

The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences EpSBS

The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences
eISSN: 2357-1330

ic-PSIRS 2015 March

Secularism is a guarantee of the development of Kazakhstan's society (sociological vision)

Zaure Zhanazarova^a, Zhanar Nurbekova^{a*}

^a*Kazakh National University al Farabi, al Farabi Av. 71, Almaty 050038, Kazakhstan, 87273773333*

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2015.03.7>

Abstract

In today's world the relationship between state and religion based division of scopes of activities are not unique, rather, there are hardly any nations where the principles of secularism are not the foundation of state structure. Theocratic states where power was wholly owned by the clergy existed in the middle and more ancient ages. Today only Vatican can be called a theocratic state in the full sense. Elements of theocratic structure are demonstrated by Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Arabic monarchies where Islam plays a crucial role in a wide spectrum of social life of the population, including politics, judicial power system, education, etc. But even in these countries in recent years there is a growing trend to reinforce secular principles of public administration. In general, religion should be understood to be a complex of attitudinal and behavioral norms based on recognition of existence of the supernatural, omnipotent being - God and worship practices to Him. Religious scholars include the following elements in a religion: religious consciousness, religious faith and religious organization. Today, many pseudo-religious associations deliberately and systematically involve almost all the population layers and many target groups in the scope of their interests, including children, students, young workers, intellectuals, educational and scientific, senior citizens and businessmen. When assessing the influence of religion on the lives of contemporary Kazakhstan's society, up to half of the respondents considered this as a positive trend. At the same time, one in six respondents (14,9%) did not see any positive impact of religion on the lives of people in Kazakhstan. While in the previous model (typical of

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0-000-000-0000 ; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .

E-mail address: ermirshahini@live.com



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

the socialist Soviet mentality) religious fanatics were about 1-2%, now their number has increased to 5-6. Analysis of sermons and activities performed by pseudo-religious organizations shows that religious workers consistently and persistently emphasize socio-economic problems in the lives of people in Kazakhstan.

© 2015 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.uk

Keywords: Kazakhstan society; religion; mentality; relationship; socio-economic problems; legitimization of religion

1. Introduction

Kazakhstan at the turn of the XX-XXI century is in the center of geopolitical interests, which led to a sharp increase in religious migration to republic. Lasts for many decades "legitimization of religion" society has led, in the early transformation processes to a kind of "fashion" on religiosity in different population groups. In the state of mobility permanent values of the society, under the strong pressure of pluralism different world views, that the condition of visiting the country for non-traditional beliefs of our culture.

2. Problem Statement

In Kazakhstan - as a sovereign, democratic, secular, legal and social state now exist not only traditional and world religions, but also new beliefs and pseudo- association. But despite of this Kazakh society is not religious.

Mechanism for the involvement of citizens in the sphere of interests of many pseudo-religious associations and different orientation. They destroy valuable bases of Kazakh society, deformed baby vision, destroy family values and intergenerational communication.

Artificial activity has focused pseudo-religions - is the introduction of a given worldview, certain behaviors, lifestyle and more that forms a new subculture in society. This in turn can lead to increased conflict in the country and threaten national security and stability of Kazakhstan society. Kazakhstan, though belatedly, did respond to the challenges of modernity. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Religious Activities and Religious Associations" provides for compulsory re-registration of all religious associations and beliefs. In Kazakhstan, the number of non-traditional denominations and religious associations has not only reduced, but also their activities were regulated. Kazakhstan's legislation allows for the interests of the entire multicultural population of the country and aims to protect the rights, freedoms and interests of all citizens without exception.

There is an authorized state body acting to ensure observance of citizens' rights to freedom of conscience and religion - the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Religious Affairs, which, in collaboration with religious organizations creates the environment suitable for the development of acceptable state and religious relations and protects the rights of religious citizens. Guided by the principle of secularism, the Agency regulates relations between the state and religious associations and individual citizens, without interfering with faith affairs as such.

In today's world the relationship between state and religion based division of scopes of activities are not unique, rather, there are hardly any nations where the principles of secularism are not the foundation of state structure. Theocratic states where power was wholly owned by the clergy existed in the middle and more ancient ages. Today only Vatican can be called a theocratic state in the full sense. Elements of theocratic structure are demonstrated by Iran, Saudi Arabia and

other Arabic monarchies where Islam plays a crucial role in a wide spectrum of social life of the population, including politics, judicial power system, education, etc. But even in these countries in recent years there is a growing trend to reinforce secular principles of public administration.

Nevertheless, the religious factor in public life, including politics, affects, sometimes significantly, the development of the state.

In general, religion should be understood to be a complex of attitudinal and behavioral norms based on recognition of existence of the supernatural, omnipotent being - God and worship practices to Him. Religious scholars include the following elements in a religion: religious consciousness, religious faith and religious organization (Yablokov, 2000).

Religion affects both the internal state of society and external processes and phenomena, including politics, economy, culture, and social processes. The main functions of religion are ideological, communicative, regulatory, integrating (disintegrating), legitimating, and culture-transmitting. It sets the criteria and ideals used to assess the surrounding world; there are notions formed that relate to both objective reality (physical objects, phenomena and processes), and to morality and ethics.

Religion defines community of population groups or, conversely, forms a person's narrow mindedness and ensures communication. An understanding of the nature of things common to a group of believers is the basis for the implementation of communicative function of religion. (Garaja, 2005).

Nevertheless, in one case religion can unite, while in another, - on the contrary, disconnect individuals, groups, different societies and even nations.

3. Research Questions

Today, many pseudo-religious associations deliberately and systematically involve almost all the population layers and many target groups in the scope of their interests, including children, students, young workers, intellectuals, educational and scientific, senior citizens and businessmen. Monitoring of public opinion of people in Kazakhstan on issues of religiosity dynamics and trends, carried out by "Perspective" Information and Advisory Group" Public Fund (Osipov, 2011) in 2010 in 14 regional centers, as well as in Astana and Almaty , shows that 2/3 of the respondents somehow associate themselves with religion. Believers, who are in communities, represent a little more than 10%.

To the question, *How do you feel about religion?* the majority of respondents said, 'I am a believer, but I am not involved in a religious life' - 56.2 %. To the question, *How long ago have you chosen your worldview?* An over whelming majority – 37,8% - said, since childhood, 25% - more than ten years, and 10,1% - more than five years ago and 8,6 % - less than five years ago.

When assessing the influence of religion on the lives of contemporary Kazakhstan's society, up to half of the respondents considered this as a positive trend. At the same time, one in six respondents (14,9%) did not see any positive impact of religion on the lives of people in Kazakhstan.

In general, based on the results of this study, the number of believers in the country has not increased. So-called "passive believers" (who believe, but are not involved in religious life) account for more than half population. Active believers (i.e., closely associated with the religious life-style,

with its communal way of life) from about 10 to 17% (depending on the region), however, in this segment of believers the number of believers fanatically devoted to pseudo-religious ideas (ideas for which they are willing to become hostages to their own life and destiny) is increasing.

While in the previous model (typical of the socialist Soviet mentality) religious fanatics were about 1-2%, now their number has increased to 5-6. Analysis of sermons and activities performed by pseudo-religious organizations shows that religious workers consistently and persistently emphasize socio-economic problems in the lives of people in Kazakhstan. They politicize assessment of ongoing social changes with an emphasis on negativity; substitute causal relationships of the reality with fictional mythological dependencies that take away the followers' thinking from reality. They also oppose the efforts of religious groups against other ways of social support citizens; impose beliefs and force people to change their worldview and understanding of the world, use threats and instill fear, ranging from moral oppression all the way to physical methods of influence.

In addition, the image of the Kazakhstani state and its institutions are ascribed characteristics of monsters and enemies, which must be combated from the position of (pseudo) religious faith, calling its followers to become "spiritual warriors" in order to achieve their goals (Osipov, 2011).

As is emphasized in this study, all of this is embodied in endless sermons and workshops, meetings and conversations with the ultimate goal of bringing a person out of their common groups of participation (family, friends, and professional) and engaging them in a new community of like-minded people; to submit their will to the behaviors of a community leader.

Pursuit of the objective to achieve individual and group and citizen and society opposition is seen in the study as shattering a common cultural identity, undermining the atmosphere of harmony in our society. A similar activity can already be classified as politically charged and ideologically motivated (Osipov, 2011).

4. Purpose of the Study

The state must restrict activities of communities and organizations behind them, that invade the lives of citizens violating their constitutional rights with respect to personal property, housing, and health (both physical and mental). Kazakhstan citizens regardless of their religious beliefs must unite to prevent dissemination in our country of such extremes as lack of spirituality and radicalization of religious beliefs.

Religious situation in the country as a whole is characterized as stable. At the same time, in some regions there is a concentration of potential sources of religious extremism.

In recent years, the country has had a strong increase in interest among young people in spiritual traditions. Sociological surveys show that in 2003 the share of those calling themselves "religious" among young people was 38,7%, while based on the results of 2013 – it is already 73,9%.

That means that over the past 10 years the percentage of youth religiosity has doubled. Experts believe that external threats are a serious challenge – in foreign countries there is an increased manifestation of radical extremism on religious grounds, planting of intolerance and ideology of consumerism and permissiveness among the youth. And religious radical forces (i.e. foreign "missionaries", Internet resources, etc.) purposefully recruit young people. For example, they have shown that young believers have a theoretical readiness to conflict in order to defend the interests of their religious group. Experts believe that this was made possible due to poor religious

literacy among young people who, because of their inexperience, are vulnerable to extremist and terrorist ideas. Extremists using the inability of young people to objectively evaluate the differences in interpretations and content of religious teachings, push them towards extreme judgments and actions. In connection with this Agency for Religious Affairs together with the Ministry of Education and Science is working to incorporate the subject of "Basic Religious Studies" in school and university programs, and to improve this course in the part of explaining the principles of secular state and traditional values of Kazakhstan's society (Shulembayeva, 2014)

"Religious" literature is distributed through a network of bookstores, given out or sold to agents in new religious organizations; books, booklets and magazines are offered to people on the streets, thus, we can say that the people of Kazakhstan have unlimited information with extremist content available to them.

According to the General Prosecutor Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there were 112 crimes discovered related to terrorism and extremism in just 10 months in 2013. Only in 2012 intelligence services had prevented 24 terrorist attacks that were being prepared. Over the last five years 40 citizens of Kazakhstan involved in the activities of terrorist organizations were detained in the territory of other states. They also participated in activities of illegal armed rebel groups. 68 members of international terrorist extremist organizations were detained in Kazakhstan (Lama Sharif, 2013).

5. Research Methods

Monitoring of public opinion of people in Kazakhstan on issues of religiosity dynamics and trends, carried out by "Perspective" Information and Advisory Group" Public Fund (Osipov, 2011) in 2010 in 14 regional centers, as well as in Astana and Almaty.

6. Findings

Today we are talking about the active work of the entire state and society to address threats on the part of religious extremism and terrorism. There are advocacy groups, which include religious scholars, officials and public figures, working throughout Kazakhstan. The main objective is to prevent the spread of extremist ideology that uses religious cover.

Real religion should be a guide in life, morally educate a person and a citizen, strengthen a sense of patriotism and gender equality, and guard a person from committing evil deeds, not to mention various forms of aggression.

Yet the information disseminated by pseudo religious associations undermines cultural traditions existing in the society of Kazakhstan in general and in a family in particular; it communicates certain behavioral patterns related to compliance with strict confidential communication guidelines in a religious group.

Shattering of the existing worldview happens through destruction of value foundations of Kazakhstan mentality: additional formation of ideas about the value of parental love and relationships between generations.

7. Conclusions

It is very important that using the norms of religious law, morals and dogma both individual behavior of believers, and the whole processes in society can be adjusted. Sometimes this function of religion is used by parties involved in radical extremist and other destructive activities, legitimizing certain antisocial behavior, supposedly, in favor of a particular religion and its doctrines.

Religion is largely subjective, which makes it possible to manipulate the public consciousness, therefore destructive leaders who offer their own interpretation of religious theses, contribute, at least, to the disintegration of people, and sometimes even to interdenominational enmity and hatred.

Cultural and communication function follows from the fact that religion, in its rituals, procedures and ideological essence, forms its own culture. Culture as an element of spiritual perception of reality also contains the above-mentioned qualities that define the functions of religion.

The above-mentioned functions demonstrate the role of religion in an individual's life, in a group of individuals (community) or a nation. In general, this ambiguity in the characteristics of religion has obviously predetermined its place in the system of social and public relations, the evolution of which has shown that a secular, non-religious state structure meets the interest of all members of society and forms the nation and its development.

In this regard, the words of the President of the country, N. Nazarbayev, from his December 2012 address to the nation, 'the secular nature of our state is an important condition for the successful development of Kazakhstan's became a very timely signal to the society of an acute ideological and value crisis experienced in the world. In this sense Kazakhstan has detected trends in the development of social relations in a very timely manner and has taken all necessary steps to consolidate its national identity.

References

- Yablokov, I. (2000). Religious Studies: *Study Guide, M.: Gardariki*, p. 536
Garaja, V. (2005). Sociology of Religion. *M.: INFRA – M*, p. 112
Osipov, V. 'Formatted' Identity (2011). Kazakhstan's Truth, *September 10*, p. 7
Shulembayeva, R. Preserving Traditional Values (2014). Kazakhstan's Truth, *April 30*, p. 3
Lama Sharif, K. There is no Extremism in Religion (2013). Evening Almaty, *January 17*, p. 6