

HARMONY BETWEEN SECULARISM AND NATIONAL VALUES: THE CASE
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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20701854>

Abstract: The article examines the relationship between secularism and national values in the context of Uzbekistan's socio-political development. Particular attention is paid to the role of secular principles in ensuring social stability, religious tolerance, and democratic development while preserving the country's rich spiritual and cultural heritage. The study argues that the Uzbek model of secularism is based not on the rejection of religion but on the harmonization of secular governance, national traditions, and universal human values. The paper analyzes the historical foundations, philosophical dimensions, and contemporary challenges of maintaining a balance between secularism and national identity in modern Uzbekistan.

Keywords: secularism, national values, Uzbekistan, spirituality, tolerance, civil society, modernization, national identity.

The relationship between secularism and national values has become one of the most significant issues in contemporary political and social philosophy. In many societies, modernization processes, globalization, and increasing cultural diversity have intensified discussions regarding the place of religion, tradition, and national identity within secular states. The challenge lies in creating a social and political system that guarantees freedom of conscience, equality before the law, and democratic governance while preserving cultural heritage and moral traditions.

Uzbekistan presents a unique example of such a balance. Since gaining independence in 1991, the country has pursued a model of development that combines secular statehood with respect for national traditions, spiritual values, and religious freedom. Unlike some interpretations of secularism that seek to exclude religion from the public sphere entirely, the Uzbek model emphasizes harmony between secular governance and the cultural values of society. This approach has become particularly important in the context of globalization, which simultaneously creates opportunities for modernization and challenges to national identity [1].

Secularism is commonly understood as the principle of separating state institutions from religious organizations and ensuring neutrality toward different



beliefs. However, secularism does not necessarily imply hostility toward religion. Modern scholars distinguish between various models of secularism, ranging from strict separationist approaches to cooperative models that allow constructive interaction between the state and religious communities [2].

In democratic societies, secularism serves several important functions. First, it guarantees freedom of religion and belief. Second, it ensures equal treatment of citizens regardless of their religious affiliation. Third, it prevents the monopolization of political power by any religious institution. Thus, secularism creates a legal framework that enables individuals with different worldviews to coexist peacefully within a common civic space.

For Uzbekistan, secularism has become an essential constitutional principle that supports social stability in a multiethnic and multiconfessional society. The secular nature of the state does not deny the importance of religion but rather provides conditions for the free development of all religious communities while maintaining state neutrality.

National values constitute a system of cultural, historical, ethical, and spiritual traditions that shape the identity of a nation. In Uzbekistan, such values include respect for family, community solidarity, hospitality, tolerance, mutual assistance, and reverence for cultural heritage.

These values have been formed over centuries under the influence of various civilizations, including Islamic, Turkic, Persian, and Central Asian traditions. They continue to play a significant role in shaping social behavior, moral norms, and public consciousness [3].

National values perform several important functions within society. They strengthen social cohesion, preserve historical memory, and provide moral guidance for younger generations. Moreover, they contribute to the formation of civic identity and national unity. In the context of globalization, national values serve as an important mechanism for preserving cultural uniqueness while adapting to global changes.

One of the distinctive features of Uzbekistan's development model is the attempt to harmonize secular principles with national and spiritual values. This approach is reflected in state policies aimed at preserving cultural heritage, promoting religious tolerance, and strengthening civic responsibility.

The Constitution of Uzbekistan guarantees freedom of conscience and establishes the secular nature of the state. At the same time, public policy recognizes the importance of the country's historical and cultural traditions. This



combination demonstrates that secularism and national values are not mutually exclusive but can complement one another in achieving social harmony.

The concept of spirituality (ma'naviyat) occupies a special place in Uzbekistan's development strategy. Spirituality is viewed not merely as a religious phenomenon but as a broader system of moral, cultural, and ethical values that contributes to personal development and social responsibility. Consequently, spiritual education is considered compatible with the principles of a secular state because it focuses on universal ethical norms rather than religious dogma [4].

Furthermore, Uzbekistan has developed a model of interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance that supports peaceful coexistence among representatives of different religions and cultures. This model demonstrates how secular governance can facilitate religious freedom while preventing extremism and maintaining social stability.

Despite significant achievements, maintaining harmony between secularism and national values remains a complex task. Globalization, digitalization, and transnational cultural influences create new challenges for societies seeking to preserve their cultural identity.

One challenge involves balancing openness to global ideas with the protection of national traditions. Excessive cultural isolation may hinder modernization, while uncontrolled cultural assimilation may weaken national identity. Therefore, policymakers must continuously seek an optimal balance between innovation and tradition.

Another challenge concerns the growing influence of digital media and social networks. These platforms facilitate the rapid spread of information and ideas but may also contribute to ideological polarization and the dissemination of extremist narratives. Under such conditions, strengthening critical thinking, media literacy, and civic responsibility becomes increasingly important.

Additionally, the interaction between religious revival and secular governance requires careful management. While religious freedom is a fundamental right, the politicization of religion may create tensions within society. Consequently, the principles of secularism remain essential for ensuring equality, social cohesion, and legal stability.

Civil society institutions play a crucial role in maintaining harmony between secularism and national values. Educational institutions, cultural organizations, research centers, and non-governmental organizations contribute to promoting dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding.



Through educational programs and public initiatives, civil society helps citizens appreciate both national traditions and democratic values. Such activities strengthen social trust and encourage active citizenship. In this regard, civil society acts as a bridge connecting state institutions, cultural heritage, and contemporary social needs.

Moreover, civil society provides opportunities for individuals to participate in public life regardless of their religious or ideological affiliations. This inclusive approach reinforces the principles of equality and pluralism that are fundamental to both secular governance and democratic development.

The experience of Uzbekistan demonstrates that secularism and national values can coexist in a mutually reinforcing relationship. The Uzbek model of secular development is based on the recognition that state neutrality toward religion does not require the rejection of cultural heritage or spiritual traditions. On the contrary, national values provide an important moral foundation for social stability, civic responsibility, and national unity

The successful harmonization of secular principles, national traditions, and universal democratic values contributes to sustainable development and strengthens social cohesion. In the context of globalization, preserving this balance remains one of the key challenges and priorities for Uzbekistan's future development.

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