

Jadidism and Political Reform: Shaping the Future of Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

Jadidism, a reformist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, played a pivotal role in the political and cultural awakening of Central Asia. Advocating for modern education, press, and governance reforms, the Jadids sought to reshape outdated socio-political structures. Their legacy remains relevant in “New Uzbekistan”, where their ideas align with contemporary efforts to foster national identity, democratic governance, and the “Third Renaissance”. Despite political persecution under Russian and Soviet rule, their intellectual contributions continue to inspire reforms in education, civic responsibility, and ideological renewal, reinforcing the importance of enlightenment in nation-building and political transformation.

Keywords: Development; Society; Political reforms; Jadidism; National identity; Progress; Justice; Third renaissance; Political system.

1. Introduction

Jadidism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries across Central Asia, Crimea, the Caucasus, and the Volga region as a reformist movement advocating for modern education, press, and progressive methods of development. It played a crucial role in the spiritual, national-cultural, and political awakening of the Turkestan peoples. The supporters of Jadidism sought to transform outdated economic, social, and political structures by introducing new approaches. Rooted in both universal and national values, the movement shaped a new ideological sphere within society, reflecting the path of progress and the interests of the people.

Key figures such as Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdulla Avloni, Munavvar Qori, Cho'lpon, Abdulla Qodiriy, Is'hoqxon Ibrat, and So'fizoda preserved and sought to develop the traditions of Eastern philosophy, even during the Soviet era. However, the political climate of the time led to their persecution, as they became victims of the communist ideology that sought to suppress alternative intellectual and nationalist movements.

2. Methodology

This article employs a historical-political analysis to examine the impact of Jadidism on political transformation and nation-building in Central Asia. A qualitative research approach is used to analyze primary sources, including the works and speeches of key Jadid figures, alongside secondary literature on political reforms. Comparative analysis is applied to assess the continuity between Jadidism and modern political reforms in New Uzbekistan. The study also integrates ideological discourse analysis to explore how Jadidism influenced governance, education, and national identity. By synthesizing historical insights with contemporary political developments, this methodology ensures a comprehensive evaluation of Jadidism's lasting political significance.

3. Discussion

As advocates of progress and reform, the Jadids not only upheld national values but also recognized universal human values. They emerged as an innovative movement that sought to meet the essential needs of social development while aligning with the interests of the region's population.

Jadidism underwent a complex evolutionary process, transitioning from an emphasis on educational enlightenment to a more political ideology. Its history can be divided into two key stages: the first focused on educational and cultural reform, while the second was marked by political engagement. Through these phases, the Jadids played a significant role in shaping national statehood and contributing to the development of political thought in the region [1]. The transformations and innovations within the Jadids' ideology naturally instilled a sense of confidence and hope in the younger generation of that era. Understanding that progress depended on scientific and intellectual advancement, the Jadids fearlessly pursued reforms, emphasizing the crucial role of knowledge and enlightenment in societal development.

Politically, this movement sought to liberate minds from dogmatic constraints, advocating for intellectual freedom and modernization. The Jadids called on the people of Turkestan to embrace both religious and secular sciences, as well as the achievements of modern scientific progress. Their vision extended beyond cultural and educational reform; it was deeply tied to political awakening and the aspiration for national self-determination, making them a significant force in shaping the region's socio-political landscape. Perhaps this is why the Jadid movement, despite the passage of time, has not lost its philosophical essence or relevance. On the contrary, over the years, its innovative ideas have continued to inspire Uzbekistan's socio-political development, aligning with the ideals of humanism, progress, justice, education, and the construction of the "Third Renaissance".

Indeed, the aspiration for Uzbekistan to take its rightful place among the world's most developed nations and for its people to stand among the most advanced societies is fundamentally rooted in the ideals of Jadidism. It is worth emphasizing that these constructive ideas resonate strongly with the vision of building the "Third Renaissance" in "New Uzbekistan".

To implement this vision, national intellectuals have historically prioritized modern education, raising an enlightened generation aware of global political and social dynamics. This approach aligns seamlessly with today's reform agenda, demonstrating continuity between past aspirations and present transformations.

Pioneering figures such as Abdulla Avloni, Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, Munavvar Qori, Ubaydulla Khojayev, Fayzulla Khojayev, Akmal Ikromov, Abdurauf Fitrat, Is'hoqxon Ibrat, Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, Abdulla Qodiriy, Usmon Nosir, Ashurali Zohiriy, Hoji Muin, and hundreds of other great reformers made invaluable contributions to the national awakening movement. Their efforts not only shaped Uzbekistan's intellectual and political identity but also laid the foundation for its modern trajectory towards justice, knowledge, and progress.

Alongside establishing modern-method schools, the Jadids launched newspapers, journals, publishing houses, libraries, and theaters aimed at transforming public consciousness and lifestyle. They prioritized human capital development by sending young scholars to study in advanced countries, ensuring the formation of a well-educated and competent leadership class. Additionally, they initiated ideological and practical efforts to reform state governance, judicial and legal systems, finance, taxation, and land policies. In essence, the Jadids mobilized all their resources and efforts to modernize the ideological sphere of society, reshape the national worldview, and achieve national progress through their innovative reform agenda. However, due to the prevailing political system and circumstances of their time, they were unable to fully realize their noble objectives.

The oppressive policies and political persecution of that era led first to their suppression under the Russian Empire and later to their tragic fate under Soviet rule. Victims of political repression and false accusations, they sacrificed their lives in pursuit of national liberation and the prosperity of their people. Despite this, their intellectual, educational, and ideological legacy continues to serve as a foundational pillar in today's era of progress. Their aspirations for justice, enlightenment, and national self-determination remain deeply relevant in the political and socio-economic transformation of "New Uzbekistan".

One of the prominent political figures of the 20th century, **Mahmudkhoja Behbudi (1875-1919)**, emphasized the necessity of promoting science and education to rescue the country from decline and liberate the people from ideological stagnation. He believed that the advancement of a nation and the ideological sphere of society required systematic reform and modernization.

According to Behbudi: "For every era, the means of reform and progress are essential. To serve the nation, one must reform schools and educators, prepare children for Russian-style schools, and develop farmers and craftsmen. For this, charitable societies, educational institutions, reading rooms, funds, cooperatives, newspapers, journals, and publishing houses are necessary" [2]. His vision highlights the crucial role of education, press, and institutional reforms in nation-building. Behbudi's ideas were deeply political, as they aimed at strengthening national consciousness, resisting colonial domination, and fostering a self-sufficient, enlightened society. His advocacy for modern educational and ideological institutions positioned him as a leading intellectual force in the Jadid movement, directly influencing the political and social transformations of his time.

Abdulla Avloni (1878-1934) emphasized the necessity of elevating society's ideological sphere through education and moral upbringing. He believed that education was a crucial tool in shaping young people's knowledge, ethical virtues, and creative abilities.

In particular, he highlighted the importance of intellectual development, stating: "*The cultivation of thought is one of the most essential and long-cherished duties, entrusted to teachers' attention and placed upon their conscience as a sacred responsibility. Thought is what makes a person honorable and diligent*" [3].

Avloni's perspective underscores the political significance of education as a means of national awakening and social reform. By advocating for intellectual and moral development, he positioned education as a foundation for strengthening national identity, civic responsibility, and progressive governance. His ideas were deeply intertwined with the broader reformist agenda of the **Jadid movement**, which sought to modernize society and challenge outdated social and political structures.

In today's world, **Abdulla Avloni's** vision of elevating the ideological sphere of society through education and fostering a morally and ethically strong generation remains just as relevant. His belief that national and moral upbringing is a crucial factor in societal progress continues to hold great significance in shaping a modern, enlightened, and just political system.

One of the **theoretical founders of the Jadid movement**, **Abdurauf Fitrat (1886–1938)**, put forward progressive ideas that extended beyond his era and remain a source of inspiration today. His remarkable **political engagement**

and civic courage serve as a historical and intellectual model for contemporary political thought and reformist efforts.

Fitrat devoted his life to advocating for **the liberation and independence of Turkestan** through knowledge and enlightenment. His leadership in developing the “*Reform and Bukhara*” program stands as evidence of his commitment to national self-determination. His ideas, which challenged outdated political structures and promoted self-rule, were not only a product of his time but also offer valuable lessons for today’s political and social reforms in *New Uzbekistan*. His vision aligns with modern aspirations for **a sovereign, progressive, and educated society**, making his legacy a guiding force in shaping the country’s future.

He pursued the path of transforming society’s mindset, emphasizing the necessity of spreading knowledge among the people and reforming schools and higher education institutions. He underscored the importance of continuous progress, stating:

“It is evident that from the very beginning of humanity until today, mankind has advanced and will continue to advance. As long as humans have a purpose in life, and since the Wise Creator has shown them a lofty rank and an elevated destination, mankind will strive towards it and achieve progress” [4].

These words reflect a deep political and philosophical understanding of societal development. By advocating for **educational reform and intellectual enlightenment**, he positioned knowledge as the primary driver of national progress. His vision extended beyond education, touching upon the very **ideological foundation of governance and state-building**. His belief in the **continuous advancement of humanity** aligns with modern political aspirations, where **education and intellectual growth remain key pillars of national development and democratic governance**. His ideas continue to resonate in today’s political landscape, reinforcing the notion that a nation’s progress is inseparable from its commitment to **education, reform, and innovation**.

Cholpon (1897–1938) left an indelible mark on the **national awakening movement**, emphasizing the **incomparable power of literature** in fostering **freedom of thought** and elevating the **national consciousness** in Turkestan. He firmly believed that literature was not merely an artistic expression but a **political instrument** capable of shaping public opinion, challenging oppressive regimes, and inspiring the struggle for national self-determination.

His works reflected the aspirations of a people striving for **political sovereignty and intellectual freedom**, making him a key figure in the broader **political and cultural resistance against colonial rule**. By advocating for the **liberation of minds through literature**, he aligned himself with the **Jadid movement’s reformist vision**, where education, enlightenment, and national identity were central to political and social progress.

Despite his execution during the Stalinist purges, Cholpon’s **ideological legacy** continues to influence modern political discourse in *New Uzbekistan*, reaffirming that **cultural and intellectual revival is inseparable from national sovereignty and democratic progress**.

For this reason, **Cholpon** declared: *“If literature thrives, the nation will thrive. A nation that does not preserve its literature, does not strive for its literary progress, and fails to cultivate writers will, in the end, be deprived of*

emotion, thought, and intellect – gradually falling into decline. This is undeniable. A nation that denies this fact is already in decline” [5].

These words highlight **the profound political role of literature** in shaping national consciousness, preserving identity, and resisting oppression. **Cho‘lpon saw literature not just as an artistic endeavor but as a crucial pillar of national survival and progress.** His statement serves as a warning against intellectual stagnation and cultural erosion, emphasizing that without literary and intellectual development, a nation risks losing its independence and sovereignty.

In the context of modern **political thought**, Cholpon’s vision underscores the need for **freedom of expression, cultural preservation, and intellectual advancement** as fundamental elements of **state-building and democratic governance.** His ideas remain highly relevant in *New Uzbekistan*, where **national revival, educational reform, and ideological renewal are central to political and social transformation.**

In summary, **Cholpon** sought to elevate the **ideological sphere of society** by analyzing the means of intellectual and cultural progress. He actively worked to **enhance literary, social, and political awareness**, promoting these ideas throughout society. His commitment to **literature as a tool for national awakening** positioned him as not only a literary figure but also a **political thinker** advocating for the **intellectual liberation of the nation.**

4. Results

Similarly, **Munavvarqori Abdurashidxonov (1878-1931)** emphasized the importance of **education and upbringing** in shaping the ideological foundations of society. He firmly believed that **education was the key to national identity, independent thought, and the development of a strong national consciousness.**

His perspective underscores **the political significance of education** in fostering **self-determination, civic awareness, and resistance to colonial domination.** In today’s context, these ideas remain highly relevant, as education continues to play a **critical role in shaping the political and intellectual future of New Uzbekistan.** The vision of figures like Cholpon and Munavvarqori serves as a **guiding principle for modern reforms**, where **nation-building efforts are deeply tied to the advancement of knowledge, culture, and independent political thought.**

“A well-educated child respects and honors elders. They treat their peers with kindness and fairness. They show compassion and generosity to those younger than themselves. They recognize the worth of every person. They strive to gain the approval of others and help those in need to the best of their ability” [6].

This statement reflects a profound **political philosophy**, where moral upbringing and education are not only personal virtues but also essential elements in **building a just and progressive society.** The thinker **recognized the crucial role of knowledge and enlightenment in societal development**, emphasizing that the people of **Turkestan must embrace scientific achievements to advance their intellectual and political landscape.**

By advocating for **education and ethical responsibility**, this perspective aligns with the broader **political goal of nation-building**, where a **well-educated, morally upright, and socially engaged citizenry** serves as the foundation for national progress and governance. In *New Uzbekistan*, these ideas remain highly relevant, as the

government prioritizes **educational reforms, civic responsibility, and ideological renewal** to foster a politically aware and forward-thinking society.

The ideas and reforms put forward by **Fayzulla Khojayev (1896-1938), a prominent statesman and public figure**, continue to play a crucial role in shaping the ideological and political consciousness of modern Uzbekistan. His efforts contributed to **preserving the legacy of great scholars, saints, outstanding statesmen, and undefeated military leaders**, ensuring that their bravery and achievements are passed down to future generations. His work also strengthened **patriotism, national pride, and a sense of honor among the youth**, reinforcing the foundations of national identity.

In **1913, Khojayev joined the Jadid movement**, recognizing that true democratic change in Bukhara was impossible without transforming the **ideological and intellectual landscape of society**. He devoted his energy to **spreading knowledge, education, and culture among the people**, understanding that an **informed and enlightened society was essential for political progress and governance reform**.

One of his significant contributions was the development of a **five-year plan**, outlining the necessary reforms in the **public education system**. This initiative was aimed at modernizing **national education, improving literacy, and fostering civic awareness**, demonstrating his commitment to **nation-building through enlightenment and political transformation**.

Khojayev's legacy continues to influence **modern political thought and reform in New Uzbekistan**, where **education, national pride, and ideological renewal remain at the forefront of state policies**. His vision serves as a **historical blueprint for progressive governance**, aligning with contemporary efforts to create an **educated, independent, and forward-thinking nation** [7].

From the above, it is clear that the ideas of **great enlightenment thinkers** regarding the **renewal of the ideological sphere of society and the systematic organization of ideological activity** were of utmost importance to our nation in the early 20th century. Today, these ideas remain just as, if not more, relevant to our **political and social transformation**.

5. Conclusion

The arguments presented above demonstrate that the **life path and intellectual heritage of the Jadids are shaping the spiritual and ideological environment for the progress of New Uzbekistan**. As **Professor Ismoil Saifnazarov** has said, *“The practical efforts aimed at building New Uzbekistan align with and complement the fundamental ideas and objectives of the Jadid movement. Therefore, we must deeply study our history, particularly the legacy of our enlightened ancestors, and derive meaningful lessons applicable to our rapidly changing world”* [8].

Thus, by educating and nurturing young people on the **basis of knowledge and enlightenment**, we can contribute to **positioning our country among the most developed nations**. This approach will also help to **strengthen belief and confidence in our national ideology**, laying the foundation for **innovative mechanisms that drive political and social progress**. However, it is essential to remember that while we must **honor and learn from our past**, we

must not lose sight of the future. Progress requires not only preserving historical heritage but also **actively shaping the political, economic, and intellectual landscape of tomorrow.**

Declarations

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Consent for publication

The author declares that he consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

Author's independent contribution.

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