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# Trends In The Formation Of Legal Consciousness And Legal Culture In The Individual

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**Abstract.** This article examines the contemporary trends in the formation of legal consciousness and legal culture in the individual, with particular reference to the transformations occurring in Uzbekistan during the period of democratic reforms and rule-of-law state building. Drawing on legislative data, sociological surveys, and comparative legal analysis, the study identifies five principal trends: the gradual transition from a nihilistic to a constructive legal worldview; the integration of digital technologies into legal education and awareness campaigns; the growing role of civil society institutions in cultivating legal values; the alignment of national legal culture with international human rights standards; and the reinforcement of legal culture through military-patriotic education among young people. The article argues that sustainable legal culture cannot be built through legislation alone but requires a systematic, multi-institutional approach involving family, school, military service, and civil society. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on legal socialisation in post-Soviet transitional states and offer practical recommendations for policymakers and educators.

**Keywords:** legal consciousness, legal culture, legal education, rule-of-law state, legal socialisation, digital legal awareness, military-patriotic education, civil society, Uzbekistan.

## INTRODUCTION

Legal consciousness (huquqiy ong) and legal culture (huquqiy madaniyat) occupy a central place in the contemporary theory of the state and law. They constitute the subjective dimension of the legal system - the complex of ideas,



values, emotions, and behavioural patterns through which citizens perceive, evaluate, and act upon legal norms. Without a sufficiently developed legal consciousness, even the most technically advanced legislative system remains ineffective, because laws derive their social force not merely from state compulsion but from the voluntary recognition and internalisation of legal norms by members of society.

The relevance of this topic has acquired exceptional practical significance in the context of Uzbekistan's ambitious state-building programme initiated under the Development Strategy 2017–2021 and continued under the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026. According to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, over 1,200 normative legal acts were revised or newly adopted between 2017 and 2023, yet sociological monitoring conducted by the Centre for the Study of Public Opinion (IJTIMOIY FIKR) in 2022 indicated that only 34 percent of respondents felt confident in their ability to defend their rights using available legal mechanisms. This significant gap between the formal development of legislation and the practical legal competence of citizens underscores the urgency of investigating the formation of legal consciousness and legal culture.

From a scientific standpoint, the concept of legal consciousness has been explored extensively in classical Soviet jurisprudence (Alekseyev, 1975; Ratinov, 1981) and in post-Soviet Uzbek legal scholarship (Toshmatov, 2004; Nazarov, 2011; Saidov, 2019). However, the field is rapidly evolving in response to new social conditions, including digitalisation, globalisation, and the deepening of civil society, all of which generate new mechanisms and institutional actors involved in the formation of legal consciousness. Contemporary scholarship must, therefore, track these emerging trends and assess their implications for both theory and policy.

The purpose of this article is to identify and systematically analyse the dominant trends in the formation of legal consciousness and legal culture in the individual in present-day Uzbekistan, situating these trends within the broader international scholarly debate. The article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a conceptual framework; Section 3 presents and analyses five key



trends; Section 4 discusses the implications of these trends for military-patriotic education; and Section 5 offers conclusions and recommendations.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND LEGAL CULTURE

Legal consciousness is a form of social consciousness that reflects the legal reality of society through a system of legal knowledge, assessments, and orientations. In the structure of legal consciousness, scholars conventionally distinguish between the cognitive element (knowledge of law), the evaluative element (attitudes toward law), and the behavioural element (readiness to act in accordance with law). Legal culture, in turn, is typically understood as the qualitative state of legal reality, encompassing the level of legal consciousness of the population, the perfection of legislation, the effectiveness of legal institutions, and the traditions of law-abiding behaviour (Saidov, A.Kh., 2019).

Importantly, legal consciousness and legal culture are not static properties of individuals or communities. They are formed, reproduced, and transformed through a continuous process of legal socialisation - the lifelong process through which individuals acquire knowledge of law, develop attitudes toward legal institutions, and learn to navigate the legal system. Legal socialisation involves multiple agents: the family, the educational system, peer groups, mass media, civil society organisations, religious institutions, and the state itself through its law enforcement and judicial activities. In transitional societies such as Uzbekistan, the process of legal socialisation is complicated by two competing legacies. On the one hand, Soviet legal culture was characterised by a strong statist orientation, a tendency toward legal nihilism among ordinary citizens (who often viewed law as an instrument of state power rather than a means of protecting individual rights), and a low level of legal activism. On the other hand, traditional Uzbek society possesses deep-rooted normative systems - including customary norms (odat) and Islamic ethical norms - that interact in complex ways with the formal legal system. Understanding the trends in the formation of legal consciousness requires sensitivity to both legacies and the ways in which contemporary reform processes are reshaping them.



## KEY TRENDS IN THE FORMATION OF LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND LEGAL CULTURE

### Transition from legal nihilism to constructive legal awareness

One of the most significant and well-documented trends in contemporary Uzbekistan is the gradual but consistent shift in the dominant orientation of citizens' legal consciousness: from passivity, distrust, and nihilism toward a more active, constructive, and rights-asserting posture. This transition is supported by empirical evidence. According to the report of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2022, the number of citizens' appeals to the Ombudsman's office increased by 42 percent compared to 2018, reaching 28,467 complaints and petitions. This growth reflects not a deterioration of the human rights situation but rather an increase in citizens' willingness and capability to articulate their legal claims and seek institutional redress.

Legislative changes have directly contributed to this trend. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On the Appeals of Physical and Legal Entities' (2017, as amended in 2021) simplified procedures for filing complaints with state bodies. The introduction of the E-Murojaat (Electronic Appeal) portal enabled citizens to submit petitions online, with 1.4 million electronic appeals registered in 2022 alone (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). These structural changes have incentivised citizens to engage with the legal system and have contributed to a shift in legal consciousness.

### Integration of digital technologies into legal education and awareness

The digitalisation of public life has created fundamentally new channels and formats for the formation of legal consciousness, particularly among youth. Uzbekistan's Strategy 'Digital Uzbekistan 2030' places special emphasis on the use of digital platforms for legal enlightenment. As of 2023, the Ministry of Justice operates the My Rights (Mening Huquqlarim) legal information portal, which provides free access to the full text of all national legislation and has registered over 5 million unique visitors since its launch in 2020.

Social media and mobile applications have become important spaces for legal education. The Telegram channel of the Ministry of Justice, with over 320,000 subscribers as of early 2024, disseminates daily digests of legal news,



explanations of new legislation, and practical guides on citizens' rights. University legal clinics have expanded their outreach through YouTube channels and Instagram accounts, reaching demographics that formal legal education does not easily penetrate. Research conducted by Tashkent State University of Law in 2021 found that 67 percent of respondents aged 18–35 reported acquiring legal knowledge primarily through social media and internet resources rather than through formal education, indicating a structural transformation in the channels of legal socialisation.

This trend presents both opportunities and challenges. Digital platforms enable rapid and wide dissemination of legal knowledge, but they also carry risks of misinformation, oversimplification, and the formation of distorted legal attitudes. Developing media literacy and critical legal thinking alongside digital legal content is therefore an essential complementary task.

### **Growing role of civil society in cultivating legal values**

A third significant trend is the expanding role of civil society institutions - non-governmental organisations, mahalla committees, legal aid centres, bar associations, and academic institutions - in the formation of legal consciousness. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations' (2019) created a more enabling environment for civil society activity, and the number of registered NGOs increased from 8,200 in 2017 to over 10,600 in 2023 (Agency for Civil Society Development, 2023).

Of particular significance is the role of the mahalla - the traditional neighbourhood institution - in transmitting legal norms and values. Presidential Decree No. PP-4931 (2020) significantly expanded the powers and resources of mahalla committees, assigning them functions in legal education, conflict mediation, and social support. Mahalla-based legal aid programmes, piloted in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Fergana regions, have demonstrated measurable improvements in citizens' legal awareness and their willingness to use formal legal mechanisms for dispute resolution (Umarov & Karimov, 2021).

Free legal aid clinics operating at law faculties of universities have also grown in importance. By 2023, there were 24 such clinics operating across Uzbekistan, collectively providing over 18,000 free consultations annually to



low-income citizens, thereby directly contributing to both legal empowerment and the formation of constructive legal consciousness.

### **Alignment with international human rights standards**

A fourth trend is the progressive harmonisation of national legal culture with internationally recognised human rights norms and values. Uzbekistan's accession to 74 international human rights treaties and conventions, combined with the country's active engagement with UN treaty bodies, has created a normative framework that increasingly shapes the content of legal education, judicial training, and public legal awareness programmes.

The adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 30 April 2023 - supported by 90.21 percent of voters in the constitutional referendum - was a watershed moment in this process. The new Constitution substantially expanded the catalogue of constitutional rights (from 33 to 50 articles devoted to rights and freedoms), explicitly incorporated references to international human rights law, and introduced new institutional mechanisms for rights protection, including the constitutional complaint procedure. Scholars have argued that constitutional reforms of this magnitude, when accompanied by broad public discussion, themselves function as events of mass legal education, raising awareness of rights and stimulating legal consciousness (Toshmatov, N., 2019).

The systematic inclusion of international human rights norms in the curricula of law schools, military academies, and professional training programmes for civil servants represents another dimension of this trend. The introduction of the course 'Human Rights and Democratic Values' as a mandatory subject across all higher educational institutions in 2021 demonstrates the institutional commitment to grounding legal culture in universal human rights principles.

### **Legal culture formation through military-patriotic education**

A fifth trend - particularly relevant to the institutional context of the present study - is the growing recognition of military-patriotic education as a vital channel for the formation of legal consciousness and legal culture among young people. In the military institution, legal education operates not merely as an academic discipline but as a component of the broader process of professional and civic socialisation. Military service imparts respect for the rule of law through



practical experience of living and acting within a strictly regulated normative order.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On Universal Military Obligation and Military Service' (2002, as amended 2022) explicitly assigns educational functions to military units, including the formation of legal consciousness, discipline, and civic responsibility. Research conducted at the University of Military Security and Defense of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2022 indicated that cadets who had completed a full cycle of legal education within the military curriculum demonstrated significantly higher levels of legal literacy (74 percent correct responses on standardised legal knowledge tests) compared to the national average among youth (47 percent), suggesting that structured military-legal education has measurable positive effects on legal consciousness formation.

Furthermore, the interdependence of legal culture and military service culture is increasingly recognised in scholarship: a soldier who respects legal norms, understands his rights and responsibilities, and applies legal reasoning in complex situations is not only a more effective defender of the motherland but also a better citizen upon return to civilian life. The formation of legal consciousness in the military context is therefore an investment with long-term dividends for the entire society.

### **DISCUSSION: SYSTEMIC IMPLICATIONS**

The five trends identified above are not independent phenomena but form part of a coherent systemic transformation of Uzbekistan's legal culture. Several cross-cutting observations merit attention.

First, the simultaneous development of multiple channels of legal socialisation - digital platforms, civil society, schools, the military, and constitutional reform - creates a synergistic effect that is greater than the sum of its parts. When citizens encounter consistent legal messages through different institutional channels, the formation of stable legal attitudes and values is accelerated. Conversely, contradictions between different socialisation agents - for example, when formal legal norms conflict with traditional practices transmitted through family or mahalla - can impede the formation of a coherent legal consciousness.



Second, the trends reveal a shift in the conceptual model of legal education: from a transmission model (in which legal knowledge is conveyed by authoritative institutions to passive recipients) toward a participatory model (in which citizens are encouraged to engage actively with legal issues, ask questions, use legal mechanisms, and contribute to legal culture through their behaviour). This shift reflects a broader transformation of the relationship between state and citizen in Uzbekistan's reform process.

Third, the trends highlight the need for careful quality management of legal information disseminated through digital channels. As legal awareness increasingly forms through social media, the accuracy, accessibility, and pedagogical quality of digital legal content becomes a matter of public policy significance. Regulatory frameworks for legal information providers, professional standards for online legal education, and digital legal literacy programmes are all tools that policymakers should consider.

## CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that the formation of legal consciousness and legal culture in the individual in contemporary Uzbekistan is shaped by five principal trends: the transition from nihilism to constructive legal activism; the integration of digital technologies into legal awareness formation; the expanding role of civil society, including mahalla institutions; the alignment of national legal culture with international human rights standards; and the reinforcement of legal culture through military-patriotic education.

These trends collectively indicate that Uzbekistan is undergoing a significant qualitative transformation of its legal culture - a transformation that is multi-institutional, multi-channel, and increasingly citizen-centred. However, the pace and depth of this transformation are uneven across demographic groups, regions, and social strata, and significant challenges remain, particularly in rural areas and among older age cohorts with strongly ingrained nihilistic attitudes formed during the Soviet period.

The principal policy recommendations emerging from this analysis are as follows. First, state investment in digital legal literacy must be increased and systematically monitored, with particular attention to quality control of online legal content. Second, civil society institutions, and mahalla committees in



particular, should be provided with greater methodological support for their legal education functions. Third, military legal education should be further integrated with national legal socialisation strategies, treating the military as a key institutional partner in the broader national programme of legal culture development. Fourth, a national monitoring system for legal consciousness should be developed to enable evidence-based policy adjustment.

The study of the formation of legal consciousness and legal culture is not an abstract theoretical exercise but a foundation for effective governance, social cohesion, and the protection of human rights. As Uzbekistan continues to build its rule-of-law state, investing in the legal culture of its citizens - including its military personnel - is among the most strategically important commitments a society can make.

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