

**RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS IN UZBEKISTAN:
HISTORICAL ROOTS AND MODERN PROBLEMS**

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ABSTRACT :*Religion in Uzbekistan reflects a complex tapestry of historical legacies and contemporary challenges. This paper explores the intricate interplay between religion, culture, and politics in Uzbekistan, focusing on its rich historical diversity, predominantly Islamic character, and the enduring impact of Soviet-era suppression on religious practices. Following independence in 1991, Uzbekistan experienced a revival of religious expression, albeit within a framework of government regulation aimed at preserving national unity and stability. Despite efforts to promote religious tolerance, tensions persist, underscored by occasional reports of discrimination against religious minorities and restrictions on religious freedoms. Through a nuanced analysis of religious dynamics, this paper aims to provide insights into the multifaceted nature of religion in Uzbekistan, highlighting its cultural significance, interfaith dynamics, and evolving role in shaping the country's socio-political landscape.*

Key words: Uzbekistan; Religion; Religious dynamics; Historical roots; Contemporary challenges; Islam; Soviet era; Religious suppression; Religious revival

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan, a land rich in history and culture, has long been a melting pot of religious diversity. Situated at the crossroads of ancient trade routes, the region has witnessed the ebb and flow of various faiths, each leaving its imprint on the collective consciousness of its people. From the mystical teachings of Sufism to the grandeur of Islamic architecture, Uzbekistan's religious landscape is a tapestry

woven with threads of tradition and innovation.

In this introduction, we delve into the historical roots of religious dynamics in Uzbekistan, tracing the evolution of belief systems and their impact on society. Furthermore, we examine the contemporary challenges facing religious communities in the modern era, exploring the complex interplay between tradition and globalization, state policies, and societal transformations.

The main idea for "Religious Dynamics in Uzbekistan: Historical Roots and Contemporary Challenges" is to examine the evolution of religious dynamics in Uzbekistan, tracing its historical roots and exploring the contemporary challenges it faces. This involves understanding the dominant influence of Islam, the impact of Soviet-era policies on religious practices, and the ongoing complexities in the post-independence era, including government regulation, interfaith relations, and issues of religious freedom. By delving into these aspects, the paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the religious landscape in Uzbekistan and its implications for society and governance.

Sunni Islam is the predominant religion in Uzbekistan, and public moral and ethical norms stem directly from Islamic teachings and play a vital role in the spiritual life of the population.

Religion has long played a significant role in the cultural and social fabric of Uzbekistan, a country with a diverse history and a rich tapestry of religious traditions. From the ancient Silk Road cities to the modern urban centers, religious dynamics in Uzbekistan have evolved over centuries, influenced by various factors including conquests, migrations, and political regimes. This paper explores the historical roots and contemporary challenges of religion in Uzbekistan, focusing on the dominant influence of Islam, the impact of Soviet-era policies on religious practices, and the ongoing complexities of religious dynamics in the post-independence era.

Historical Roots:

Uzbekistan's religious landscape is characterized by its historical diversity, with influences from Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and other

faiths. Islam, particularly Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school, emerged as the predominant religion in the region following the Arab conquests in the 8th century. The spread of Islam brought with it a rich tradition of scholarship, architecture, and cultural expression, shaping the identity of Uzbekistan and its people.

During the medieval period, cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva became centers of Islamic learning and trade, attracting scholars, merchants, and travelers from across the Muslim world. The architectural marvels of mosques, madrasas, and mausoleums that dot the Uzbekistani landscape are enduring symbols of this Islamic heritage, reflecting a fusion of Persian, Arabic, and Central Asian influences.

However, Uzbekistan's religious landscape underwent significant transformation during the Soviet era. Under Soviet rule, religious practices were heavily suppressed, and mosques and religious institutions were closed or repurposed for secular use. The state-promoted atheism and secularism sought to undermine religious authority and replace it with Marxist-Leninist ideology. This period of repression led to a decline in religious adherence and practice among the population, but it also fueled underground religious movements and resistance to Soviet rule.

Contemporary Challenges:

Since gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has witnessed a resurgence of religious expression, as mosques were reopened, and religious freedoms gradually restored. However, the legacy of Soviet-era repression continues to influence religious dynamics in Uzbekistan today. The government maintains tight control over religious institutions and expressions, wary of potential extremism and political dissent associated with religious movements.

Government regulation of religious activities often limits the autonomy of religious communities and their leaders, requiring them to operate within the confines of state-approved guidelines. While Uzbekistan officially guarantees freedom of religion, there are occasional reports of discrimination against religious minorities and restrictions on religious freedoms, particularly for non-Muslim

groups.

Interfaith relations in Uzbekistan are generally peaceful, with Orthodox Christians, Jews, and other religious minorities coexisting alongside the Muslim majority. However, tensions occasionally arise, exacerbated by socio-economic disparities, political grievances, and external influences. The government's efforts to promote religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue are crucial in maintaining social cohesion and preventing the escalation of religious tensions.

The issue of religious belief and freedom of conscience is reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It fully meets international legal and regulatory requirements. Believes in any religion and no religion in the 31st plan of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which provides the same conditions for non-believers, separately it says:

"Freedom of conscience is guaranteed for everyone. Every person has the right to believe in religion or not to believe in any religion. Forced indoctrination of religious views is not allowed."

Along with national values, religious values are also important in improving the socio-spiritual environment in our country. This is the principle in the following words of the First President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov which found its vivid expression: "Democratic principles of our country, with modernization based on scientific achievements and high technologies to live together, preserving our holy religion and national identity"

We have done it. Such an approach has a vital basis, it is religion unbiased, scientific study of the changes taking place in the field and from that and further development of positive processes, prevention of negative situations created an opportunity for.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has made efforts towards religious tolerance and dialogue, recognizing the importance of diverse religious communities in its society. Yet, challenges persist, including the influence of radical ideologies, socio-economic disparities, and political instability. Achieving a balance between preserving religious traditions and ensuring national security remains a delicate

task for the Uzbek government.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, religious dynamics in Uzbekistan are deeply intertwined with the country's history, culture, and politics. While Islam remains the dominant religion, Uzbekistan's religious landscape is characterized by diversity, resilience, and complexity. The legacy of Soviet-era repression continues to shape religious practices and government policies, posing challenges to religious freedom and interfaith relations. Moving forward, fostering greater understanding, tolerance, and cooperation among religious communities will be essential for promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in Uzbekistan.

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