

**THE EARLY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE DURING ISLOM KARIMOV'S ERA:
FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY**

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Abstract: This article provides a scientific analysis of the early years of the Republic of Uzbekistan's independence under Islom Karimov and the process of forming state sovereignty. The study examines the consolidation of internal and external political independence of Uzbekistan as a sovereign state in political, economic, and social spheres. It also explores the constitutional foundations, state symbols, and the process of international recognition. Furthermore, the article analyzes the political reforms, governance system, and strategic measures taken to strengthen sovereignty during the early years of independence.

Keywords:

Republic of Uzbekistan, Islom Karimov, independence, state sovereignty, political reforms, constitution, state symbols, foreign policy, domestic policy, governance

Introduction

On August 31, 1991, the Republic of Uzbekistan declared its independence, joining the ranks of independent states in Central Asia. Prior to independence, the country was part of the former Soviet Union and operated under a centralized political and economic system. The early years of independence were critical for Uzbekistan not only to implement state sovereignty in practice but also to establish independent political, economic, and cultural institutions. During this period, Islom Karimov, as the first President, defined strategic directions aimed at stabilizing the independent state and strengthening its sovereignty.

State sovereignty is directly linked to both domestic and foreign political independence. This process was formalized with the adoption of the Constitution on December 8, 1992. The Constitution became the primary legal document defining Uzbekistan as a sovereign state, establishing the principles of state sovereignty, popular representation, the presidential institution, and the parliamentary system. Simultaneously, decisions on national symbols—including the flag, emblem, and anthem—were adopted, reinforcing the state's identity and ensuring its recognition in the international arena.

Another key priority was ensuring domestic political stability and initiating economic reforms. Between 1991 and 1995, political parties, the Supreme Council of People's Deputies, and the local government system were established. Although liberal economic reforms began, they were implemented in a way that ensured state stability. During this period, Uzbekistan also initiated an independent foreign policy, joining the UN, the CIS, and other international organizations, thereby consolidating its sovereignty on the global stage. Thus, the early years of independence under Islom Karimov represented a crucial historical phase for forming and developing the state sovereignty of the Republic of Uzbekistan, laying the foundation for political stability, national identity, and international recognition. The aim of this study is to scientifically analyze the processes and key political, legal, and economic measures undertaken to establish state sovereignty.

Formation of State Sovereignty and Legal Foundations. On August 31, 1991, during the Extraordinary VI Session of the Supreme Council of Uzbekistan, the country officially declared independence, and the name “Republic of Uzbekistan” was officially restored. On the same day, the Declaration “On State Independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan” was adopted, and September 1 was designated as Independence Day. Following the declaration, Uzbekistan began consolidating its constitutional order. The Constitution, adopted on December 8, 1992, legally reinforced the country’s sovereignty, formalized state symbols—the flag, emblem, and anthem—and defined the main principles of the government system. These legal instruments laid the foundation for consolidating state sovereignty. On December 29, 1991, a nationwide presidential election was held, resulting in Islom Karimov being elected President with 87.14% of the vote. This was a critical political milestone aimed at establishing democratic institutions.

Formation of Political Institutions. In the early years of independence, political institutions actively developed. On June 20, 1990, the Supreme Council adopted the Declaration of the Republic’s Independence, which marked the first steps toward independent political governance separate from the Soviet center. In 1991, the independence process further strengthened domestic political autonomy. The presidential institution, parliamentary system, and local government bodies became the main pillars of independent state governance. Civil society and political parties also began to develop, though full openness required more time. Post-independence political reforms included diplomatic initiatives to strengthen national sovereignty. Uzbekistan soon joined the UN and other international organizations, establishing an independent foreign policy.

Economic Transformations and Transition to a Market Economy. During the years of independence, Uzbekistan experienced significant changes in its economic system. Initially, the country began transitioning from the planned Soviet economy to market mechanisms. The state policy, known as the “Uzbekistan model,” aimed at a gradual transition to a market economy, promoting stable economic growth, liberalizing the economy through legal institutions, and developing small and medium-sized enterprises.

Statistical data indicate that during the early years of independence, the Uzbek economy faced a challenging path. Between 1993 and 1995, nominal GDP fluctuated, and real growth rates were temporarily negative due to the transition from the Soviet system to market mechanisms. For example, in 1993, nominal GDP was \$6.9 billion (PPP \$46.6 billion), and in 1994, it rose to \$8.2 billion, yet real growth remained negative. Despite economic difficulties, the state maintained policies aimed at protecting social sectors, including education and healthcare. Institutional and economic stability was a key factor in ensuring sovereignty and improving citizens’ living standards.

National Identity and Symbolic Sovereignty. During independence, the development of national identity—rooted in historical heritage and national values—became an integral part of sovereign statehood. The Uzbek language was granted state language status, and education programs based on national culture and history were introduced. In 1992, the national emblem was adopted as a symbol of sovereignty, representing the independent state. Through national symbols, the state language, and cultural values, a distinctive awareness of state sovereignty was fostered in society, contributing to internal political stability.

Summary of the Main Findings. The early years of independence under Islom Karimov were vital for Uzbekistan, encompassing all key areas of establishing and consolidating sovereignty: legal institution building, political and economic reforms, strengthening national identity, and

ensuring international recognition. These measures enabled Uzbekistan to successfully transition from the Soviet system to an independent state, laying the foundation for future political and economic development.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this study, the early years of independence under Islom Karimov were crucial for establishing state sovereignty and building independent political and legal institutions. Following the declaration of independence on August 31, 1991, Uzbekistan adopted its Constitution, laying a strong foundation for a sovereign state. National identity, political institutions, and economic governance structures were developed, while the Constitution reinforced democratic principles, state symbols, and citizens' rights, positively influencing both domestic and foreign policy. Political reforms led by President Islom Karimov ensured domestic stability, a gradual transition to a market economy, and strengthened diplomatic relations, thereby enhancing Uzbekistan's international profile. At the same time, promoting national values, language, and culture reinforced sovereignty. In the early years, Uzbekistan defined its path as a sovereign state, creating the foundation for subsequent economic growth and political stability.

Overall, 1991–1995 represents a historically significant period during which Uzbekistan established independent governance, legal institutions, and strategic national development priorities, contributing to the country's progressive growth in subsequent years.

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