

FREEDOM OF SPEECH VS INFORMATION SECURITY IN UZBEKISTAN

Umaralieva Laziza Alisherovna

Student of Sarbon University

e-mail: lazizaumaralieva@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT:

ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received: 17.04.2026

Revised: 18.04.2026

Accepted: 19.04.2026

KEYWORDS:

*freedom of speech,
information security,
social networks,
cybersecurity,
Uzbekistan, information
policy, fakes, mass
media*

This article examines how freedom of speech can threaten information security in Uzbekistan. Let's consider the relevance of the topic of the growth of the Internet, social networks, the threat of fakes, as well as cybersecurity, how to develop these areas in Uzbekistan and protect citizens from cybercrime. The emerging problems related to how to maintain a balance between freedom of speech and the security of the country, often excessive freedom leads to various conflicts, and this article will help to uncover these problems and provide possible solutions. Also, the main object is the information policy of Uzbekistan, an in-depth analysis of how information policy works to understand its advantages and disadvantages. Along with this, it is necessary to examine the restrictions on freedom of speech by the state, what impact it has on citizens. The purpose of the article is to reveal the balance and clarify the contradictions of freedom of speech.

Introduction

Amid the rapid growth of digital technology and social media, the issue of freedom of speech and information security is escalating rapidly. In Uzbekistan, as in many countries, the online audience is growing exponentially every day, which expands opportunities for

people to express their thoughts online; at the same time, the dissemination of information is also increasing.

At the same time, the spread of misinformation is also increasing, thereby misleading a large number of people. In Uzbekistan, there is a law stating that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, speech, and belief [1], as specified in Article 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which guarantees state freedom in these areas. In practice, absolute freedom poses a threat primarily to the population due to the aforementioned problem of inaccurate information. Thus, the state attempts to maintain control over the use and dissemination of information, thereby striking a balance between freedom of speech and national security.

The aim of this study is to identify the boundaries of state intervention in the sphere of freedom of speech for the sake of information security. On the one hand, a democratic state cannot exist without freedom of speech, as it is a cornerstone of democracy; on the other hand, its unrestricted exercise poses risks to social stability.

The aim of this article is to analyze the relationship between freedom of speech and information security, as well as to identify significant contradictions and determine possible ways to resolve them.

Main Section

Social media serves as a platform for expressing opinions; it is through social media that the public receives most of its information, unlike in the past when information came from newspapers, television, or various news magazines. In the past, the state could easily monitor and filter the information being disseminated; the public received only information that did not harm the state and highlighted potential benefits. In the past, severe punishment was meted out for non-compliance with censorship in Uzbekistan. During the reign of the first president, Islam Karimov, the media faced numerous obstacles—journalists were pressured, expelled from the country, and subjected to trials and arrests. [2].

The government did not engage with the public in this way and prevented any unnecessary information from becoming public knowledge. Given the harsh treatment of those who expressed views contrary to the state's, it is only natural that the rest of the population chose to remain silent. As for the present, with the arrival of the new president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, reforms have been implemented to alleviate the unjust pressure on journalists and the public. As noted by Human Rights Watch, some political prisoners, including journalists, have been released; thousands of citizens have been removed from the security services' infamous

“blacklist”; and the forced mobilization of teachers, doctors, and students to work in the fields during the annual cotton harvest season has been publicly banned.[2]

As mentioned earlier, social media is extremely popular in modern society as a platform for expressing opinions. As we know, virtually everyone has access to the internet, which gives people unlimited freedom to voice their views; however, it is important to remember that one’s freedom ends where another’s begins, which means that everyone must, above all, exercise self-control. However, as reality shows, not everyone can adhere to this rule; with the growth of digital technology, the level of cyberbullying on the internet has also increased.

A high-profile case related to this in Uzbekistan involves the arrest on April 30 of Dilmurod Mukhitdinov, a human rights activist from Andijan, on charges of extortion and insulting a person’s honor and dignity [3]. This case illustrates how excessive freedom can be harmful. It is also necessary to monitor statements regarding the authorities; criticism of the authorities can lead to criminal liability. In March 2024, 27-year-old D. Tursunov was sentenced to five years in prison for online comments about the president [3].

This shows that the issue of freedom of speech remains relevant today; while the state enacts numerous laws on freedom of speech, in practice, criticizing the government’s shortcomings is not encouraged.

As noted earlier, Article 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees everyone the right to freedom of thought, speech, and belief. However, in practice, absolute freedom poses a threat primarily to the population due to the problem of the spread of misinformation. In this regard, the state is establishing a system to control the flow of information, based on the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the Principles and Guarantees of Freedom of Information” [4]. The main objective of this control is to maintain a balance between freedom of speech and national security.

An in-depth analysis of how Uzbekistan’s information policy is structured helps to understand its strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, legal mechanisms, including the Law “On Cybersecurity” [5], are designed to protect critical infrastructure and citizens’ data. On the other hand, it is also necessary to carefully examine state restrictions on freedom of speech and the impact they have on citizens. The main focus of this study is to identify the limits of state intervention in the sphere of freedom of speech to ensure information security.

The widespread dissemination of fake news leads to a large number of people being misled. Under such conditions, freedom of speech can directly threaten information security within Uzbekistan. As practice shows, excessive freedom often leads to various conflicts. In this

regard, there is an urgent need to study how to develop cybersecurity measures and find methods to protect users from online manipulation.

The challenges that arise are directly linked to the delicate balance between freedom of speech and national security. Strict government regulation can be interpreted as excessive censorship and have a negative impact on democratic institutions, while a complete lack of oversight turns the information space into a breeding ground for cybercrime and disinformation

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to analyze the relationship between freedom of speech and information security, as well as to identify significant contradictions and determine possible ways to resolve them. The analysis showed that unchecked freedom of speech, accompanied by the growth of the internet and social media, can indeed pose a threat to information security.

A comprehensive approach is required to maintain a balance between freedom of speech and national security. First, the boundaries of state intervention must be clearly defined so that legal restrictions do not suppress civil liberties but rather target fake news and cybercrime specifically. Second, this article helps shed light on these issues and offers possible solutions, the main one being the improvement of media literacy among the population of Uzbekistan. Teaching citizens critical thinking and the basics of fact-checking will minimize the impact of misinformation and ensure the safe exercise of the constitutional right to freedom of thought, speech, and belief.

Bibliography

1. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan
2. https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/03/28/you-cant-see-them-theyre-always-there/censorship-and-freedom-media-uzbekistan?utm_source=chatgpt.com
3. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/uzbekistan?utm_source=chatgpt.com
4. <https://lex.uz/docs/52709>
5. <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/5960609>