

Article

The Role Of Social Partnership In Ensuring International And Intercultural Harmony In Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The author provides a comprehensive scientific analysis of the role of social partnership in ensuring interethnic and intercultural harmony in Uzbekistan. Due to the correct strategic path chosen in the country's development and the partnership of the state with NGOs and other civil society institutions, today our country has achieved the goal of ensuring interethnic and intercultural harmony and the restoration of traditional moral, historical and cultural values. This, in turn, is of great importance in ensuring social stability in society.

Keywords: interethnic and intercultural harmony, national cultural centers, social partnership, NGOs and civil society institutions, the Law "On the State Language".

Introduction

We are witnessing the fact that the ideas about the connection of the world's diversity with the will and wisdom of the Creator, the equality of peoples, the preservation of customs, traditions, and respect for historical monuments, which were written in the holy books several centuries ago, are currently undergoing a serious test.

In this sense, for Uzbekistan, which is home to more than 130 nationalities and ethnic groups and is a multinational state, the issue of improving national relations is one of the priority areas of state policy, as it plays an important role in ensuring peace, stability in the country, and building a civil society.

Literature analysis and methodology

This article makes effective use of a number of normative and legal acts adopted on ensuring and developing interethnic and intercultural harmony, including the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law "On the State Language", the Law "On the Fundamentals of State Independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan", the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures to Further Improve Interethnic Relations and Friendly Ties with Foreign Countries" (PF-5046 dated May 19, 2017), as well as a number of normative and legal acts on the topic, as well as current archival data from the UzMA, the Amir Temur Foundation, the Babur International Charity Foundation, and the Golden Heritage International Charity Foundation.

The research on the topic of scientists (Mukhammadiev N., Musayev O.) who studied the issues of ensuring interethnic and intercultural harmony was analyzed.

The research work was based on the generally accepted principles of scientific knowledge: objectivity, systematicity, generalization, historicity and logic, and impartiality.

Discussion and conclusion.

As is known, the Law "On the State Language" gave our language a new content, a new worldview, a new resonance and strength.

At this point, it is necessary to note that the Law "On the State Language" has passed the path of historical and gradual renewal in response to the demands and needs of the period of independent development. The Law, adopted on October 21, 1989, contained 30 articles, 7 of which set programmatic tasks to be performed within certain periods. In essence, the Law became the initial legislative document that initiated the movement of the masses aimed at national identity, the restoration of the history of the people, and the country's achievement of sovereignty and independence.

The provisions of the Law on granting the Uzbek language the status of the state language were enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan [1]. It should be noted that the law was accepted by representatives of all nationalities living in the republic. All the important conditions and guarantees of their rights to study and use national languages were created for them.

At the same time, the time that passed since the adoption of this law in 1989, especially after Uzbekistan embarked on the path of independent development, required amendments to the first edition of the law on the state language.

By 1995, this Law was adopted in a new edition, which reflected a number of new requirements put forward by a new stage of life and development. The new edition of the law on the state language took into account all the circumstances related to the operation of the previous law. At the same time, it establishes the rights and norms for the use of the state language and the languages of other nationalities living in the republic. This fully complies with the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and international law.

The law, along with clearly defining the priority of the Uzbek language as the state language, also stipulates that citizens of Uzbekistan have the right to use other languages in various situations. This right was introduced in order to ensure the functioning of an interethnic language of communication that can be chosen at will.

It should be noted that the withdrawal of the Republic of Uzbekistan from the union provided an opportunity to develop an independent national policy. The main principles of such a policy were expressed in the Declaration of the Supreme Council "On the State Independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan" and the Law "On the Foundations of the State Independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan" [2]. Many of the provisions of these documents were later confirmed and enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted in 1992. All of the above-mentioned state documents emphasized the idea that Uzbekistan would henceforth remain a truly international republic[3], that "all citizens, regardless of nationality, constitute the sovereign people of Uzbekistan," and formed the basis for the implementation of an independent national policy[4].

The need to develop its own national policy, which is being implemented independently for the first time in the entire history of Uzbekistan, was formed not only due to the fact that the population of the republic is multinational, but also due to the importance of involving the peoples living in our country in the processes of renewal, directing the potential and activities of nations and peoples to the grand task of building a civil society. The improvement of national spirituality is directly related to the issues of interethnic friendship and harmony. The Uzbek nation, which forms the basis of the population of the republic, demonstrates such qualities as decency, patience, attention and even concessions in order to cooperate with all ethnic and national groups living in Uzbekistan in the socio-political and economic development of the country. As confirmation of this conclusion, one can refer to the results of a survey conducted by the Center for Social Thought in 2009. In particular, the results of a survey conducted by the same center in 1999-2008 show that the number of people who positively assess interethnic relations in the republic is increasing. 85.1 percent of respondents rated relations in this area as "good" or "very good," and 13.7 percent as "good." Only 0.1 percent of respondents (0.4 percent in 2008) noted the presence of tension in interethnic relations[5], and it is indicated that these manifestations of tension relate to the domestic sphere.

The assessment of the dynamics of interethnic relations during the survey is also noteworthy. In particular, 74.1 percent of respondents acknowledged that the level of interethnic harmony had increased (in 2006, this figure was 63.7 percent). The number of those who noted the emergence of tension in this area was 1.3 percent (in 2006, this figure was 5.4 percent)[6].

What changes have occurred in the national groups of Uzbekistan by the 2000s? First of all, it should be noted that independence has allowed not only Uzbeks, but also representatives of other national groups to preserve and develop their national identity.

Each national or ethnic group can remain as a unique historical entity only if it is not discriminated against, prohibited or restricted by laws, regulations, or other means of developing its language, history, traditions and customs, and elements of its national way of life. Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states that "The Republic of Uzbekistan ensures respect for the languages, customs and traditions of all nations and ethnic groups residing on its territory and creates conditions for their development" [7]. The existence of multinational and multilingual countries in the region requires extreme attention to interethnic relations. After all, the strength and harmony of relations between the main nation that gave the name to the states and the ethnic minorities living in these countries is becoming one of the decisive conditions for internal political stability and national security, as clearly demonstrated by world examples.

The practice developed in Uzbekistan has shown that the establishment of National Cultural Centers (NCCs) and their implementation on the basis of the principles of social partnership between the state, NGOs and civil society institutions is a realistic and effective form of implementing national policy. Because national cultural centers have shown that they have broad opportunities for restoring and preserving the national language, history, traditions and customs, improving relations with representatives of their own nation, enabling diasporas to come closer to the territory of the country where they live, and directing their activities to the development of Uzbekistan.

It is noteworthy that among the CIS countries, such a structure as the MMM (national cultural centers) was created only in Uzbekistan. Thus, a unique system of non-governmental organizations in the field of interethnic relations was formed in our country. The diverse activities of these organizations, based on cooperation with state bodies and other institutions of civil society, serve to ensure a peaceful and prosperous life in our country, solve important cultural and educational tasks, as well as develop cooperation with foreign countries.

The goal of the activities of cultural centers in the republic is to eliminate the feeling of separation from the "historical homeland", eliminate shortcomings in providing spiritual and cultural needs, expand ties between nations, further strengthen the commonwealth between representatives of all nationalities in our country and, with their help, harmonize their relations.

It can be said that during the period of independence, national cultural centers went through two stages of formation and development. The first stage - the process of organizational formality, determining the directions of activity - falls on the late 80s and early 90s. It was during these years that Kazakh, Armenian, Tajik, Korean, Azerbaijani, Dungan and other national associations were formed. In 1989, the Republican Interethnic Cultural Center was established under the Ministry of Culture to coordinate their activities.

The second stage of development began at the end of 1992. During this period, work on further intensification of the multifaceted practice of MMMs, characteristic of nationalities and ethnic groups of the population, intensified.

On January 13, 1992, by Resolution No. 10 of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Republican Interethnic Cultural Center under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan was transformed into the Republican International Cultural Center, which began to operate as an independent non-governmental institution that assists in the implementation of state policy to meet the cultural needs of national groups. In 2003, in order to further improve activities in the field of interethnic relations, the new Charter of the Republican International Cultural Center was approved, defining its goals and objectives, as well as the main areas of activity[8].

When the decision to establish an international cultural center in Uzbekistan was made in 1992, not everyone fully understood its importance for improving interethnic relations. Such a decision was made with a deep understanding that ensuring peace, stability, and interethnic harmony in the country are one of the important conditions for the positive implementation of reforms in our country. That is, in the early years of independence, the country's leadership set the establishment of the principle of tolerance in society and the comprehensive promotion of this feeling as a priority direction of state policy. The effective implementation of national cultural centers prevented attempts by internal and external malicious forces to incite national and ethnic conflicts in our country.

In the early 2000s, the Republican International Cultural Center united the activities of more than 150 national cultural centers. It is worth noting that since independence, their number has increased 15 times, and 14 of them have the status of republican organizations[9]. Over the years, national cultural centers have become influential social organizations that address issues of a spiritual, cultural and social nature. Based on the principles of social partnership with state bodies, their role in preserving the language, values, traditions of national groups living in our country and ensuring interethnic harmony in society is increasing day by day. National cultural centers hold more than a hundred events every year. The largest of them are such large-scale friendship forums as "The

Motherland is One – The Motherland is One”, “Our Strength – in Unity and Harmony”, “Uzbekistan – Our Common Home”.

A wonderful cultural innovation during the years of independence was the organization of a festival of folk art, which was held by the Republican International Cultural Center in collaboration with national cultural associations. Skilled and amateur artists from Kazakh, Armenian, Jewish, Korean, Tatar and other cultural centers demonstrate their skills on the stages of theaters and palaces of Uzbekistan, participate in mass celebrations on Independence Square on the occasion of Independence Day.

Such activities of national cultural centers confirm that the national policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, based on partnership with state NGOs and other institutions of civil society, is correctly directed towards rationally resolving issues of interethnic relations, coordinating the mutual harmony of national cultures and languages.

It is worth noting that the support of the state NGOs and other institutions of civil society for the work of independent national cultural centers has saved them from being entangled in the framework of narrow ethnic needs, which are provided separately for each national diaspora. However, if this were to happen, cultures would develop one-sidedly and imperfectly. Although national cultural centers differ from each other, they are united by common features of the peoples, in particular, living in the same territory, similar customs, practices, and other features. “The centers have important common tasks: to help members of their diaspora learn the state language, to actively participate in the formation of a national patriotic consciousness, to promote the idea of unity and equality of all peoples in Uzbekistan, and to harmonize the goals and aspirations of representatives of different nationalities and ethnic groups”[10].

It should be noted that the National Cultural Centers cooperate with spiritual and other organizations in order to help meet the cultural, linguistic and other needs of the population of Uzbekistan. In this regard, social surveys, conferences, round tables, seminars, symposiums are being held. These events help develop practical recommendations on interethnic cooperation, spiritual and social activities. National Cultural Centers, together with other institutions of civil society, NGOs, research organizations, etc., are developing social programs to harmonize interethnic relations, study migration processes, develop cultural ties, and strengthen stability in the republic.

Such effective activities of the Republican International Cultural Center were duly appreciated. In January 2007, in his congratulatory message on the 15th anniversary of the center, the first President I. Karimov noted the extensive activities of the Republican International Cultural Center and about 150 national cultural centers affiliated with it in further strengthening interethnic harmony in our country[11].

In January 2017, celebrations dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Republican International Cultural Center were held. President Sh. Mirziyoyev, who participated in these events, touched upon the activities of the National Cultural Centers during the years of independence and noted: “It should be noted that during the years of independence, more than a hundred activists of the Republican International Cultural Center and national cultural centers were awarded honorary titles, orders and medals. It is worth noting that 14 of our citizens, representatives of different nationalities, were awarded the high title of Hero of Uzbekistan”[12].

In order to systematically carry out work on harmonizing interethnic relations in our country, in 2017, the Committee on Interethnic Relations and Friendship with Foreign Countries[13] was established under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In order to further expand cooperation with state bodies, NGOs and other institutions of civil society in implementing state policy to harmonize interethnic relations, protect the unique culture and traditions of the nation, and preserve its cultural and spiritual heritage, the activities of the “Public Councils for Ensuring Interethnic Harmony, Tolerance and Solidarity” were established in 2020.

On the land of ancient and unique Uzbekistan, representatives of more than 130 nationalities and ethnic groups currently live in peace and harmony, making a worthy contribution to the prosperity of our country, religious organizations belonging to 16 confessions, 38 friendship societies and 153 national cultural centers operate freely[14].

Considering that in the development of the country, preserving the historical and cultural values of the nationalities living in our republic plays a special role in ensuring harmony between them, President Sh. Mirziyoyev emphasized: “Building a new Uzbekistan means studying our recent and distant history, our unique and rare cultural wealth in more depth, and relying on them, continuing our path of independent national development at a new stage.”[15]

It is worth noting that, along with state bodies, civil institutions, citizens' self-government bodies - neighborhoods, non-governmental non-profit organizations also participated in the

implementation of these tasks. At the same time, they not only studied the opinion of the population, but also took into account the fact that they could solve real problems on the spot, using state and public resources for these purposes.

The last years have opened a new stage in interethnic relations in our country. The development of a culture of tolerance and humanity in Uzbekistan, strengthening interethnic and civic, mutual solidarity and harmony, and educating the younger generation on this basis, in the spirit of kindness and loyalty to the Motherland, have become one of the most important priorities of state policy. And all this has been fully implemented in life. NGOs and civil society institutions play a special role in the implementation of these tasks. "Thanks to the effective activities of state bodies, NGOs and civil society institutions in ensuring interethnic harmony, an atmosphere of friendship and solidarity prevails in our republic, which, undoubtedly, is the most important factor in increasing peace and stability, the effectiveness of the reforms being implemented"[16].

All opportunities have been created for representatives of the nationalities living in Uzbekistan to preserve and further develop their values. Education in state educational institutions is conducted in 7 languages, and in universities there is an opportunity to study in several related and foreign languages.

The fact that TV and radio channels are broadcast in 12 languages, and newspapers and magazines are published in more than 10 languages, is a practical expression of the atmosphere of interethnic harmony and solidarity prevailing in our country.

The above examples show that radical reforms in our country were effective on the basis of social partnership between state bodies, NGOs and other institutions of civil society. The cooperation of NGOs and civil society institutions with state bodies in ensuring interethnic, intercultural harmony and the restoration and formation of traditional moral, historical and cultural values continued to develop in the coming years.

In particular, the Strategy of Actions set out major tasks aimed at strengthening the atmosphere of friendship and harmony between nations.

Later, a number of legal documents were adopted in the country on interethnic relations. These documents aroused great interest, were well received by the population, and were widely discussed by the international community.

In particular, "The Concept of State Policy in the Field of Interethnic Relations in Uzbekistan for 2019-2021 has been adopted and is being implemented. It is aimed at ensuring the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of every person and citizen, strengthening the unity and integrity of Uzbekistan, preserving the ethnic and cultural identity of the nations and peoples living on its territory, and developing social partnership in matters of interethnic tolerance and harmony" [17].

The Concept identifies one of the main areas of state policy in the field of interethnic relations as: improving the mechanisms of cooperation between state bodies, NGOs and other institutions of civil society, including the media, in ensuring harmony in interethnic relations and expanding ties with foreign countries[18].

In June 2020, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the National Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Human Rights"[19] (PF-6012) was adopted. This document approved the National Strategy in the Field of Human Rights and the "Roadmap" for its implementation set out priority areas of measures to ensure the social and cultural rights of national minorities, in particular, the participation of civil society in resolving issues, ensuring interethnic, intercultural harmony and preserving traditional moral, historical and cultural values[20].

Therefore, from the first days of independence, broad opportunities for the preservation and development of the historical and cultural values of the nations and peoples living in the republic were recognized as the main task of state policy in this area.

The proposal of the Head of State in his Address to the Oliy Majlis to hold the first "Friendship Week", the "Friendship" international forum-festival in our country, and to widely celebrate the Day of Friendship of Peoples on July 30 every year was another step towards strengthening solidarity, tolerance and interethnic harmony[21]. The establishment and widespread celebration of this date has become a good tradition, serving to further strengthen the spirit of interethnic harmony and tolerance in Uzbekistan.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the state's independence, the "Friendship of Peoples" badge was established[22], which is awarded to intellectuals and compatriots who have made a worthy contribution to strengthening the atmosphere of friendship and harmony between representatives of all nationalities and ethnic groups living in our country. Thus, this is a vivid expression of the state's role in strengthening the interethnic conglomerate of Uzbekistan[23].

At the same time, the country's leadership recognizes that in the context of globalization and changes in international and regional relations, the intensification of interethnic relations, religious

and other contradictions in the world, there are problematic issues in this area, and in their resolution, it is necessary to further develop social partnership relations with state bodies, NGOs and other institutions of civil society.

The essence of the work carried out in this area in recent years is clearly reflected in the statement of President Sh. Mirziyoyev that "Our focus is on further developing the mutual friendship and solidarity that prevails in our society, ensuring equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their nationality, religion and beliefs. The spread of extremist and radical ideas that cause discord among them is absolutely unacceptable in Uzbekistan"[24].

It should be noted that in our country, special importance is attached to the issues of preserving cultural monuments and involving the population and civil society institutions in their comprehensive study, along with scientists and specialists.

It has become a tradition to organize scientific and research expeditions to the places of death of great scholars who lived in our country, to hold scientific and practical conferences at the international, republican and regional levels, and to involve representatives of civil society institutions in these works. In this sense, it is important that a number of measures have been taken to repair, reconstruct, and restore existing historical monuments and religious monuments in the republic. In particular, in 1992, the Main Department for the Preservation of Monuments under the Ministry of Culture developed the Law on the Preservation of Cultural Heritage[25] and the UzNIPI Institute and the Association of Master Architects were entrusted with the repair and restoration work[26]. On January 5, 1993, measures were developed for the restoration of architectural monuments associated with the names of Amir Temur and Mirzo Ulugbek, as well as for studying the hydrogeological conditions of the remains of the Jahongir Mausoleum and its protection[27].

If we look at the activities of the "Amir Temur" Foundation alone, in 1996, on the occasion of the "Year of Amir Temur", the UNESCO headquarters organized a week "The Flourishing of Science, Culture and Education in the Era of the Temurids", dedicated to the 660th anniversary of the birth of the great sahibkiran. The head of UNESCO, the heads of state of France and Uzbekistan, prominent scientists and political figures also participated in it. Over the past period, the Foundation has held more than 400 meetings and more than 70 conferences in collaboration with various organizations and educational institutions[28]. Also, the "Bobur" International Public Foundation held international scientific conferences dedicated to the 510th, 515th, 520th, 525th and 530th anniversaries of the birth of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur. A new edition of "Boburnoma" was published dedicated to the birth of Babur. A supplement to the Kabul edition of "Bobur Divan", a translation of "Boburnoma" into the current Uzbek language, a Russian translation, the "Garibing Andijoniydur" Divan, Rumer Godenni's "Gulbadan", miniatures of "Boburnoma", "Bobur and Julius Caesar", "Thoughts on Babur" and other books were published[29]. Scientific expeditions were carried out in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan.

During the activities of the International Charitable Foundation "Golden Heritage", a lot of information was found about the rich and ancient history, prosperous cities, and unique manuscripts. Fund branches were established in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regions, and districts. Over the years, the foundation's museum has been enriched with about 400 ancient manuscripts and lithographs, more than 40 paintings, archaeological and craft items, and more than 100 shrines, pilgrimage sites, and monuments have been improved and restored[30]. These include the Abulkasim Madrasah, a 19th-century monument in Tashkent, the historical monument Kukaldash Madrasah in Bukhara, the Hazrati Davud, Ghavsul A'zam, Chorchinor, Shirvoq Ota in Samarkand region, the 11th-16th-century monument Qilichbek Madrasah in Navoi region, and Hazrat Bashir, among others[31].

During the years of independence, many exemplary works were carried out to restore and preserve historical and cultural values, and to familiarize the world community with them. In particular, the national holiday of Navruz, the culture and tradition of making pilaf, the art of askiya, the art of big singing, the art of Lazgi, the art of Bakhshi, the Boysun cultural site and the Margilan Crafts Development Center for the preservation of traditional technologies for making Shashmaqom, Atlas and Adras were included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in different years. was included in the register. This, in turn, further enhanced the reputation of Uzbekistan and created the basis for a further increase in our country's rating in the world[32].

Speaking about the successes achieved in recent years in the field of preserving historical and cultural values and presenting them to the world, the ancient dance of Khorezm "Lazgi" was included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as an element of the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan. This decision was made at the UNESCO session on December 12, 2019[33].

On December 16, 2021, in Paris, at the XVI session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the proposal to include the "Art of Bakhshi" in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was unanimously approved[34]. In the process of preparing proposals to UNESCO on intangible cultural heritage objects, non-governmental and public organizations, together with state bodies, are also involved, including collecting information on the work carried out by them on the protection of our historical and cultural values on the basis of social partnership. Proposals are prepared based on all new information and sent to UNESCO headquarters through the National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO.

In conclusion, it should be noted that in order to restore and preserve the historical and cultural values of our people, our intangible heritage, and to familiarize the peoples of the world with the historical and cultural values of our people, as well as other NGOs and civil society institutions, such as the International Charity Public Foundation "Golden Heritage", the Public Organization "Umrboqiy Meros", together with state bodies, are operating on the basis of establishing and developing social partnership relations.

The new version of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on the basis of a nationwide referendum on April 30, 2023, serves to establish the organization and free activity of NGOs, further develop the institution of social cooperation, and implement effective public control over the activities of state bodies and institutions. One of the important works done in this area was the fact that the new version of the Constitution clearly defined the status of the oldest democratic institution of Uzbek society - the mahalla institution - for the first time at the constitutional level.

Thanks to the correct strategic path of development of the country and the partnership between the state, NGOs and other civil society institutions, today our country has achieved the achievement of ensuring interethnic and intercultural harmony and the restoration of traditional moral, historical and cultural values. This, in turn, has become important in ensuring social stability in society.

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34. The art of Bakhshchilik was included in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. <https://www.gazeta.uz/uz/2021/12/16/baxshi/>