

## THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ART IN DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF THE NEW UZBEKISTAN

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**Jumanazarov Zohidjon Eldor o'g'li**  
*Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture*

### Abstract

This article analyzes the role of culture and art in the formation and strengthening of the international image of New Uzbekistan from a scientific and theoretical perspective. It is argued that in the context of globalization, the influence of states in the international arena is determined not only by economic and political factors, but also by cultural diplomacy and creative industries. The article reveals that culture and art are a strategic resource in shaping the international image of the state as a source of "soft power". The rich historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, international exhibitions, cooperation within the framework of TURKSOY, UNESCO projects, and the development trends of cultural diplomacy through modern digital platforms will also be analyzed.

### Keywords

New Uzbekistan, international image, culture, art, cultural diplomacy, soft power, creative industries, globalization, cultural heritage.

In the modern era, when globalization processes are becoming increasingly intense, competition between states is intensifying not only in the economic and political spheres, but also in the cultural and spiritual spheres. Today, the country's prestige, attractiveness, and positive image on the international stage are largely determined by its cultural potential and cultural diplomacy capabilities<sup>1</sup>. In this context, promoting national culture and art internationally, actively presenting the historical and cultural heritage in the global information space, and forming a positive international image of the country through art are becoming one of the priority areas of state policy in New Uzbekistan.

The image of a state is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, and depending on the criteria used to form it, it can take on an economic, political, or cultural character. This situation is also reflected in many scientific definitions of the country's image. In particular, the state image is interpreted as a "set of economic, geographical, national, cultural, demographic and other systemic characteristics that have formed and are interconnected in the process of historical and evolutionary development of statehood"<sup>2</sup>. This approach shows that the culture factor plays an extremely important role in the formation of the image of the modern state. Therefore, this issue requires a deeper theoretical analysis and a conceptual approach. These theoretical approaches show the need to assess culture

<sup>1</sup> Dovidxonov M.M. O'zbekistonning siyosiy imijini oshirishda madaniy diplomatiyaning o'rni // CyberLeninka, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Галумов Э.А. Имидж против имиджа. – М.: Известия, 2005. – С. 371.

and art in the context of the New Uzbekistan not only as a factor of spiritual development, but also as a strategic resource that shapes the state's international image.

The relevance of this topic for Uzbekistan is explained by a number of political, cultural, and strategic factors. First of all, Uzbekistan has long been one of the important cultural centers of Central Asia, with a rich historical and cultural heritage and a tradition of high art. The architecture, status art, folk applied decorative art, theater, and musical culture that emerged during the era of Amir Timur and the Timurids continue to serve as one of the important factors that define the country's international cultural image today<sup>3</sup>. In recent years, in particular, large-scale cultural projects aimed at promoting Uzbekistan's historical and cultural heritage on the international stage have played an important role in strengthening the country's positive image. In particular, the 2023 exhibition "Uzbekistan: masterpieces of the Great Silk Road", organized in the city of Paris, aroused great interest among the European public and further strengthened Uzbekistan's international image as a state with a rich civilized heritage.

In addition, cultural diplomacy is becoming one of the important components of the foreign policy of New Uzbekistan today. The principle of "For the Sake of Man" put forward by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the concept of openness and pragmatic foreign policy, serve to form a positive image of the country in the international arena and expand Uzbekistan's cultural ties with the global community<sup>4</sup>. In this regard, Uzbekistan's activity in international cultural forums, art festivals, and exhibitions is also increasing. In particular, the active participation of Uzbek artists in cultural events within the framework of the TURKSOY Cultural Capital Program, held in Ankara in 2024, served to strengthen cultural integration between the Turkic peoples and also contributed to the development of Uzbekistan's international cultural image<sup>5</sup>.

The Cultural and Artistic Reform Forum, held in Tashkent in 2024, brought together international experts, regional organizations, and representatives of the cultural sector to discuss cultural reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan and prospects for international cooperation. The forum considered issues related to expanding the country's cultural diplomacy potential, as well as deepening cooperation with TURKSOY and other international cultural institutions. The results of the Forum served to strengthen the process of systematic and consistent promotion of cultural policy of Uzbekistan in the international arena.

At the same time, within the framework of the TURKSOY platform, Uzbekistan is actively involved in a number of cultural projects between the Turkic states. In particular, projects aimed at studying cultural heritage, Regional Art Exchange and development of cultural capital serve to strengthen Uzbekistan's

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<sup>3</sup> Diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and the State of ... (Madaniyat yangiliklari) // gov.uz, 5 Mar 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Uzbekistan and Türkiye Strengthen Cultural Cooperation // UzDaily, 20 Jun 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Features of cultural policy in New Uzbekistan / Z. Jumanazarov // InLibrary (JASS), 2025.

cultural position in the Turkic world. This is further increasing the country's position in the processes of international cultural integration<sup>6</sup>.

In addition, Culture Days, exhibitions, and concert programs organized by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan and foreign policy agencies serve as important tools in shaping the country's international image. Cultural events organized through diplomatic missions serve to strengthen positive perceptions of Uzbekistan among foreign audiences.

In recent years, the processes of digital transformation are also gaining momentum in the activities of museums. In particular, virtual tours, digital catalogs and online science collaboration projects are expanding the possibilities of bringing cultural heritage to a global audience. These processes demonstrate the transformation of cultural diplomacy instruments from traditional forms to digital platforms, which is contributing to the modernization of Uzbekistan's cultural communication system.

A number of indicators are used to assess the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy and image policy based on art. Indicators such as international media coverage, the level of discussion on social networks, tourist flow, the number of international cooperation projects, the volume of foreign investment, and the activity of diplomatic relations allow us to measure the cultural image of a state. These indicators serve as an important methodological basis for assessing the real social and economic impact of cultural policy.

However, the development of cultural diplomacy in practice is also associated with a number of problems. Firstly, the implementation of cultural projects at the international level requires significant financial resources. Secondly, the lack of a unified visual and communicative identity for the national cultural brand requires a strategic approach. Thirdly, the intensifying competition in the global cultural space requires Uzbekistan to create high-quality and original content. Logistics, language, and professional communication issues are also emerging as factors complicating international cultural exchange processes.

In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen the institutional approach to enhance the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy, develop creative industries, and expand digital cultural platforms.

Thirdly, in the context of the rapid development of modern information and communication technologies, art and media are becoming one of the most effective tools for shaping and promoting a national image on the international stage. Today, young Uzbek artists, filmmakers, and visual artists are shaping the country's modern cultural brand by showcasing their creative work on global cultural platforms, including Netflix, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and World Art Dubai<sup>7</sup>. In this process, art is not only an expression of aesthetic value, but also an important tool for the state's strategic soft power in the international communication system.

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<sup>6</sup> TURKPA attended Forum within International Cultural Heritage Week in Uzbekistan // TURKPA news, 24 Oct 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Kurbanov S.// Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan / Atlantis Press (PDF), 2025.

In this regard, Uzbekistan's cultural diplomacy serves to create a positive image in the international community through the arts and creative industries. This process will also have a direct impact on the country's political stability, the expansion of tourism potential, and the strengthening of international economic cooperation. Therefore, the issue of "the role of art in shaping the image of Uzbekistan" is not only a theoretical, but also a practical and strategic scientific problem.

Today, the cultural policy of any country is focused on maintaining and strengthening the country's traditional image. This image is primarily associated with the general perception of the historical and spiritual greatness of the people, as well as with the rich artistic, architectural and cultural monuments inherited from the past and the national cultural heritage. Many cultural elements, such as music, theater, fine arts, and national cuisine, emerge as important factors shaping the country's international image. Therefore, in modern cultural policy, the preservation of national cultural heritage and its promotion in the global arena are among the priority areas<sup>8</sup>.

In particular, the promotion of national cultural heritage through modern communication technologies allows for the formation of Uzbekistan's cultural brand in Uzbekistan's global information space. In the 1980s, the famous Greek politician and public figure Melina Mercouri came up with the idea of counterposing culture to wars and conflicts, and its power to unite societies. This initiative demonstrated the importance of culture not only as an aesthetic force, but also as a peace-building and integrative force<sup>9</sup>. In this sense, improving cultural diplomacy mechanisms will serve to increase Uzbekistan's competitiveness in the international communication space.

Also, I.A. Vasilenko as well as P.I. Zhukova notes that world experience shows that it is culture that can become the main factor in the development of states, cities and territories today. Because culture surpasses the potential of many economic factors in terms of its long-term impact and strategic importance. In this sense, culture is also becoming increasingly important as a spiritual, socio-political and economic resource for modern development<sup>10</sup>.

The success of many foreign image campaigns is closely related to the effective use of the nation's cultural capital. For example, Americans had already realized from the earliest stages of the formation of a national brand that culture was a decisive factor in its promotion. From the end of the XIX century, the cultural achievements of the United States began to be actively promoted in the international arena. Hollywood films in particular played an important role in the process. While glorifying American values, they also instilled foreign audiences with the spirit of American popular culture, fostering a positive attitude and

<sup>8</sup> Кузнецова А.И. Культура и процессы глобализации. – Власть, № 1, 2009. – С. 39-42.

<sup>9</sup> Макаров Д.В., Демьяненко А.А. Программы «Культурные столицы СНГ» и «Культурные столицы Европы» // Власть. – №7, 2014. – С. 96-99.

<sup>10</sup> Василенко И.А. Роль культурной политики в процессе формирования и продвижения позитивного имиджа России // Власть. – №6, 2014. – С. 40-43

goodwill towards the country<sup>11</sup>. Analysis of foreign experience shows that the international image of a state is largely determined by its cultural attractiveness. That is why the development of creative industries is considered one of the strategic directions in New Uzbekistan.

Today, many countries in the European Union are implementing programs to revitalize economically and socially distressed cities through contemporary creative arts and cultural projects. In particular, the concept of “Culture as a key resource for regional regeneration” developed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport emphasizes that regional development programs cannot be effective without a cultural component.

Cultural policy is also an important component of the country’s image strategy in Germany. In particular, the Goethe-Institut is today working towards promoting German cultural values in more than 90 countries around the world. This once again confirms the invaluable importance of culture in shaping international influence and “soft power”<sup>12</sup>.

World experience shows that culture-based image strategy is an effective tool in increasing the international prestige, investment attractiveness and tourism potential of the state. This will also be of urgent importance for the New Uzbekistan.

Academician Dmitry Sergeyevich Likhachev developed a concept of humanitarian culture in his scientific views, which is focused on humanity. According to the scientist, preserving culture means preserving the soul, language, unique thinking, and moral values of the people. He said, “If there is no culture in society, there will be no morality. Without moral criteria, social and economic laws will not work, decrees will not be enforced, and modern science will not develop,” he emphasizes<sup>13</sup>.

At the same time, cultural values refer not only to architectural monuments, sculpture, painting, archaeology, music or folklore samples, but also to such intangible phenomena as traditions, norms of behavior, Customs and cultural individuality of peoples in the field of art, science and education. In this regard, culture appears as a fundamental factor that determines the historical memory, spiritual foundation, and image of a nation in the international arena.

Culture is a holistic social phenomenon that raises people living in a certain area from the layer of the common population to the level of the people and the nation. The concept of Culture also encompasses science, education, human beings and the moral and normative values of the state. At the same time, cultural policy is emerging as an important component of Uzbekistan’s modern branding technologies. Cinema, music, art, and literature play a special role in shaping the international image of the state. Because it is they who give charm, impact and emotional diversity to the image of the country.

<sup>11</sup> Анхольт С., Хильдрет Д. Бренд Америка: мать всех брендов. – М.: Добрая книга, 2010. – С. 116.

<sup>12</sup> Сайт института имени Гете. Режим доступа: [http:// www.goethe.de/ins/ru/mos/uun/ruindex.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ins/ru/mos/uun/ruindex.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Лихачев Д.С. Раздумья о России. – СПб.: Logos, 1999. – С. 640.

The mechanisms of state image formation based on cultural factors are deeply illuminated by the concept of symbolic capital of culture, proposed by the French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and the theory of "soft power" by the American political scientist Joseph Nye. These theories make it possible to theoretically understand the strategic place of culture in the formation of the image of the country. When viewed through these concepts, it becomes clear that cultural areas such as status art, bakhshi, national theater, and folk arts are of significant strategic importance in developing the international image of New Uzbekistan.

The symbolic capital of culture is the collective memory, cultural representations, images and spiritual and ideological space of society. From this point of view, the image of the state is an integral part of cultural symbolic capital. Its power of influence is determined by the extent to which people value and trust this capital<sup>14</sup>. It is this belief that brings symbolic power to the surface.

The symbolic capital of culture can have a high level of attractiveness for other peoples, as well as for citizens of their country. If a state's cultural values and ideology are attractive, other countries will naturally tend to follow them. This process is not limited only to the fact that the elite-oriented "high culture" knows art, literature or education. It may also include pop culture aimed at a mass audience.

For example, it was thanks to popular culture that the image of America became extremely attractive in the eyes of the world public. American pop culture has served to envision the United States as a progressive Center of modernity and innovation, a rich, powerful, and uniquely exciting country. Thus, culture has become one of the most effective tools for shaping a state's "soft power" and positive image in the international arena<sup>15</sup>.

The national idea plays a special role in the formation of the state's image strategy based on cultural factors. A national idea is a system of values of society, which embodies the people's self-awareness, historical memory, and goals of personal and national development. It is the national idea that acts as the center of the symbolic capital of culture and serves to create a bright and impressive foreign policy image of the state in the information space.

Cultural hegemony is achieved primarily by a state that is able to offer its citizens a national idea as an attractive symbolic project in the information space. Such a project embodies national priorities, historical traditions, ideas and a system of values, and becomes more important and influential for many than external informational influences.

In this sense, the state's international image should also reflect its foreign policy interests, inspire its citizens, and instill in them a sense of pride and

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<sup>14</sup> Василенко И.А. Роль культурной политики в процессе формирования и продвижения позитивного имиджа России // Власть. – №6, 2014. – С. 40-43

<sup>15</sup> Neal M, Rosendorf. Social and Cultural Globalization. Wash. 2000. P. 123.

belonging. At the same time, such an image also creates a positive resonance among the world community and serves to strengthen the country's prestige<sup>16</sup>.

Joseph Nye has proposed the term "soft power", a term that translates as "soft power" or "flexible power". Adaptive authority is the ability to achieve the desired result not through coercion, but through the means of attraction. The main source or resource of "flexible power" is the country's culture.

For a state, "flexible power" is the power of its cultural symbols, the attractiveness of its cultural achievements, which are continuously promoted through global communication channels. It encourages the whole world to have a positive opinion about this state. As American General Wesley Clark noted: "Soft power has allowed for a much wider range of influence than hard power dominance in traditional balance of power politics"<sup>17</sup>.

The paradox is that even today, governments tend to spend nearly 400 times more on "hard power" than on "soft power". This is a case of inertia in thinking, while modern states have intangible assets that can provide their attractiveness and can effectively use them<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, it is extremely important to completely debunk the myth of the superiority of "hard power" in world politics and to reveal the hidden mechanisms of "soft power" that serve to achieve victory without a fight<sup>19</sup>.

The idea that traditional "hard power" based on military force, economic sanctions, and threats should be replaced by "soft power" based on culture is supported by many scholars today. Indeed, in Uzbekistan's international relations agenda, states are increasingly resorting to "soft power" as a means to achieve their goals. The basis of "soft power" is cultural, ideological, and spiritual values. These factors are extremely important in shaping the positive image of the state<sup>20</sup>. In addition, Uzbekistan's rich historical and cultural heritage is attracting the attention of the international community as one of the important factors that increase the country's "soft power" potential. Thus, culture has become one of the most effective tools of foreign policy and an influential factor in promoting national interests, spreading and strengthening political institutions and values.

The attitude of the United States towards other national-cultural states is also a notable example in this regard. Methods aimed at imposing a "civilizational order" through force often lead to the erosion of ethnic and national cultural values, established lifestyles, and historical and spiritual traditions. Such processes usually

<sup>16</sup> Василенко И.А. Имидж России: концепция национального брендинга // Контуры глобальных трансформаций: политика, экономика, право. – №4(24), Т.5, 2012. – С. 66-78.

<sup>17</sup> Михайлов А. Жизнь замечательных людей — Маяковский [Электронный ресурс] // Электронная библиотека ModernLib.Ru : [веб-сайт]. URL: [modernlib.ru/books/mihaylov\\_aleksandr/mayakovskiy/read\\_24/](http://modernlib.ru/books/mihaylov_aleksandr/mayakovskiy/read_24/)

<sup>18</sup> Путин потратит более \$500 млн на улучшение имиджа России за рубежом [Электронный ресурс] // Электронная газета «Век» : [веб-сайт]. URL: [wek.ru/putin-potratit-bole-500-mln-na-uluchshenie-imidzha-rossii-zarubezhom](http://wek.ru/putin-potratit-bole-500-mln-na-uluchshenie-imidzha-rossii-zarubezhom)

<sup>19</sup> Академическая музыка XX—XXI вв. Биографии композиторов: Сергей Рахманинов. Жизнь и творчество [Электронный ресурс] // Культурно-образовательный портал OrpheusMusic.Ru : [веб-сайт]. URL: [orpheusmusic.ru/publ/115-1-0-149](http://orpheusmusic.ru/publ/115-1-0-149)

<sup>20</sup> Львова И. В. Ф. М. Достоевский и американский роман 1940—1960 годов : автореф. дис. на соиск. учен. степ. доктора филологических наук : 10.01.01 — русская литература / Львова Ирина Вильевна ; Новгородский государственный университет имени Ярослава мудрого. Великий Новгород, 2010.

serve the political ambitions and economic interests of the aggressive side, and not in the interests of the people.

Here we are talking about a one-way process of influence, not about an equal dialogue or mutual enrichment of cultures based on values. As a result, national culture is eroded from within, its ethnic and value content is weakened, and it is often replaced by foreign elements that distort national consciousness and culture.

The 2004 UN Human Development Report openly recognizes the principle of cultural freedom in the modern world, and cultural freedom is considered one of the most important factors in human and societal development. However, in practice, Western civilization often acts contrary to these principles, seeking to exploit the existence of other peoples or reshape them according to its own model in the process of strengthening its own socio-cultural existence.

In fact, as noted above, there can be no single universal criteria for understanding and evaluating a particular national culture. Moreover, one nation cannot serve as an absolute model for another. Because the way of life and culture of each nation is determined by historical and geographical factors.

Lev Gumilev puts forward the following idea in this regard: "It is impossible for there to be a universal culture that is common to all peoples. Because each ethnic group has a different landscape and historical past, and it is these factors that shape its present and future. Each Ethnos culture is unique, and this mosaic diversity of humanity provides the flexibility that served to keep the Homo sapiens species living on planet Earth". So, in Uzbekistan's multipolar world, intercultural dialogue is extremely necessary. However, this dialogue should have a dialectical character. That is, the process of mutual exchange and enrichment of cultures serves as an important impetus for world development, rather than expansion and a one-sided cultural monologue. This situation further highlights the need to combine national values with the principles of modern development in New Uzbekistan.

Today, there are several structural models for shaping the image of a country, based on which culture appears as a set of strategic components of the state image<sup>21</sup>. The strategic components of a state image include the country's name, emblem, flag, anthem, motto, history, philosophy, or ideology. The most important components, however, are mission and strategy. The reason they are called strategic components is because they are important to the system and have long-term impact.

From a cultural perspective, a state's image can include both objective and subjective components. "While the objective aspects of strategic components are related to how well they are developed and delivered to the public, the subjective aspects are determined by how they are perceived by the domestic and international public. Objective and subjective aspects require an analysis of the quality of components, the level of in-depth development and the effects of their

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<sup>21</sup> Окладникова Е.А. Структурная модель имиджа страны и ее архаические компоненты // Вестник Кемеровского государственного университета культуры и искусств. – №10, 2010. – С. 39-47.

perception. It is these aspects that form the content of the image in different audiences”<sup>22</sup>.

The image of a country is more often associated with the “cultural” aspect. Therefore, the geographical image can be interpreted as a set of symbols and archetypes associated with a particular territory. They are formed in a specific culture and are reflected in works of literature, film, or music, as well as in the historical memory of the people<sup>23</sup>.

One of the most striking examples of working on the image of a country in this direction is the “Seven Wonders of Russia” competition. Three man-made and four natural landmarks are recognized as winners of this competition: Saint Basil's Cathedral, Mamayev Kurgan and the Statue of “Rodina-Mat”, Peterhof Palace palace-complex, nurash pillars, Lake Baikal, geysers Valley and Mount Elbrus.

Such contests are essentially considered one of the effective means of forming a positive image and image of the Russian regions and the country as a whole, as well as popularizing its natural, historical and cultural monuments. The geographical image of the state can also be expressed through monuments of ancient culture. At the same time, these monuments should be reflected in the symbols and emblematic signs of the country and appear as an integral part of the national image.

The image also includes a natural-geographical portrait, in which cultural-civilizational dominance (dominance) plays a special role. This advantage is often expressed through a monument that is understood as a symbol of the cultural heritage of a particular country, embodies its historical memory, and is internationally recognized. Such objects are usually considered historical and cultural monuments listed by UNESCO. For example, architectural complexes such as Registan Square, Ich'an Kal'a, Koksaroy, Bibikhanim Madrasah, and Minorai Kalon are monuments of such symbolic significance for Uzbekistan.

The growing participation of Uzbekistan in international cultural projects under the auspices of UNESCO is a testament to the country's increasing activity in the global cultural space.

As you know, state symbols include a coat of arms, a flag and an anthem. They form a system of visual, sonic and textual expressions in a manner similar to the organization's logos. These symbols are created with a long-term perspective and play an important role as strategic elements of national identity<sup>24</sup>.

It is the cultural components philosophy, values and symbolic symbols that make up the main layers of the formation of the image of the country. They serve as the main foundation that embodies both economic and geographical factors.

<sup>22</sup> Яковлев И. П. Стратегические компоненты имиджа страны, имидж государства/региона: современные подходы. – СПб. 2006. – С. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Галумов Э. А. Международный имидж России. – М., 2003; Замятнин Д. Н. Образ страны: структура и динамика // Общественные науки и современность. – 2000. – № 1. – С. 34–39.

<sup>24</sup> Яковлев И. П. Стратегические компоненты имиджа страны, имидж государства/региона: современные подходы. – СПб. 2006. – С. 19.

V.M. As Mezhuev points out, through culture, a person understands his history, his social and individual essence, and the meaning of his human life<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, the cultural component occupies one of the leading places in the structural model of the state image. It is an important factor in demonstrating the legitimacy of state power, the historical foundations of territorial and political independence, and, unlike geographical or economic factors, it manifests itself as a historical and cultural dominant with a more symbolic and spiritual character. One of the most important components of an image strategy is to appeal to cultural archetypes and codes. The increasing importance of cultural capital and creative potential in determining the competitiveness of states in the modern system of international relations is opening up new strategic opportunities for New Uzbekistan.

In conclusion, culture and cultural policy play a decisive role in the formation of a positive image of the state. Therefore, the issue of the development of culture and art is manifested today as a strategic issue of not only spiritual, but also geopolitical and image significance. The cultural reforms being implemented in New Uzbekistan are one of the important factors that serve to increase the country's prestige and attractiveness in the international arena. It is the cultural content that provides the greatest strategic resource for the effective positioning of a state in the international communication space.

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<sup>25</sup> Межуев В.М. Культура и история. – М.: Политиздат, 1991. – 199 с.

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