



IQTISODIYOT & TARAQQIYOT

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THREE GENERATIONS OF REFORM: GOVERNANCE PARADIGMS AND THE MEASUREMENT GAP IN UZBEKISTAN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TRANSITION

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Annotatsiya. O'tish iqtisodiyotlarida barqaror rivojlanish bo'yicha tadqiqotlar odatda islohotlar natijalarini maqsadli ko'rsatkichlar bilan taqqoslab baholaydi, bunda boshqaruv salohiyati asosiy shartlardan biri sifatida qaraladi. O'zbekistonning islohotlar jarayoni uch avlodli davrlashtirish asosida tahlil qilinadi: liberallashtirish va ochiqlik (2017–2022), unumdorlik va yashil o'tish (2022–2030) hamda innovatsion iqtisodiyot (2030-yildan keyingi davr). Har bir avlod uning siyosiy mazmunidan ko'ra, mos ravishda maqsadlar asosidagi boshqaruv, ma'lumotlarga asoslangan boshqaruv va istiqbolga yo'naltirilgan boshqaruv paradigmalariga tayanishi bilan tavsiflanadi. Shu nuqtayi nazardan, avlodlar o'rtasidagi o'tish iqtisodiy jarayon bilan bir qatorda axborotga asoslangan institutsional transformatsiyani ham ifodalaydi. Milliy strategik va huquqiy hujjatlarning tahlili ikkinchi avlod uchun zarur bo'lgan o'lchov infratuzilmasi shakllantirilganini, biroq uning milliy Barqaror rivojlanish maqsadlari (BRM) indikatorlari tizimidan ko'ra strategik rejalashtirish konturiga birlashtirilganini ko'rsatadi. Yagona organ tomonidan bir sanada qabul qilingan bitta huquqiy hujjat doirasida ushbu ikki konturning alohida shakllantirilishi mazkur holatni ma'muriy salohiyat yoki vaqt omili bilangina izohlash imkoniyatini cheklaydi. Vositalar va maqsadlarning institutsional ajralishi haqidagi nazariy yondashuv asosida ushbu konfiguratsiya ikkinchi avlod islohotlarida asosiy masala ma'lumotlarning mavjudligidan ko'ra, raqobatlashuvchi o'lchov tizimlari o'rtasida institutsional e'tiborning taqsimlanishi bilan bog'liqligini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Barqaror rivojlanish maqsadlari, boshqaruv paradigmalar, ma'lumotlarga asoslangan boshqaruv, institutsional ajralish, siyosat natijalarini o'lchash, o'tish iqtisodiyotlari, O'zbekiston.

Abstract. Studies of sustainable development in transition economies typically evaluate reform outcomes against target values, treating governance capacity as a background condition. An alternative interpretation is advanced through a three-generation periodisation of Uzbekistan's reform process: liberalisation and openness (2017–2022), productivity and green transition (2022–2030), and the innovation economy (2030 and beyond). Each generation is defined less by its policy content than by the governance paradigm it presupposes: governance by objectives, governance by data, and anticipatory governance, respectively. The transition between generations is therefore an informational transition before it becomes an economic one. Drawing on documentary analysis of national strategic and legal instruments, the analysis demonstrates that the measurement infrastructure required by the second generation has been constructed but was attached to the strategic planning contour rather than to the national Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator system. The two contours are separated within a single legal act adopted by a single body on a single date, limiting explanations based solely on administrative capacity or elapsed time. Interpreted through the institutional literature on means–ends decoupling, this configuration suggests that the key constraint on second-generation reform is not the availability of data but the allocation of institutional attention among competing measurement systems.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, governance paradigms, data-driven governance, institutional decoupling, policy measurement, transition economies, Uzbekistan.

Аннотация. Исследования устойчивого развития в странах с переходной экономикой, как правило, оценивают результаты реформ посредством их сопоставления с целевыми показателями, рассматривая управленческий потенциал в качестве одного из базовых условий. Альтернативная интерпретация основывается на трехэтапной периодизации процесса реформ в Узбекистане: либерализация и открытость (2017–2022), повышение производительности и зеленый переход (2022–2030), а также



инновационная экономика (после 2030-года). Каждое поколение реформ определяется не столько содержанием проводимой политики, сколько соответствующей парадигмой управления: управлением по целям, управлением на основе данных и опережающим управлением соответственно. В связи с этим переход между поколениями представляет собой не только экономическую, но и информационно-институциональную трансформацию. Документальный анализ национальных стратегических и нормативно-правовых актов показывает, что инфраструктура измерения, необходимая для второго поколения реформ, сформирована, однако она интегрирована преимущественно в контур стратегического планирования, а не в национальную систему индикаторов Целей устойчивого развития (ЦУР). Разделение двух контуров в рамках одного нормативно-правового акта, принятого одним органом в одну дату, ограничивает возможность объяснения данной конфигурации исключительно административным потенциалом или временным фактором. Интерпретация с позиций институциональной концепции разделения средств и целей показывает, что ключевой вопрос второго поколения реформ связан не столько с наличием данных, сколько с распределением институционального внимания между конкурирующими системами измерения.

Ключевые слова: Цели устойчивого развития, парадигмы управления, управление на основе данных, институциональное разделение, измерение результатов политики, переходная экономика, Узбекистан.

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda established an unusual mode of international governance. It sets no binding obligations and provides no enforcement mechanism; instead, it operates through the formulation of goals, the production of indicators, and the expectation that states will incorporate both into domestic policy. Biermann, Kanie, and Kim [1] characterise this as governance by goal-setting and observe that its effectiveness depends on the extent to which goals become embedded in institutions that allocate authority and resources. Subsequent evidence has provided further insights into this process. Reviewing a decade of research, Biermann, Hickmann, and Sénit [2] find that the political impact of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been largely discursive: goals are cited in strategies more frequently than they are linked to budgets, responsible agencies, and verifiable targets. Comparative work by Allen, Metternicht, and Wiedmann [3] reaches similar conclusions regarding national implementation, while Forestier and Kim [4] document systematic goal prioritisation, whereby governments advance those goals that align with pre-existing domestic agendas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A parallel body of literature examines how governance paradigms themselves evolve. The succession from traditional public administration through new public management [5] to new public governance [6] is conventionally described as a sequence of paradigms, each responding to the limitations of its predecessor. Pollitt and Bouckaert [7] observe that such paradigms rarely displace one another completely, instead becoming layered into hybrid arrangements. More recently, attention has shifted towards the informational foundations of governance: the OECD [8] describes the emergence of a data-driven public sector in which data function as a strategic asset integrated across the policy cycle, while Head [9] traces the evolving institutionalisation of evidence-informed policymaking. At the forward edge of this literature, research on anticipatory governance [10, 11] examines the capacity of states to act on foresight rather than solely on realised outcomes.

The transition economics literature provides a third element. Roland [12] shows that reform sequencing matters independently of reform content because early measures alter the political and institutional conditions under which subsequent measures must be adopted. This insight can be productively connected to the SDG governance literature, as the relationship between the two is direct: if goal-setting operates through institutional embedding, and if institutional capacity itself develops sequentially, then the feasibility of goal-based governance depends on where a country stands within its own reform sequence.

Finally, organisational institutionalism provides the conceptual vocabulary for situations in which formal adoption develops more rapidly than operational integration. Meyer and Rowan [13] introduced the notion of decoupling between formal structures adopted for external legitimacy and the operating core. Bromley and Powell [14] refine this concept into a distinction of considerable analytical value: policy–practice decoupling, where a stated norm has yet to be fully implemented, and means–ends decoupling, where the norm is sincerely endorsed and substantial activity is directed towards it, yet the relationship between that activity and the intended outcome remains to be fully established and measured. World-society scholarship [15] shows that the



diffusion of global templates can also produce such institutional configurations.

These four strands of literature have considerable potential for greater analytical integration. This article brings them together around a single case. It examines what governance paradigm each phase of Uzbekistan's reform process presupposes, whether the informational infrastructure required by the current phase has been developed, and—where such infrastructure exists—how sustainable development indicators can be more effectively integrated into it. The contribution is conceptual rather than quantitative: the proposed periodisation and the mechanism it identifies are intended to be applicable to other transition economies pursuing goal-based development agendas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs qualitative documentary analysis of national strategic and legal instruments, supplemented by comparative institutional interpretation. Three categories of sources were examined. The first comprises legal acts constituting the strategic planning contour, principally the Presidential Decree of 16-February-2026 approving the updated Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy for 2026–2030 [16], together with the acts it repealed and amended. The second comprises instruments constituting the national SDG contour, principally the Cabinet of Ministers resolution establishing the national goals, targets, and indicators and its successor act of 2022 [17], together with the national SDG monitoring platform and the Voluntary National Review [18]. The third comprises assessments by international organisations and independent evaluations of governance and statistical capacity [19, 20, 21].

The analysis proceeded in three steps. First, reform measures were assigned to periods on the basis of the legal instruments that introduced them, and each period was characterised by the governance paradigm that its measures presuppose rather than by its sectoral content. Second, the two contours were compared feature by feature across the attributes that determine whether an indicator can function in management: the presence of a baseline value, the presence of annual target values, the designation of a responsible body, the designation of a financing source, the designation of a data source, and the connection to the budget cycle. Third, the resulting configuration was interpreted against the decoupling typology set out above.

A methodological caveat applies to the second step and is stated explicitly, since it conditions the strength of the argument. National SDG statistics in transition economies remain under active development: coverage, methodology, and published series are subject to revision at source, and such revisions may alter the direction of measured change for individual goals. The argument advanced here is therefore deliberately constructed so as *not* to depend on the level or trajectory of any particular indicator. Instead, it rests on the structural properties of the two measurement systems, which are established by legal instruments and remain stable under data revision.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Three Generations and Their Governance Paradigms

The reform process since 2017 falls into three phases, distinguished not by sectoral emphasis but by what each requires of the state as an information-processing institution. Figure 1 presents the periodisation.

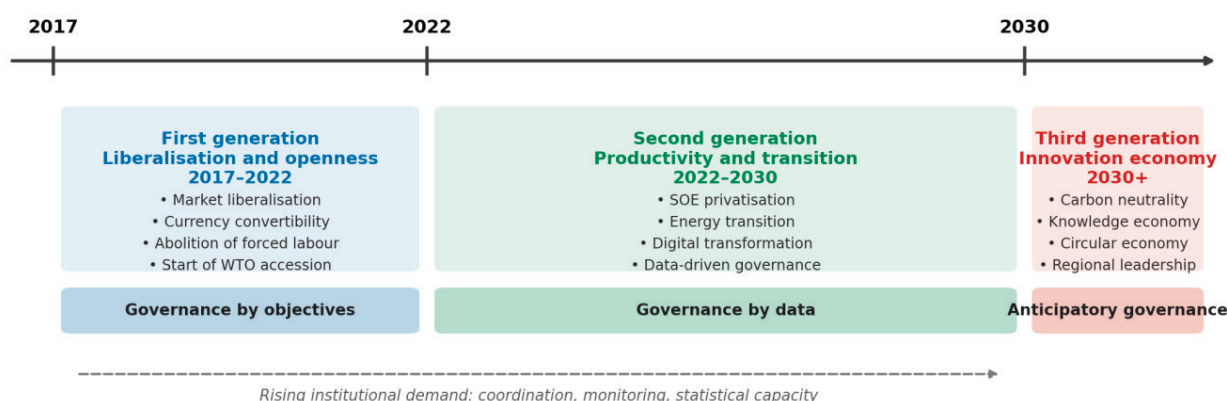


Figure 1. Three Generations of Sustainable Development Reform in Uzbekistan: Timeline and Governance Paradigms¹

¹ Source: Compiled by the author



The first generation (2017–2022) was concerned with transforming command-economy structures through currency convertibility, market liberalisation, the elimination of forced labour in the cotton sector, and the opening of WTO accession negotiations. Its governance model was governance by objectives. Success was legible through the completion of discrete acts, and the informational requirement was correspondingly modest—aggregate reporting was sufficient because the object of measurement was whether a barrier had been removed.

The second generation, beginning in 2022, is qualitatively different. The privatisation of state-owned enterprises, the energy transition, the digital transformation of public administration, and improvements in productivity cannot be fully assessed solely through the completion of individual acts because each depends on behavioural responses distributed across sectors and territories. Establishing the effectiveness of such reforms requires disaggregated, verified indicators linked to responsible agencies and expenditure. This is the requirement that the OECD [8] characterises as a data-driven public sector, and it constitutes a change in the logic of governance rather than merely an increase in reporting effort.

The third generation, oriented towards 2030 and beyond, presupposes anticipatory governance [10, 11]: carbon neutrality, a knowledge-based economy, and circular production require the state to act on projected rather than solely realised conditions and, therefore, to possess predictive analytical capacity. Table 1 summarises the three generations across the dimensions relevant to this argument.

Table 1

Three Generations of Reform: Content, Governance Paradigm, and Informational Requirement²

Dimension	First Generation (2017–2022)	Second Generation (2022–2030)	Third Generation (2030+)
Reform content	Transformation of command-economy structures	Building productivity, inclusion, and green transition	Innovation economy and decarbonisation
Governance model	Governance by objectives	Governance by data	Anticipatory governance
Institutional task	Removal of barriers	Construction of coordination and accountability mechanisms	Predictive capacity and foresight
Information requirement	Aggregate outcome reporting	Disaggregated, verified, budget-linked indicators	Forward-looking scenario and simulation data
Measure of success	Completion of liberalisation acts	Demonstrable causal link between action and outcome	Ability to act before problems materialise
Characteristic challenge	Maintaining reform momentum and consistent sequencing	Strengthening measurable links between activities and outcomes	Integrating foresight into operational decision-making

The Asymmetry Between Generations

The periodisation reveals an asymmetry that may be overlooked when reforms are catalogued by sector. The first generation comprised a comparatively homogeneous set of liberalising measures, most of which could proceed semi-independently of one another. The second requires simultaneous progress across heterogeneous fronts whose interactions require systematic coordination. Managing such heterogeneity benefits from effective inter-agency coordination, a functioning monitoring and evaluation system, and a mature statistical infrastructure capable of providing an integrated view of reform processes. The institutional demands therefore rise across the sequence, as indicated in Figure 1, and the second generation constitutes the point at which measurement capacity becomes particularly important.

The Measurement Infrastructure Was Built and Institutionally Allocated

The central empirical finding is that this measurement capacity has, in fact, been constructed. The updated Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy [16] assigns to each of its performance indicators a baseline value, annual target values through 2030, a responsible agency, a financing source, and a designated data source. Monitoring is conducted on a digital platform, with achievement classified into graduated categories carrying defined administrative consequences, while indicator performance is taken into account in the formation of the consolidated budget. Measured against the requirements of the second generation, this represents a comprehensive operational instrument.

² Source: Compiled by the author



The national SDG indicator system is structured differently across these attributes. It publishes levels and trends, while target values, annual trajectories, designated responsible agencies, and budgetary consequences are organised through a different institutional contour. Within the 2026 decree, the 2030 Agenda appears once, as a consideration to be taken into account when strategic planning documents are drafted. The two systems are governed by instruments of different legal weight—a presidential decree in one case and a government resolution [17] in the other—and this distinction has persisted throughout the period under study.

An important feature of this configuration is that the separation occurs *within a single legal act, adopted by a single body, on a single date*. This provides an opportunity to consider the configuration beyond explanations based solely on administrative capacity or elapsed time. The state demonstrated the administrative capacity to construct an operational measurement contour within the same document, while the comparison itself concerns two components of a single text rather than a document and its subsequent implementation over time.

Read through the decoupling typology, this configuration is better understood as distinct from straightforward policy–practice decoupling. The goals remain recognised, monitoring is conducted and published, and reform commitments continue to be institutionally represented. The configuration corresponds more closely to means–ends decoupling in the sense of Bromley and Powell [14]: the norm is endorsed, substantial activity is directed towards it, while the connection between that activity and the intended outcome offers scope for further institutional integration and measurement. It is also distinct from the goal prioritisation documented by Forestier and Kim [4], in which governments advance selected goals; here, the entire goal set is retained, and the distinction lies not between individual goals but between measurement systems.

This distinction is important for diagnosis. Where capacity is the principal constraint, investment in statistical infrastructure represents an appropriate response. Where prioritisation is central, institutional and policy choices become particularly important. The configuration identified here suggests a third possibility: the allocation of institutional attention may follow the measurement contour to which budgetary consequences are attached. Indicators without direct budgetary consequences continue to perform an important monitoring function, while indicators that influence expenditure acquire baselines, responsible bodies, and trajectories. From this perspective, strengthening institutional and climate measurement within national SDG systems may depend not only on statistical capacity but also on the position of those goals within the institutional contour governing resource allocation.

The implication for the periodisation is that the second generation may be advanced not simply by producing additional data but by strengthening the integration of existing measurement systems. The required instrument already exists; further progress can therefore be achieved by reinforcing the connection between this instrument and the goal framework through which the country reports internationally. A practical corollary follows: aligning the two contours may be facilitated by extending an existing format—baseline, annual trajectory, responsible agency, and data source—to the national SDG indicator set, together with the technical integration of the two platforms. Where a strategic performance indicator and an SDG indicator coincide in substance, the approved target value can be transferred directly.

There is also an important implication for external accountability. A Voluntary National Review [18] presents a substantial body of measurement that can be further connected to the mechanisms determining the allocation of public expenditure. Strengthening this connection could enhance the relationship between international reporting and the operational machinery of government and provide external readers with a clearer understanding of how reported indicators interact with domestic planning and budgeting processes.

Two considerations define the scope of these conclusions. First, the analysis is documentary: it establishes what the instruments provide, while interview or administrative evidence could further clarify how officials operate within these institutional arrangements and whether the proposed allocation of attention is recognised by participants. Second, the study focuses on a single case. The identified mechanism may also be relevant to states that adopted the 2030 Agenda through subordinate legislation while developing strategic planning systems through executive instruments of higher standing. Establishing the broader applicability of this mechanism would benefit from comparative research, for which the Central Asian states offer a particularly relevant sample.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This article has proposed a three-generation periodisation of reform in Uzbekistan and argued that the generations differ primarily in the governance paradigms they presuppose: governance by objectives, governance by data, and anticipatory governance. The value of this periodisation is diagnostic. It locates the current challenge not in the ambition of policy but in the informational architecture available to implement it, and it suggests that a country entering the second generation may encounter particular challenges where reforms require evidence of causal linkages rather than evidence of completion.



Applied to the present case, the periodisation yields an alternative perspective on the customary diagnosis. The measurement infrastructure required by second-generation reform has been developed; it has been attached to the strategic planning contour rather than to the Sustainable Development Goal framework, and this distinction is visible within a single legal instrument. The key consideration is therefore not data availability but the allocation of institutional attention between two parallel systems of goal-setting. Strengthening the connection between these systems represents an administratively feasible task with considerable potential significance and can contribute to the effective completion of the second generation of reform.

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