

Social State Policy in New Uzbekistan: Theoretical Foundations, Institutional Reforms, and Practical Outcomes in Strengthening Social Protection, Poverty Reduction, Youth Empowerment, and Public Administration Modernization

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the essence, theoretical foundations, and practical outcomes of the social state policy being implemented in New Uzbekistan. It examines the stages of the formation of the social state concept, its fundamental principles, and its role in the development of a modern democratic society. The study also explores recent reforms in Uzbekistan aimed at strengthening social protection, reducing poverty, supporting youth and women, enhancing the effectiveness of public administration, and improving the quality of social services. In particular, the practical significance of the social state policy is revealed through the activities of the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP), the “Youth Register” (Yoshlar Daftari), the “Women’s Register” (Ayollar Daftari), the “From Poverty to Prosperity” programme, and the experience of strengthening executive discipline in the regions. Using systematic, comparative-legal, historical, and logical analysis of constitutional provisions, normative-legal acts, state programmes, and official statistical data, the findings demonstrate that effective governance and the prioritisation of human interests constitute the key foundations of the social state-building process in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Social State; New Uzbekistan; Social Policy; Social Protection; Poverty Reduction; Human Dignity; Public Administration; Social Justice; Mahalla System; Youth Policy; Population Welfare; Institutional Reform.

1. Introduction

The primary objective of Uzbekistan’s policy of building a social state is to ensure human interests, create decent living conditions for citizens, and orient public administration toward serving the real needs of the population. The reforms being implemented in this regard are grounded in the principles of human dignity, social justice, and public welfare. In particular, enhancing the effectiveness, transparency, and citizen-oriented nature of state institutions constitutes one of the fundamental requirements of the social state concept.

In this context, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s following statement clearly reflects the essence of the social state policy in New Uzbekistan: “The dream of New Uzbekistan is becoming a reality. However, this is not something that will happen easily or by itself. The need to build a new society and create a bright future for our descendants requires great responsibility, dedication, and constructive efforts from all of us... In this process, we must abandon the practice of chasing numbers. Solving a few problems in practice is far more beneficial than resolving hundreds of issues on paper. Most importantly, our people must feel the changes taking place in their lives and realise that they truly have their representatives within the system of state authority” [1].

This idea serves as the methodological foundation of the social state policy being implemented in Uzbekistan. The effectiveness of a social state is measured not by the number of adopted legal documents or statistical indicators, but by tangible improvements in citizens’ daily lives, including enhanced social protection, employment opportunities, income levels, and overall quality of life. Therefore, in recent years particular attention has been paid to increasing the results-oriented nature of public administration, addressing citizens’ problems through targeted approaches,

reducing poverty, improving the quality of social services, and strengthening the neighbourhood-based (“mahalla”) system of governance and social support.

1.1. Study Objectives

The present study pursues the following objectives:

1. To examine the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the social state and to trace the principal stages of its historical formation;
2. To analyse the constitutional, legal, and institutional basis of social state policy in New Uzbekistan;
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of recent reforms in the fields of social protection, poverty reduction, and support for youth and women;
4. To assess the role of public administration modernisation, digital governance, and executive discipline in implementing social policy at the regional level;
5. To compare Uzbekistan’s national social state model with relevant international experience and scholarly approaches;
6. To formulate evidence-based conclusions and practical recommendations for further strengthening the social state in Uzbekistan.

2. Literature Review

A social state is a model of governance in which ensuring citizens’ decent living standards, social protection, and economic well-being constitutes one of the state’s primary responsibilities. This concept is founded upon the principles of creating equal opportunities for all individuals, reducing social inequalities, ensuring the fair distribution of income and resources, and providing support for vulnerable segments of the population. Within this framework, the state assumes responsibility for guaranteeing a dignified quality of life and social security for its citizens. Consequently, a social state not only safeguards fundamental rights and freedoms but also establishes the necessary socio-economic conditions for sustainable human development, social justice, and public welfare [2].

The practical manifestation of the social state concept varies across countries depending on their historical development, economic capacity, and political systems. Consequently, the formation, institutional structure, and development mechanisms of social states differ significantly among regions of the world. Nevertheless, a common feature that unites these diverse models is the existence of effective mechanisms aimed at meeting the social needs of citizens and ensuring their well-being. In contemporary social states, the provision of social services is often carried out through cooperation among government institutions, non-governmental organisations, and private sector entities. Through public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks, essential services such as education, healthcare, pension provision, and various forms of social assistance are delivered to the population at different administrative and territorial levels, thereby enhancing social welfare and promoting inclusive development.

The process of the formation of the social state institution began in the late nineteenth century in rapidly industrialising Western countries, initially manifested through the introduction of state pension schemes and social

insurance systems. Subsequently, major historical events such as the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War highlighted the necessity of expanding the social functions of the state. These developments underscored the need for governments to assume greater responsibility for protecting citizens from economic and social risks. Particularly in the post-Second World War period, many developed countries established comprehensive welfare systems designed to provide broad social protection and improve living standards. As a result, the social state evolved into one of the fundamental institutions of modern democratic governance, playing a crucial role in promoting social justice, economic stability, and public welfare [3].

Contemporary scholarship continues to refine the understanding of welfare state development and its sustainability. Recent comparative research demonstrates that, although social policy systems pass through certain common stages of consolidation – from education and healthcare mandates to work-related protections and care services – their actual trajectories diverge considerably and challenge conventional regional clustering [4]. Other studies emphasise that the long-term sustainability and legitimacy of the welfare state depend on its capacity to maintain social cohesion and reduce social discrimination, particularly under conditions of prolonged crisis [5]. Comparative analyses of state social policy further indicate that social provision improves quality of life most reliably when protection and services are coordinated and when opportunity-oriented measures complement direct cash transfers [6]. These insights are directly relevant to the Uzbek model, which combines targeted social assistance with employment- and entrepreneurship-oriented programmes.

Uzbekistan's strategic choice to build a social state represents an important development model shaped by the integration of international experience and the country's national development priorities. At the core of this model are the principles of protecting human interests, ensuring social justice, providing equal opportunities, and guaranteeing a decent standard of living for all citizens. In this regard, the social state serves not only as a mechanism for improving the welfare of the present generation but also as a foundation for creating a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable society for future generations. By prioritising human dignity and social well-being, this model contributes to long-term socio-economic stability and the comprehensive development of society.

3. Methodology

In this study, a combination of systematic, comparative-legal, historical, and logical analysis methods was employed to examine the theoretical and legal foundations of the social state concept. In addition, the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, relevant normative-legal acts, state programmes, and statistical data related to the field of social protection were analysed. The research also involved a comparative assessment of international experiences in building a social state and the specific features of Uzbekistan's national development model, with particular attention given to evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing reforms. The findings were interpreted through a process of generalisation, analytical evaluation, and the formulation of scientific conclusions.

4. Results and Discussion

In recent years, under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has consistently implemented comprehensive reforms aimed at translating the principles of the social state into practical reality. The primary priorities of these reforms include reducing poverty, improving the quality of life of the population, strengthening

the social protection system, and establishing social justice as a fundamental value within society. These initiatives reflect the government's commitment to ensuring human dignity, expanding social support mechanisms, and creating equal opportunities for all citizens. As a result, the ongoing reforms have become an important component of Uzbekistan's broader strategy for sustainable development and social modernisation.

Particularly during 2023–2024, efforts in this area entered a new stage of development, marked by the adoption of several significant programmes and normative-legal acts aimed at strengthening social protection and improving public welfare. Notably, pursuant to the Presidential Decree issued on 1 June 2023, the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP) under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan was established. The creation of this institution provided a solid organisational and institutional foundation for enhancing the quality of social services, expanding targeted social assistance mechanisms, and increasing the effectiveness of social protection policies. This development represents an important step toward building a modern social state that prioritises human dignity, social justice, and the well-being of its citizens.

As part of the implementation of the 2024 State Programme, a total of 133,718 young people were included in the Youth Register (Yoshlar Daftari). Among them, 75,599 beneficiaries received financial support amounting to 146.3 billion Uzbekistani so'm (UZS) to cover expenses related to educational and professional development programmes in fields that are highly demanded among young people. This initiative has contributed significantly to expanding opportunities for youth empowerment, enhancing their professional skills, and improving their competitiveness in the labour market. Furthermore, the programme serves as an important instrument of Uzbekistan's social state policy by providing targeted support to young people and promoting their social and economic inclusion.

A nationwide assessment was conducted among 7.5 million women aged over 30, as a result of which 1.18 million women were included in the Women's Register (Ayollar Daftari). Based on the identified needs, a comprehensive system of targeted support was established to assist women facing difficult social circumstances. This system provides social, legal, and psychological assistance, while also ensuring individualised support measures aimed at improving their living conditions and facilitating their social integration. The initiative represents an important component of Uzbekistan's social state policy, reflecting the government's commitment to strengthening social protection mechanisms, promoting gender equality, and enhancing the welfare of vulnerable groups within society.

It should be noted that poverty reduction measures constitute one of the fundamental pillars of the social state concept. In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken comprehensive reforms aimed at improving living standards and expanding economic opportunities for vulnerable segments of the population. A significant step in this direction was the adoption of the "From Poverty to Prosperity" (Kambag'allikdan farovonlik sari) programme, under which 22 trillion UZS was allocated to poverty reduction initiatives in 2024 alone. As part of these efforts, a wide range of practical measures has been implemented. In particular, under the "Every Family is an Entrepreneur" (Har bir oila – tadbirkor) programme, thousands of families received preferential loans that enabled them to establish and develop their own businesses. This initiative not only expanded income-generating opportunities but also contributed significantly to improving household welfare, promoting economic self-sufficiency, and

strengthening social stability. Consequently, these measures have become an important instrument of Uzbekistan's social state policy aimed at ensuring inclusive development and enhancing the quality of life of its citizens [7].

For example, information provided by Sh. Abdurazzaqov, Governor of Namangan Region, demonstrates that effective public administration and strong executive discipline play a crucial role in implementing the principles of the social state in Uzbekistan. Within the regional administration, a specialised Executive Discipline Monitoring Department consisting of three staff positions was established to strengthen oversight and improve institutional performance.

In addition, 14 employees from district administrations in the region completed internships at the Cabinet of Ministers, where they acquired specialised knowledge and practical skills in modern governance technologies. As a result, 88 targeted inspections and 2 comprehensive reviews were conducted to assess the activities of district administrations and the state of executive discipline. Following these monitoring activities, disciplinary measures were imposed on 43 officials and employees, including 10 reprimands and 33 official warnings. These measures illustrate Uzbekistan's commitment to enhancing administrative accountability, improving the effectiveness of public institutions, and ensuring the proper implementation of social policies. Such efforts are essential for strengthening the institutional foundations of a social state and ensuring that government programmes aimed at improving citizens' welfare are implemented efficiently and effectively.

During the first seven months of 2021 alone, the administration of Namangan Region received 345 normative legal documents, including 35 laws adopted by the Oliy Majlis, 33 Presidential Decrees, 101 Presidential Resolutions, 6 Presidential Orders, 141 resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers, and 28 orders of the Cabinet of Ministers. To ensure the effective implementation of these legal acts, the regional governor issued 288 resolutions and 26 orders, while an additional 33 documents were accepted for informational and official use purposes. These figures reflect the growing scale of regulatory and administrative activities at the regional level and demonstrate the importance of effective implementation mechanisms in translating national policies into practical outcomes. In the context of Uzbekistan's social state policy, the timely execution of normative legal acts serves as a key prerequisite for ensuring social protection, improving public services, and advancing the welfare of citizens.

In addition, the Namangan Regional Administration received 5,886 directives derived from a total of 858 normative documents issued by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, including 131 Presidential Decrees, 464 Presidential Resolutions, 22 Presidential Orders, and 241 official protocols and statements. Of these directives, 4,154 were fully implemented, while the timely execution of the remaining 1,864 ongoing assignments was placed under systematic supervision and monitoring. Furthermore, during the same period, an additional 668 directives were received, originating from 118 Presidential Decrees, 246 Presidential Resolutions, 5 Presidential Orders, and 299 official protocols and statements.

According to data from the "E-Qaror" (E-Decision) electronic system introduced under the Namangan Regional Administration, local executive authorities adopted 2,092 resolutions and 456 executive orders during the reporting period, while local Councils of People's Deputies approved an additional 336 resolutions. An analysis of statistical data reveals a significant increase in legislative and administrative activity at the regional level. Whereas an average

of 121 documents were adopted annually during 2010–2016, this figure rose to 456 documents during 2017–2020, representing a 3.7-fold increase.

These figures demonstrate a significant increase in the activity and effectiveness of the public administration system, the improvement of mechanisms for ensuring the implementation of normative legal acts, and, most importantly, the strengthening of the institutional foundations necessary for the realisation of social state policies. Indeed, the success of a social state depends not only on the adoption of laws and policy documents but also on their effective and timely implementation at the local level. In this regard, the experience of Namangan Region serves as a noteworthy example of the practical outcomes of state policies aimed at strengthening social protection, improving public welfare, and ensuring the realisation of citizens' constitutional rights. Furthermore, it illustrates how effective governance, administrative accountability, and institutional capacity contribute to the successful implementation of social state principles and the enhancement of citizens' quality of life [8].

One of the key priorities of social state policy in New Uzbekistan is to strengthen social protection for young people, ensure their employment, and enhance their active participation in social and economic life. In pursuit of these objectives, the government has set a target of gradually reducing the youth unemployment rate from 9.6 per cent to below 8 per cent. Achieving this goal is regarded as an important component of promoting social inclusion, improving living standards, and expanding opportunities for young citizens. To this end, comprehensive measures are being implemented by the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment in cooperation with the Youth Affairs Agency. These efforts include expanding employment opportunities, supporting youth entrepreneurship, developing vocational training programmes, and facilitating young people's integration into the labour market. Such initiatives reflect the state's commitment to investing in human capital and ensuring sustainable socio-economic development through the empowerment of youth.

As a practical manifestation of social state policy, particular attention is being devoted to increasing youth employment. In this regard, the government has set a target of providing employment opportunities for 400,000 young people, with an initial goal of employing 100,000 individuals and gradually expanding this figure to reach the planned target. This initiative is aimed at enhancing the economic participation of young people, creating sustainable sources of income, and reducing the risk of poverty among the younger generation. Moreover, by facilitating access to employment and productive economic activities, the programme contributes to strengthening social stability, improving living standards, and promoting inclusive socio-economic development. Consequently, youth employment policies serve as an important instrument for realising the principles of a social state and investing in the country's human capital potential.

Furthermore, in the context of the rapidly expanding digital economy, equipping young people with modern professional skills has become an important component of Uzbekistan's social state policy. To achieve this objective, the government has set a target of creating employment opportunities for 300,000 young people in the information technology (IT) sector, with the number of employed youth expected to increase gradually from 110,000 to 300,000. In addition, efforts are being made to expand access to training programmes that prepare school students for modern IT professions that are in high demand in the international labour market. As a result, the

number of students receiving such training is projected to increase from 40,000 to 250,000. These initiatives are expected to enhance young people's competitiveness, provide access to high-income employment opportunities, and strengthen their capacity to participate effectively in the digital economy. Consequently, they contribute to the development of human capital and support the long-term objectives of building an inclusive and sustainable social state.

Promoting a healthy lifestyle among young people is also regarded as a significant component of social state policy. Accordingly, the government has set targets to increase the proportion of the population regularly engaged in sports activities from 30 per cent to 36 per cent, while also raising the participation rate of young people aged 7 to 30 years in mass sports events from 47 per cent to 60 per cent. These measures are aimed at strengthening the physical health and well-being of young citizens, encouraging the productive use of leisure time, and fostering the development of a healthy and active generation. Moreover, expanding access to sports and recreational activities contributes to social inclusion, enhances overall quality of life, and supports the broader objectives of human capital development within the framework of Uzbekistan's social state policy [9].

5. Conclusion and Future Recommendations

In conclusion, the policy of building a social state in New Uzbekistan is being implemented through consistent and comprehensive reforms aimed at ensuring human dignity, social justice, and public welfare. In recent years, significant progress has been achieved in strengthening the social protection system, reducing poverty, supporting youth and women, and enhancing the effectiveness of public administration. The establishment of the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP), the introduction of targeted assistance mechanisms, and the expansion of digital governance systems have substantially increased the effectiveness of social policy implementation. Furthermore, initiatives focused on employment generation, human capital development, and the promotion of social inclusion have contributed to improving citizens' quality of life. As a result, solid foundations are being laid for the development of a modern social state model that effectively safeguards the rights, interests, and well-being of the population in Uzbekistan.

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for the further strengthening of the social state in Uzbekistan:

1. To develop a unified digital social protection platform that integrates the Youth Register, the Women's Register, and poverty databases in order to deliver targeted assistance more accurately and transparently;
2. To shift the emphasis of social policy from direct cash transfers toward opportunity-oriented measures such as vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and labour-market integration, thereby ensuring the long-term sustainability of welfare outcomes;
3. To strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of executive discipline at the regional and district levels, using measurable indicators of citizens' satisfaction rather than the quantity of adopted documents;
4. To expand public-private partnership (PPP) mechanisms in the delivery of education, healthcare, and social services in order to diversify funding sources and improve service quality;

5. To enhance the participation of mahallas, non-governmental organisations, and civil society institutions in identifying social needs and implementing social programmes at the community level;

6. To conduct further comparative and empirical research – including causal evaluations of policy design – in order to refine the national social state model in light of relevant international experience.

Declarations

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Competing Interests Statement

The author declares that there are no competing interests.

Consent for Publication

The author contributed to the manuscript and consented to the publication of this research work.

Authors' Contributions

The sole author conceived the study, conducted the analysis, and wrote and approved the final manuscript.

Informed Consent

Not Applicable.

Availability of Data and Material

All data analysed in this study are derived from publicly available official documents, state programmes, and statistical sources cited in the references.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not Applicable.

Ethical Approval

Not applicable; this study did not involve human participants or animals.

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Declaration of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence tools were used only for language editing and formatting assistance. The author reviewed and takes full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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