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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS POLICY IN THE FORMATION OF CIVIC IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF UZBEKISTAN

Makhkamova Nadira Ulfatdjanovna
Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences
EMU University

Mirobitova Sojida Mirzokir kizi
2 Stage Student of the 201B – Group (Dentistry)
EMU University

Abstract:

This article examines the role of religious policy in the formation of civic identity in the contemporary history of Uzbekistan. The study focuses on the interaction between the secular state, religious institutions, national values, and social consciousness after independence. Particular attention is given to how state policy toward religion has contributed to the strengthening of social stability, interconfessional tolerance, historical memory, and a sense of belonging to a common civic community. The article analyzes the transformation of religious policy from the early years of independence to the present stage, emphasizing the balance between freedom of conscience, preservation of secular governance, and prevention of ideological radicalization. The research also considers the pedagogical significance of this issue for history education, since the study of religious policy helps students understand the complex relationship between statehood, spirituality, national identity, and civic responsibility. The article argues that religious policy, when based on legal regulation, tolerance, and respect for cultural heritage, becomes an important factor in developing civic identity and consolidating society around shared historical and moral values.

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Keywords: Religious policy, civic identity, secular state, freedom of conscience, interconfessional tolerance, national values, historical memory, civic responsibility.

Аннотация:

В статье рассматривается роль религиозной политики в формировании гражданской идентичности в новейшей истории Узбекистана. Основное внимание уделяется взаимодействию светского государства, религиозных институтов, национальных ценностей и общественного сознания после обретения независимости. Особое значение придаётся тому, как государственная политика в сфере религии способствовала укреплению социальной стабильности, межконфессиональной толерантности, исторической памяти и чувства принадлежности к единому гражданскому сообществу. В статье анализируется трансформация религиозной политики от первых лет независимости до современного этапа, подчёркивается необходимость баланса между свободой совести, сохранением светского характера управления и профилактикой идеологической радикализации. Также раскрывается педагогическая значимость данной проблемы для исторического образования, поскольку изучение религиозной политики помогает студентам понять сложную связь между государственностью, духовностью, национальной идентичностью и гражданской ответственностью. Делается вывод о том, что религиозная политика, основанная на правовом регулировании, толерантности и уважении к культурному наследию, выступает важным фактором развития гражданской идентичности и консолидации общества вокруг общих историко-нравственных ценностей.

Ключевые слова: религиозная политика, гражданская идентичность, светское государство, свобода совести, межконфессиональная

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ТОЛЕРАНТНОСТЬ, НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ЦЕННОСТИ, ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ ПАМЯТЬ, ГРАЖДАНСКАЯ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬ

Introduction

The contemporary history of Uzbekistan is closely connected with the search for a stable model of statehood, social unity, national self-awareness, and civic identity. After gaining independence, the country faced the task of building a modern secular state while preserving historical memory, cultural continuity, and the spiritual values of society. Religion, especially Islam as an important element of the historical and cultural heritage of the people, became one of the significant factors influencing public consciousness, moral education, and social integration. At the same time, the state had to develop a balanced policy that would guarantee freedom of conscience, protect religious rights, maintain interconfessional harmony, and prevent the politicization of religion. Therefore, the study of religious policy in relation to civic identity is highly relevant for understanding the political, cultural, and educational processes of the post-independence period. Civic identity is not limited to legal citizenship. It includes a person's awareness of belonging to the state, acceptance of common social values, respect for laws, responsibility for public life, and recognition of the diversity of society. In the context of Uzbekistan, civic identity has developed under the influence of national traditions, historical experience, secular constitutional principles, and spiritual renewal. Religious policy has played an important role in this process because it has helped define the relationship between the state and religious communities, between individual belief and public responsibility, and between cultural heritage and modern citizenship. The regulation of this sphere has required careful attention, since religion can serve both as a source of moral consolidation and, if misused, as a channel for ideological division.

In the first years of independence, the revival of religious values was perceived as part of the broader restoration of national identity. Mosques, religious

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educational institutions, historical monuments, and spiritual traditions began to receive renewed public attention. This process contributed to the strengthening of historical memory and the rehabilitation of cultural heritage that had been limited during the Soviet period. However, the state also emphasized that religious freedom must develop within the framework of secular law and civic equality. This position became essential for preventing religious exclusivism and for ensuring that citizens of different beliefs could participate equally in the social and political life of the country.

The relevance of this topic is especially important for historical and pedagogical education. Future history teachers need to understand that religious policy in contemporary Uzbekistan cannot be studied only as a legal or administrative issue. It should be analyzed as a complex historical phenomenon connected with state-building, identity formation, social stability, moral education, and cultural continuity. The study of this issue allows students to develop a more balanced understanding of the relationship between religion and society, between secular governance and spiritual values, and between national heritage and civic responsibility.

Thus, the role of religious policy in the formation of civic identity reflects one of the key dimensions of Uzbekistan's contemporary development. It demonstrates how the state seeks to harmonize freedom of conscience, religious tolerance, secular principles, and the consolidation of citizens around common historical, legal, and moral foundations.

Methods

The methodological basis of this article is formed by a historical-pedagogical and analytical approach to the study of religious policy and civic identity in the contemporary history of Uzbekistan. Since the topic is connected with political history, social consciousness, legal culture, spiritual values, and educational interpretation, the research cannot be limited to one narrow method. For this

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reason, the article uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines historical analysis, comparative interpretation, content analysis of normative and conceptual sources, and pedagogical generalization. This makes it possible to examine religious policy not only as a system of state regulation, but also as a factor influencing the formation of civic consciousness and social responsibility. The historical method is used to identify the main stages in the transformation of religious policy after independence. This method allows the study to trace how attitudes toward religion changed from the Soviet period, when religious life was strictly controlled and often restricted, to the post-independence period, when the restoration of spiritual heritage became an important part of national revival. Through historical analysis, attention is given to the development of legal guarantees for freedom of conscience, the restoration of religious and cultural monuments, the activity of religious educational institutions, and the state's efforts to maintain interconfessional harmony. This method helps reveal that religious policy in Uzbekistan has evolved in close connection with the broader tasks of state-building, social stability, and identity formation.

The analytical method is applied to examine the relationship between religious policy and civic identity. In this context, civic identity is understood as a complex social and historical category that includes legal belonging to the state, respect for constitutional principles, participation in public life, awareness of shared historical memory, and recognition of the cultural diversity of society. The analysis focuses on how religious policy contributes to the development of these elements by supporting tolerance, legal awareness, moral education, and respect for national heritage. At the same time, the method makes it possible to consider the limits of religious influence in a secular state and to show why the balance between spiritual values and civic equality is essential for social development.

The comparative method is used to compare different historical stages and policy priorities in the field of religion. The early years of independence were marked by the restoration of religious values and cultural memory, while later stages

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placed stronger emphasis on legal regulation, prevention of religious extremism, interfaith dialogue, and educational work with youth. Comparing these stages helps demonstrate that religious policy has not remained static; it has changed in response to social needs, global challenges, and internal processes of modernization. Such comparison also allows a deeper understanding of how civic identity is shaped through the interaction of continuity and change.

The content analysis method is used to interpret legal documents, educational materials, public discourse, and scholarly works related to religion, secularism, tolerance, and civic education. This method helps identify the key concepts that define the state's approach to religion, including freedom of conscience, secularism, tolerance, legality, spiritual heritage, and social stability. These concepts are important because they show how religious policy is represented in official and academic discourse and how it can be explained in history education. The pedagogical generalization method is applied to determine the educational significance of the topic for students of pedagogical universities, especially future history teachers. The study proceeds from the idea that the history of religious policy should be taught not as a separate political issue, but as part of the broader process of forming civic culture. In the educational process, this topic helps students develop historical thinking, respect for cultural diversity, critical understanding of ideological processes, and awareness of the importance of secular and legal principles in society. Thus, the chosen methods make it possible to study religious policy as a historical, social, legal, and pedagogical phenomenon that influences the development of civic identity in contemporary Uzbekistan.

Results

The analysis shows that religious policy in the contemporary history of Uzbekistan has become one of the important instruments for maintaining social stability, strengthening civic consciousness, and harmonizing spiritual heritage

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with the principles of a secular state. After independence, religion was no longer treated only as a private sphere separated from public life, but began to be understood as an element of cultural memory, moral education, and historical continuity. This shift had a significant influence on the formation of civic identity, because citizens began to perceive religious heritage not only through the prism of belief, but also as part of national history, ethical culture, and collective self-awareness.

One of the main results of the study is that the state's religious policy contributed to the restoration of historical memory. The revival of religious and cultural monuments, the study of the heritage of great scholars and thinkers, and the renewed public attention to spiritual traditions created conditions for society to reconnect with its historical roots. This process was especially important after the Soviet period, when many religious and cultural traditions had been limited or interpreted ideologically. In the post-independence period, the restoration of spiritual heritage helped citizens understand that civic identity is connected not only with modern legal citizenship, but also with respect for the historical experience and moral values of previous generations.

Another important result is the strengthening of the secular model of statehood. The policy of Uzbekistan has emphasized that freedom of conscience and religious belief must exist within the framework of constitutional order, legality, and equality of all citizens. This approach has helped prevent the dominance of one religious worldview over civic life and has created a legal basis for interconfessional coexistence. In this sense, religious policy has supported civic identity by forming the idea that all citizens, regardless of their religious views, belong to a common political and social community. Such an approach is especially significant for a multiethnic and multiconfessional society, where civic unity requires mutual respect and legal equality.

The research also shows that religious policy has performed a preventive function. In the context of globalization, ideological conflicts, and the spread of

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radical ideas, the state's attention to religious education, legal regulation, and public awareness has helped reduce the risks of religious extremism and ideological manipulation. At the same time, the policy has sought to distinguish between genuine religious values and destructive interpretations of religion. This distinction is important for civic identity because it helps citizens develop a responsible attitude toward belief, society, and the state.

A further result concerns the educational dimension of the issue. In pedagogical universities, especially in the training of future history teachers, the study of religious policy provides an opportunity to explain the relationship between religion, statehood, citizenship, and social responsibility. Students can understand that religion in contemporary history is not only a theological matter, but also a historical, cultural, legal, and social phenomenon. This strengthens their ability to interpret complex processes objectively and to teach history in a balanced way. Thus, the results indicate that religious policy has influenced civic identity through several interconnected mechanisms: restoration of historical memory, preservation of secular governance, support for interconfessional tolerance, prevention of ideological threats, and development of civic responsibility through education.

Discussion

The findings indicate that religious policy in contemporary Uzbekistan should be understood as a multidimensional historical process rather than as a narrowly administrative sphere of state regulation. Its importance lies in the fact that it connects several essential aspects of social development: the preservation of secular statehood, the protection of freedom of conscience, the revival of spiritual heritage, the strengthening of social stability, and the formation of civic identity. These dimensions are closely related to one another, because civic identity cannot develop only through legal citizenship; it also requires moral orientation, historical memory, cultural belonging, and trust in public institutions.

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In the post-independence period, the revival of religious values became one of the visible signs of the restoration of national and cultural self-awareness. For many citizens, religion was associated not only with faith, but also with historical justice, continuity of traditions, respect for ancestors, and moral purification after decades of ideological limitation. However, this revival required careful regulation, because uncontrolled religious politicization could threaten the unity of society and weaken secular principles. Therefore, the state's religious policy developed as a balancing mechanism between spiritual renewal and legal order. This balance is one of the key features of Uzbekistan's contemporary historical development.

The formation of civic identity in this context depends on the ability of society to distinguish between religion as a moral-cultural value and religion as a political instrument. When religion functions as a source of ethics, tolerance, compassion, responsibility, and respect for heritage, it supports civic consolidation. It helps individuals feel connected to the past and responsible for the future of the country. However, when religion is used for ideological exclusiveness or political confrontation, it can create social divisions. For this reason, the secular character of the state is not directed against religion; rather, it creates equal legal conditions for all citizens and prevents the transformation of belief into a source of discrimination or conflict.

An important point for discussion is the role of education. In history education, religious policy must be presented objectively, without simplification or ideological bias. Future history teachers should be able to explain that contemporary religious policy includes both the protection of religious rights and the responsibility to preserve public order. This pedagogical approach develops students' critical thinking and helps them understand the complex interaction between state, society, religion, and identity. It also prevents one-sided interpretations in which religion is viewed either only as a private matter or only as a political problem.

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The issue is also significant for civic culture. A citizen who understands the secular and legal foundations of the state, while respecting spiritual heritage and religious diversity, is more prepared for constructive participation in public life. Such a person can combine national values with civic responsibility and personal belief with respect for the rights of others. Therefore, religious policy contributes to civic identity not by imposing a single worldview, but by creating a framework in which different beliefs can coexist within a shared legal and moral space.

Thus, the discussion of religious policy in the contemporary history of Uzbekistan shows that civic identity is formed through the interaction of law, memory, spirituality, tolerance, and education. This interaction gives the topic special relevance for pedagogical universities, where future teachers learn to interpret historical processes and transmit civic values to the younger generation.

Conclusion

The role of religious policy in the formation of civic identity in the contemporary history of Uzbekistan demonstrates the close connection between state-building, historical memory, spiritual renewal, and social consolidation. After independence, Uzbekistan faced the important task of restoring national and cultural values while at the same time preserving the secular foundations of the state. In this process, religious policy became not only a legal mechanism for regulating the relationship between the state and religious organizations, but also an important factor in shaping citizens' understanding of belonging, responsibility, tolerance, and respect for common social values.

The analysis shows that religious policy has contributed to civic identity through several interrelated directions. First, it supported the restoration of historical and cultural memory. The renewed attention to religious heritage, historical monuments, spiritual traditions, and the legacy of great thinkers helped society reconnect with its cultural roots. This process strengthened the idea that citizenship is not only a formal legal status, but also a conscious connection with

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the history, values, and moral experience of the people. In this sense, religious heritage became one of the components of civic self-awareness.

Second, religious policy played an important role in strengthening the secular model of statehood. The principle of freedom of conscience, combined with constitutional order and equality of citizens, created the basis for peaceful coexistence of different beliefs and worldviews. This is especially significant in a society where ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity requires a common civic framework. The secular state does not deny the importance of religion; rather, it ensures that religious values develop within the boundaries of law, tolerance, and mutual respect. Such an approach protects both religious freedom and civic unity. Third, religious policy has had a preventive and educational function. In the modern world, religion can be influenced by various ideological pressures, including radical interpretations and political manipulation. For this reason, the state's attention to religious education, legal awareness, and the prevention of extremism has become an essential condition for preserving social stability. At the same time, it is important to distinguish between genuine spiritual values and destructive ideological distortions. This distinction helps citizens develop a responsible attitude toward religion, society, and the state.

The pedagogical importance of this topic is also considerable. For future history teachers, the study of religious policy provides an opportunity to understand contemporary history as a complex interaction of political, cultural, legal, and spiritual processes. It helps students develop historical thinking, civic responsibility, respect for cultural diversity, and the ability to explain sensitive social issues objectively. Therefore, this topic should occupy an important place in historical education, especially in pedagogical universities.

In general, religious policy in contemporary Uzbekistan has influenced the formation of civic identity by harmonizing spiritual heritage with secular governance, freedom of conscience with legal responsibility, and national values with civic unity. Its historical significance lies in the fact that it has helped build

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a model in which citizens can preserve their cultural and spiritual identity while remaining part of a common, stable, and responsible civic community.

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