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DEVELOPMENT OF STATE RELIGIOUS POLICY IN KAZAKHSTAN: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH AND STRATEGIC GUIDELINES

Abstract

The study provides an analysis of the evolution of state religious policy in Kazakhstan, with special emphasis on an integrated approach that combines strategic guidelines with practical measures aimed at promoting religious harmony and strengthening national security. A detailed analysis of the legal, administrative, and practical aspects of interaction between the state and religious institutions is conducted, emphasizing the critical importance of preserving the secular model of governance that promotes freedom of conscience, religious tolerance, and the prevention of interreligious conflicts. A comprehensive review of existing literature, combined with empirical data collected from various governmental and non-governmental sources, as well as a comparative analysis of the practices of other secular states, reveals significant public support for the current religious policy. However, the study also identifies key challenges facing Kazakhstan, such as the growing threat of religious extremism, demographic pressures, and the need to update the legal framework. The main findings of the work emphasize the need to develop a holistic concept of state policy in the religious sphere, including legal, methodological, and organizational measures that will effectively manage religious diversity in the country. The conclusion presents strategic recommendations aimed at further improving Kazakhstan's religious policy, which will contribute to strengthening socio-political stability and ensuring a balanced, progressive approach to religious issues in the context of modern challenges of globalization and regional changes.

Keywords: interconfessional relations, interethnic stability, national security, religious sphere, freedom of conscience

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНДА МЕМЛЕКЕТТІК ДІНИ САЯСАТТЫ ДАМУ: КЕШЕНДІ ТӘСІЛ ЖӘНЕ СТРАТЕГИЯЛЫҚ БАҒДАРЛАР

Аңдатпа

Зерттеу діни үйлесімділікке жәрдемдесуге және ұлттық қауіпсіздікті нығайтуға бағытталған стратегиялық бағдарлар мен тәжірибелік шараларды үйлестіретін ықпалдастырылған тәсілге ерекше назар аудара отырып, Қазақстандағы мемлекеттік діни саясаттың эволюциясын талдауды білдіреді. Мемлекет пен діни институттардың өзара іс-қимылының құқықтық, әкімшілік және тәжірибелік аспектілеріне егжей-тегжейлі бағалау жүргізілді, бұл ар-ождан бостандығын, діни шыдамдылықты

қамтамасыз етуге және дінаралық жанжалдарды болдырмауға ықпал ететін басқарудың зайырлы моделін сақтаудың сындарлы маңыздылығын көрсетеді. Түрлі мемлекеттік және үкіметтік емес дереккөздерден жиналған эмпирикалық деректермен үйлестірілген қолда бар әдебиетті кешенді шолу, сондай-ақ басқа да зайырлы мемлекеттердің тәжірибелерін салыстырмалы талдау діни саясаттың ағымдағы бағытын айтарлықтай қоғамдық қолдауды анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Алайда, зерттеу Қазақстанның алдында тұрған діни экстремизмнің өсіп келе жатқан қаупі, демографиялық қысым және құқықтық базаны жаңарту қажеттігі сияқты негізгі сын-қатерлерді де ашады. Жұмыстың негізгі қорытындылары елдегі діни әртүрлілікті тиімді басқаруға мүмкіндік беретін құқықтық, әдіснамалық және ұйымдастырушылық шараларды қамтитын діни саладағы мемлекеттік саясаттың тұтас тұжырымдамасын әзірлеу қажеттігіне назар аударады. Қорытындыда Қазақстанның діни саясатын одан әрі жетілдіруге бағытталған стратегиялық ұсынымдар ұсынылды, бұл әлеуметтік-саяси тұрақтылықты нығайтуға және жаһандану мен өңірлік өзгерістердің қазіргі заманғы сын-қатерлері жағдайында діни мәселелерге теңгерімді, прогрессивті көзқарасты қамтамасыз етуге ықпал ететін болады.

Кілт сөздер: конфессияаралық қатынастар, этносаралық тұрақтылық, ұлттық қауіпсіздік, діни сала, ар-ождан бостандығы.

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РАЗВИТИЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ РЕЛИГИОЗНОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ: КОМПЛЕКСНЫЙ ПОДХОД И СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКИЕ ОРИЕНТИРЫ

Аннотация

Исследование представляет собой анализ эволюции государственной религиозной политики в Казахстане, с особым акцентом на интегрированный подход, который сочетает стратегические ориентиры и практические меры, направленные на содействие религиозной гармонии и укрепление национальной безопасности. Проведена детальная оценка правовых, административных и практических аспектов взаимодействия государства и религиозных институтов, что подчеркивает критическую важность сохранения светской модели управления, способствующей обеспечению свободы совести, религиозной терпимости и предотвращению межрелигиозных конфликтов. Комплексный обзор существующей литературы в сочетании с эмпирическими данными, собранными из различных государственных и неправительственных источников, а также сравнительный анализ практик других светских государств, позволили выявить значительную общественную поддержку текущего курса религиозной политики. Однако исследование также вскрывает ключевые вызовы, стоящие перед Казахстаном, такие как растущая угроза религиозного экстремизма, демографическое давление и необходимость обновления правовой базы. Основные выводы работы акцентируют внимание на необходимости разработки целостной концепции государственной политики в религиозной сфере, включающей правовые, методологические и организационные меры, которые позволят эффективно управлять религиозным разнообразием в стране. В заключении представлены стратегические рекомендации, ориентированные на дальнейшее совершенствование религиозной политики Казахстана, что будет способствовать укреплению социально-политической стабильности и обеспечению сбалансированного, прогрессивного подхода к религиозным вопросам в условиях современных вызовов глобализации и региональных изменений.

Ключевые слова: межконфессиональные отношения, межэтническая стабильность, национальная безопасность, религиозная сфера, свобода совести.

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Introduction.

Following Kazakhstan's attainment of independence, the nation—a historical melting pot where diverse ethnicities and religions have coexisted harmoniously and enriched each other culturally—established the necessary political, legal, and socio-economic frameworks to foster the development of its cultural heritage and traditional spiritual values. In alignment with the nation's Constitution, Kazakhstan has adopted a secular model for state-religious interactions. This model is founded on the principles of legal equality for all citizens and respect for the personal beliefs of each individual, regardless of their language or religious background.

Under widely recognized international norms, the state has the authority to oversee the activities of religious organizations to safeguard citizens' rights and public safety. The "Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Religious Activity and Religious Associations" is designed to uphold the right to freedom of conscience as prescribed by international law and the national Constitution. This law establishes the legal framework for implementing state policies and protecting national interests in the religious domain.

Within the existing legal framework, the activities of religious associations are regulated, and procedures are specified for missionary work, organizing religious events, conducting religious studies expertise, building places of worship, and distributing religious literature.

The state also implements specific measures to promote stability in the religious sector, enhance interfaith harmony and tolerance within society, and strengthen resistance against the ideologies of religious extremism and radicalism in all their forms [1, 89-98]. As of the end of 2023, necessary conditions have been established to support the activities of 3,977 officially registered religious associations, representing 18 confessions in Kazakhstan. These include: 2,835 Islamic associations, 342 Orthodox associations, 93 Catholic associations, 586 Protestant associations, 61 Jehovah's Witnesses associations, 24 New Apostolic Church associations, 13 Society for Krishna Consciousness associations, 7 Jewish associations, 6 Bahá'í associations, 2 Buddhist associations, 2 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) associations, and 1 Moonist association.

A total of 486 missionaries are officially registered; among them, 416 are foreigners, and 70 are nationals of the Republic of Kazakhstan. By confession, there are 272 Catholic representatives, 42 Orthodox representatives, 59 Pentecostal Church representatives, 17 New Apostolic Church representatives, 40 Society for Krishna Consciousness members, 22 Presbyterian Church representatives, 5 Baptist representatives, 4 Seventh-day Adventist representatives, 2 Jewish representatives, 2 Lutheran representatives, 4 Jehovah's Witnesses representatives, 2 Buddhist representatives, and 15 Mormon representatives. As of the end of 2023, the country operates 14 religious educational institutions with a total of 4,395 students.

At the end of 2023, 53 facts of administrative offenses in the field of religious activities were identified, of which 29 facts were identified by law enforcement agencies and regional Directorates for Religious Affairs under Articles 453, 489 of the Code. Currently, authorized state and law enforcement agencies are primarily concentrating on preventive and educational efforts, aiming to reduce the reliance on administrative measures [2].

As an independent nation with a diverse ethnic and religious makeup, Kazakhstan is developing its unique framework for interaction between government bodies and religious associations. Research [3], [4,41-58] indicates that religious beliefs form a unique sphere, encompassing both universal human values and potential risks to spiritual harmony, social relations, and citizens' consciousness. Therefore, the approaches and principles of state policy for regulating public relations in the religious sphere are unique, taking into account the country's specificity and the cultural-mental characteristics of its people.

In 2019, pivotal studies titled 'The Religious Situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan' and 'The Population's Assessment of State Policy in the Religious Sphere' found that 92.8% of the population identifies as believers, with Islam (70.2%) and Orthodoxy (26%) being the predominant religions. These investigations also showed strong public approval of the government's religious policies, with 89.5% support and 63.04% backing the secular governance direction. Awareness of anti-extremism efforts is high, at 76.9%, contributing to a generally positive view of the religious climate, described by 83% of respondents as "prosperous" or "somewhat prosperous" [5].

These indicators suggest that state measures in the religious sphere have contributed to stability and found broad support within Kazakhstani society. However, significant risks of religiously driven social destabilization remain under-controlled by current legislation and state management levels.

The 2023 U.S. Department of State report highlights several issues within Kazakhstan's religious sphere, including fines, arrests, detentions, or imprisonments based on religious beliefs or affiliations; prohibitions on unregistered groups practicing their faith; restrictions on peaceful religious gatherings; limitations on public religious expressions and attire; criminal liability for statements inciting religious discord; restrictions on proselytism, religious literature, and content censorship [6].

Additionally, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in 2023 noted some liberalization in legislation concerning human rights protection but pointed out ongoing challenges in ensuring freedom of religion. National security and counter-terrorism laws frequently restrict believers' rights and are used for stringent control over religious groups [7].

Research by R. Podoprigora [8] reveals that following the Soviet Union's collapse, both governmental and societal apprehensions about religious institutions persist in Kazakhstan, particularly affecting public sectors like education. Without reforms in political systems, societal attitudes towards religion, and perceptions of secularism, the shift towards more liberal religious legislation and practices remains unlikely. The remnants of Soviet-era suspicion and prejudice against religious minorities continue to influence the state-religion relationship in Kazakhstan.

Our analysis is supported by findings from Cornell et al. [9], which detail the evolution of Kazakhstan's state religious policies. Recent developments have highlighted the government's previous underestimation of risks from extremist religious groups, prompting legislative and policy reforms aimed at addressing these threats. These measures, focusing on groups and individuals labeled as extremist or unconventional, have sparked criticism from Western observers.

The core Western critique of Kazakhstan's religious policies stems from a deep ideological divide. Western views emphasize absolute religious freedom and governmental neutrality, intervening only when violence occurs. In contrast, Kazakhstan believes in active government oversight of religion to support traditional religious groups and maintain social harmony. This approach, while needing periodic updates, faces criticism for being overly restrictive.

In Kazakhstan, Western critiques often fail to gain traction as they challenge the country's fundamental Skeptical/Insulating secular model, thus having little impact on policy. A more effective strategy would involve acknowledging the basis of Kazakh policies and collaboratively working with local officials to refine them. This cooperative approach could help Kazakhstan develop a religious policy model that might serve as a reference for other Muslim-majority nations.

Numerous scholars have explored the intricacies of the Kazakhstani approach to state-religious interactions, with notable contributions from Korganova et al. [10], Yerekesheva [11], Mukhit [12], Kusack [13], Smagulov [14], Cornell et al. [9], Mazhiev et al. [15], Zhanat et al. [16], Aimukhambetov et al. [17], Azilkhanov & Zhalgas [18] and Buribayev et al. [19].

Additional research has been directed towards understanding the evolution of religious sentiment in Kazakhstan, as exemplified by works from Tutinova, Laruelle, Moldakhmet, Alimbekova, Karimov, Alimbekova, Karpat, Kabidenova, Ayazhan & Kabdulayevna, Kulsaryieva, Yerekesheva and Malik. These studies not only analyze Kazakhstanis' perceptions of religious radicalism and strategies for its mitigation but also address practical concerns in the field, highlighted by the research of Beissebayev, Rakhimbekov, Ahmed, Surucu, Olcott and Malik [20].

Kazakhstani legal scholars have extensively explored the intricacies of personal rights within the religious domain, scrutinizing the state of religious freedom under current laws. Noteworthy contributions in this area include works by Trofimov, Epkenhans, Podoprigora, Iskakova and Brady. Additionally, the formation of religious identity in Kazakhstan, examining its significance across different historical epochs, has attracted scholarly attention. Key studies in this domain have been conducted by Zhussipbek et al., Summers et al., Achilov, Sadvokassov & Zhumashev, Yemelianova, Zengin & Badagulova), Mustafayeva et al., Haghayeghi, Aydingun, Curanović, and Charles. Research delving into religious education has been pivotal, featuring contributions by Kusack, Erpay et al., Oktyabrovich, Mussabekov & Seisenova, Smagulov et al., Mustafayeva et al. and Tursunbay. Furthermore, investigations into the nuances of religious conversion and shifts in religious consciousness among women in Kazakhstan offer insightful perspectives, with studies from Kusbekov et al. [21], Tolsdorf [22], Sultangaliyeva [23], and Constantine [24].

Scholarly discussions on state-religious dynamics often emphasize the role of socio-cultural and national-historical factors in shaping religious policies. However, there has been limited detailed evaluation of Kazakhstan's approach to managing its religious sector. This study investigates the interaction between religion

and the multi-confessional, multi-ethnic fabric of Kazakhstan, a secular nation by constitutional mandate. It focuses on how the country oversees religious groups, aligning with democratic norms while addressing the complex dynamics between state and religion. Given the predominantly Muslim population, crafting a distinct secular framework that accommodates this majority is crucial. Our research highlights how Kazakhstan uniquely engages with different religious denominations, aiming to define future policy directions and underscore the specific features of these state-religion interactions.

Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives.

The study of religion, its place, and role in the process of state-building in Kazakhstan is relevant due to the processes of modernization and the transformation of religious values and their integration into civil identity. The increasing influence of religious factors on public consciousness, surges of Islamophobic sentiments, and radical discourse necessitate an objective analysis of the religious landscape and the identification of its ontological characteristics. Conducting an analysis of contemporary religious paradigms will reveal the prospects for the future of religion in Kazakhstan and its potential for innovation in science, education, and social life.

This article aims to outline and examine the development and strategic direction of Kazakhstan's state religious policy, which is essential for the country's continued state-building and governance efforts. This study explores the current direction and key features of Kazakhstan's management of its religious domain, aiming to refine and improve the existing legal framework and introduce socio-economic, political, and administrative reforms. A comprehensive, integrated approach is proposed for reshaping state policy in the religious domain, incorporating legal, methodological, and organizational strategies. The findings are intended to guide and synergize the efforts of various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, religious organizations, and civil society, in refining and advancing Kazakhstan's policies on religious coexistence and interfaith dialogue.

Research Objectives:

To elucidate the primary characteristics of the development of religion in independent Kazakhstan and to identify the socio-economic, political, and spiritual bases for its operation under new socio-political conditions.

To examine the religious climate in Kazakhstan and to assess the political and legal frameworks governing the religious sphere.

To investigate the extent of the religious factor's impact on the country's national security, and on interethnic and interfaith stability, considering the historical development experience in independent Kazakhstan.

To formulate recommendations and proposals for addressing pressing issues within the religious sphere.

Scientific research methodology.

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to examine the evolution of state religious policy in Kazakhstan, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques to develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The methodology incorporates key elements designed to create cohesive strategies for policy development. A detailed analysis of existing literature was conducted, encompassing academic articles, government reports, legal documents, and historical texts. This review established a theoretical basis, identified research gaps, and offered insights into the historical and socio-political dynamics of religious policy in Kazakhstan.

This analysis explored the interactions among religious institutions, state policies, and societal dynamics. It helped pinpoint crucial elements of Kazakhstan's religious policy framework, such as legislative actions, governance structures, and stakeholder roles, contributing to our understanding of how religious policy is shaped within the country.

This study employed comparative analysis to benchmark Kazakhstan's religious policy against other secular states with significant religious diversity, assessing different models of state-religious interaction to identify best practices for refining Kazakhstan's strategic guidelines. The research included a survey developed with local religious studies and sociology experts, focusing on public attitudes towards current religious policy, the government's management effectiveness, and satisfaction with religious freedoms.

Additionally, qualitative data from literature reviews and comparative analysis were thematically analyzed to identify relevant themes and patterns for developing Kazakhstan's state religious policy. The study also featured in-depth case studies examining the implications of policy changes on religious freedom and the effectiveness of various policy approaches.

Using empirical data and insights from these case studies, the research proposed future scenarios for evolving Kazakhstan's religious policy to enhance religious harmony, address current challenges, and refine governance models. This methodological approach provides a solid foundation for generating actionable insights and recommendations for policymakers, religious communities, and civil society, aiming to improve the management and efficacy of religious policy in Kazakhstan.

Main part.

The study reveals key patterns in Kazakhstan's religious dynamics, emphasizing the need for strategic responses due to globalization's impact. This includes the importation of religious tensions and the rise of radical movements, influenced by political misuse of religion and global trends in religious extremism and terrorism. Kazakhstan's state must regulate religious practices to maintain freedom of conscience and develop new state policies for managing religion.

Legal adjustments are required to align with global and regional trends and combat religious radicalism and extremism. Despite a generally moderate religious stance, there's an uptick in religiosity among Kazakhs, potentially eroding secular foundations. This includes a rise in public expressions of piety, which some confuse with atheism, and increased radicalization among youth who lack deep religious knowledge, making them susceptible to extremist influences.

Social dynamics, like socio-economic disparities and perceived injustices, contribute to youth vulnerability towards radical ideologies. The confessional landscape is further complicated by unregistered and radical religious groups, leading to societal divisions and conflicts within the religious community.

Results and discussion.

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The state's role in regulating overseas religious education is critical, as unmonitored education abroad can foster harmful ideologies. Strengthening domestic educational pathways and professional development in religious studies is vital for building local expertise to counter extremism.

Effective government strategies are needed to foster a societal stance of zero tolerance towards radical behaviors, enhance interagency collaboration, and implement educational and preventive measures against extremism. Establishing clear policy directions and strengthening capacities to tackle religious extremism are urgent priorities for Kazakhstan's medium-term religious policy agenda.

The examination of Kazakhstan's religious landscape reveals notable trends and challenges that necessitate strategic policy interventions. Globalization has introduced complex challenges, such as interreligious tensions and the emergence of radical religious movements. This situation underscores the need for updated regulations to effectively navigate these influences and prevent the exploitation of religion for political and extremist purposes.

The existing laws governing religious activities are outdated, necessitating revisions to align with global trends and the evolving domestic religious landscape, particularly to curb religious extremism. Despite a traditionally moderate religious population, there is a noticeable increase in visible religiosity, which some misinterpret as a shift from secularism to atheism, threatening the secular foundation of the state.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to radical ideologies due to socio-economic disparities and a lack of critical religious understanding, increasing the risk of societal division and conflict. The unregulated interactions among various religious groups and the trend of pursuing unmonitored religious education abroad contribute to the assimilation of harmful ideologies. This underscores the need for regulated and quality theological education within Kazakhstan.

There is a critical need for professional development in religious studies and theology to mitigate extremism risks. It is essential to establish clear policy priorities and enhance the capabilities of government and non-governmental bodies in managing religious affairs. Additionally, fostering collaboration among government, civil society, media, and educational institutions, and promoting a societal stance of zero tolerance towards radical religious behaviors are crucial for effectively combating extremism.

These findings underscore the importance of a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to addressing Kazakhstan's religious challenges, focusing on both preventive measures and the development of informed and cohesive policies.

From our perspective, the state's primary endeavors should concentrate on these objectives:

- 1) Strengthening the secular basis of state development while ensuring the protection of every citizen's right to freedom of conscience;
- 2) Refining the legal framework governing religious practices and organizations;
- 3) Improving coordination between governmental agencies and civil society in executing Kazakhstan's religious policy, with a focus on upholding secularism and mitigating religious extremism;
- 4) Guaranteeing citizens' legislatively enshrined rights to freedom of conscience and respect for their religious beliefs;
- 5) Creating an environment conducive to the legitimate activities of religious groups, while obstructing the proliferation of harmful religious sects that threaten national security, the secular constitution, and promote radicalization among certain demographics;
- 6) Elevating the scope and effectiveness of public education and awareness initiatives, designed to communicate the state's efforts in maintaining societal stability, ethnic and religious cohesion, and to cultivate resilience against harmful religious ideologies.

The formulation and execution of religious policies should be the responsibility of a designated authority within the religious sector, in collaboration with relevant governmental entities and civil society organizations. The approach to religious policy at both national and local levels ought to adhere to the ensuing principles:

- 1) Adopting an integrated strategy in the application of state religious policy;
- 2) Enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration that leverages the capabilities and resources of both state and community organizations towards realizing the objectives and mandates in the religious domain;
- 3) Implementing sophisticated techniques for monitoring and evaluating the religious landscape to inform strategic administrative decisions;
- 4) Actively preventing illegal activities associated with religious groups.

Our conclusions emphasize that Kazakhstan is dedicated to reinforcing its secular foundations while ensuring every citizen's right to freedom of conscience, highlighting the balance between secular governance and religious freedom.

There is a focus on refining laws governing religious practices and organizations to better meet current needs and enhance cooperation between government agencies and civil society. This is crucial for effectively implementing religious policy, particularly in maintaining secularism and countering extremism.

The analysis underscores the importance of upholding the rights to freedom of conscience and respecting diverse religious beliefs, as mandated by law. It is essential to foster conditions that support legitimate religious activities and prevent the proliferation of harmful sects, which is vital for national security and adherence to the secular constitution. Increasing the scale and effectiveness of educational and awareness initiatives is crucial to enhance societal stability and resilience against harmful ideologies.

Responsibility for developing and implementing religious policy should rest with a designated authority within the religious sector, in collaboration with relevant government and civil organizations, to ensure a unified and strategic approach. This approach should be comprehensive, involving cross-sectoral cooperation and sophisticated monitoring to make informed decisions and actively prevent unlawful activities related to religious groups.

These findings highlight the need for an integrated and proactive strategy to manage Kazakhstan's religious landscape, emphasizing the integration of secular principles, legislative precision, and public engagement in policymaking.

Kazakhstan's establishment of a secular state is a significant historical achievement, influenced by its unique historical and cultural backgrounds and the nature of its religious life. The constitution underscores secularism as a core principle guiding state-religious interactions, ensuring that societal functions like education, healthcare, and governance are governed strictly by statutory laws.

Secular ideals are integral to the functioning of the state, ensuring that no religion receives state endorsement or becomes obligatory. Instead, policies focus on the collective welfare and security of society. In Kazakhstan's democratic and secular framework, decisions are made with societal interests in mind, maintaining a clear separation between religious influences and legislative processes.

The principle of freedom of conscience allows citizens to freely define their religious stance without coercion, promoting harmony among different religious communities. The state retains the authority to guide religious organizations and impose legal constraints, provided these do not infringe on personal religious convictions.

In governance and civil service, civil servants must adhere to professional obligations, maintaining neutrality and avoiding religious advocacy in their official functions. Religious practices are prohibited in the law enforcement, special agencies, and the Armed Forces to ensure that service duties are not compromised.

The mass media plays a role in promoting secular principles, interfaith harmony, and preventing religious extremism, with religious coverage limited to outlets established by registered religious associations. This comprehensive approach reinforces Kazakhstan's commitment to a secular governance system, balancing religious diversity with the overarching needs of the state and its citizens.

Within the Educational Framework. The educational sector is pivotal in nurturing a sense of Kazakhstani patriotism and a deep appreciation for the nation's cultural and spiritual heritage among individuals and the wider community. The core tenets of the educational infrastructure, beyond spiritual or religious education, include:

- Upholding the secular essence of the education system as mandated by the state.
- Charging educators with the responsibility to refrain from endorsing or promoting any religious perspective.
- Guaranteeing the autonomy of educational institutions in their internal governance and activities, free from religious influence.
- Providing students with a scientific and objective understanding of various religions as part of their educational journey.
- Forbidding any form of compulsion in education to affiliate with or remain within any religious group.
- Disallowing absences from academic sessions based on religious grounds.
- Banning religious ceremonies and missionary endeavors within educational premises.
- Enforcing dress code policies as defined by educational institutions.

Within the Healthcare Framework, it is imperative that religious groups and their emissaries refrain from persuading individuals to reject medical interventions critical to the preservation of health and life. Healthcare institutions must:

- Initiate educational dialogues with patients who resist vaccinations, organ transplants, blood transfusions, and other medical procedures for religious reasons.
- Guarantee that healthcare and pharmacy professionals, in the course of delivering medical services, avoid any behaviors (or lack thereof) influenced by personal religious convictions. Moreover, these professionals should abstain from orchestrating or engaging in any religious rituals that might jeopardize patient health or safety.

Kazakhstan's secular framework promotes equitable cultural development for all ethnic groups and faiths, ensuring every citizen can cultivate and celebrate their culture, traditions, and language, and participate fully in public and state life. The state respects and preserves the national traditions and customs of all ethnic groups, requiring that all religious associations honor state symbols and public holidays.

The state also places a high priority on preserving historical and cultural heritage, safeguarding sites of both global significance and religious importance. This includes sacred sites associated with various religions, integral to Kazakhstan's heritage. The Kazakhstani model of secularism supports the national and cultural identity, with government efforts focused on maintaining and developing this diverse heritage.

Regarding family institutions, Kazakhstan allows religious rituals for significant life events, but only legally registered marriages are recognized. This upholds the secular constitution which also grants the state a role in child upbringing if it's in the child's best interest, and allows adults to independently choose their religious or atheistic beliefs, free from parental influence.

The rights of minors are protected by Kazakhstani legislation, specifically through laws governing religious activities. These laws mandate that religious leaders prevent minors from participating in religious activities if a parent or other legal guardian objects. Additionally, the 'Law on the Rights of the Child,' dated August 8, 2002, stipulates that any religious ceremonies involving minors must obtain the consent of either the parents or their legal representatives. This ensures that religious ceremonies involving minors can only be conducted with the consent of both parents or their authorized representatives.

In the relationship between the state and religious associations, the state monitors the efforts of religious organizations to promote humanistic values within society. Several strategies are critical to manage this effectively:

Enhance the mechanisms for cooperation between central and local government bodies and religious organizations.

Provide substantial support for community initiatives by religious groups that align with the goals of the state's religious policy.

Encourage ongoing dialogue with religious organizations on a broad range of issues to mitigate radicalization among followers, counter extremist religious ideologies, and weaken their theological underpinnings.

Ensure transparency in the organizational, financial, economic, and doctrinal operations of religious groups in the country.

Curb the activities of religious groups and movements, along with their affiliates, that defy constitutional norms, especially those undermining the principles of a secular state. This includes efforts to combat the proliferation of religious extremism and terrorism.

The analysis suggests that Kazakhstan's constitutional dedication to secularism plays a key role in regulating the relationship between the state and religion, ensuring that public roles are dictated by statutory laws instead of religious doctrines. The state supports the freedom of conscience, permitting individuals to freely choose their religious beliefs without pressure, thereby fostering harmony among various religious groups.

To maintain national security and public order, the state regulates religious organizations, ensuring they respect individual freedoms and do not foster extremism. Civil servants are mandated to remain neutral and must not use their positions to benefit religious groups.

Education, media are pivotal in promoting secular principles and interfaith harmony, while in healthcare, religious influence on medical decisions is discouraged. Cultural policies support equitable development across all ethnic and religious groups. The legal framework manages religious participation by minors and regulates religious rites to align with constitutional standards.

Enhancing cooperation between the government and religious organizations is vital for promoting humanistic values and combating extremism, with an emphasis on transparent organizational activities.

This underscores the significance of a robust secular system in Kazakhstan, essential for fostering a cohesive, inclusive, and secure society.

To enhance the accountability of executive bodies, it's proposed to introduce a transparent reporting mechanism whereby both central and local executive entities regularly disclose their religious affairs-related activities and outcomes on a public platform. This could encompass comprehensive data on efforts to foster religious harmony, outcomes of interfaith dialogues, and actions against religious extremism.

The development of an optimal interagency cooperation model is also suggested, involving the establishment of a national interdepartmental committee on religious affairs. This committee would consist of representatives from central and local executive authorities, civil society institutions, and religious organizations, tasked with coordinating religious policies and initiatives across different levels of governance and society. Key measures include precisely delineating the roles and responsibilities of committee members to avoid overlap or competency gaps.

Moreover, setting specific criteria and performance metrics is crucial. A framework of indicators, such as the reduction of religious conflicts, enhancement of the populace's religious literacy, and successful engagement of religious organizations in delivering social services, should be devised to gauge the efficacy of local executive bodies in enforcing religious policy.

Essential actions include conducting foundational research to ascertain the current effectiveness level, routine monitoring and evaluation of these metrics, and strategy modification as required.

The adoption of a distinct Kazakhstani approach is advocated, leveraging the nation's rich heritage of religious tolerance and multiculturalism to design educational initiatives highlighting shared values across various religious factions. This strategy aims to bolster unity and diminish the appeal of extremist ideologies.

Practical measures encompass partnering with religious leaders, scholars, and the media to create and disseminate educational content, and organizing interfaith dialogues and cultural exchange programs to enhance mutual understanding and respect.

To counteract the influence of harmful religious factions, launching a national awareness campaign to educate the public about the risks of religious extremism, including recognition and reporting guidelines for suspicious behavior, is recommended. Utilizing traditional and social media, community gatherings, and educational institutions for this campaign could prove effective. Practical actions entail training law enforcement and social service personnel in culturally sensitive approaches to religious extremism, along with establishing hotlines and online platforms for confidential and secure reporting of extremism-related concerns.

Strengthening coordination for deradicalization and rehabilitation is critical. One approach could be the establishment of a national deradicalization center acting as a hub for coordination among government agencies, local authorities, law enforcement, and specialized agencies. This center could spearhead programs aimed at rehabilitating individuals influenced by extremist ideologies, with a focus on both incarcerated individuals and those in the community at risk. Developing tools and protocols to identify those susceptible to radicalization or in need of rehabilitation, within both the penal system and the broader society, is essential. Tailored programs might include psychological counseling, education from moderate religious leaders, vocational training, and activities for social integration. Training for law enforcement, social workers, and prison staff on understanding radicalization, recognizing signs, and interacting effectively with those undergoing deradicalization is necessary. Involving local communities and families in the rehabilitation process by offering support networks post-rehabilitation is beneficial.

Modernizing the media and promoting secular and national spiritual traditions could involve launching a national media initiative dedicated to the history of religious tolerance and secularism in Kazakhstan, celebrating coexistence and a shared national identity. This initiative could utilize multiple media outlets, such as television, digital platforms, and social media, to engage a broad audience. Creating content that highlights Kazakhstan's secular values and spiritual heritage through historical stories, personal experiences, and cultural celebrations is essential. Partnering with media professionals, influencers, and content creators is critical to ensure the extensive reach and effectiveness of the campaign's messages. Additionally, incorporating educational materials into school curricula that emphasize Kazakhstan's secular governance and the importance of religious tolerance is important. Setting metrics to assess the effectiveness of media campaigns and educational initiatives, with adjustments made based on feedback and outcomes, is necessary.

Comprehensive information and awareness-raising measures might include creating a national portal or online platform offering reliable information on various religions, the dangers of extremism, and the virtues of secularism and religious tolerance. This platform could serve as a valuable resource for educational institutions, the media, and the public. Organizing workshops for journalists, educators, and community leaders on effective strategies to advocate for secular principles and combat religious extremism is recommended. Facilitating forums and discussions that promote open dialogue on religion, secularism, and social values, encouraging diverse group participation, is encouraged. Implementing feedback mechanisms to gauge the impact of informational efforts allows for ongoing enhancement based on community input and reactions.

Enhancing the framework of religious studies and education is critical. This initiative necessitates revising the religious studies curricula in both schools and higher education institutions to provide a comprehensive understanding of world religions, the history of religious thought, and the societal impact of religion. Key goals include fostering critical thinking and promoting interfaith dialogue. Practical measures include developing curricula, training specialized teachers, and providing educational institutions with necessary resources such as textbooks, multimedia materials, and guest speakers from diverse religious backgrounds. Additionally, integrating modules that address religious extremism, critical media literacy, and the risks associated with religious extremism into secondary education curricula is essential. These modules are designed to help students critically evaluate information sources and recognize extremist propaganda.

Establishing a network of community centers is crucial for providing support to individuals at risk of radicalization or seeking reintegration after exposure to extremist ideologies. These centers should offer consultations, educational programs, vocational training, psychological counseling, religious education promoting moderate views, and job placement assistance. Staff must be trained in culturally sensitive counseling and rehabilitation techniques. Additionally, implementing a system to monitor the progress of individuals and assess the effectiveness of the programs is essential to ensure these centers meet their objectives effectively.

The successful application of these strategies to refine state religious policy should lead to:

- 1) Creation of a framework for cross-sectoral cooperation and dialogue among government entities, civil society organizations, and religious groups across various levels;
- 2) The ability to anticipate and track evolving trends and patterns within the religious landscape, both in the short and long term;
- 3) A reinforcement of secular principles within public awareness;
- 4) A societal consensus rejecting any form of radical or extremist behaviors in religious contexts;
- 5) The advancement and specification of Kazakhstan's distinct approach to managing the relationship between state authorities and religious organizations;
- 6) Enhanced, precise rehabilitation initiatives for followers of harmful religious ideologies, individuals convicted on charges of extremism or terrorism, and their families;
- 7) A boost in outreach and educational activities targeting susceptible or challenging groups, aimed at undermining extremist religious ideologies, utilizing the expertise of trained religious leaders and educators;
- 8) This initiative emphasizes the creation of theoretical and practical tools to reinforce the state's secular framework and counteract religious extremism and terrorism;
- 9) This project aims to expand and enhance rehabilitative educational programs at centers for individuals affected by or convicted of religious extremism and terrorism. Included in this expansion is the consideration of potentially revoking citizenship for those found guilty of related offenses;
- 10) Increased promotion of Kazakhstan's indigenous spiritual and cultural heritage both domestically and abroad.

Conclusion.

This research has meticulously examined the development and current dynamics of religious policy in Kazakhstan, emphasizing its pivotal role in sculpting the socio-political landscape and bolstering national security. Our in-depth investigation into the legal, administrative, and practical facets of state-religious

interactions has unveiled the intricate task of upholding a secular governance model. This model adeptly balances religious freedom with the imperative of societal stability, showcasing the nuanced relationship between state policies and religious practices.

The study highlights substantial public endorsement of the government's religious policies, reflecting widespread satisfaction with the management of religious diversity and the reinforcement of secularism. Nonetheless, the research has identified enduring challenges, including demographic shifts, rising religious extremism, and an urgent need for sweeping legal reforms to adapt to a dynamically evolving religious landscape. These issues call for a sophisticated approach to policy development that honors both Kazakhstan's secular constitution and the diverse religious sentiments of its citizens.

To address these challenges, the study proposes a series of strategic recommendations aimed at refining Kazakhstan's religious policy framework:

- Strengthening the Legal Infrastructure: Enhance legal frameworks to provide the necessary flexibility for accommodating diverse religious practices while firmly upholding the principles of secular governance.
- Fostering Interfaith Dialogue: Encourage deeper interfaith dialogue and cooperation to cultivate mutual respect and understanding among varied religious communities.
- Promoting Educational Initiatives: Launch comprehensive educational programs that elucidate religious rights and freedoms, along with the associated responsibilities, to foster a well-informed populace.

The imperative for ongoing research and the implementation of adaptive policy mechanisms is vital. As Kazakhstan progresses on its journey towards a well-balanced secular state, it is essential to maintain a proactive and foresighted stance in religious policy management. This includes addressing current concerns and anticipating potential challenges that may emerge from both domestic shifts and global religious trends.

Implementing the outlined strategies for religious policy will not only affirm Kazakhstan's commitment to its constitutional values but also align with emerging geopolitical realities, addressing both domestic and international security challenges effectively. The stability, peace, and security of Kazakhstan's society hinge on the constructive and active participation of governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and citizens who are dedicated to safeguarding state interests. This collaborative effort is crucial for fostering a secular Kazakhstan and ensuring a peaceful and harmonious future for its ethnically and religiously diverse population.

By building upon the foundational insights of this study, Kazakhstan can significantly enhance its religious policy framework, ensuring it positively impacts the nation's overarching goals of peace, stability, and harmony. This endeavor will require concerted efforts from all societal sectors—government, religious organizations, and civil society—to collaboratively develop policies that are inclusive, well-informed, and effective.

In conclusion, this research not only deepens the understanding of Kazakhstan's religious policy landscape but also charts a strategic course for future enhancements. We hope that the insights and recommendations provided herein will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, religious leaders, and scholars involved in the ongoing discourse on religion and state interactions in Kazakhstan and beyond.

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