members.

The digital environment has a two-way impact on intergenerational relations. While young people are exposed to global culture through social media, the older generation cannot participate in this environment. The mahalla institution remains the oldest and still most important mechanism for intergenerational relations in Uzbekistan. The law “On Neighborhoods”, adopted in 2022, clarified the powers and responsibilities of the mahalla. However, research shows that urban mahallas in most cases function as formal administrative units. Rural mahallas have retained a more traditional structure. Significant progress was noted in the field of youth policy between 2018 and 2024: the number of universities increased from 65 to more than 130, scholarship programs expanded, and preferential credit lines were opened for youth entrepreneurship. However, the close connection of these measures with spiritual education is often insufficient. Economic opportunities and spiritual-value education are considered parallel directions in many programs, while their integration is a prerequisite for the young generation to grow up not only as competent, but also as citizens committed to national values. One of the important conclusions of the study is that the mechanisms operating on the basis of the traditional teacher-student relationship - the master-apprentice system in crafts, professor-student cooperation in

scientific research, and the teacher-student relationship in religious education - are still highly effective. The common feature of these mechanisms is that they ensure the transmission of knowledge and values through “living chains”, while official programs often cannot replace this deep personal transmission.

During the study, a number of systemic obstacles to the implementation of spiritual policy were identified. The first and most important obstacle is the problem of economic-spiritual imbalance. For broad strata, spiritual development becomes a secondary need under economic pressure. According to the law of Maslow's hierarchy, in conditions where basic material needs are not met, members of society neglect the issues of spiritual development. This problem is especially acute in rural areas and among migrant families. The second obstacle is the lack of high-quality national content. Strong national content, educational and cultural digital resources in the Uzbek language, are necessary for the spiritual formation of the younger generation in the digital environment. However, currently, local digital content lags significantly behind content on global platforms in terms of quantity and quality. This gap poses a risk of negatively changing the balance of cultural influence. The third obstacle is the infrastructure gap between urban and rural areas. Spiritual policy opportunities are concentrated mainly in urban centers, such as cultural centers, youth centers, modern libraries, and the Internet. The rural population has limited access to these opportunities, which leads to a partial state influence in the field of strengthening intergenerational relations. The fourth obstacle is the weakness of the research and monitoring base. There is a lack of systematic, methodologically sound empirical research on the results of spiritual policy in Uzbekistan. The evidence base necessary for policy adoption is poorly developed, which reduces the purposefulness and effectiveness of political decisions.

Based on the results of the study, the following strategic directions are recommended to strengthen spiritual policy and intergenerational relations. The first



direction is to integrate spiritual policy with economic development. It is necessary to create material opportunities for young people and develop spiritual education as an integrated system. For example, introducing elements of national crafts and cultural economy into youth entrepreneurship programs, creating economic opportunities based on local cultural heritage. The second direction is to expand digital spiritual infrastructure. It is necessary to establish the creation of high-quality educational and cultural digital content in the national language as a state priority. In this direction, the public-private partnership model of cooperation between technology companies, educational institutions and cultural organizations can be effective. At the same time, targeting digital literacy programs to the older generation will allow building an intergenerational digital bridge. The third direction is to functionally modernize the mahalla institute. It is recommended to include the institution of youth coordinators in the traditional neighborhood management system, transfer neighborhood activities to digital platforms, and develop joint projects that combine the experience of the older generation with the innovative potential of the younger generation. As the experience of “Saemaul” in South Korea has shown, local development initiatives organized on the basis of intergenerational cooperation lead to quick and sustainable results. The fourth direction is to form a system of monitoring and evaluation of spiritual policy on a scientific basis. The goal is to ensure that political decisions are made based on empirical evidence. To this end, it is recommended to develop an index of intergenerational relations in cooperation with universities and independent research centers, conduct comprehensive social surveys every two years, and publish the results as open data.

International experience shows that the most successful approach to spiritual policy is a combination of “soft power” influence through education, culture, and civil society with “hard power” state institutions and regulatory regulation. The experiences of South Korea (combining Confucian values with modern education), Finland

(forming democratic values through civic education), and Singapore (maintaining national unity in a multicultural society) provide valuable lessons for Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan has the potential to become a regional leader in the field of spiritual politics in the Central Asian region: the rich scientific heritage of Islamic civilization (Al-Khwarizmi, Ibn Sina, Al-Farghani, Imam Bukhari), unique cultural heritage monuments, and centuries-old pedagogical traditions all expand the potential of "soft power". To fully utilize this opportunity, it is necessary to strengthen intergenerational relations.

CONCLUSION . In the renewing Uzbekistan, the issue of spiritual policy and strengthening intergenerational relations is simultaneously a strategic task of state building and an internal need of society. Based on the results of the study, the following main conclusions can be drawn. First, the institutional foundations of spiritual policy in Uzbekistan have been formed and initial results have been achieved, but the effectiveness of the system is not fully realized due to the weakness of the monitoring base and problems with interdepartmental coordination. Second, traditional values (family, patriotism, hospitality) in intergenerational relations remain stable, but the impact of labor migration, urbanization and the digital environment is changing the form and content of these relations. Third, the main factor of effective spiritual policy is the functioning of official institutions, civil society and family upbringing as a complementary system. Only when the consistency between these three components is ensured can a “continuous chain” of spiritual influence be formed from the state to the neighborhood, from the neighborhood to the family, from the family to the individual. Fourth, preserving national identity in the digital space and ensuring intergenerational communication in a new form will become the most important political and cultural problem of the coming decade. In this area, a proactive, evidence-based and broadly engaging approach to civil society will be crucial. The path to Uzbekistan’s spiritual rise is the art of finding a balance between tradition and modernity, local and global,

state and citizen initiatives. Strengthening intergenerational relations is not only a goal, but also a main driving force on this path.

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, B. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (Revised ed.). Verso, 1991
2. Bourdieu, P. The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. Greenwood,1986.pp. 241–258.
3. Bronfenbrenner, U. The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design. Harvard University Press, 1979.
4. Fumagalli, M. Ethnicity, state formation and foreign policy: Uzbekistan and "Uzbeks abroad". Central Asian Survey, 2007. p.105–122..
5. Heathershaw, J. (). Post-conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order. Routledge, 2009.
6. Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (Eds.). The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge University Press, 1983.
7. Laruelle, M. Discussing nationhood and why it matters: Reassessing Central Asia. Nationalities Papers, 40(5), 2012. 649–654.
8. Mannheim, K. The problem of generations. In P. Kecskemeti (Ed.), Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge Routledge. 1952. pp. 276–322.
9. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023 edition). Supreme Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
10. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 28, 2022 No. PF-60. "On the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026."
11. Putnam, R. D. Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. Simon & Schuster. 2000