



THE SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ESSENCE AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE PHENOMENON OF LEGAL NIHILISM

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Abstract. Legal nihilism is one of the most significant obstacles to the establishment of the rule of law and democratic governance. It manifests itself through distrust of legal institutions, disregard for legal norms, and skepticism regarding the effectiveness of law as a regulator of social relations. This study examines the socio-philosophical essence of legal nihilism, its theoretical foundations, causes, and social consequences. The research relies on the works of Uzbek and CIS scholars in the fields of legal philosophy, legal culture, and state theory.

Keywords: legal nihilism, legal consciousness, legal culture, rule of law, social philosophy, civil society.

Introduction. The modernization of society and the establishment of democratic governance require a high level of legal culture and legal consciousness among citizens. However, in many transitional societies, legal norms are often perceived as ineffective or detached from social realities. Such conditions contribute to the emergence of legal nihilism, which weakens the authority of law and undermines public trust in state institutions.

According to S.S. Alekseev, legal nihilism reflects a negative attitude toward law and legal values, arising from deficiencies in legal culture and legal awareness [1]. The phenomenon becomes particularly visible when legal norms fail to correspond with social expectations and practical realities.

Theoretical Foundations of Legal Nihilism. The term “nihilism” derives from the Latin word *nihil*, meaning “nothing.” In philosophy, nihilism signifies the rejection of established norms, values, and institutions. Legal nihilism is a specific form of this phenomenon directed toward law and legal institutions.

N.A. Berdyaev considered nihilism a socio-cultural response to crises of values and moral disorientation [2]. He argued that the rejection of legal and moral norms often emerges when individuals lose confidence in the legitimacy of social institutions.

Russian legal scholar V.V. Lazarev defines legal nihilism as a deformation of legal consciousness characterized by disbelief in the effectiveness and social value of law

[3]. Similarly, N.I. Matuzov emphasizes that legal nihilism represents a destructive attitude toward legal order and constitutional principles [4].

In Uzbek legal scholarship, A.X. Saidov notes that legal nihilism develops where legal culture remains insufficiently developed and where citizens do not perceive law as an instrument for protecting their rights and interests [5].

Socio-Philosophical Nature of Legal Nihilism. From a socio-philosophical perspective, legal nihilism is not merely a legal phenomenon but also a reflection of broader social contradictions. It arises from the interaction between social consciousness, institutional practices, and cultural values.

D.A. Kerimov argues that legal consciousness is inseparable from social consciousness and reflects society's perceptions of justice, legality, and social order [6]. Consequently, distortions in legal consciousness often produce nihilistic attitudes toward law.

Legal nihilism may be understood through several dimensions:

- cognitive (lack of legal knowledge);
- axiological (devaluation of legal values);
- behavioral (non-compliance with legal norms);
- institutional (disregard for legal principles by public authorities).

These dimensions demonstrate that legal nihilism possesses both individual and collective characteristics.

Causes of Legal Nihilism. Researchers identify several factors contributing to the emergence of legal nihilism:

- ineffective implementation of legislation;
- corruption and bureaucratic arbitrariness;
- inconsistency between legal norms and social realities;
- weak legal education;
- low levels of civic participation;
- historical traditions of authoritarian governance [7].

According to H.T. Odilqoriyev, legal nihilism often develops when citizens perceive a discrepancy between declared legal principles and actual governmental practices [8]. Such contradictions diminish trust in legal institutions and encourage informal forms of social regulation.

Legal Culture as a Means of Overcoming Legal Nihilism. Most contemporary scholars regard legal culture as the primary mechanism for combating legal nihilism. Legal culture promotes respect for law, strengthens civic responsibility, and facilitates the internalization of legal values.

Z.M.Islomov emphasizes that legal culture constitutes an essential component of democratic transformation and social modernization [9]. Through legal education and civic engagement, societies can develop positive attitudes toward law and constitutional principles.

Therefore, the formation of a mature legal culture represents a necessary condition for reducing the prevalence of legal nihilism and strengthening the rule of law.

Conclusion. Legal nihilism is a complex socio-philosophical phenomenon rooted in deficiencies of legal culture, crises of social trust, and contradictions between legal norms and social realities. The works of Uzbek and CIS scholars demonstrate that legal nihilism threatens democratic development and the effectiveness of legal institutions. The successful prevention of legal nihilism requires comprehensive reforms aimed at improving legal education, strengthening legal culture, enhancing institutional transparency, and ensuring the consistent implementation of legal norms. Only under such conditions can law function as a respected and effective regulator of social relations.

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