

## **THE ROLE OF ENLIGHTENMENT IDEALS AND WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF NEW UZBEKISTAN**

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**Annotation:** This paper analyzes the integration of enlightenment principles and women's social activism in the "New Uzbekistan Development Strategy". Emphasizing the central role of human capital, especially the empowerment of women and promotion of national identity, this study reveals the state's commitment to modernization grounded in cultural values. The findings indicate a significant shift towards inclusive governance and intellectual progress through policy, education, and public mobilization.

**Keywords:** New Uzbekistan, enlightenment, women's activism, development strategy, modernization, social reform

### **Introduction**

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken comprehensive reforms to redefine its socio-political and economic model. The concept of the "New Uzbekistan" emerged as a vision for a just, democratic, and progressive society. A core component of this vision includes promoting enlightenment values (ma'rifatparvarlik) and expanding the role of women in public life. These efforts are clearly articulated in the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, which reflects the ideals of national revival and modernization. The current research investigates how enlightenment and female activism are strategically integrated into this reformative roadmap.

The study employed a qualitative content analysis approach to explore the role of enlightenment ideals and women's activism in the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan. This method was chosen due to its effectiveness in identifying thematic patterns, interpretive frameworks, and policy orientations within complex textual data. The analysis was conducted in several stages:

Firstly, official government documents were thoroughly examined. These included the Presidential Decree on the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, annual reports from the Committee on Gender Equality, legislative texts such as the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, and public policy recommendations from the Center for Spirituality and Enlightenment (Ma'naviyat va Ma'rifat Markazi). These sources provided insight into how enlightenment values and gender inclusion are embedded in the national reform agenda.

Secondly, the discursive content of Presidential speeches, public addresses, and interviews with key political figures were analyzed to trace ideological continuity and rhetorical emphasis on national identity, modernization, and gender equality. These speeches were particularly useful in understanding the symbolic and practical positioning of women within the national narrative of renewal.

Thirdly, the study integrated a historical-comparative analysis, comparing current strategies with earlier periods in Uzbek history — notably the Jadid enlightenment movement of the early 20th

century, the Soviet era policies on women's emancipation, and post-independence reforms. This lens enabled the identification of ideological evolution and recontextualization of enlightenment within contemporary socio-political frameworks.

Furthermore, supplementary materials such as academic publications, conference proceedings, policy evaluations, and articles from leading Uzbek scholars on gender studies and enlightenment thought were reviewed to enrich the theoretical grounding of the research. Emphasis was placed on locating shifts in discourse and institutional priorities over time.

The study included an interpretive thematic coding process, through which recurrent concepts—such as “moral development”, “national consciousness”, “women’s leadership”, and “inclusive governance”—were identified and analyzed across documents. This process ensured the triangulation of sources and reinforced the internal validity of the findings.

The integration of enlightenment and women’s activism into national development signifies a deliberate move towards both intellectual advancement and social modernization. This is not a superficial adjustment but a transformative effort to reshape societal norms, priorities, and governance structures. Enlightenment, in the context of New Uzbekistan, extends beyond the acquisition of secular knowledge—it encompasses a comprehensive process of nurturing ethical responsibility, civic consciousness, patriotism, and critical thinking. It implies the creation of a society grounded in reason, cultural identity, and a strong sense of social justice.

Women’s empowerment, which for decades remained on the periphery of state policy, has now become a central pillar of reform. This paradigm shift is evident not only in legislation and political rhetoric but also in the increasing visibility of women in leadership positions, education, business, and civil society. The state’s recognition of women not only as beneficiaries but as active agents of change marks a crucial departure from previous approaches that often treated gender issues as secondary.

These developments draw intellectual and ideological legitimacy from the historical heritage of Uzbek enlightenment thinkers, particularly Abdulla Avloni, Munavvar qori Abdurashidxonov, and Ismail Gaspirali. These early 20th-century reformers emphasized the vital role of education, especially for women, in the spiritual and intellectual revival of the Muslim world. Avloni’s writings, such as *Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq*, promoted moral education and national unity, while Munavvar qori’s contributions to pedagogical reform and advocacy for female literacy laid the groundwork for inclusive societal progress. The echoes of their thought are clearly present in the current strategy, which institutionalizes their vision through concrete policy and programming.

Moreover, these reforms resonate with international development goals, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. However, what sets Uzbekistan’s approach apart is the fusion of global standards with national traditions and values. The strategy does not adopt a Western model of enlightenment wholesale but adapts it to local contexts, ensuring cultural resonance and sustainability.

The discussion also suggests that the promotion of enlightenment and gender equity has the potential to fortify democratic institutions, enhance social cohesion, and accelerate economic development. By involving women and enlightened citizens in decision-making processes, the state promotes transparency, accountability, and innovation. Thus, the New Uzbekistan model illustrates how culturally rooted reforms can drive holistic national transformation.

## Conclusion

The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan serves as a comprehensive and visionary blueprint for building a culturally rooted yet forward-looking society. It reflects a transformative agenda that merges the nation's rich historical heritage with modern principles of governance, human development, and inclusivity. By embedding enlightenment values—such as education, critical thinking, civic responsibility, and ethical integrity—into the heart of national policy, Uzbekistan is laying the groundwork for a sustainable, knowledge-based society.

Importantly, the strategy does not treat women's participation as a peripheral concern, but rather elevates it as a cornerstone of national progress. The recognition of women as equal stakeholders in political, economic, and social spheres marks a significant ideological shift from previous frameworks. This inclusion fosters not only gender equity but also strengthens the institutional resilience of the state by diversifying perspectives and promoting community-driven development.

Moreover, the integration of enlightenment and female activism contributes to multiple dimensions of societal well-being. It supports economic growth by tapping into the full potential of the population; it enhances social cohesion by promoting mutual respect and shared values; it accelerates democratization by empowering citizens with knowledge and agency; and it enriches the spiritual and moral fabric of society by encouraging ethical behavior and national pride.

This multidimensional approach ensures that the reforms are not only effective in the short term but also resilient in the face of future challenges. In essence, the New Uzbekistan model presents a unique synthesis of traditional wisdom and modern innovation, showing that progress rooted in cultural identity can be both dynamic and inclusive. As such, it may serve as an example for other nations undergoing post-authoritarian transitions seeking to modernize without losing their cultural soul.

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