

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPING YOUTH POLITICAL CULTURE AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the theoretical and methodological foundations of the concept of political culture, its role in the development of society, and the processes of formation of political consciousness of youth. The study covers the content and essence of political culture, the participation of citizens in the governance of the state and society, the development of legal consciousness and democratic values. It also examines the factors of formation of political culture of youth based on the political and moral views of Eastern thinkers and approaches within the framework of modern political science. The article reveals the importance of political culture in building a democratic society.

Keywords: Political culture, political consciousness, youth, democratization, civil society, state and society, legal consciousness, political thinking, democratic values, civic activity.

Introduction

In the context of contemporary globalization, the need to organize state and public governance systems on the basis of new paradigms has become increasingly significant, highlighting the necessity of developing civil society as one of the fundamental directions of global development. This emerging approach encompasses the enhancement of existing legislation through strategic cooperation between state institutions and civil society organizations, as well as the rational interpretation and timely implementation of legal frameworks. Such processes contribute to the sustainable development of civil society and the consolidation of democratic values. Furthermore, they necessitate comprehensive analysis and the formulation of strategic measures aimed at strengthening youth social engagement and encouraging their active participation in political and social processes during the construction of a democratic civil society.

Among the most authoritative international institutions engaged in the study of civil society worldwide, particular attention should be given to the substantial body of scholarly monographs, doctoral dissertations, and numerous international scientific conferences

produced in developed countries. These sources have become the subject of extensive academic research aimed at their systematic examination and critical analysis. Existing studies indicate that civil society emerged as a product of the historical development of humanity and serves as the foundation for the establishment of the rule of law. The opportunities created by these institutions contribute significantly to enhancing young people's social engagement within civil society, promoting sustainable societal development, and strengthening democratic processes and systems of civic governance.

Since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has implemented comprehensive reforms aimed at democratizing society. The democratic reforms and principles for the development of civil society advanced by the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, laid the foundation for strengthening democratic processes and fostering the development of civil society in the country. Furthermore, within the framework of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has identified the promotion of human dignity and the further development of a free civil society as the highest priorities for building a people-oriented state. In this context, particular emphasis has been placed on increasing the social engagement of young people and strengthening their role and participation in society, which, in turn, constitutes a vital factor in the further development of civil society.

MAIN BODY

In the era of the information society, the continuous flow of information plays a pivotal role in shaping young people's consciousness, political culture, and political identity. Understanding these evolving processes requires an in-depth examination of the nature and essence of political culture, its formative factors and criteria, and its decisive role in fostering a well-rounded and socially responsible younger generation.

The cultivation of political culture among young people possesses distinctive characteristics and is ultimately directed toward the broader objective of establishing a progressive state and society. The development of a strong political consciousness and legal culture enables the younger generation to comprehend the essence of ongoing socio-economic and spiritual reforms. Moreover, it equips them with a resilient worldview capable of overcoming various ideological and moral challenges.

The principle of justice occupies a central place in the development of youth political culture, as it supports governance that serves the public interest while strengthening national stability, peace, and prosperity.

Examining political culture through the lens of young people's participation in socio-political processes requires careful consideration of the dynamics, substance, procedural aspects, and intended outcomes of these processes. Taking into account the developmental characteristics of different age groups, it is essential to adapt educational and civic engagement initiatives accordingly. Such an approach exerts a significant influence on young people's political awareness and civic education. In particular, secondary school represents a critical stage characterized by the development of social activity, worldview, personal beliefs, self-determination, independent thinking, and career aspirations. Recognizing these developmental

characteristics contributes to optimizing initiatives aimed at fostering the political development of young people.

It should be noted that during the Soviet period, the concept of *political culture* received limited scholarly attention in the republics of the former Soviet Union due to strict ideological control imposed by the central authorities. In contrast, democratic countries actively conducted research in this field. Consequently, no universally accepted definition of political culture has yet emerged. Numerous theoretical perspectives and interpretations have been proposed. According to the Canadian scholar G. Patrick, more than forty definitions of political culture had been formulated during the 1970s and 1980s. However, considering the diversity of scholarly thought worldwide, this number is undoubtedly much higher. Similarly, J. Tulenov identified more than two hundred definitions of the broader concept of culture, underscoring the complexity and multidimensional nature of the subject. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, scholarly interest in political culture expanded considerably.

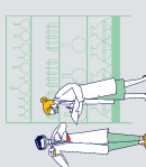
Political culture primarily encompasses such components as political knowledge, political consciousness, political thinking, political attitudes, and political experience. The foundations and determinants of youth political and legal culture have long been reflected in the intellectual heritage of Eastern scholars, including *Qobusnoma*, Abu Nasr al-Farabi's *The Virtuous City*, Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasatnama (Book of Government)*, and Amir Timur's *Temur Tuzuklari (The Institutes of Timur)*.

The *Qobusnoma*, for example, “contains valuable educational principles that contribute directly to the formation of politically mature and morally responsible individuals. It emphasizes justice, wisdom, impartiality, and awareness of diverse customs and beliefs as essential qualities for those entrusted with public authority”¹. These principles continue to serve as important ethical foundations for developing youth political culture.

Likewise, both Western scholars, including Gabriel Almond and his colleagues, and Uzbek researchers such as Q. Nazarov, H. T. Odilqoriyev, Sh. G'. G'oyibnazarov, A. Qodirov, R. Jumayev, I. Ergashev, and N. Umarova have examined youth political culture by analysing its distinctive characteristics, political maturity, and processes of socialization. Their studies identify several key factors influencing the formation of youth political culture, including the opportunities provided by the political system, the activities of state institutions, political parties, non-governmental organizations and social movements, national ideology, the family, educational institutions, national culture, ethnic traditions, religious values, and other social institutions.

In particular, scholars identify several key factors that influence the development of youth political culture: (1) opportunities created within the political system; (2) the active involvement of the state, political parties, non-governmental organizations, and social movements; (3) national ideology; (4) the central role of the family in the process of political socialization; (5) the participation of educational institutions; (6) national culture; (7) national

¹ Kaykavus. (1986). *Qabusnoma* (Translated from Persian by M. R. Ogahiy). O'qituvchi. P 101. (Original work published ca. 1082)



and ethnic characteristics; (8) religious values and beliefs; (9) the practical functioning of social institutions; and (10) the participation of public organizations.

The political thought of both Eastern and Western traditions is significantly influenced by Plato's dialogues *The Statesman* and *The Republic*. Plato closely associated politics with ethical conduct and emphasized the decisive role of political leaders in shaping the moral foundations of society. According to his perspective, the moral integrity of those occupying positions of political authority profoundly influences the ethical values of the population and ultimately determines the prosperity or decline of the state.

In *The Republic*, Plato argued that the sense of justice is cultivated from early childhood and therefore advocated the early moral education of children. He proposed educating children separately under laws founded upon the principles of justice, believing that such an approach would foster moral qualities independent of parental biases and ethical shortcomings. Consequently, the implementation of justice within the structure of the state becomes a practical mechanism for ensuring social harmony, stability, and public welfare.

A comprehensive analysis of the role of political culture in promoting young people's participation in socio-political activities requires careful consideration of the nature, procedural dimensions, and expected outcomes of such activities. Recognizing the developmental stages of young people and adapting civic initiatives to the characteristics of each age group are essential for fostering political awareness and civic responsibility. Secondary school, in particular, represents a transitional period characterized by increasing social engagement, the formation of worldviews and personal beliefs, self-determination, independent thinking, and the exploration of personal interests and career aspirations. Acknowledging and appropriately guiding these developmental processes contributes significantly to strengthening political consciousness and preparing young people for active, informed, and responsible citizenship.

The development of legal culture through participation in socio-cultural activities requires the implementation of several essential measures. First, socio-cultural events and civic rituals should be organized regularly in accordance with the developmental characteristics of different age groups. Second, every activity should be guided by clearly defined objectives and measurable expected outcomes. Third, comprehensive evaluations should be conducted following each event to assess both its strengths and shortcomings. Fourth, qualified specialists should actively participate in these activities to ensure that young participants fully understand their educational and civic significance. Finally, every socio-cultural initiative should be designed to promote the comprehensive socialization and civic development of young people. However, the organization of socio-cultural activities within secondary specialized and vocational education institutions continues to face numerous challenges. Many activities are conducted without clearly defined objectives, insufficient preparation, or appropriate professional supervision. Furthermore, these initiatives frequently lack effective collaboration among stakeholders, fail to engage a broad student audience, rely heavily on traditional rather than innovative approaches, and often overlook the psychological characteristics and developmental needs of young participants.

The concept of *political culture* has undergone a long process of intellectual evolution. Systematic scholarly analysis of the concept began in the eighteenth century with the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, political culture became an increasingly important subject of academic inquiry. Scholars such as Heinz Fayer, Gabriel Almond, and many others extensively examined the concept, investigating the relationship between political culture and political systems, identifying the factors that shape political culture, and analysing its fundamental concepts, structures, and constituent components.

Interest in political culture has deep historical and geographical roots. Under contemporary conditions characterized by rapid social transformation, political culture plays an increasingly significant role in political and social development. Prominent scholars, including Sidney Verba, Seymour Martin Lipset, Lucian Pye, Maurice Duverger, Klaus von Beyme, Walter Rosenbaum, Richard Rose, and Michel Crozier, have made substantial contributions to advancing theoretical understanding in this field. Likewise, American political scientists such as V. O. Key, Roy Macridis, W. Neuman, and David Marvick further expanded research on political culture, highlighting its growing significance within political science and inspiring subsequent generations of scholars. The steadily increasing academic interest in political culture reflects its central importance in understanding the complexities of contemporary political and social life.

The British political scientist Dennis Kavanagh synthesized various theoretical approaches to political culture and classified them into four distinct categories in an effort to capture its multidimensional nature.

First, Kavanagh examined the psychological dimension of political culture, defining it as the aggregate of individuals' internal orientations toward political objects. In doing so, he emphasized the psychological foundations that shape people's attitudes and behaviour within the political sphere.

Second, he conceptualized political culture as a set of orientations and psychological predispositions that encompass patterns of behaviour consistent with individuals' political beliefs and preferences.

Third, Kavanagh adopted an objective perspective, interpreting political culture through established social norms, collective values, and stereotypical patterns of behaviour exhibited by social groups and citizens. This approach provides an objective framework for understanding the organization and functioning of society.

Finally, his framework views political culture as a normative model that prescribes desirable patterns of political thought and behaviour, thereby presenting an idealized conception of how individuals should conduct themselves within the political system.

Young people who contribute to the development of a strong civil society should actively engage with these conceptual foundations of political culture. From a critical perspective, misconceptions regarding the absence of political culture or the inadequate understanding of its significance remain widespread among certain segments of society. Addressing such misconceptions requires timely educational interventions aimed at fostering political

awareness among young people. Providing youth with a comprehensive understanding of political culture is essential for cultivating informed, responsible, and active citizens.

Although political culture is often regarded as a characteristic primarily associated with educated individuals, we argue that every member of society should possess an adequate level of political culture. Only under such conditions can citizens properly understand the processes of social development and formulate informed attitudes toward them. In many cases, political culture is mistakenly equated with the political regime, without recognizing the fundamental distinction between these concepts. In this regard, it is important to consider the definitions proposed by Uzbek scholars.

According to Uzbek scholars, “political culture is *an integral component of general culture that manifests itself in the process of a society's political development through citizens' acquisition of political knowledge and experience, their ability to express attitudes toward political events, and their capacity to evaluate political processes*”². Furthermore, the ability to understand both domestic and foreign policy, critically analyse political developments, independently determine one's political behaviour in response to changing political circumstances, anticipate political events, exercise civic oversight, and identify appropriate courses of action constitute the principal indicators of an individual's political culture.

According to Professors H. Odilqoriyev and Sh. G‘oyibnazarov, political culture constitutes an inseparable component of general culture, representing the integration of historical-political experience, political consciousness, and political behaviour³.

Professor I. Ergashev defines political culture as the collective perceptions of different peoples, nations, and socio-political communities regarding political reality, politics, laws, the principles governing their implementation, and the values that underpin them⁴. In contrast, the political scientist R. Jumayev considers political culture to be the foundation of critical thinking, conscious attitudes toward social and political realities and events, the development of a systematic worldview, and the basis upon which individuals engage in purposeful and responsible action⁵.

Therefore, it is essential to help young people develop a clear understanding of the distinction between political culture and the political regime. Achieving this objective requires fostering their political awareness, critical thinking, and understanding of political processes.

Political culture is an inherent feature of civil society and is indispensable for the proper interpretation and practical application of political processes in everyday life. It should also be recognized that political culture is dynamic rather than static and therefore evolves in response to changing social and political conditions. In this respect, the dialectical principle of continuous development is applicable: approaches that no longer correspond to the demands of the time are inevitably replaced by new and more relevant perspectives. Ultimately, no state

² Jalilov A. *The Processes of Development of Youth Political Culture in Uzbekistan*: Dissertation for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Political Sciences. – Tashkent, 2020. – 16 p.

³ Odilqoriyev H., Goyibnazarov Sh. *Political Culture*. – Tashkent: Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2004. – 5 p.

⁴ Ergashev I. *Philosophy of Politics*. – Tashkent: Akademiya, 2004. – 27 p.

⁵ Jumaev R. *State and Society: On the Path to Democratization*. – Tashkent: Sharq, 1998. – pp. 118–119.

can function effectively without active political participation, as political activity is fundamentally shaped by interstate relations as well as economic and productive processes.

In the contemporary world, characterized by growing interstate disagreements, escalating conflicts, and increasingly complex geopolitical developments, the need for a well-developed political culture has become more urgent than ever. History demonstrates that since the emergence of political governance, it has served as an essential mechanism for regulating social relations. Political culture is equally significant because it constitutes an integral component of culture itself and contributes to the governance of society through the promotion of democratic values, civic responsibility, and effective public administration. In this sense, it performs a fundamental regulatory function within the governance system. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the principles of political culture must be reinforced and regulated through the development of a strong legal culture, thereby ensuring the effective functioning of a democratic civil society⁶.

Like many other academic concepts, political culture has been classified into various types and dimensions in an effort to define its conceptual boundaries more precisely. Accordingly, scholars distinguish among ethical, spiritual, ideological, and value-based dimensions of politics. Similarly, attention has been given to different forms of politics, such as open politics and hidden (covert) politics. Classifying political culture into these various dimensions and categories primarily reflects the nature and extent of an individual's relationship with the state and local governing authorities, as well as the ways in which citizens engage with political institutions and public governance⁷.

In essence, political culture serves as a defining characteristic of individuals, shaping their attitudes toward significant social, political, and national issues through their actions, responsibilities, and civic engagement. It reflects the distinctive ways in which individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to the broader political environment.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Republic of Uzbekistan has witnessed a new wave of political reforms aimed at democratizing society and enhancing citizens' socio-political participation. These reforms have sought to elevate public engagement to an unprecedented level while fostering national traditions and values that promote democratic governance. Within this reform agenda, particular emphasis has been placed on increasing young people's political participation, strengthening their ability to critically evaluate legislative decisions, and enhancing their capacity to appreciate political pluralism and diversity.

As a fundamental pillar of building a genuine civil society, it is essential to cultivate a strong political culture among all citizens, particularly the younger generation. This objective requires the active participation of individuals and social groups, as well as their commitment to the

⁶ Rustamboyev M., Abduxolliqov S. *Methodology of Law: Foundations of the Dialectical and Cultural Understanding of Law*. Vol. V. – Military Technical Institute of the National Guard of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018. – 286 p.

⁷ *Fundamentals of Political Science. Textbook*. Edited by V.P. Pugachev. Part II. – Moscow, 1996. – pp. 59–60.

social and political developments shaping the nation's future. Such active civic engagement forms the foundation for the evolution of a socially conscious and participatory society.

Given the diversity of social life, it is equally important to recognize the varying characteristics, interests, and needs of young people. From this perspective, youth development encompasses both achievements and existing challenges. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of these accomplishments, areas requiring improvement, and future strategic priorities is indispensable for enhancing youth participation in democratic development.

Our long-term strategic objective remains unchanged: to promote the continuous development of a democratic state, foster an active civil society, strengthen democratic values within public consciousness, and advance market-oriented reforms. Achieving these goals requires the meaningful participation of informed and politically engaged citizens.

Within the context of ongoing reforms and national modernization, strengthening the role and influence of Parliament as the legislative branch is regarded as a key priority for achieving a balanced and effective distribution of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. The present study argues that the political culture of young people plays a significant role in establishing and consolidating these democratic institutions. Developing a strong political culture among youth is therefore essential for ensuring effective governance, maintaining a balanced democratic system, and promoting sustainable democratic development. Ultimately, the successful realization of these objectives depends upon the proper formation of political consciousness among the younger generation.

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