

KAZAKHSTAN: THE PHENOMENON OF “IMPOSED IDENTITY”

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By Way of Introduction

Today, we all (I mean the people of Kazakhstan) have come dangerously close to the “point of no return” beyond which our unique ethnoconfessional community will cease to exist. This has been brought about, among other things, by the geopolitical strategy designed to plant ide-

as of separatism in people's minds: for several decades now (in the past two decades in particular) much has been done to impose a false religious identity on those who live in the republic. This

means that we should create certain mechanisms to monitor social processes and defuse potential tension. Today, the state should do all it can to keep these processes of utmost importance in check.

Religion in Kazakhstan Society

At the turn of the 21st century, Kazakhstan, a "median" Eurasian state, found itself in the epicenter of the geopolitical interests of several players. Market reforms, liberalization, and democratization forced Kazakhstan society to readjust its ideas about the world and life accordingly; in the whirlpool of transformations, they blended into a symbiosis of old stereotypes and new landmarks and standards. It turned out that the cultural, political, and economic changes called for a new mechanism for mastering the new meanings, both at the individual and at the collective level; folk traditions were gradually restored and preserved, while innovation activities became more open.

In recent years, re-orientation of the development vectors has been going on in the extremely tense context of a quest for sovereign identity and its economic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions; this has already affected the social infrastructure and lifestyle, up to and including the value-oriented institutions of family, as well as the traditions of personal and group communication.

The transformational shifts that spread to all spheres of vital activities were caused not only by global financial and economic crises, but also by what can be called the cultural intervention of the social values of alien groups (religious, groups of outsiders, etc.). There is the danger that loss of previous identity, the emergence of marginal states, and "alienation" from civilized civil society will cause new breaches in mentality and asocial behavior.

Modernization of traditional ideas about the world and the predestination of man coupled with the loss of ideology typical of times of change have caused frustration and distorted mentality; the threat of "a breach in mentality" has been deliberately exaggerated as part of the process of "imposing identity."

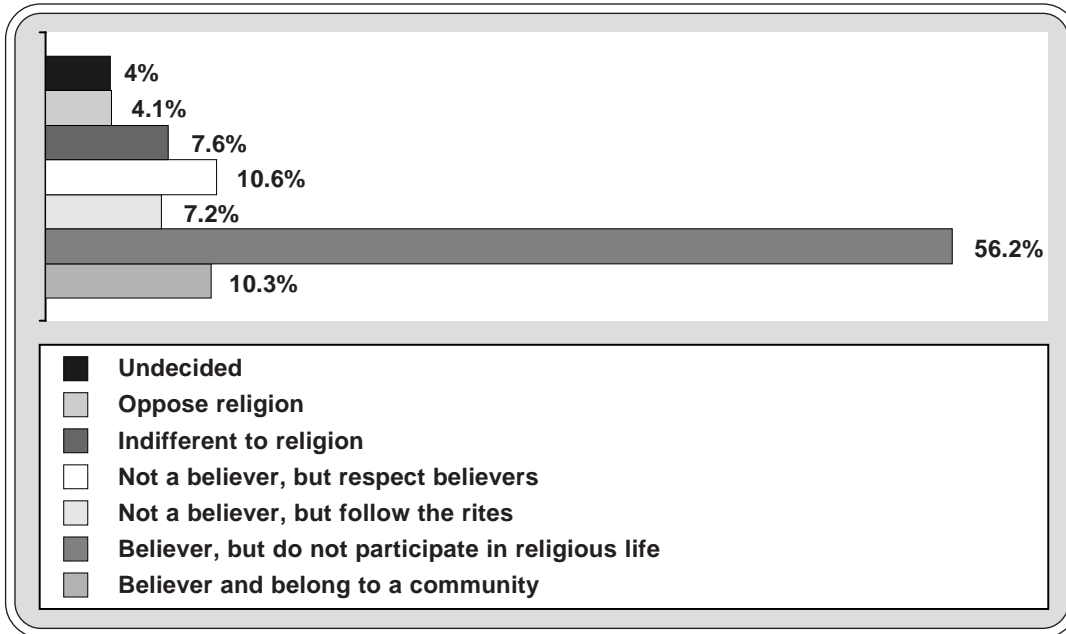
Kazakhstan is a multi-confessional and polyethnic state, which means that the quest for a new identity implies a religious component as one of its elements. The changed ideological component caused by real pluralism proved to be fertile ground for new (or non-traditional) religious beliefs and groups. Since the 1990s, the confessional map of Kazakhstan has changed considerably under the pressure of religious migrants who have been attracted into the country by many things: the liberal registration rules offered by all sorts of organizations; the tolerance typical of Kazakhstan mentality; the transformational shifts caused by de-ideologization; and the new religious fad that various social groups (alienated far too long from religion by official atheism) have enthusiastically embraced. These and many other factors have caused a rapid increase in the number of religious or pseudo-religious organizations.

Public opinion polls reveal that up to two-thirds of the respondents associate themselves with religion while slightly over 10 percent of them belong to various kinds of religious communities.

The answers to the question, "What do you think about religion?", revealed the following picture¹ (see Fig. 1):

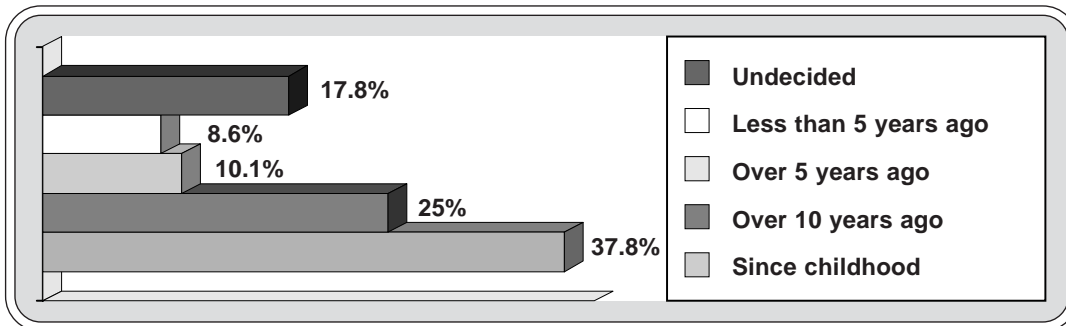
¹ Here and elsewhere the graphs are based on the returns of public opinion polls carried out by the Information-Consultative Perspektiva Group Public Foundation.

Figure 1



The question, “How long ago did you choose your world outlook?”, drew the following answers in 14 regional centers and in Astana and Almaty (see Fig. 2):

Figure 2

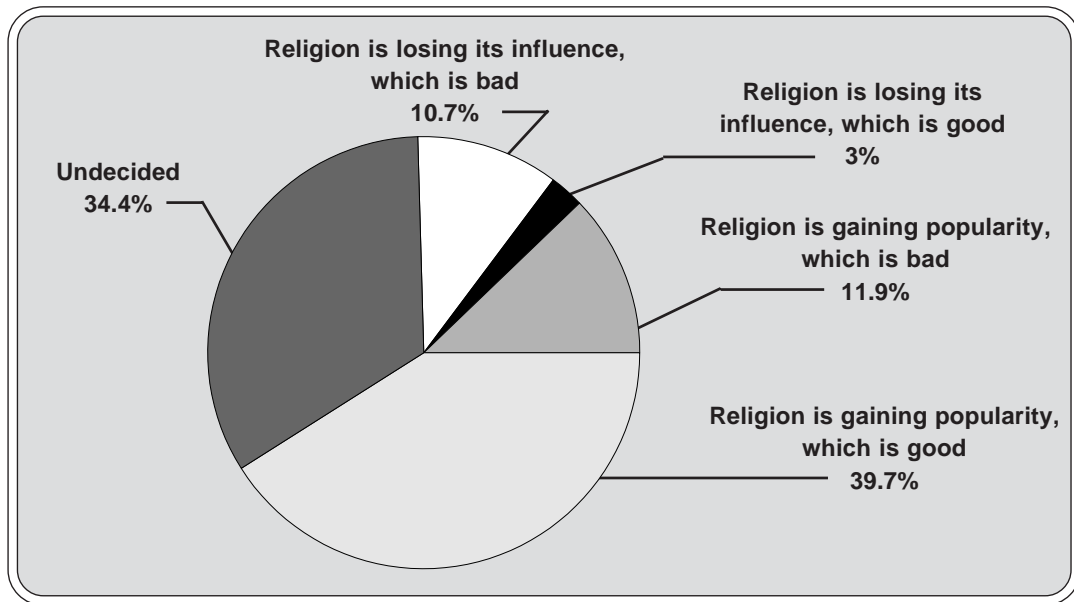


According to our findings, about half of the polled believe that religion will become more important and assess this trend as positive. At the same time, one out of six respondents failed to detect any positive impact of religion on Kazakhstan society (see Fig. 3).

While the new economic relations were emerging and developing (associated primarily with the market reforms), life in the countryside, smaller towns, and the regions hit by ecological disasters has been deteriorating along with personal (professional) status. This has caused a loss of identity in the functioning of human capital reproduced in Kazakhstan in the previous decades and narrowed down the labor market for the local (Kazakh) population; labor relations have become warped and developed an obvious bias toward legal nihilism, etc.

Under the pressure of the new circumstances, people have started moving to the large cities and regional centers. In fact, the dynamics of the forms and types of people’s social mobility are deter-

Figure 3



mined by the combined pressure of domestic and external factors. Uncontrolled migration is fraught with spontaneous, as well as deliberately created, threats to social and state stability; it may warp the integrity of society.

Deprived of their previous ideological context, people, taught by the previous system to think in collectivist terms, have begun looking for new communities (collectives): religious, sham religious, or others. This has created network organizations targeted at “spiritual outcasts;” past masters of deliberate and purposeful manipulation of minds and behavior, they change individual mentality to attract as many recruits as possible into all sorts of quasi societies.

Society is already aware of the negative results of migration: in the new social context, migrants and their families never achieve the desired social status, which undermines group identity and fans social tension. Religious migrants are creating a new subculture brimming with conflicts, which can be described as one of the main threats to the country’s political stability.

New Religious Trends

The last few decades have revealed two distinctive religious trends—toward Islamization and Evangelization—which might develop into breaches that threaten social unity. In the current geopolitical context and in view of Kazakhstan’s stabilizing role in Central Asia, we must admit that these factors might undermine regional stability. The Kazakhstan people, on the whole, are determined to preserve stability, which might, however, crumble in the wake of conflict-prone factors “imported” from abroad. This is creating a marginal personality that finds it hard, or even impossible, to fit into the traditional forms of cultural adaptation (the family, educational system, profession, circle of friends, etc.).

For social groups at different levels of marginalization, adaptation/re-adaptation proceeds as a contradictory process: they have already lost their old identity and have to assume a new one that is

frequently unnatural or even rejected or imposed. Underestimation of the scope and content of social marginalization, coupled with the lack of tools needed to keep social mobility in check, increases the risks created by acculturation of those living in depressive (or new) regions, large cities, the countryside, border areas, etc. The market has not created real and efficient mechanisms of socialization and re-adaptation, which is forcing people to seek new forms of collective existence (organizations which pass themselves off as religious can be described as one such form).

All sorts of groups—ethnic, religious, social, professional, age, property status, new settlers, etc.—find sham religious groups very attractive; the groups themselves aim at children and young people.

The local academic and teaching communities supply gurus for sham religious groups; officials extend administrative support, while the affiliated media and trained journalists carry their ideas far and wide; these groups, patronized by branches of international human rights organizations, are sponsored from abroad.

In fact, there is a network of organizations which preaches an alternative ideology and claims a religious-political role. These organizations operate according to strict rules and have acquired a fairly large number of psychologically and ideologically brainwashed followers with warped axiological structures and altered civil conscience totally obedient to their charismatic leaders.

As a rule, potential conscripts are “bombarded with love,” the other side of which is aggression and cruelty applied in full measure to those who want to leave the community and the families and relatives determined to keep away from this sort of religious life. All adepts become vehicles of the idea that society is strictly divided, on the strength of several parameters, into “friends” and “foes.”

The new religious organizations employ all sorts of special propaganda and educational means and methods to intrude, latently yet on a wide scale, the sphere of political ideology. Ideological, methodological, organizational, and financial regulation is important for imposing a new identity; the same can be said of strict account for the population’s age-and-sex, social, ethnic, settlement, and other characteristics.

In sham religious communities, the members are assigned roles and functions designed to attract new members, maintain mutual control, extend material and financial support, etc.

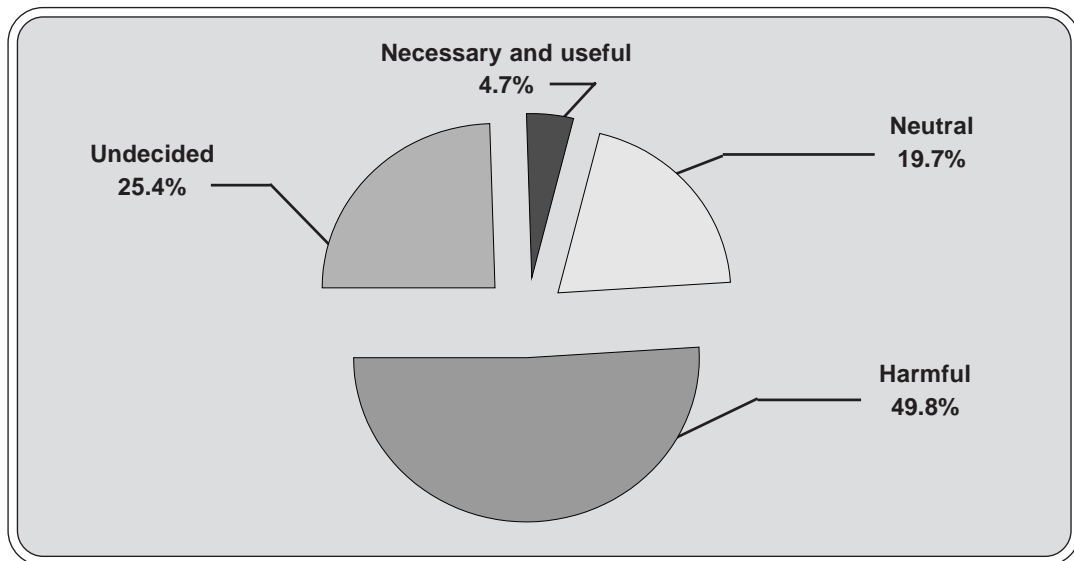
In fact, their functioning requires a lot of money comparable to what the state spends on writing and publishing textbooks and methodological aids in the humanities, as well as related organizational, propaganda, and information efforts. Normally, the sham religious structures try to pass for charities (free meals for the needy, campaigns in old people’s homes, etc.); they set up “salvation armies” with strict internal discipline and the obligation for all to obey the leaders. Bit by bit this, first, destroys old identities; second, it distorts the meaning of the basic values (the family, leadership, mutual assistance, the meaning of life, well-being, spirituality, serving society, etc.); third, it destroys public and personal security; and, fourth, it destroys the atmosphere of tolerance, a product of Kazakhstan society’s previous history.

Today, in view of the current geopolitical context and the role of the Republic of Kazakhstan in maintaining stability in Central Asia, the public is worried about possible confessional conflicts. According to the public opinion poll carried out in 2010 across the republic, 12 percent of the respondents believe that such conflicts are possible; 26 percent describe them as highly probable; 49.8 percent of respondents from all social groups describe organized and encouraged activities of the so-called non-traditional cults and corresponding religious organizations as harmful, while a mere 4.7 percent believe that they are necessary and useful (see Fig. 4).

➤ **Those who say YES to non-traditional cults are convinced that:**

- “Unlike the traditional confessions which are fairly passive, non-traditional religions spare no effort to attract new members.”

Figure 4



- “They teach people to be tolerant and this is the main thing.”
 - “There is another positive aspect: non-traditional confessions accumulate the energy of those who want to avoid traditional spiritual affiliations ... such people existed and will exist ... if not Krishnaists, then Jehovah’s Witnesses; if not Jehovah’s Witnesses, then drug addicts or homosexuals. This cannot be avoided: the share of mavericks increases until it reaches its natural limits... They are either recognized or die out ... either way, society evolves ... either way, there is progress and this is good.”
 - “Civil society is taught religious tolerance. On the whole, these religious communities do not teach anything bad; they teach people to ‘love thy neighbor’ and respect him and obey those in power. They perform a huge amount of social work, which remains unappreciated.”
 - “The fact that there are non-traditional religions in Kazakhstan proves that it is a secular democratic state in which each and everyone is guaranteed freedom of conscience.”
 - “These structures are doing a lot to resolve social problems, such as poverty, drug addiction, etc.”
 - “They preach endurance, respect, and kindness, values they share with the traditional religions.”
 - “They represent the freedom to choose one’s own way to God.”
 - “This means that all religious movements and confessions are treated as they should be in a democratic society. The fact that there are non-traditional religions in Kazakhstan means that each and everyone can enjoy his constitutional right to freedom of conscience.”
 - “Very much like the traditional religions, non-traditional religions bring people kindness and love; they are also more active in doing this.”
- **Those who say NO to non-traditional religions argued:**
- “There is nothing positive in their presence in the republic; they are alien to Kazakhstan mentality.”

- “There are practically no positive factors; the ideas, fundamental principles of life, and culture traditionally shared by Kazakhs, Russians, and people of other nationalities are eroded. They are replaced, through brainwashing, with elaborate sham religious ideas.”
- “There are no positive factors. I am convinced that these religious trends negatively affect people (this will be obvious sometime in future).”
- “When I hear ‘non-traditional’ I think ‘religious sects.’ This means that there is nothing positive in their presence in the republic.”
- “There is nothing positive in a poly-confessional society; it is living on the brink of conflicts.”

When asked about the negative influence of non-traditional religions in Kazakhstan, the respondents answered:

- they impose alien values and make religion look primitive;
- people abandon the traditional religions, while faith becomes another money-making instrument;
- they bring in pro-Western pseudo-religious teachings to occupy the minds; the country might lose those, who lured away, will refuse to obey the secular government and laws; they will reject the state and their own ethnicity (they will stop thinking of themselves as Kazakhs, Russians, Tatars, Uzbeks, etc.).
- the spread of very active non-traditional religions radicalizes the Muslims. Consistent brainwashing and attempts to evangelize, so to speak, the entire population (the Kazakhs in particular) cannot but cause concern;
- nearly all pseudo-religious organizations are nothing more than sects engaged in commercial activities, while their members, in the final analysis, are misguided.
- these organizations are hunting mainly for teenagers and young people, which cannot be described as positive;
- the negative impact of non-traditional religions is not yet obvious, but when it becomes obvious, it will be too late to ask questions;
- the so-called clergy pursue their own commercial interests; not infrequently they use their congregation in their own (economic or political) interests. Some people are forced to donate their apartments; other are sent with grenade in hand to kill others, etc.;
- many of those who familiarize themselves with the organizational principles, forms, and operational methods of pseudo-religious communities become averse to all other religions;
- a steadily increasing number of people caught in the net of non-traditional religious sects are turned into slaves. As if hypnotized, people part with their money or even commit crimes. Non-traditional religious sects are lucrative business for those who can hypnotize others. They merely fool people. The special services are not doing enough to fight this evil—this is the worst thing.”
- these communities are asocial; much in their “teachings” is pure invention which serves the interests of certain groups; not infrequently they resort to radical measures to control their followers.
- there is not enough information about the true motives of religious movements to allow people to objectively assess their activities. Many people, young men in particular, are tempted

by the eloquence of the agents of non-traditional faiths who present their teachings as very special, enticing, exotic and, therefore, extremely attractive.

The polled believe that totalitarian sects are dangerous for the following reasons:

- they deny that men and women are equal and insist that some religions are superior to others;
- their adepts abandon their families and move away from society and social reality;
- there are attempts to spread their philosophy, which says, “we are righteous, others are sinners.” Divorces are very frequent in families where members practice different religions;
- the members of such religious organizations are turned into zombies; they reject those who belong to other religions;
- persistent and fanatical members of totalitarian sects detach people from society and from their faiths;
- they profess idolatry;
- they warp human minds and souls with false religious teachings;
- they insult other faiths to impose on people their own God;
- religion is imposed in a way best described as persecution and aggression;
- non-traditional religious groups consist of fanatics who flaunt their faith, which is demonstrative rather than genuine;
- the children whom parents bring into sects negatively affect their peers: they look and behave differently, express very different ideas about the world, and impose zealous religiosity on others.

Challenges of Liberalism

The laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan do not resolve the problems created by the uncontrolled activities of non-registered public structures (including false religious organizations); the flow of extremist literature and its distribution inside the country go on practically unrestricted: ignorant people are lured into sham religious organizations through lies and are kept in them through intimidation or suppression of their willpower.

The respondents gave the following answers to the question about the foreign missionaries present in all regions (see Fig. 5).

Experts, teachers, and parents agree that attempts to “impose identity” have become more frequent. Ignorant people join new religious structures which pass themselves off as training and other courses, consultation bureaus, etc.

The respondents gave the following answers to the question of how the state should react to foreign missionaries (see Fig. 6).

In September 2010, a hot line (free calls from landlines from any corner of Kazakhstan) was established in Almaty to cope with the ever increasing number of appeals to public organizations and law-and-order structures by victims, their relatives, friends, teachers, and concerned members of the public. It is enough to dial 8-800-080-78-68 to reach a psychologist or a lawyer to discuss cases of illegal conscription to or detention by force in sham religious organizations which might cost the vic-

Figure 5

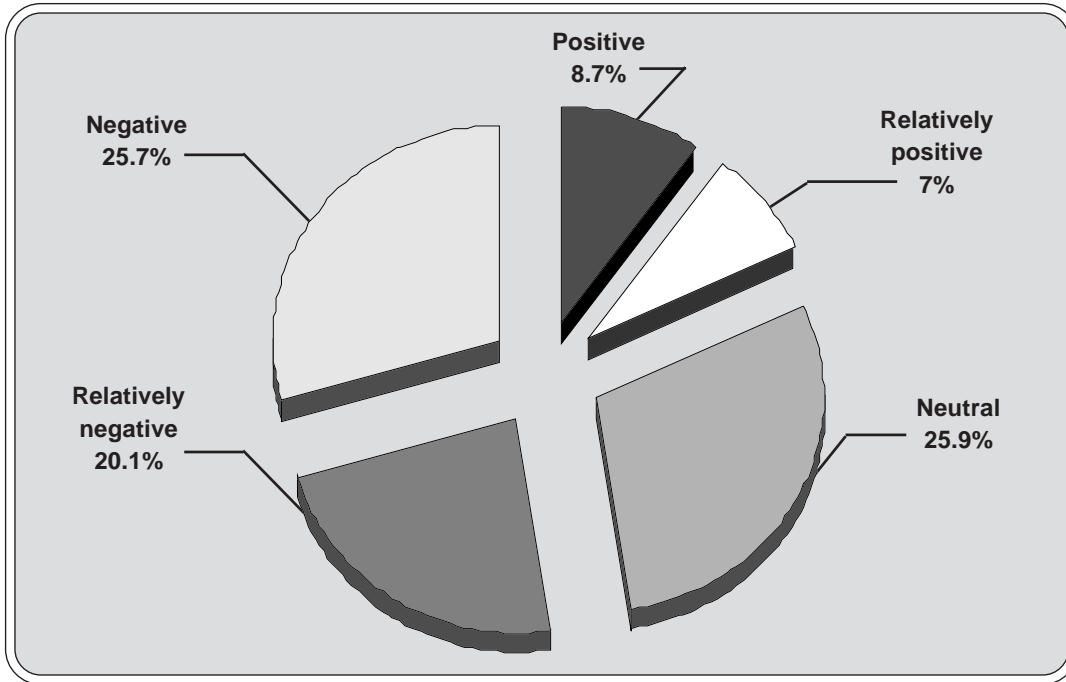
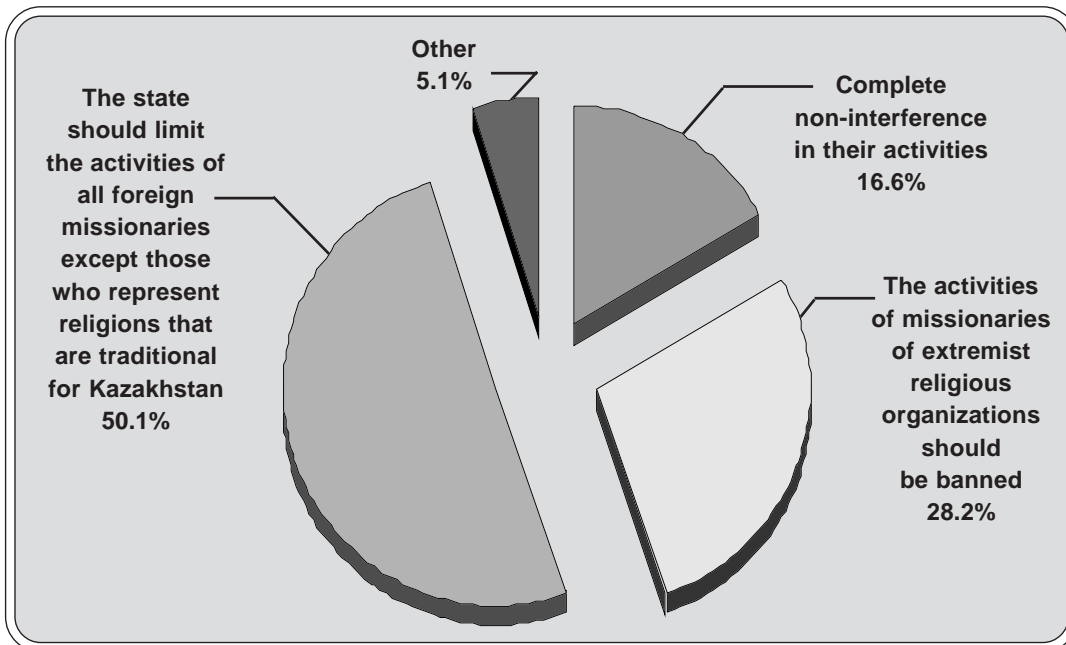


Figure 6



tim his health and personal property and which violates his civil rights. In 2010 alone, we registered about 1,000 cases of conscription through deceit.

Psychological re-adaptation of the former victims is long and torturous; so far, it has not been that easy to return the property (or money) “donated” to these organizations: in all cases they put documents on the table signed by former adepts who allegedly voluntarily (in fact, under psychological pressure) donated money to a religious society or an individual. Having freed themselves from many years (or even decades) of religious slavery, people realize that they lost not only their mental health and property, but also the meaning of life. They have to face the fact that what they did under psychological pressure destroyed their families; distorted the lives of their children, disappointed their parents, etc.

In view of the above, our Foundation has pointed out to the corresponding state structures that the country needs a rehabilitation center to help the victims of destructive activities of pseudo-religious organizations. Today, there is a firmly established expert opinion that former adepts are lost to society.

The Central Asian countries with rich practical experience in relations among the state, religious communities, and citizens should share it with the rest of the world; the criteria of cooperation between civil society institutions and the state should be adjusted to the present situation. This means that all the evidence relating to the destructive impact of religious communities on personal and public security should be carefully investigated; our laws should be amended accordingly to exclude the abuse of religion for far from religious or even criminal purposes.

The practical experience gained by the Information-Consultative Perspektiva Group Public Foundation, which represents the interests of victims, suggests that the following criteria can be used to monitor and assess the activities of religious communities:

- (1) A peaceful rather than confrontational dialog between citizens and a particular religious community based on the priority of interests of the former.
- (2) Mechanisms for promoting the integration of religious communities into society and consensus among all sides (the state, society, and individuals);
- (3) Efficient social services that fit the standards as an inalienable part of the cultural paradigm of the “host” society.
- (4) Non-discrimination of those who for any reason cannot remain in a religious community.

The human rights organizations (state and NGOs) should join forces to protect people’s freedom of thought and conscience.

It seems that in the context of a transition mentality, the practically unrestrained onslaught of non-state political ideology adds to the polarization of ideas about life based on the “us/them” dichotomy. It is actively promoted by those who support the conflict-prone paradigm, an obvious threat to political and social stability in a polyethnic and multi-confessional environment: social outcasts or members of radical, yet attractively wrapped, religious groups willingly embrace extremist ideas.

The time has come to learn how to keep conflict potential in check: today, the state should tighten its grip on the changes in historic dimensions in order to preserve Kazakhstan’s specific identity. The current situation calls for a scientifically substantiated ideology and a corresponding policy capable of shaping civil identity.

The new ideological agents apply various technologies and methods and address different population groups. Experts have demonstrated that the image of statehood is purposefully and consistently undermined by those who attack the axiological stronghold of Kazakhstan mentality. These activities are funded by all sorts of new religious cults, public structures, and organizations which are ostensibly “fighting for democratic freedoms;” the same structures provide training, monitoring, registration, broadcasting, and other services.

Today, with the loss of upbringing and socialization functions which belonged to the educational system and of the socialization technologies previously used by other structures, ideological convictions are no longer transferred from generation to generation. Intergenerational continuity has slackened, which might create a crisis of mass political marginalization in the form of atomization and alienation; people might stop thinking of themselves as members of certain groups or a civil community. There is the danger that further disruption of the national mentality will push “social outsiders” (people with imposed new identities) deeper into marginal states; this will destroy the tolerance reproduced throughout history as one of the unique features of the multicultural Kazakhstan society.

Under certain conditions, political and religious extremism, which is undergoing an upsurge in Kazakhstan, might create new fissures in social mentality.

Careful studies of the republic’s political risks revealed that latent extremism has come into the open. This means that certain social groups have embraced protest behavior as a self-contained value, which is particularly true of the numerous pseudo-religious organizations that aim at children, students, young workers, intellectuals (mostly teachers and academics), senior citizens, etc. The institutions of civil society are sparing no effort to slow the downhill trend toward protest behavior by promoting a correct attitude toward the state and its institutions.

This calls for monitoring social tension; we should acquire a clear idea about how fully the most urgent needs of all the population groups are being satisfied. No monitoring is possible without an interdisciplinary approach to the subject and interest in public mentality as such; this explains why there is no consistent scientific monitoring of the shifts, structure, and dynamics of the changes in mentality in Kazakhstan. It should be said that methodological support of the institutions of civil society is inadequate. We need a research center of interdisciplinary monitoring to follow the shifts in national mentality.

What is being done today to identify the trends in social shifts and provide reliable forecasts of the social-political situation is limited to a mono-disciplinary approach and sporadic situational efforts: they never cover the entire country, i.e. all the social strata and focus groups; they are never realized on a permanent basis, while the results are not entered into a unified database.

To identify the trends of evolving spirituality we need sociological monitoring and a system of corresponding indicative measurements to compile a map of the social risks and identify the measures necessary to reproduce the traditional axiological pillars of Kazakhstan mentality.

To be able to study the process of “imposing mentality,” we need institutional support in the form of an independent research structure.

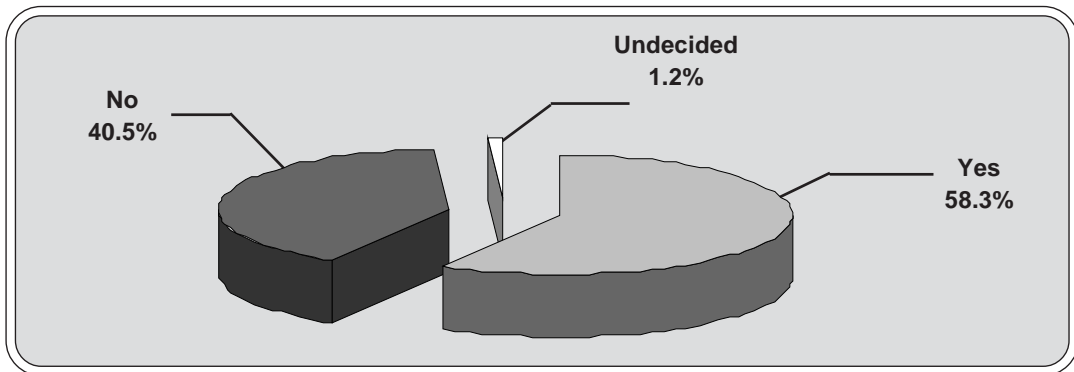
State Control and Tolerance

As a secular and socially oriented state ruled by law, Kazakhstan is a country of genuine ideological pluralism: its citizens are free to choose their convictions and forms of involvement in all sorts of organizations, including religious structures. It is implied that these structures abide by the Constitution and the laws, respect the rights of their members, and contribute to social progress. Even though people in Kazakhstan are not deeply religious, all the world religions are present in the country; there is also any number of new confessions and cults. This speaks of the country’s ideological diversity and real freedom of conscience. In these conditions, the frantic conscripting efforts of many of the religious communities cannot be described as justified: they are obviously determined to promote certain ideas and impose new identities.

It should be said that the Kazakhs' traditional ideological pluralism and tolerance are behind the state's and society's fairly liberal attitude toward religious communities; the laws and the general atmosphere of religious tolerance are the best evidence of this.

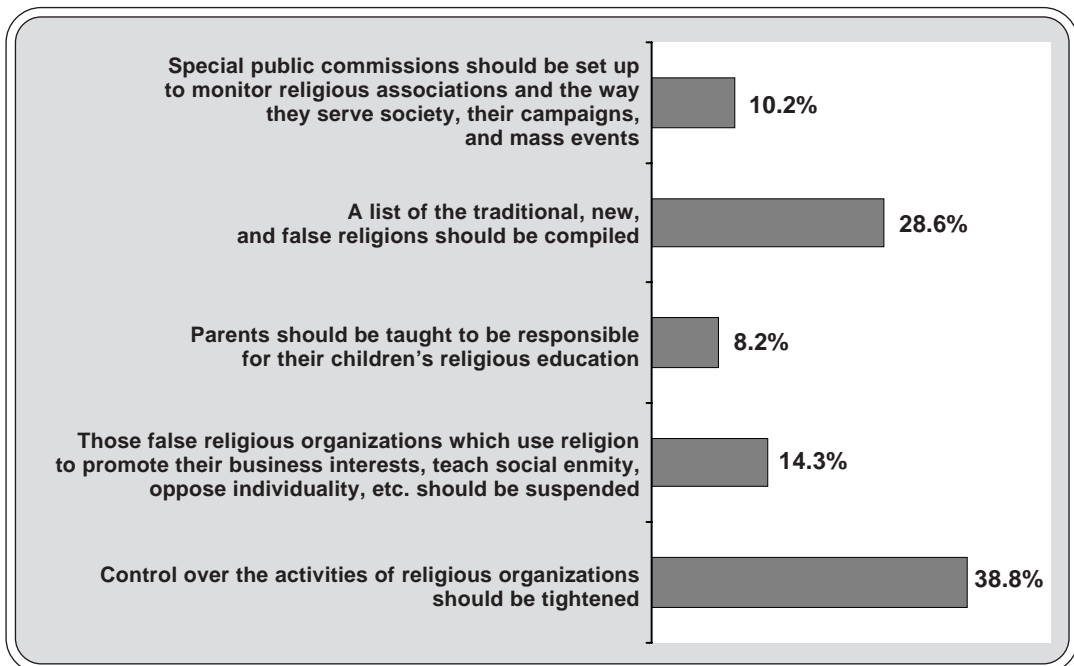
When asked whether the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations should be amended, the respondents answered (see Fig. 7):

Figure 7



The respondents also suggested (see Fig. 8):

Figure 8



We are convinced that the principle of tolerance of religion and freedom of ideological choice should not interfere with the state's duty to keep in check those communities and their patrons that invade private lives and violate constitutional rights related to personal property, homes, and people's health (physical and mental), etc.

An analysis of the so-called religious literature which has inundated Kazakhstan and is sold in bookshops, distributed among the adepts of new religious organizations, sold in the streets or offered free to passers-by, dropped into letterboxes in apartment houses, etc. revealed that the state is not controlling the process. Those who distribute ostensibly religious printed matter pursue the following aims:

- Fanning religious strife, ethnic enmity, and protest against the secular government;
- Inculcating all sorts of fears and phobias associated, among other things, with possible apocalyptic events to scare unbelievers or followers of other confessions, etc.;
- Planting in potential adepts the idea of alienation from the cultural traditions of Kazakhstan society;
- Imposing certain behavioral algorithms which demand strict discipline inside religious groups never divulged to outsiders; behavior control; gathering information about the private lives of other members of the same community.

The above and certain other factors can be described as manifestations of imposed pseudo-religious identity fraught with extremist outbursts. This means that the state should entrust corresponding structures and the expert community with monitoring the literature distributed in the republic.

Our studies of the state and dynamics of civil culture in Kazakhstan revealed that the political preferences of the absolute majority of its population are unrelated to any of the parties or public movements. The fairly high ratings of religious organizations should be treated as a cause for concern: the polls designed to identify the state of political mentality revealed that the people are subjected to consistent efforts to impose political awareness on them by drawing them into “quasi-religious” activities. It bears reminding that politicization outside political structures and public movements is fraught with extremist forms of mentality and behavior.

In Kazakhstan religion is separated from the state, which means that its educational system operates as a secular one. To survive, tolerance in a multi-confessional society should be underpinned by religious studies as part of the curriculum in schools and higher educational establishments. This has been discussed for some time at the state and international level. To be introduced, a new subject must be absolutely balanced in order to avoid any axiological assessments and biases; teachers and lecturers should be trained in scientific and methodological approaches. The subject will serve as a compass of the ideological diversity that has taken shape in Kazakhstan.

We are convinced that globalization, the political processes occurring in Kazakhstan and its neighbors, and the present state of civil mentality in the republic have made this subject absolutely indispensable in the continued efforts to build a closely knit community in Kazakhstan.

We should bring together all professional skills for comprehensive monitoring in order to detect at an early stage, identify, and prevent the destructive activities of structures that claim to be religious organizations; this requires efficient mechanisms. Such activities should be stopped and the dissemination of sham religious ideas prevented at the national and interstate levels.

At the Review OSCE Conference in Warsaw in 2010, we suggested that the OSCE come up with criteria that define the nature of false religious activities and devise monitoring methods applied to the freedom of conscience and its observation.

So far, the trends in Kazakhstan mentality are not quite clear; data about people’s biases toward certain religious and ideological doctrines are vague or even contradictory; we have not yet identified what different social groups think about the vitally important issues of their coexistence (including the national idea, ethnic and confessional interaction, etc.); the typological models of electoral behavior are still unclear, as is the mechanism of adaptation to the new reality and axiological preferences.

Any effective policy requires profound knowledge of the entity to be managed (in our case, basic and secondary descriptions of Kazakhstan society). This means that we should start a full-scale program of study and expert analysis to identify at the empirical level, interpret at the theoretical level, create models, launch continued monitoring of identity dynamics, and supply the subjects of politics with practical recommendations. Monitoring could cover the following fields: Lifestyle, Employment, Migration, Civil and Family Socialization, Structure of Consumption, Leisure, Social Well-being, Axiological Preferences, etc.

As an inter-disciplinary problem, extremism should be studied in its entirety by a system of scholarly methods adjusted to the task at hand. This means a well-substantiated system of criteria and an effective method of non-contradictory qualimetric measurements of extremist threats.

To achieve the desired identity, we should employ the latest methods when dealing with issues related to the development of human capital; this will add efficiency to education and upbringing of the younger generation. It should be taught morality and achieve spiritual maturity; it should learn to be active, socially mobile, and competent; know how to arrange living strategies; and learn to make responsible decisions related to itself and other people.

In the absence of purposeful and systematic study of mental processes based on the latest methods and technologies, the state cannot expect to create more or less efficient tools to control the nation's social health and remedy its ills. There are no mechanisms of preemptive responses to possible protests which undermine civil unity and confidence in the institutions of power.

It is more or less commonly, and wrongly, believed that the state alone should prevent terrorism and extremism and fight them.

It seems that NGOs engaged in various activities should learn to monitor society's mentality and supply expert opinions about the civil sector and its functioning; this may prevent extremist sentiments in human minds and extremist behavior. Their study of the activities of various public structures will bring to light any discrepancies between their stated aims and real activities and help identify the degree to which they correspond, socially and politically, to the needs of people and the values cultivated by the modern democratic community.

The state and society should remain in control of the ideological impact on mentality; this is especially important in transition political systems, as well as in social and economic order.

It should be said that because of the never-ending reforms, the system of education and enlightenment cannot create and reproduce a value-oriented frame of mind; this deprives people of their opportunity for civil socialization. The opposition media, on the other hand, promote confrontational ideas—the state vs. the citizen, society vs. the individual, the government vs. the individual—in an effort to spread protest sentiments far and wide.

Many years of monitoring have revealed that about 13 to 15 percent of respondents are inclined to protest and are always prepared to criticize the state of things; less than 1 percent of them, however, are prepared to take part in protest rallies; they are ready to take to the streets only when and if their civil interests are threatened.

At the same time, the level of protest sentiments is several times higher among those who describe themselves as believers, even though the traditional religions call for peace and humility and sow tranquility and confidence in human souls.

It should be said that today, in the extremely ambiguous situation, the state does not interfere in what religious structures are doing; it respects their autonomy. This means that the religious communities should respond in kind: they should keep away from what the state is doing and from political ideology; they should respect people's privacy (personal and family) and obey the laws.

The state has invited those religious communities that serve social progress and the interests of each and every individual to participate in an open and constructive dialog.

Some of the religious communities have failed to clearly outline their aims in Kazakhstan, not infrequently what they describe as propaganda and educational is in fact:

- Political counterpropaganda;
- Propaganda of social inequality, religious exclusiveness, and intolerance of other faiths and their followers;
- Proliferation of confrontational behavior in their adepts in relation to their families, relatives, neighbors, the state, and its structures;
- Tilling the soil for inculcating extremist ideas and behavior in their adepts spearheaded against the followers of other faiths, the state, and social institutions;
- Other than religious activities, etc.

We learned from those who survived the cruelty of the “new” religions that many of the so-called religious organizations taught fear and pressure and practice them; their followers were instructed to regard those who refused to buckle under pressure and rejected the teaching as enemies.

This means that despite the fairly strong and prevailing preference for stability among the people of Kazakhstan, the country is living in a state of mounting tension brought about by certain geopolitical factors and imported from abroad.

For this reason, the country should urgently create civil education programs adjusted to different population groups. The NGOs, in turn, should shoulder the task of informing the people about the true aims and practices of the extremist trends that pose as religious faiths and about their political patrons.

Conclusion

Kazakhstan has accepted and is applying many of the European legal principles in relations between the state and religion; religious confessions, organizations, and associations which obey the Constitution enjoy all rights and freedoms in essentially every sphere of life.

This explains, in part, the increased interest new cults and movements (both religious and sham religious) are showing in Kazakhstan. This interest has created a relatively recent phenomenon—religious migration.

By way of summing up, I deem it necessary to say that the country urgently needs an expert analytical center to carry out the following:

- Monitor the development of civil mentality (including religious mentality) and analyze the results;
- Study the impact of socio-cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors on civil conscience and behavior;
- Create methods for measuring the identification processes going on in various social groups;
- Offer multisided social-humanitarian expert analyses;
- Draw up ideological programs for the educational system and methodological recommendations for the media.