

Prospects for Forming A New Model of Cooperation Between the State and Civil Society in The Security Sphere

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Abstract

This article examines the prospects for forming a new model of cooperation between the state and civil society in the security sphere in the context of contemporary Uzbekistan. The study rests on the premise that the categories of state security, national security, and societal security, although frequently conflated in administrative and public discourse, designate distinct referent objects and therefore presuppose different configurations of the relationship between governmental institutions and civil society. The article delineates these categories, establishes their interrelation, and considers how the normative framework consolidated under the New Uzbekistan reforms reconfigures the participation of civil society institutions in the provision of security. The renewed Constitution, the Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy, the successive concepts of civil society development, and the legislation governing non-governmental non-commercial organizations are read as elements of a single institutional design. It is argued that the emerging model marks a transition from a state-centric understanding of security, in which civil society figures predominantly as an object of protection, toward a co-productive arrangement in which civil society institutions operate as partners in the identification of threats, the prevention of social risks, and the maintenance of public order. The analysis specifies the institutional preconditions of this transition, examines its functional domains, and assesses the constraints that bear upon its consolidation, treating these constraints as tasks of institutional maturation rather than as structural impediments.

Keywords: State security, national security, societal security, civil society institutions, social partnership, public control, mahalla, Uzbekistan.

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1. Introduction

The relationship between the state and civil society in the provision of security constitutes one of the more demanding problems in contemporary political science, because it touches simultaneously upon the theory of security, the theory of the state, and the theory of associational life. The difficulty is compounded in contexts of institutional transformation, where the

division of labor between governmental and non-governmental actors remains in formation and where the vocabulary of security itself carries the sediment of an earlier, state-centric order. Uzbekistan offers an instructive case in this respect. Over the past decade the country has undertaken a sustained program of institutional modernization that has altered both the normative status of civil society and the conceptual content of security policy. The convergence of these two

trajectories raises the question of whether a qualitatively new model of state and civil society cooperation in the security sphere is taking shape, and, if so, what its scope and limits are.

The salience of this question derives from a structural feature of the security domain. Security has historically been treated as the paradigmatic prerogative of the state, the sphere least amenable to the participation of non-state actors. Where economic, cultural, or educational policy could readily accommodate the involvement of associations and citizens, the protection of constitutional order and territorial integrity appeared to belong exclusively to specialized governmental bodies. This intuition is sound with respect to certain dimensions of security and misleading with respect to others. The error lies in treating security as a single, undifferentiated category. Once the concept is disaggregated, it becomes apparent that its several dimensions admit very different degrees and forms of civic participation, ranging from oversight at one pole to genuine co-production at the other.

2. Methods

The conceptual confusion that obstructs analysis is not merely terminological. State security, national security, and societal security denote distinct referent objects, and the conflation of these objects has practical consequences. When the logic appropriate to the protection of the state is extended to social problems that would be better addressed through the cohesion and self-organization of society, the space available for civic participation contracts, and the resources resident in civil society are left underused. Conversely, a precise delimitation of the categories reveals where the state must retain primacy, where it can share responsibility, and where it can rely upon civil society as the principal agent. The first task of this article is therefore conceptual, and the analysis of the Uzbek case proceeds from it.

The Uzbek reforms supply the empirical material for that analysis. The renewed Constitution adopted in 2023 for the first time devoted a separate chapter to the institutions of civil society and defined their composition in the fundamental law. The Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy, approved by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, established the expansion of civil society activity as one of its hundred goals and set the objective of positioning the country as a regional center of civil society development. A succession of conceptual documents, beginning with the Concept of Civil Society

Development for 2021 to 2025 and continuing with the strategy for the development of civil society now under preparation, has progressively codified the forms and mechanisms of state support. In parallel, the legislative base governing the security domain has been substantially renewed, with new laws on countering extremism, on cybersecurity, on emergency situations, and on security activity. The simultaneity of these two legislative movements is precisely what makes the question of a new cooperative model timely.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the prospects for forming such a model on the basis of the normative framework of contemporary Uzbekistan, to establish the conceptual relations among the categories of security that the model must respect, and to identify the functional domains in which civil society participation in security is most developed and most appropriate. The study further seeks to assess the constraints upon the consolidation of the model, understood not as evidence of its failure but as the ordinary tasks that attend the maturation of any new institutional arrangement. The argument is developed in the following sequence. The conceptual delimitation of the three categories of security and their interrelation is established first, since it furnishes the analytical framework for everything that follows. The normative and institutional foundation of civil society participation is then reconstructed. The logic of the emerging model is set out as a movement from the protection of society toward partnership with it. The functional domains of cooperation are examined in turn, the mechanisms that mediate the interaction are described, and the constraints upon consolidation are assessed before the prospects are summarized.

3. Results

The analysis must begin with a distinction that administrative and journalistic usage tends to efface. State security, in the strict sense, designates the protection of the state as an institutional order: the inviolability of the constitutional structure, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, and the continuity of the institutions through which public authority is exercised. Its referent object is the state itself, and the instruments appropriate to it, intelligence, counterintelligence, border protection, and the defense of constitutional order, are concentrated in specialized governmental bodies whose functions cannot be delegated to non-state actors without compromising the very order they protect. In this domain the role available to civil society is not co-production but oversight, the

external scrutiny of the legality and proportionality of state action.

National security is the widest of the three categories and stands in a relation of inclusion to the other two. Its referent object is the nation conceived as the totality of the state, society, and the individual, and its content extends well beyond the protection of governmental institutions to encompass the economic, informational, ecological, demographic, and humanitarian conditions of national life. National security is organized around the concept of national interests, and because those interests are realized in every sphere of social life, their protection necessarily engages a corresponding breadth of actors. It is within national security, understood in this comprehensive sense, that the participation of civil society becomes not merely admissible but structurally necessary, since the state acting alone cannot secure conditions that depend upon the conduct and cohesion of the population.

Societal security occupies the mediating position between the two. The term carries two related meanings that should not be merged. In one sense, associated with the theoretical tradition that distinguishes the security of the state from the security of society, societal security concerns the preservation of the collective identity, values, and cohesion of a community against developments that would erode them. In another sense, prevalent in administrative and legal usage and predominant in the Uzbek normative context, public security designates the safety of the population in everyday life: public order, the prevention of offenses, and the protection of people and territories from emergencies. The two senses are connected, because a cohesive society with a shared normative framework is also a society in which public order is more readily maintained, but they are analytically distinct. The mediating character of this category is decisive for the argument. Public and societal security is the domain in which the daily lived security of citizens is produced, and it is produced not by the state alone but in the interaction between state institutions and the self-organizing capacities of society.

The interrelation of the three categories can now be stated precisely. State security is the narrowest and most institutionally concentrated; national security is the widest and integrative; public and societal security mediates between them. The degree and form of civic participation vary correspondingly. Civil society cannot substitute for the state in the protection of constitutional

order, but it is indispensable in the production of public and societal security, and through that domain it contributes substantially to the humanitarian and social dimensions of national security. The hinge of the emerging cooperative model lies in this mediating zone. It is here that the transition from a state-centric to a co-productive understanding of security is both most feasible and most consequential, and it is here that the institutional reforms of contemporary Uzbekistan are concentrated.

The Normative and Institutional Foundation of Civil Society Participation

The participation of civil society in the security sphere presupposes a prior recognition of civil society institutions as legitimate actors with a defined legal status, and the renewed constitutional order of Uzbekistan supplies precisely such recognition. For the first time in the national legislation, the revised Constitution devotes a dedicated chapter to the institutions of civil society and establishes that public associations, other non-governmental non-commercial organizations, the bodies of citizens' self-government, and the mass media constitute the basis of civil society. This constitutional enumeration is consequential beyond its symbolic value, because it elevates the composition of civil society from the level of ordinary legislation to that of the fundamental law and thereby fixes the actors whose participation the subsequent normative apparatus is designed to enable. The constitutional entrenchment of the bodies of citizens' self-government as territorial units of self-government is of particular importance for the security domain, since it provides the legal foundation for the institution that operates at the point of contact between the population and public authority.

The Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy translates this constitutional recognition into a programmatic objective. Among its hundred goals, the strategy assigns a distinct place to the expansion of the activity of civil society organizations and the mass media and articulates the ambition of establishing the country as a regional center of civil society development, including a substantial increase in the number of organizations. The significance of this provision for the security sphere is indirect but real. A policy that commits the state to multiplying the institutions of civil society and to strengthening their capacities is, in effect, a policy that enlarges the pool of potential partners available for cooperation in every domain of public life, the security domain included. The strategy thereby supplies the developmental horizon

within which a new cooperative model in security can be situated.

Between the constitutional foundation and the programmatic horizon stands the body of specialized legislation that defines the forms and mechanisms of interaction. The Concept of Civil Society Development for the period from 2021 to 2025 provided the medium-term framework for the active participation of the third sector in social, political, and legal life, and the strategy for the development of civil society now in preparation is intended to extend that framework toward the end of the decade. The law on non-governmental non-commercial organizations establishes the legal forms, the registration regime, and the purposes for which such organizations may be constituted, including the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of citizens. The law on social partnership institutes a system of forms, principles, and mechanisms of interaction between state bodies and civil society institutions, defining the rights and obligations of the parties. The law on public control specifies the instruments through which citizens and their associations may oversee the activity of state bodies. Taken together, these instruments constitute the legal infrastructure upon which any cooperative model in the security sphere must rest.

This legal infrastructure is matched by an institutional one. The public fund for the support of non-governmental non-commercial organizations and other civil society institutions, established under the Oliy Majlis, provides a mechanism of state financing; a national association coordinates the sector; and the digitalization of registration and reporting through a dedicated electronic portal has reduced the administrative burden upon organizations. A consultative platform for dialogue between the state and civil society has been established to channel civic input into the legislative process. The density of this combined normative and institutional apparatus is considerable, and over the period from 2017 onward a large number of legal acts directly concerned with the support of civil society institutions has been adopted. The analytical question is not whether the framework exists, for it plainly does, but whether and how it translates into substantive participation in the security domain, and to that question the argument now turns.

4. Discussion

From Protected Object to Partner: The Logic of the Emerging Model

The model of state and civil society relations inherited from the earlier period rested upon an understanding of security in which society figured as the object to be protected and the state as the sole protecting agent. Within this understanding the contribution of civil society was confined to compliance and, at most, to the transmission of information upward to the responsible bodies. The reforms of the past decade have initiated a reconfiguration of this relationship, the essential content of which is the gradual repositioning of civil society institutions from objects of protection into participants in the production of security. This repositioning does not abolish the protective function of the state, nor does it extend uniformly across the several dimensions of security. It is concentrated, as the conceptual analysis indicated, in the domain of public and societal security, where they lived security of the population is generated.

The theoretical category that best captures the emerging arrangement is coproduction, the joint generation of a public good by state institutions and the citizens who are also its beneficiaries. Public order, the prevention of offenses, the early identification of social risks, and resilience in the face of emergencies are goods of precisely this kind: they cannot be produced by the state acting upon a passive population, but only through the active engagement of communities and associations that possess local knowledge, proximity, and the trust of the people among whom they operate. The reorientation of the relevant state bodies toward proximity, expressed in the relocation of a substantial part of the administrative apparatus of the internal affairs system to units close to settlements, is intelligible as an institutional adaptation to this logic. Proximity is the precondition of coproduction, because it places the state in the social space where civil society already operates.

The transition can be assessed along a continuum of participation that ranges from the mere provision of information, through consultation, toward genuine partnership and the delegation of defined responsibilities. Located on this continuum, the Uzbek arrangement exhibits an uneven profile. In certain functional domains the relationship has advanced toward partnership; in others it remains at the consultative level, in which civic input is solicited but its influence upon decisions is not assured. The diagnostic value of the continuum lies in its refusal of a binary judgment. The question is not whether civil society participates, but at what level of the continuum its participation is situated in each domain, and the prospects for the model depend upon the

movement from the lower levels toward the higher in those domains where co-production is appropriate.

A further resource of the emerging model is the dense fabric of social capital that the traditional institutions of Uzbek society embody. The bodies of citizens' self-government rest upon networks of mutual familiarity, reciprocity, and trust that constitute a reservoir of the relational capacity upon which co-production draws. This reservoir is an asset of the first importance for the security domain, since the prevention of offenses and the maintenance of public order depend more upon the informal regulation of conduct within communities than upon the coercive capacity of the state. The asset is not without its corresponding risk. Social capital of the bonding type, concentrated within tightly knit communities, can foster parochialism and the exclusion of those outside the network unless it is complemented by the bridging ties that connect communities to one another and to the wider institutional order. The new model must therefore cultivate not only the density of local trust but also the connective tissue that integrates local communities into a national framework of cooperation.

Functional Domains of Cooperation

The abstract logic of co-production acquires concrete content in the functional domains where civil society participation in security is already operative. The first and most developed of these is the maintenance of public order and the prevention of offenses. The institution of citizens' self-government, with several thousand assemblies operating across the country and performing a wide range of socially significant tasks, functions as the frontline of preventive work. Its activists are engaged in the prevention of offenses, the cultivation of legal awareness, and targeted work with young people, families, and women among whom the risk of social deviance is concentrated. The value of this institution for public security lies in its capacity to address the social antecedents of disorder before they crystallize into offenses, a capacity that the coercive instruments of the state, which act after the fact, structurally lack. The reorientation of preventive policing toward cooperation with these self-governing bodies represents the clearest instance of co-production in the Uzbek security landscape.

The second domain is the countering of extremism and the prevention of radicalization, an area in which the limits of a purely coercive approach are especially

evident. The relevant legislation establishes a framework that combines prohibitive and preventive measures, and it is in the preventive dimension that civil society possesses an irreplaceable function. Radicalization proceeds through social and ideational channels, within families, peer groups, and communities, that lie largely beyond the reach of state coercion but well within the reach of the institutions of civil society. The bodies of citizens' self-government, religious and educational institutions, and youth and women's organizations are positioned to detect the early signs of ideational drift, to provide alternative channels of belonging and meaning, and to support the reintegration of those who have been exposed to radical influence. The emphasis upon the social and spiritual factors of security in the relevant policy reflects a recognition that the prevention of radicalization is a task of societal security in which the state and civil society must act jointly.

The third domain is information and cybersecurity, where the structural necessity of civic participation is dictated by the nature of the contemporary information environment. The protection of the information space cannot be secured by the regulatory and technical instruments of the state alone, because the principal vulnerabilities lie at the level of individual judgment and collective discernment rather than at the level of infrastructure. The relevant legislation provides the regulatory foundation, but the cultivation of media and digital literacy, the development of the critical faculties required to resist disinformation, and the formation of a responsible culture of online conduct are tasks that civil society institutions are far better equipped to perform than state agencies. In this domain the contribution of civil society is preventive and formative, directed at the resilience of the population rather than at the suppression of threats, and it constitutes an essential complement to the technical and regulatory capacities of the state.

The fourth domain is resilience in the face of emergencies and the protection of the population and territories from natural and man-made hazards. The legislation adopted in this area establishes the framework within which community-based resilience can be developed. The bodies of citizens' self-government and the relevant non-governmental organizations serve as channels for the mobilization of local response, the dissemination of preparedness, and the organization of recovery. Their value resides, once again, in proximity and trust: in the immediate aftermath of an emergency, the capacity of a community to organize itself often

determines outcomes more decisively than the eventual arrival of external assistance. The cultivation of this self-organizing capacity is a security function in the broad sense, and it is one in which civil society is not an auxiliary to the state but a primary agent.

A common structural feature underlies these four domains and clarifies the comparative advantage that civil society brings to the production of security. In each case the contribution of civil society is concentrated at the pre-emptive, formative, and proximate stages of the security process, the stages at which threats are anticipated rather than confronted, at which rather than conduct is sanctioned, and at which response is local and immediate rather than centralized and delayed. These are precisely the stages at which the coercive apparatus of the state is least effective, because coercion operates upon manifest acts and not upon the social conditions that precede them. The division of labor that the emerging model institutes is therefore not arbitrary but follows from the respective capacities of the two sets of actors: the state retains the functions of coercion, adjudication, and the protection of constitutional order, while civil society assumes the functions of prevention, formation, and proximate response. The security of society is the joint product of these complementary capacities, and the recognition of their complementarity is the conceptual foundation upon which a durable cooperative model can be built.

Mechanisms of Interaction: Social Partnership, Public Control, and Feedback

The functional cooperation described above is mediated by a set of institutional mechanisms that determine whether civic participation is substantive or merely formal. The principal mechanism of positive cooperation is social partnership, the institutionalized interaction between state bodies and civil society institutions in the elaboration and implementation of policy. Where social partnership functions effectively, it converts the abstract recognition of civil society into concrete joint activity, allowing organizations to participate in the design of programs and in their implementation rather than merely in their reception. The development of social partnership in the security domain is the operative condition for the advance of the cooperative model from consultation toward genuine partnership, and its deepening is among the central tasks that the prospective framework must address.

The complementary mechanism is public control, the

oversight of state activity by citizens and their associations. Whereas social partnership operates principally in the domains of public and societal security, where co-production is appropriate, public control is the form of civic participation appropriate to the domain of state security in the strict sense, where the role of civil society is not to share in the exercise of protective functions but to scrutinize their legality and proportionality. The instruments of public control, which include the submission of appeals, participation in the open sessions of state bodies, public discussion and hearings, monitoring, expert assessment, and the study of public opinion, constitute the channel through which the activity of the security apparatus can be rendered accountable to society without compromising the operational integrity that the protection of constitutional order requires. The coexistence of co-production in one domain and oversight in another is not a contradiction but the precise expression of the differentiated relationship that the conceptual analysis prescribed.

The effectiveness of both mechanisms depends upon the existence of institutionalized feedback. Participation is substantive only when civic input demonstrably informs the decisions that issue from it, and it is formal when consultative procedures are observed without consequence for outcomes. The establishment of dialogue platforms and consultative bodies creates the architecture within which feedback can flow, but the architecture does not guarantee the flow. The decisive question for the prospects of the model is whether the channels of participation transmit influence or merely register opinion, and the consolidation of the model requires that the feedback loops be strengthened to the point at which the contribution of civil society is reliably incorporated into policy. The financial dimension is part of this condition. The state financing of civil society organizations, through dedicated funds and grant mechanisms, supplies the material basis of participation, and the calibration of this financing, such that it sustains organizations without inducing dependence that would compromise their capacity for independent contribution, is itself a determinant of the model's quality.

Constraints and the Tasks of Institutional Maturation

The prospects for the new model must be assessed soberly, and a candid identification of its constraints is a condition of analytical seriousness rather than a departure from it. These constraints are best understood as the tasks that attend the maturation of a recently established institutional arrangement, not as evidence of

structural failure. The first constraint is the asymmetry between the density of the formal framework and the depth of its practical realization. The legislative and institutional apparatus has developed rapidly, and its formal completeness now exceeds the maturity of the practices it is meant to govern. The deepening of social partnership in actual cooperation, as distinct from its formal availability, remains the principal task, and the advance of the model depends upon closing the distance between the framework and the practice.

The second constraint is the capacity of the civil sector itself. The contribution that civil society can make to security is a function of its organizational strength, its financial sustainability, its expertise, and the legal literacy of its members, and where these are limited, the sector cannot fully occupy the space that the framework opens to it. The development of capacity is therefore not ancillary to the model but constitutive of it, and the policy commitment to multiplying and strengthening civil society organizations addresses this constraint directly. The maturation of the sector is a precondition for the movement from consultation toward partnership in the functional domains where co-production is appropriate.

The third constraint is the calibration of the relationship between guidance and autonomy. The distinctive contribution of civil society to security derives precisely from its character as civil society, from the independent initiative, local knowledge, and social trust that distinguish it from the state apparatus. A relationship in which state support shades into direction risks attenuating the very qualities that make civic participation valuable, while an absence of coordination would forfeit the coherence that effective cooperation requires. The calibration of this balance is intrinsic to any partnership between the state and civil society and is not peculiar to the Uzbek case; its resolution in the security domain, where the stakes of coordination are high, is among the more delicate tasks of the maturation process.

The fourth constraint is conceptual and returns the analysis to its point of departure. The absence in practice of a sharp distinction among the categories of security carries the risk that the logic of state security will be extended to social problems that belong properly to the domain of public and societal security. When ordinary questions of social welfare, community life, or public discourse are framed through the lens of state security, the space available for civic co-production contracts, and the resources of civil society are displaced by

instruments designed for a different purpose. The discipline of treating each problem at the level of security appropriate to it, neither inflating social questions into matters of state security nor neglecting genuine threats, is a conceptual task with direct practical consequences for the cooperative model. The maintenance of this discipline is what allows the differentiated relationship, co-production in one domain and oversight in another, to function as designed.

The Contours of the Prospective Model

The foregoing analysis permits the contours of the prospective model to be drawn with some precision. The model is not a single uniform relationship but a layered one, differentiated according to the category of security at stake. In the domain of state security in the strict sense, the participation of civil society takes the form of oversight, exercised through the instruments of public control, which renders the protective activity of the state accountable without intruding upon its operational core. In the domain of public and societal security, the participation takes the form of co-production, in which the bodies of citizens' self-government and the relevant organizations act as primary agents in the prevention of offenses, the countering of radicalization, the cultivation of information resilience, and the organization of community response to emergencies. In the humanitarian and social dimensions of national security, the participation takes the form of partnership in the broad sense, through which civil society contributes to the conditions of the nation's security across the spheres of social life. The coherence of the model resides in the matching of the form of participation to the category of security, and its consolidation consists in the deepening of each form within its proper domain.

The instrument through which this layered model is most likely to be codified is the strategy for the development of civil society now in preparation, which is positioned to consolidate the gains of the preceding concepts and to extend the framework toward the end of the decade. The value of such an instrument would lie not merely in the further multiplication of organizations but in the articulation of the differentiated relationship that the security domain requires, specifying where civil society oversees, where it co-produces, and where it partners. To the extent that the prospective framework incorporates this differentiation and strengthens the feedback mechanisms upon which substantive participation depends, it would advance the model from its present uneven profile toward a coherent and consolidated form.

The trajectory of reform over the past decade, which has progressively recognized, enabled, and resourced the institutions of civil society, provides reasonable ground for expecting that the prospective framework will continue in this direction.

5. Conclusion

The prospects for forming a new model of cooperation between the state and civil society in the security sphere in contemporary Uzbekistan are best understood through the conceptual distinction among state security, national security, and societal security, and through the differentiated relationship that this distinction prescribes. The emerging model does not abolish the primacy of the state in the protection of constitutional order, nor does it extend civic co-production uniformly across the security domain. It establishes, rather, a layered arrangement in which civil society oversees the state in the narrow domain of state security, co-produces public and societal security in cooperation with state institutions, and partners with the state across the humanitarian dimensions of national security. The normative and institutional foundation for this arrangement has been laid by the constitutional recognition of civil society institutions, the programmatic commitments of the Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy, the successive concepts of civil society development, and the legislation governing both the third sector and the security domain.

The consolidation of the model depends upon the resolution of tasks that are characteristic of institutional maturation rather than indicative of structural impediment: the closing of the distance between the formal framework and its practical realization, the strengthening of the capacity of the civil sector, the calibration of the balance between guidance and autonomy, and the conceptual discipline of addressing each problem at the level of security appropriate to it. The forthcoming strategy for the development of civil society offers the instrument through which the layered model may be codified and its feedback mechanisms reinforced. The decade of reform that precedes it, marked by the progressive recognition and resourcing of civil society institutions, supplies grounds for a measured expectation that the cooperative model will advance from its present uneven profile toward a more coherent and consolidated form, in which the security of the state, the nation, and society is produced through a relationship of differentiated and mutually reinforcing participation.

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