

Scottish International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation – SICMRI 2026

IDEOLOGICAL RISKS AND THE ISSUE OF PRESERVING NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract: This scientific article deeply analyzes the theoretical foundations of the concept of ideological threat, its formation factors, spread mechanisms and impact on social consciousness. In addition, the article comprehensively covers the impact of ideological threats on the national character, that is, the changes taking place in the people's value system, mentality, social memory and historical consciousness.

Keywords: Ideology, ideological threat, national idea, national character, ideological security, ideological struggle, social consciousness, spiritual immunity, cultural expansion, information attacks, youth education, national values, historical consciousness, national identity, social stability, mentality, ideological policy, New Uzbekistan, spiritual and educational reforms, ideological stability.

It should be emphasized that from the very beginning of the twenty-first century, ideological and conceptual struggles in the world intensified significantly. On the one hand, considerable attention was devoted to developing the theoretical foundations and practical dimensions of our national ideology; on the other hand, a number of states that were unable to accept our national development began to intensify ideological struggles against us. In other words, ideological threats escalated. The primary reason for this lay in the major political objectives of certain powerful states, such as redividing the world and pursuing their own interests at the expense of other nations. The most effective means chosen to achieve such objectives was the use of ideological threats.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to address the questions "What is ideology?" and "What is a threat?" According to The Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, ideology is defined as a system of thought, reflection, beliefs, and convictions. It is also recognized as the totality of specific political, legal, moral, religious, artistic, philosophical, and scientific views, ideas, and concepts existing within a society. It should not be forgotten that a society without ideology cannot exist. Within a society's spiritual life, various ideologies may coexist. However, forcibly imposing the ideology of one society, social group, or nation upon another society, social group, or nation is extremely difficult to accomplish.

Such actions contradict the principles of democracy and freedom, as well as the sovereignty of nations. Nevertheless, communist ideology – that is, the ideology of the proletariat – followed precisely such a path. Recognizing only its own worldview as ideology, it rejected the legitimacy of all others. The Soviet state, which was based on communist ideology and aggressively promoted it through various means, was totalitarian in nature and founded on coercion, serving exclusively the interests of the dominant nation. The Soviet authoritarian system did not recognize the national ideology of any nation living within the former USSR and pursued a policy aimed, as far as possible, at eliminating existing national ideologies.

History demonstrates that ideologies have played a crucial role in determining the destinies of nations and states. Therefore, even today, any state or organization that prioritizes its own interests over those of others clearly understands that its objectives can be achieved only through ideological struggle. Another important point is that ideological processes are often carried out on the basis of threats. What, then, is a threat? Once again, we may refer to The Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, according to which a threat denotes intimidation, coercion, warning, menacing behavior, or actions intended to instill fear.

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Ideological threats are destructive in nature. For this reason, ideological threats may also be understood as destructive ideologies. It is well known that ideological threats, or destructive ideologies, are forms of ideology that lead to the disruption of social, political, economic, and spiritual relations which are objectively necessary for societal development under specific historical conditions. Regardless of where and how such ideologies emerge, the nature of their activities, or other distinguishing features, certain common patterns can be observed among them. The rejection of universally accepted laws, moral norms, cultural and spiritual values; attempts to impose one's own worldview and political will upon the rest of society; and the use of terrorism, as well as spiritual, informational violence, and manipulative practices, are considered among the key characteristics of ideological threats. In this regard, the study of destructive ideologies as a complex phenomenon that embodies shared conditions, patterns, supporters, and methods of influencing social institutions has become an urgent scholarly task.

There are numerous dimensions to combating ideological threats. In our view, for any nation or state to be resilient against ideological threats, it is first and foremost necessary that a stable socio-spiritual environment be established within that society. At the same time, a high level of national self-awareness among citizens, along with the presence of firm beliefs and convictions, plays a particularly important role in preventing various ideological threats. In this context, national character occupies a significant place as a key factor in countering ideological threats. Indeed, national character constitutes an essential marker of a nation's existence. Research indicates that every people possesses numerous qualities that are common to all citizens residing within that society. However, this does not negate the fact that individuals within a given nation may differ from one another in terms of personal character traits.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above quotation is that national morality constitutes the foundation of national character. The higher the level of a people's national morality, the more it naturally stimulates the formation and strengthening of national character. If national character is grounded in national morality, there is little reason to fear either external or internal threats. In today's context, the rapid pace of global development, the intensification of efforts aimed at instilling various ideological threats into public consciousness, and the widespread expansion of social networks undoubtedly contribute to the growing influence of ideological threats. Nevertheless, ongoing efforts to preserve the strongest aspects of our national character and enrich them with new content are already yielding tangible results to a certain extent.

It is well known that human character does not develop spontaneously. For this to occur, individuals must possess clearly defined life goals. During periods of dependence, people lack the opportunity to think independently, to set autonomous objectives, or to act freely in pursuit of those objectives. This is because such actions are controlled by "higher authorities," and all forms of activity are subject to strict supervision. An individual's ability to utilize inner potential and to achieve self-realization can occur only within a society where freedom is ensured.

The development of the capacity to resist ideological threats largely depends on the extent to which individuals particularly young people align their independently set goals with the strategic objectives defined by society. It must be emphasized that purpose constitutes the foundation of all conscious human activity. Moreover, a goal represents a carefully planned, thoroughly analyzed, and well-considered blueprint of an individual's practical actions. Goals themselves may differ in nature: some are constructive and benevolent, while others are directed against goodness and even against humanity as a whole. Whom or what these goals serve ultimately depends on the moral and spiritual maturity of the individual. The higher a person's level of spirituality, the more humane and benevolent the content of their goals becomes.

The existence of ideological threats, as well as the degree of their influence whether strong or weak is also closely linked to the living standards of a country's citizens, the state of everyday socio-economic problems, and, more broadly, the effectiveness with which economic and social issues are addressed within society. For instance, the prevalence of socio-economic problems, the extent to which state policies aimed at resolving them correspond to citizens' interests, or, in

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other words, the level of public satisfaction with living standards, plays a crucial role in preventing ideological threats. Under such conditions, the level of public satisfaction with state policy increases, social anxiety diminishes, and the fulfillment of material and spiritual needs enables individuals to analyze surrounding events and phenomena and to draw sound conclusions. In preventing ideological threats, the harmony between national values and national character deserves particular attention. Indeed, as national values become more firmly entrenched, such traits as determination, integrity, and fidelity to one's word within the national character continue to strengthen. All of these factors are ultimately reflected in the formation of the individual and in the consolidation of their role within society.

The underlying reason is that the harmony between Uzbek national values and Uzbek national character enables the people to protect themselves from various unfounded or harmful ideas. In other words, this harmony serves as a safeguard against ideological threats and allows for the preservation of national self-awareness and the dignified bearing of the sacred name "Uzbek." In this sense, placing special emphasis on educating citizens – particularly young people – within the framework of the harmony between national values and national character should occupy a central place in today's system of spiritual and moral education.

We believe that in safeguarding the people from ideological threats and protecting them from various forms of ideological influence, particular attention must be paid to social activism, which plays an exceptionally important role in the formation of the Uzbek national character. Indeed, where collectivism, mutual cooperation, and solidarity among people are strong – key traits of the Uzbek national character – the capacity to neutralize ideological threats is significantly enhanced. Conversely, where levels of cooperation are low, alienation from social life is pronounced, and individualistic modes of thinking dominate, conditions become favorable for the emergence and spread of ideological threats.

Therefore, in combating ideological threats, a crucial aspect of national character – mutual engagement, or in other words, an active civic position among citizens – is of vital importance. An active individual is not merely one who works tirelessly in pursuit of personal interests, but rather one who is able to harmonize personal goals and aspirations with the interests of society and the state.

In individuals possessing an active civic position, the formation of national character occurs in a systematic manner. One of the key manifestations of such individuals is their ability to respond objectively to events and developments taking place both nationally and globally, and to form reasoned attitudes toward them. Today, social networks and the Internet increasingly draw everyone into their sphere, inundating users with vast amounts of information and content. The dissemination of "fake," that is, false information; the manipulation of people into imaginary or illusory modes of thinking; and the exploitation of individuals' inability to regulate themselves within the boundless virtual space in order to achieve various political and ideological objectives have become deeply concerning phenomena for healthy public consciousness.

In essence, an active civic position implies the ability to resist any ideological threat and to be fully aware of the true aims and intentions underlying such threats. This position serves as an important means of protecting society from spiritual and ideological challenges in today's information space and, at the same time, plays a crucial role in the formation of national character. An active civic position requires determination on the part of the individual. Determination is one of the most significant components of personal character; it encompasses the ability to objectively assess profound changes occurring across various spheres of social life, to refrain from relying on superficial, scientifically unsubstantiated, or experientially untested conclusions, and to defend one's views under any circumstances.

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