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RELIGIOUS REVIVAL AND THE STATE STRATEGY OF SECULAR DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN AFTER INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract

The article examines the relationship between religious revival and the state strategy of secular development in Uzbekistan after independence. The relevance of the topic is determined by the fact that the restoration of religious values, historical memory, spiritual heritage and freedom of conscience became one of the important social processes in the post-Soviet period. At the same time, the state preserved the principle of secular governance, emphasizing the separation of religious institutions from political power, the protection of interfaith harmony and the prevention of radical ideology. The purpose of the article is to analyze how religious revival developed within the framework of a secular state model and how this process influenced social stability, civic consciousness and historical identity. The study focuses on the legal, educational, cultural and ideological aspects of state policy in the field of religion. Special attention is paid to the role of historical heritage, Islamic educational traditions, religious tolerance, modernization reforms and the activities of state institutions in maintaining balance between spiritual renewal and secular development. The article argues that the Uzbek model demonstrates a specific form of interaction between religion and state, in which religious values are recognized as part of national culture, while political governance remains based on constitutional secularism. This approach has contributed to strengthening social cohesion, preventing ideological conflicts and forming a more balanced understanding of religion in public life.



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Keywords: religious revival, secular state, freedom of conscience, spiritual heritage, national identity, interfaith harmony, modern history, state policy.

Introduction

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается взаимосвязь религиозного возрождения и государственной стратегии светского развития в Узбекистане после обретения независимости. Актуальность темы определяется тем, что восстановление религиозных ценностей, исторической памяти, духовного наследия и свободы совести стало одним из важных социальных процессов постсоветского периода. Вместе с тем государство сохранило принцип светского управления, подчёркивая отделение религиозных институтов от политической власти, защиту межконфессионального согласия и предупреждение радикальной идеологии. Цель статьи заключается в анализе того, как религиозное возрождение развивалось в рамках модели светского государства и как данный процесс повлиял на социальную стабильность, гражданское сознание и историческую идентичность. Исследование сосредоточено на правовых, образовательных, культурных и идеологических аспектах государственной политики в сфере религии. Особое внимание уделяется роли исторического наследия, исламских образовательных традиций, религиозной толерантности, модернизационных реформ и деятельности государственных институтов в поддержании баланса между духовным обновлением и светским развитием. В статье обосновывается, что узбекская модель демонстрирует особую форму взаимодействия религии и государства, при которой религиозные ценности признаются частью национальной культуры, а политическое управление сохраняет конституционно светский характер. Такой подход способствует укреплению общественного согласия, предупреждению идеологических конфликтов и формированию более взвешенного понимания роли религии в общественной жизни.

Ключевые слова: религиозное возрождение, светское государство, свобода совести, духовное наследие, национальная идентичность,

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межконфессиональное согласие, новейшая история, государственная политика.

Introduction

The period after independence marked a profound transformation in the political, cultural and spiritual life of Uzbekistan. One of the most important directions of this transformation was the rethinking of religion as a historical, cultural and moral factor in society. During the Soviet period, religious life had been strictly controlled, many religious institutions were limited in their activity, and the connection between religion, education and national heritage was weakened. After the declaration of independence, the restoration of religious values became part of a wider process of national self-awareness, historical memory and spiritual renewal. Mosques, madrasas, religious educational centers, historical monuments and sacred places regained public importance, while society began to rediscover the intellectual legacy of scholars such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, Bahauddin Naqshband and other figures whose works had shaped the religious and philosophical culture of Central Asia.

At the same time, the revival of religion did not mean the transformation of the state into a religious political system. From the first years of independence, Uzbekistan chose a secular model of development in which religion was recognized as an important element of spiritual life but was not allowed to replace constitutional law, civic equality or state institutions. This approach was especially significant because the post-Soviet space faced different ideological challenges, including the growth of radical movements, the politicization of religion and the search for new national development models. For Uzbekistan, the task was not only to restore religious freedom but also to prevent religion from becoming an instrument of political conflict or social division.

The relevance of this topic is connected with the need to understand how religious revival and secular development interacted in the modern history of Uzbekistan. In many societies, these two processes are often viewed as contradictory. However, the Uzbek experience shows that religious values and secular statehood may coexist when they are placed within a legal, educational

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and cultural framework. The state supported the study of religious heritage, the restoration of historical monuments and the strengthening of interfaith tolerance, while also maintaining control over the political use of religion and promoting civic identity above confessional division.

For pedagogical and historical education, this issue has particular importance. Future history teachers should understand not only the chronology of political reforms but also the deeper social processes that influenced public consciousness after independence. Religion in modern Uzbekistan cannot be studied only as a theological phenomenon; it must be examined as part of national history, cultural continuity, moral education, social stability and state policy. Such an approach allows students to analyze the relationship between tradition and modernization, freedom and responsibility, spiritual heritage and constitutional order.

Therefore, the study of religious revival and secular development in Uzbekistan after independence helps reveal the complexity of the country's historical path. It shows that the formation of a modern state was accompanied not by the rejection of spiritual heritage, but by its reinterpretation within the framework of secular governance, legal order and social harmony.

Methods

This study is based on a historical-analytical and interdisciplinary methodological approach aimed at examining the interaction between religious revival and the secular state development strategy in Uzbekistan after independence. Since the topic belongs to the field of modern history, the research does not limit itself to a simple chronological description of events, but focuses on the interpretation of political, cultural, legal and educational processes that shaped the relationship between religion and the state in the post-Soviet period. The methodological basis of the article includes historical analysis, comparative interpretation, content analysis of legal and conceptual documents, and a socio-cultural approach to the study of religious processes.

The historical-analytical method was used to trace the main stages of religious revival after independence. This method made it possible to identify how religious institutions, spiritual values, sacred monuments, religious education

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and public attitudes toward religion changed in comparison with the Soviet period. Special attention was given to the transition from ideological restriction to the recognition of freedom of conscience and spiritual heritage as important components of social life. Through this approach, the study considers religious revival not as an isolated phenomenon, but as part of the broader process of restoring national memory, cultural continuity and moral values.

The legal-institutional method was applied to analyze the secular foundations of state policy. The study considers the constitutional principle of secularism, the legal regulation of freedom of conscience, the separation of religious organizations from the state, and the role of public institutions in maintaining interfaith harmony. This method helps reveal how the state created a legal framework that allowed religious life to develop while preventing the politicization of religion. The legal dimension is important because the balance between religious freedom and secular governance cannot be understood without examining the norms that define the rights and responsibilities of citizens, religious organizations and state bodies.

The comparative method was used to distinguish the specific features of the Uzbek model from broader post-Soviet and regional processes. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many newly independent states faced similar issues related to religious revival, identity formation and ideological security. However, Uzbekistan developed its own approach by combining respect for religious and cultural heritage with the preservation of a secular political order. The comparative perspective allows the study to show that this model was shaped by historical experience, demographic diversity, regional security concerns and the need to maintain social stability.

The content analysis method was used in relation to academic literature, historical sources, official concepts, educational materials and scholarly works devoted to religion, secularism, national identity and spiritual education. This method helped identify dominant themes such as tolerance, moderation, historical memory, enlightenment, civic unity and resistance to radical ideology. The analysis also paid attention to how religious heritage is represented in historical education and how it can be taught in pedagogical universities without reducing the topic to ideological or purely theological interpretation.

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The socio-cultural approach was used to understand religion as a factor of public consciousness, moral education and cultural identity. In this framework, religious revival is interpreted not only through the restoration of mosques or religious institutions, but also through changes in everyday values, family traditions, public rituals, ethical norms and attitudes toward historical figures. Such an approach is especially relevant for history education, because it helps future teachers explain religion as part of social history and cultural development.

Overall, the chosen methodology allows the article to examine the topic from several interconnected perspectives. It combines historical chronology with legal analysis, institutional interpretation with cultural context, and state policy with social processes. This makes it possible to provide a balanced understanding of how religious revival developed within the framework of a secular state strategy and how this interaction influenced modern historical development, civic consciousness and educational practice.

Results

The analysis shows that religious revival in Uzbekistan after independence developed as a multidimensional historical process connected with the restoration of spiritual values, national memory and cultural self-awareness. The first visible result of this revival was the return of religion to public life after decades of ideological restriction. Religious holidays, sacred places, Islamic educational traditions, historical personalities and moral values began to be reconsidered as legitimate parts of national heritage. This process helped society overcome the spiritual gap created during the Soviet period, when religion was often presented as an outdated worldview rather than as a component of cultural identity. After independence, religion gradually became associated not only with personal belief, but also with historical continuity, moral upbringing and respect for ancestral heritage.

Another important result is that the state did not allow religious revival to develop outside the framework of constitutional secularism. The secular strategy of development became a stabilizing mechanism that defined the legal boundaries between religious life and political power. Religious organizations

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obtained the opportunity to function within the law, while the state preserved its role as the main guarantor of civic equality, public order and interfaith harmony. This balance was especially important in a society where the majority of the population historically belongs to Islamic culture, but where different confessions and ethnic communities also coexist. The state's position demonstrated that religious identity could be respected without transforming religion into a political instrument.

The study also reveals that religious revival contributed to the strengthening of historical consciousness. The names and works of great scholars such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, Burhanuddin al-Marghinani and Bahauddin Naqshband were restored in academic, educational and public discourse. Their intellectual heritage began to be interpreted not only as religious knowledge, but also as part of the broader history of science, ethics, law, philosophy and culture. This allowed the younger generation to understand that the history of Central Asia includes a rich tradition of enlightenment, tolerance and intellectual dialogue. For pedagogical universities, this result is particularly significant because it creates opportunities to teach religion-related historical topics in a scientific and culturally grounded manner.

The results further indicate that the secular development strategy served as a response to the risks of radicalization and ideological extremism. In the post-independence period, the state faced the necessity of distinguishing between traditional religious values and destructive ideological movements that used religious slogans for political purposes. Therefore, the policy of secularism was not directed against religion itself, but against the politicization of faith and the spread of radical interpretations. This approach helped preserve social stability and prevented the formation of sharp religious-political divisions in society.

A further result is the growth of attention to religious tolerance and interfaith cooperation. The state's policy emphasized peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and the preservation of civic unity. Religious revival was therefore connected not with isolation from modern development, but with the formation of a balanced public consciousness in which spiritual heritage, legal culture and secular citizenship complement one another.

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Overall, the results demonstrate that the Uzbek experience after independence represents a specific model of interaction between religion and state. Religious revival became a source of cultural renewal and moral orientation, while secular development provided the institutional and legal framework necessary for stability, modernization and civic integration.

Discussion

The findings of the study show that the relationship between religious revival and secular development in Uzbekistan after independence cannot be interpreted as a simple opposition between tradition and modernity. Rather, it represents a complex historical process in which spiritual renewal, state-building, cultural identity and legal modernization developed simultaneously. The post-Soviet period created a social demand for the restoration of religious values because religion had long been restricted in public life. However, this restoration took place within a political environment where the state had to preserve stability, prevent ideological fragmentation and build a modern civic order. Therefore, the Uzbek experience demonstrates that secularism did not mean the rejection of religion, but the establishment of legal and institutional boundaries for its constructive role in society.

One of the most important aspects of this process is the reinterpretation of religion as part of cultural and historical memory. In the Soviet period, religious heritage was often separated from the general history of the nation or was studied mainly through an ideological lens. After independence, the intellectual and moral legacy of Islamic scholars became an important element of historical education and public consciousness. The renewed interest in figures such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi helped society recognize that religious thought in Central Asia had historically been connected with knowledge, ethics, jurisprudence, moderation and enlightenment. This point is especially important for history education because it prevents a narrow understanding of religion and allows students to see it as part of the broader development of civilization.

At the same time, the state strategy of secular development performed a protective function. In a rapidly changing social environment, the uncontrolled

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politicization of religion could have created risks for national unity and public security. For this reason, the state emphasized freedom of conscience together with responsibility before the law. Such an approach allowed citizens to practice religion while maintaining the supremacy of constitutional norms and civic equality. This balance is essential in a multiethnic and multiconfessional society, where the state must represent all citizens regardless of their religious identity. The discussion also shows that religious revival influenced moral education and social values. Family ethics, respect for elders, charity, compassion, honesty and responsibility gained stronger public significance through the renewed attention to spiritual heritage. However, these values were not presented only as religious obligations; they were integrated into the broader framework of national culture and civic upbringing. This demonstrates the pedagogical importance of the topic. For future history teachers, the study of religion in modern Uzbekistan should not be limited to institutional history. It should also include the analysis of values, social behavior, identity formation and the relationship between personal belief and public responsibility.

Another significant point is that secularism in Uzbekistan developed as a pragmatic and historically conditioned model. It was shaped by the need to combine spiritual continuity with modernization, national identity with civic unity, and religious freedom with ideological security. This model differs from both strict exclusion of religion from public life and direct religious governance. Its central feature is controlled coexistence: religion is respected as a moral and cultural resource, while the state remains the main legal and political authority. Thus, the interaction between religious revival and secular development after independence reflects one of the key features of Uzbekistan’s modern historical path. It shows that the renewal of spiritual heritage can support social stability when it is combined with legal regulation, historical education, tolerance and the priority of civic consciousness.

Conclusion

The study of religious revival and the state strategy of secular development in Uzbekistan after independence shows that this issue occupies an important place in the modern history of the country. The years following independence were

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marked by the restoration of spiritual values, freedom of conscience, historical memory and cultural heritage. Religion returned to public life not only as a sphere of personal belief, but also as a significant element of national identity, moral education and cultural continuity. At the same time, this process developed within the framework of a secular state model, where constitutional principles, civic equality and the separation of religious organizations from political power remained fundamental conditions of social development.

The analysis confirms that religious revival in Uzbekistan was not limited to the reopening of mosques or the expansion of religious practice. It also included the rediscovery of the intellectual legacy of great scholars, the restoration of sacred places, the strengthening of moral values and the formation of a renewed attitude toward national history. The works and names of outstanding thinkers such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, Burhanuddin al-Marghinani and Bahauddin Naqshband became important symbols of spiritual continuity and enlightenment. Their heritage helped demonstrate that the religious tradition of the region has historically been associated with knowledge, moderation, ethics, law and intellectual culture.

At the same time, the secular strategy of the state played a decisive role in maintaining balance. It ensured that religious freedom could develop without undermining legal order, social stability or civic unity. The state's approach was based on the idea that religion may serve as a moral and cultural resource, but political governance must remain grounded in constitutional norms and public law. This position was especially important in the conditions of post-Soviet transformation, when society needed both spiritual renewal and institutional stability. The secular model helped prevent the politicization of religion, reduce the influence of radical ideologies and preserve interfaith harmony.

For historical and pedagogical education, the topic has particular significance. Future history teachers should understand that religion in modern Uzbekistan is not only a theological question, but also a historical, cultural, legal and social phenomenon. Its study requires a balanced academic approach that avoids both ideological simplification and excessive politicization. In the educational process, this topic can help students understand the relationship between


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tradition and modernization, spiritual heritage and statehood, religious freedom and civic responsibility.

Overall, the experience of Uzbekistan after independence demonstrates that religious revival and secular development are not necessarily contradictory processes. When religious values are interpreted through culture, ethics, education and historical memory, and when state policy is based on law, tolerance and social responsibility, these two directions can complement each other. The Uzbek model shows that a modern secular state can respect spiritual heritage while preserving political neutrality, legal order and public stability. This balance remains one of the key factors in the country's contemporary historical development and in the formation of a socially responsible civic consciousness.

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