BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

A NEW PERIOD IN THE HISTORY OF UZBEKISTAN: THE EVOLUTION OF INDEPENDENCE, STATEHOOD, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS

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doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23154256

Abstract. This article analyzes the new period of Uzbekistan's history, specifically the political, legal, socio-economic, and spiritual processes following the attainment of state independence in 1991, from a historical perspective. The main goal of the research is to determine the formation of public administration and national statehood institutions in Uzbekistan during the years of independence, the process of transition to a market economy, constitutional development, and the historical significance of the reforms accelerated since 2017. The study employed historical-chronological, comparative-historical, systematic, and statistical analysis methods. The results show that the post-independence development of Uzbekistan consisted of several stages. While establishing sovereign state institutions and ensuring economic stability were priorities between 1991 and 2016, a new stage in economic liberalization, public administration, social protection, and international economic integration began in 2017. The adoption of the Constitution in a new edition in 2023 became an important stage in the process of updating the legal foundations of the development of the state and society.

Keywords: History of Uzbekistan, new era, independence, national statehood, Constitution, economic reforms, modernization, liberalization, social policy, public administration.

Introduction. The new era of Uzbekistan's history is directly linked to the country's attainment of state independence at the end of the 20th century. On August 31, 1991, the state independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan was proclaimed, and a constitutional law defining the legal foundations of state sovereignty was adopted. [1] This document became an important step in the formation of the political and legal status of an independent state. On December 29, 1991, a referendum was held on the issue of state independence.

In the early years of independence, Uzbekistan faced several strategic tasks simultaneously: strengthening state sovereignty, creating new political and legal institutions, transitioning from the post-Soviet economic system to a national economy, ensuring social protection for the population, and strengthening the country's status as an independent entity in international relations.

The legal foundation of this process is the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Constitution, adopted on December 8, 1992, defined the political and legal system of independent

Uzbekistan. Subsequently, the process of constitutional development continued, and a new version of the Constitution was adopted by referendum on April 30, 2023. [2]

The relevance of studying the modern history of Uzbekistan lies in the fact that the changes that occurred during the years of independence are directly linked to the formation of today's state and social institutions. The new stage of reforms, which began in 2017, is characterized by economic liberalization, the improvement of public administration, and new directions in social policy. According to World Bank data, since 2017, Uzbekistan has been implementing large-scale reforms aimed at transitioning to market mechanisms and reducing the role of the state in the economy.

Literature analysis and methods. The study utilized general scientific and special methods of historical science. In particular, the post-independence development of Uzbekistan was studied in chronological order using the historical-chronological method. Using this method, the main political and legal events, economic reforms, and subsequent modernization processes after 1991 were divided into stages.

Using the comparative-historical method, the differences between the initial period of independence and the stage of reforms after 2017 were identified. The systematic approach made it possible to consider changes in public administration, the economy, social policy, and the legal system as a single historical process, without separating them from one another.

The article also uses the method of statistical analysis. According to official data from the National Statistical Committee of Uzbekistan, the country's permanent population grew from 20.6077 million people in 1991 to 38.2367 million people at the beginning of 2026. [3] During this period, demographic processes remained one of the important factors in the country's socio-economic development.

Sources can be divided into three groups:

Normative-legal sources are documents defining the legal foundations of the Constitution and independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Official statistical sources - demographic and socio-economic data of the National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan.

International and scientific-analytical sources - research by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and scientific publications on Uzbekistan's reforms. The combination of such sources allows for the analysis of historical events not only from a political and legal perspective but also in conjunction with their social and economic consequences.

Results. The early period of Uzbekistan's history began, first and foremost, with the establishment of national sovereignty. The political and legal decisions of August 31, 1991, created a legal basis for the development of Uzbekistan as an independent state. The documents on independence enshrined principles such as the independence of state power, the supremacy of the Constitution and laws on the territory of Uzbekistan, and the separation of power into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. [4]

The adoption of state symbols also became one of the important signs of national statehood. In particular, the State Flag was approved by law on November 18, 1991. The adoption of the

Constitution on December 8, 1992, institutionally strengthened the process of forming the political and legal system of the new state. The Constitution established the fundamental principles of state power, the rights and freedoms of citizens, and the relationship between society and the state as the fundamental law of an independent state. Thus, 1991-1992 represents a stage in the history of Uzbekistan's early period when the legal and institutional foundations of national statehood were created.

In 2017, a new stage of economic and social reforms began in the history of Uzbekistan. The World Bank characterizes this period as a stage of large-scale reforms related to the shift of the economy from state management to market mechanisms, the development of the private sector, and social transformation. [5] In the economic sphere, areas such as the liberalization of the foreign exchange market, price liberalization, improvement of the trade regime, reform of the tax system, and revision of the role of state-owned enterprises in the economy played an important role. According to the World Bank, measures such as exchange rate unification, currency market liberalization, and tax burden reduction were implemented in the period after 2017.

The International Monetary Fund's 2025 study also notes that Uzbekistan has made significant progress in macroeconomic stabilization, trade and currency liberalization, price liberalization, and small-scale privatization since 2017. At the same time, issues of reforming large state-owned enterprises and banks, as well as developing a competitive environment, are presented as an ongoing process.

One of the important aspects of the history of the independence period is the demographic growth of the population and changes in its social composition. According to official statistics, the population of Uzbekistan was about 20.6 million in 1991, and by 2025 it will exceed 37.5 million, and by the beginning of 2026 - 38.2 million. [6] Such population growth has led to increased demand for education, healthcare, employment, housing, transport, and social infrastructure. Therefore, demographic processes in the modern history of Uzbekistan should be considered a factor of not only statistical, but also political and economic significance.

On April 30, 2023, a new edition of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan was adopted through a nationwide referendum. On the official Constitution portal, it is noted that the new edition of the Constitution was adopted by referendum. This process represented a new stage of constitutional development after independence. In the new edition of the Constitution, norms related to human rights and freedoms, the organization of state power, relations between society and the individual, and the social directions of the state have been updated.

Discussion. An analysis of the new period of Uzbekistan's history shows that post-independence development is not a continuous process with a uniform pace, but rather a complex historical evolution consisting of specific stages.

The first stage (1991-2016) is characterized by the tasks of creating the foundations of national statehood, forming political and legal institutions, and ensuring economic independence. During this period, the institutional foundations of state sovereignty were established, and the necessary mechanisms for conducting an independent economic policy were formed.

The second stage – the period after 2017 – is characterized by the acceleration of economic liberalization and reforms in public administration. According to the World Bank analysis, during this period, measures were taken to reduce the dominant role of the state in the economy, develop the private sector, liberalize trade and foreign exchange markets, and expand the social protection system.

In this sense, it is advisable to study the new period of Uzbekistan's history not only as a history of political independence but also as an interconnected process of statehood, economic modernization, demographic changes, legal development, and societal transformation.

Conclusion. A new era in the history of Uzbekistan gained new substance with the achievement of state independence in 1991. Independence allowed the country to form national statehood institutions, implement an independent political and economic strategy, and operate as an independent entity in international relations.

The results of the study show that the history of the modern period can be studied in two major stages. At the first stage, the political, legal, and economic foundations of an independent state were created. In the second stage, especially since 2017, the processes of economic liberalization, modernization of public administration, and improvement of social policy have accelerated.

While the 1992 Constitution established the fundamental legal foundation of independent Uzbekistan's statehood, the 2023 constitutional reforms marked a new legal stage in the development of the state and society.

In general, the study of the modern history of Uzbekistan allows not only for the chronological recording of past events but also for a scientific explanation of the interconnectedness of political institutions, the economic system, demographic processes, and changes in society. This approach serves as an important methodological basis for a deeper understanding of the historical experience of the years of independence and the identification of the historical roots of the development of modern Uzbekistan.

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