



Unveiling Contemporary Tendencies of Religious Transformation in the Globalized Era: Solutions for State Management of Religion in Vietnam

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Abstract: Globalization has profoundly impacted the landscape of religion, initiating an epoch of unparalleled interconnectedness and cultural interchange. Rooted in the annals of human history, religion has been a dynamic force, evolving ceaselessly to adapt to the shifting historical and socio-economic milieu. Once confined by geographical boundaries, religious practices now traverse borders, propelled by remarkable advancements in technology and communication. This global dissemination of information has sparked heightened awareness of diverse religious beliefs, fostering dialogue and collaboration among adherents of various faiths. Consequently, this has led to the diversification of religious sects and the emergence of entirely novel belief systems. Within Vietnam, religion mirrors this dynamic nature, as evidenced by fluctuating trends encompassing secularization, nationalization, pluralism, modernization, and the emergence of new faiths. Grounded in historical and socio-economic contexts, the analysis of religious dynamics explores the intricate interplay between tradition and modernity, elucidating how religious practices are shaped by globalization, technological progress, and contemporary challenges. Through tailored recommendations for state management in Vietnam, the study aspires to safeguard the freedom of belief, preserve cultural heritage, and promote societal stability amid the evolving religious landscape and the complex realities of the global stage.

Keywords: religious transformation, religion, belief, globalization, state management

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1. Introduction

Religion is a baffling social phenomenon in the contemporary world, eliciting diverse perceptions. It is often positively linked to commendable human traits like ethics, morality, and spirituality, yet concurrently viewed negatively, associated with superstition obstructive traditions, rejection of scientific knowledge, and impeding overall human progress (Jensen, 2019). Throughout history, religion has manifested in various forms, wielding significant influence over minds, bodies, cultures, and societies. While it has been a constant presence in human history, it is only in the last two centuries that religion has transitioned from an object of study rather than a power to obey

The global context has experienced rapid transformations since the close of the twentieth century, impacting countries worldwide in both positive and negative ways. The collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, alongside the conclusion of the Cold War, has fundamentally altered geopolitical dynamics (Gaddis, 2006). Globalization, a significant driver of economic development, has brought increased resources for improving human life but has also presented challenges such as growing wealth gaps and environmental concerns. Scientific advancements have played a crucial role in explaining natural and societal phenomena, contributing to a gradual decline in the perceived basis for religion (Dennett, 2006). Heightened awareness and intelligence among people have led to an increasing reliance on their

own abilities rather than dependence on supernatural forces (Harris, 2005).

However, recent decades have been characterized by numerous crises, including political unrest, food shortages, energy crises, economic downturns, ecological challenges, and the emergence of dangerous epidemics. These crises, coupled with rising international crime, have given rise to prophecies and rumors about the "end of the world," leading to the formation of new religions as coping mechanisms.

Vietnam, a developing country, is not exempt from this trajectory of development. However, the Vietnamese approach to religion is highly inclusive and unique, even considered an 'anomalous' country among Southeast Asian nations with 'almost no atheists,' as noted by Inglehart (2004) and Roszko (2021). According to the report of the Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee (2019), 86.32% of the population has no religious affiliation, while Buddhism accounts for 4.76%, and other Western-origin religions like Christianity make up 7.1% (Catholicism and Protestantism constitute 6.1% and 1%, respectively). Endogenous religions such as Hoa Hao and Cao Dai only represent a small portion (1.02% and 0.58%, respectively), and the remaining religions constitute 0.19%. This surprising contrast exists because the Vietnamese people distinguish between religious beliefs and religion. According to the Law on Belief and Religion no. 02/2016/QH14, practice of folk beliefs means the activities of worshiping ancestors and sacred symbols, of commemorating and honoring people with meritorious contributions to the country or a community; and folk rituals typical of historical, cultural, ethical and social values. On the other hand, religion represents the human's faith whose existence is accompanied by a system of notions and activities encompassing the objects of worship, tenets, religious law, rites and organization. This article analyzes the shifting trends in religion within Vietnam, focusing on the remaining 13.68% of the religious population. It examines the multifaceted influence of various factors, including both objective and subjective, internal and external, regional and international elements. Through this analysis, recommendations for the state management of religion in Vietnam are proposed.

2. Theoretical Overview of the Main Concepts

The Tendencies of Religious Transformation

Secularization of religion

Secularization is a topic that has been mentioned and discussed for decades, leading to heated debate among many sociologists. It represents a significant shift in religious dynamics as individuals increasingly engage with secular aspects of society. This shift is influenced by economic, cultural, and social changes (Casanova, 2011). Essentially, it seeks to ground religion in reason, worldly concerns, and human agency rather than traditional religious concepts like God, Saints, and Spirits.

According to Western European sociologists, secularization involves the differentiation of secular spheres (like the state, economy, and science) from religious institutions and norms. This process is often interpreted as a form of emancipation from religious influence and is a central tenet of classical secularization theories, reflecting its historical roots in medieval Christianity (Casanova, 2007). As indicated by every dictionary of every Western European language, it refers to the transfer of people, things, meanings, etc., from ecclesiastical or religious to civil use, possession, control or layman (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Secularization is also evidenced by the migration of religious elements into secular domains, observable through religious participation in non-religious activities such as social and moral endeavors (Dang, 2003). This participation is driven by the aim to contribute to the betterment of humanity, echoing the original purpose of religion in promoting goodness and combating evil, akin to broader movements for reform and social justice (Wilson, 1983). However, there are also negative aspects to this trend, including religious involvement in politics and the commercialization of religious practices.

Another understanding, the most common today and widely used, is to equate Secularization with the decline of religious belief and practice. The trajectory of secularization is visible in the efforts of progressive sections within various religions, seeking to remove archaic elements from doctrines and liberalize rigid canons. This effort promotes unity among believers of different faiths and bridges the gap between those with and without religious beliefs (Dobbelaere, 2002). There are some arguments that, since "Modern" social sciences appeared, religion became even more blurred with the prevailing secularization process (Radics, 2024). According to Casanova (2007), secularism remains based on a rigid dichotomy of sacred

tradition and secular modernity, assuming that more of one means less of the other. Specifically, industrialized nations exhibit a declining influence of religion, characterized by rigorous scrutiny of religious dogma, and the abandonment of impractical explanations and ritual practices deemed burdensome and overly stringent. In Vietnam, statistics reveal a 4.64% decrease in the number of religious adherents over the span of ten years, from 2009 to 2019 (Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee, 2009). This shift indicates a reevaluation among believers concerning the sanctity and customs of religious practices, leading to a more practical perspective. Particularly, the younger generation exhibits a growing trust in their own inherent capabilities rather than relying on supernatural influences (Bruce, 2011).

The tendency of secularization is also evident in the phenomenon where individuals appear to retain religious awareness while freeing themselves from the constraints of religious dogma. This concept, coined as "believing without belonging" by Davie (1996), reflects the general state of European religion post-1960s, where many believers ceased regular church attendance yet maintained a considerable level of personal religiosity. Similarly, in Vietnam, some adherents continue to engage in rituals such as prayer to God or the Holy Spirit and undertake pilgrimages, albeit without strict adherence to prescribed doctrines or canon law. Additionally, secularization is reflected in religious activities aligned with the state and national interests, with believers striving for a "good life" intertwined with their religious beliefs.

Religion nationalization

Nationalization of religion or ethnicization of religion is defined as the act of reverting to the traditional religions of a nation or incorporating national and local psychological and cultural traits into religions imported from external sources (localization). This tendency illustrates the interplay of unity and diversity within the globalization process. Globalization of religion, as outlined by scholars such as Obadia (2010) and Roudometof (2014), pertains to the spread of religions and specific genres, forms, or frameworks of religious expression on a global scale. In the course of globalization, various religions spread rapidly to different countries at multiple levels. In response, ethnic or traditional religions tend to emerge as a defensive mechanism, safeguarding national identity against the perceived threat posed by external religions and potential assimilation.

On the other hand, the worldwide spread of various religions involves their simultaneous localization: they are reconstituted in new locales and reconstruct communal attachments in new forms (Roudometof, 2014). Rather than speaking of an inevitable tension between the local and the global it might be possible to think of the two as not being opposites but rather as different sides of the same coin (Robertson & White, 2007). Beyer (2007) suggested that globalization involves multiple localizations: Universal religion is thematized alongside local particularity. Upon entering national territories, major religions frequently undergo a process of adaptation, assimilating the cultural and religious nuances inherent to each specific nation. This deliberate integration of national elements serves as a strategic approach for world religions seeking not only for introduction but also for sustained existence. It is widely acknowledged that for an imported religion to endure in a nation, it must seamlessly integrate with the national way of life. This integration manifests in various aspects, including the formation of sects, architectural styles, and the incorporation of national elements into festival rituals. Even in doctrinal matters, there is a growing recognition that adaptation is essential for religious survival in a particular cultural milieu.

This tendency of nationalization is currently gaining momentum, reflecting the heightened awareness among ethnic groups. Their conscious efforts to ensure survival are intrinsically linked to the preservation of their ethnic and cultural identity.

Religious pluralism:

Religious life demonstrates, on one hand, the diversification of religious beliefs, and on the other hand, a tendency to personalize these beliefs. Specifically, the concept of religious pluralism encompasses two characteristics: religious diversity itself and religious adaptability. This tendency is a direct outcome of globalization across various domains in the contemporary era.

The process of globalization is progressively expanding economic, cultural, and social spaces. As economic conditions improve, individuals feel an increasing need to broaden their cultural horizons. People are no

longer confined solely to domestic religions; rather, there is a growing demand to embrace other religions worldwide. For instance, when discussing religious innovation in West Africa, Amoah (2017) remarked, "The reality of religious plurality can be seen everywhere in Africa". What is clear in that context is the occurrence of adaptation, reciprocal influence, and simultaneous affiliations resulting from plurality and change in every society, not limited to African ones.

Plurality in religion commences, indeed, with the daily experiences and predicaments of regular individuals, regardless of their countries. When ordinary people encounter the practical difficulties of everyday embodied life, they always resort to a variety of practical solutions – some religious, some not, some approved, some not (McGuire, 2008). Individuals typically practice religion, encompassing daily prayers and rituals aimed at accessing divine power for good health and well-being. In this material domain, those seeking religious assistance not only seldom restrict themselves to a singular divine source, but they also free themselves from adhering solely to the official rites prescribed by authoritative figures (Ammerman, 2010). This acceptance is not a passive process but one that is approached in a planned, critical, and selective manner. Should any traditional religion, constrained by rigorous doctrines, rituals, and other aspects, fail to cater to the requirements of the contemporary populace, it becomes susceptible to replacement by a more fitting religious alternative. The country's pervasive religious pluralism reflects the tolerance of the Vietnamese people toward various religious systems, resulting in a natural symbiosis and coexistence of many faiths (T. M. N. Nguyen, 2020); Tran (1992)).

In practice, there is a notable phenomenon where an individual may simultaneously practice multiple religions. Likewise, people may follow different religions at different times. Religious diversity is vividly expressed in religious practices, where followers of one religion actively participate in various religious activities. Many individuals, adhering to religions traditionally considered monotheistic (such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam), also engage in activities related to other religions like visiting pagodas, temples, and participating in diverse religious festivals. This is driven by the belief that, aside from their primary religious affiliation, other spiritual forces may also bring them positive benefits.

Amidst the era of globalization and international integration, the trend of religious diversity is particularly prominent, especially in agricultural countries. This can be attributed to the expansion of social spaces and the strengthening of cultural contacts, including those related to religion. Additionally, religious diversity is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural elements of each ethnic group, characterized by cultural tolerance, the diverse beliefs of agricultural residents, and the coexistence of multiple ethnic groups within a given region. Each ethnic group maintains its unique set of beliefs, contributing to the rich tapestry of cultural and religious diversity in multi-ethnic countries.

Religious modernization:

The modernization of religion is a dynamic and intricate process, reflecting the ongoing adaptation and transformation of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions in response to the complexities of modernization. Stemming from phenomena like globalization and technological advancements, modernization has ushered in widespread societal changes across the globe, exerting profound influence across economic, social, and cultural domains. This process has led to a reshaping of traditional institutions and practices, simultaneously fostering both continuity and transformation in various aspects of human life.

In the realm of religion, modernization prompts doctrinal reinterpretation, institutional restructuring, and technological integration, fundamentally altering how religious beliefs and practices are understood, expressed, and disseminated in contemporary societies. Traditional religious doctrines undergo reassessment to reconcile age-old teachings with contemporary values and knowledge, often resulting in reinterpretations of scriptures, ethical principles, and religious laws. Similarly, religious institutions undergo structural changes to adapt to modern contexts, including decentralization of authority, adoption of democratic governance structures, and incorporation of modern management practices.

Moreover, modernization facilitates the seamless integration of technology into religious practices and communication. This includes the use of multimedia tools for worship services, online religious education, virtual congregations, and social media platforms for outreach and community-building. Modernized

religions also engage with contemporary social issues such as human rights, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and social justice, advocating for social change, participating in humanitarian efforts, and collaborating with secular institutions to address societal challenges.

The modernization of religion, therefore, represents a multifaceted response to technological advancements, urbanization, globalization, and changes in social, political, and economic structures, shaping the ongoing evolution of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions in the modern world.

The tendency of the phenomenon of "new religion":

In recent decades, changes in political, economic, cultural, and social life have prompted significant shifts in religious practices. Each time individuals experience a crisis of faith, the role of religion becomes more pronounced (Bui, 2015). The emergence of "new religious" tendency is not a recent phenomenon; it has been a part of history (Dang, 2003). However, it gained global prominence in the 1960s and became popular in Vietnam during the 1990s. It is essential not to conflate religious freedom with new religious tendency because they manifest in distinct ways. Identifying them based on their origins reveals that the "new religious phenomenon" is separate from mainstream religion, or assembled, often combining mystical and scientific elements, exhibiting a secular orientation (Dang, 1999). Due to this characteristic, new religions are countless, regardless of era. They proliferate alongside major religions, either embracing or rejecting established doctrines and are often shrouded in mystery and secrecy (Do, 2001).

As compiled by Do (2001), there are sects similar to churches, clearly reflecting the decay of traditional religion. They have characteristics such as belief in experience, salvation associated with present happiness, optimism with a degree, etc. Some new religions are associated with seemingly unrelated activities such as yoga, meditation, sacred dance,... aim to foster personal transformation through physical or psychological means. There are "New Religions" born on a small scale that criticize and compete with traditional religions. Sociologists categorize them as floating, obscure, or sectarian, operating with borrowed, modified, or even anti-religious tenets. The propaganda objects that the "new religious phenomena" target are mainly individuals facing limited awareness, low living conditions, difficulties and deadlocks in life, health,... These sects typically have a loose organizational structure, chaotic religious practices, and superstitious rituals, especially regarding health and future predictions (Vu, 2017). The Hoa Long Di Lac sect is a typical example, to cure any ailment, simply place a bottle of water blessed by the sect leader on the altar, worship for 100 days, and then consume it for healing. Alternatively, the Co Non sect offers a ritual to rid the body of pathogens for those who find the former method too time-consuming (Bui, 2015). Additionally, there are "new religions" emerging around events like the Apocalypse, Millennium Day, or Life Change Day, all centered on worshipping specific sacred objects and making prophecies, particularly about after the end of the world (Mai, 2000). These sects operate under the guise of religion to conduct superstitious activities, resulting in illicit profits or being manipulated and taken advantage of by hostile forces. The consequences of these new religions are severe, causing harm to individuals, infringing upon health and property rights, and spreading toxic ideologies that destabilize social and political security.

Other notable tendencies:

Alongside the aforementioned prominent trends, numerous other tendencies shape Vietnamese religious life. One such tendency involves major religions collaborating to redefine their global influence in the new century. Another tendency sees religions uniting to address global challenges collectively. Conversely, there's a trend towards the personalization of religion, where religious practices and phenomena cater more to individual needs rather than mass appeal. There's also the trend of both competition and dialogue among religions, where they vie for followers and societal roles while engaging in interfaith discourse. Lastly, there's the trend of religious globalization, characterized by religions transcending national borders, evading state control, and impacting diverse countries and peoples.

Throughout the integration process, the shifting dynamics of religion are observed across various levels of intensity and significance in Vietnam. These changes manifest in alterations in religious appearance, structure, beliefs, and methods of propagation and religious practices. here's a resurgence of faith and a heightened need for spiritual fulfillment, leading to a "return to religious belief" across diverse religious communities and social strata throughout the country (P. L. Nguyen, 2019). Additionally, changes in

appearance and structure contribute to a growing diversity in Vietnam's religious landscape. Major religions like Catholicism, Buddhism, and Protestantism, influenced by external sources, engage with global religious communities to varying extents.

In the face of the intricate changes in religious life, some hostile forces consistently seek to align, bolster, and aid reactionary elements within the country. They exploit religion as a means to orchestrate schemes aimed at destabilizing our nation under the shadow of "peaceful evolution." Capitalizing on the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and State's policies of reform and democratization, external hostile forces promote religious endeavors, amass followers, and cultivate a faction aimed at challenging and undermining the authority of the CPV. They advocate for religious activities to operate outside of state oversight, endeavoring to internationalize the "religious issue" in Vietnam. Their objective is to falsely portray Vietnam as infringing upon democratic principles, human rights, and religious freedoms.

3. Methodology

The research methodology of our study is anchored in an exploration of both the theoretical foundations provided by Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's perspectives, and their practical applications as evidenced in state policies and religious practices in Vietnam. It is grounded in a critical examination of key documents from the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam], as well as various resolutions and directives of the Communist Party and the Vietnamese government concerning religion and religious practices. These include Resolution No. 25- NQ/TW from March 12, 2003, of the 7th Conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (9th Tenure) on religious affairs, the 2021 documents of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Decree No.162/2017/ND-CP dated December 30, 2017, by the Government for implementing specific articles and actions under the Law on Belief and Religion, and Decision No. 99/QĐ-BNV dated October 22, 2019, by the Ministry of Home Affairs concerning the recognition of religious organizations.

Marxism-Leninism, a foundational ideological tenet in Vietnamese governance and policy-making, provides a lens through which our society views religion not merely as a private spiritual experience, but also as a social phenomenon with significant implications for societal development and cultural dynamics. This perspective is deeply ingrained in Vietnam's political fabric. It posits that religious beliefs and practices, while acknowledged and respected, should align with socialist principles and contribute to the collective goals of society.

Ho Chi Minh's perspectives on religion, which are an integral part of this ideological backdrop, offer a more nuanced and culturally contextual interpretation. Ho Chi Minh, revered as the founding father of modern Vietnam, advocated for a harmonious balance between religious freedom and national unity. In the interwar period, Ho Chi Minh criticized what he then perceived as a collusion "of colonialism and the Churches during the invasion in Vietnam". However, after the Second World War, he drafted "guidelines on religions and religious policies, focusing mainly on the following aspects: freedom of belief for all Vietnamese citizens; uniting non-religious and religious people; recognizing the cultural role, the human values of religions and religious ethics". He emphasized the importance of respecting religious diversity while ensuring that religious practices do not counteract the overarching goals of national development and social harmony. His views reflect a pragmatic approach to religion, recognizing its potential to foster moral values and social cohesion, while cautioning against any form of religious extremism or divisiveness.

In this study, these ideological frameworks guide our methodological approach. We analyse religious content through the dual lenses of MarxistLeninist philosophy and Ho Chi Minh's teachings. We do this implicitly by applying learned principles and approaches on the subject matter at hand. We examine how religion in Vietnam navigates the interaction between religious autonomy and its integration in a socialist-oriented society. This involves analyzing how these political ideologies influence religious practices and perceptions, social dynamics, and scientific attitudes in contemporary Vietnam. Especially in terms of state management of religion in Vietnam.

4. Discussion

Some Recommendations on State Management of Religion in Vietnam Today

It is crucial to recognize the evolving tendencies and impacts of religion in the state's management of religious activities. This recognition is essential to guarantee the people's freedom and their right to religious beliefs, ensuring that religious activities occur smoothly within the boundaries of the law. Additionally, it aims to prevent the infiltration of extremist ideologies and the exploitation of religious trends by reactionary politics. To further uphold and promote the nation's cultural identity and moral values embedded in religious traditions, it becomes imperative for the CPV and State to enhance their oversight and management of religious affairs.

In particular:

Firstly, strengthen the Party's leadership role in the state management of religion. Religious work, in general, and the state management of religion, in particular, constitute tasks for the entire political system under the CPV's leadership. Hence, reinforcing the Party's guidance over the current state management of religion is not just a routine responsibility but an immediate necessity. Primarily, the CPV should persist in innovating its perspective on religion, recognizing it as a spiritual need for a segment of the population—a need that exists and will persist in the long-term socialist development. The Party's policies and directives on religious affairs must be effectively incorporated into the Constitution and laws, ensuring the normal operation of religions in compliance with constitutional and legal provisions. Additionally, there is a need to foster the self-consciousness and fighting spirit of religious masses, thwarting any attempts to exploit religion to sow discord within the great national unity bloc. Furthermore, regular assessments of the practical implementation of the Party's resolutions and directives on religious work are essential, providing a scientific foundation for formulating comprehensive guidelines and policies regarding religion.

Secondly, complete legal documents on religion. The 2013 Constitution and the Law on Belief and Religion (2016) were established to provide a legal framework for the state management of religion. Large religions, with numerous followers, and smaller group religions, with fewer followers, are considered equal before the law if recognized by the state. However, given the complexity and sensitivity of the religious domain, which intersects with various aspects of social life, certain legal aspects concerning religion require supplementation and adjustment to align with reality. The law on religion should function as a tool to regulate social relations related to religion, ensuring citizens' religious freedom. It is also instrumental in combating activities exploiting religion to violate national security, disrupt the unity bloc, eradicate superstitions, and preserve the nation's positive customs and traditions. The process of building and refining religious laws must ensure the inheritance and selective absorption of rational elements from international religious law.

Directive No. 18-CT/TW, dated January 10, 2018, issued by the Politburo, regarding the continued implementation of Resolution No. 25-NQ/TW of the IX Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam on religious work in the “new situation”, explicitly emphasizes the need for the CPV and State to enhance policies and laws on religion. This improvement aims to harness and leverage religious resources, particularly in areas such as charity, humanity, social security, and the protection of social support. It also extends to education, enhancing people's knowledge and social human resource training, as well as healthcare, contributing to the country's sustainable development in the contemporary era of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Thirdly, plan, build, and consolidate the organizational apparatus for the state management of religion at all levels, following the provisions of the Law on Belief and Religion, to effectively execute the task of state management of religion.

There is a need to enhance the capacity and qualifications of cadres and civil servants involved in the state management of religion at all levels, with a particular focus on the grassroots level. This is crucial to ensure effective state management and the resolution of religious issues from their inception. Simultaneously, there is a need to increase awareness of the Party's policies and the State's legal framework, enhancing the managerial skills of officials, civil servants, and public employees engaged in state management of religion.

Party Committees and authorities at all levels should organize comprehensive training sessions, ensuring a thorough understanding of the Party's policies and guidelines, as well as the State's laws on religion for key officials, civil servants, and public employees at four administrative levels, including central, provincial, district, and commune levels. Additionally, administrative reform and the application of information technology in state management of beliefs and religions should be promoted. It is advisable to offer guidance on utilizing level 4 online public services within religious organizations, thereby facilitating the handling of administrative procedures related to beliefs and religions through the National Public Service Portal.

Fourthly, enhance specialized inspection efforts and ensure the implementation of laws regarding beliefs and religions; guide religious activities in alignment with fine customs, national cultural traditions, and legal regulations.

There should be specific documents guiding the resolution of complaints, denunciations, and the handling of religious violations. Officials engaged in religious work should establish closer connections with the people and attentively listen to parishioners' opinions. Utilize the consensus of the majority of parishioners to thoroughly resolve matters without tolerance or unnecessary prolongation. It is essential to gain a clear understanding of the situations involving religious cases, and then categorize and analyze the root causes of complaints and denunciations. Collect comprehensive information from various perspectives, conduct a thorough review of case developments, and assess both subjective and objective factors contributing to complaints and denunciations related to the religious field.

Researching and comprehensively understanding the guidelines, policies, laws on religion, and relevant legal regulations set forth by the CPV and State is essential for addressing and combating various religious grievances. Implementing religious policies fully and effectively is crucial to satisfying the legitimate needs of individuals and religious organizations. Enhancing coordination among relevant units and establishing clear decentralization between levels and sectors in handling complaints and denunciations related to religion is imperative. Caution and skillfulness are required in the resolution process to prevent the escalation of grievances and the emergence of contentious issues pertaining to religion.

Fifthly, strengthen advocacy and propaganda on the Party's policies, guidelines, and the state's legal policies regarding religious work to raise awareness among religious individuals.

Party committees and governments at all levels should intensify efforts in this area, particularly targeting religious dignitaries. This ensures that dignitaries and followers clearly understand the Party's policies and legal regulations on religion. This understanding serves as the foundation for building a strong national unity bloc, fostering unity among various religious groups, encouraging dignitaries and followers to be devoted to the nation and homeland, and contributing to the establishment of a good and harmonious life alongside a beautiful religion.

Sixthly, enhance close coordination between functional agencies involved in the state management of religion.

This coordination must align with the Party's guidelines, policies, and the State's laws on religious work to enhance the effectiveness of state management in this domain. Coordinated activities should be based on the functions and tasks of local departments, branches, and organizations to effectively fulfill their assigned functions and tasks.

The Departments and Offices of Home Affairs in provinces and districts, responsible for religious affairs, should advise the respective People's Committees to issue decisions, directives, and plans for the implementation of state management of religion in the locality. They should collaborate with relevant departments, branches, and organizations to organize training and knowledge enhancement sessions on the Party's guidelines and policies, as well as the State's laws regarding religious activities, for officials from the provincial to grassroots levels. Additionally, they should implement programs, plans, and projects related to religious work and conduct propaganda, dissemination, and legal education in the field of religion for the general public and religious individuals to promote understanding and self-awareness.

Furthermore, collaboration with the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee, the Catholic

Solidarity Committee, and other departments, branches, and organizations should be elevated to establish and replicate exemplary practices among religious communities. At the same time, efforts should be made to combat negative and aggressive manifestations that exploit religion to incite opposition to the Party's guidelines and policies and the State's laws, with the aim of creating division and disunity between religious and non-religious individuals.

We must continue mobilizing monks, nuns and Buddhists to eliminate practices and habits that harm the environment and exacerbate climate change. Efforts should focus on creating green, clean and beautiful Buddhist facilities and organizing training programs to enhance the environmental protection capacity of Buddhist organizations at all levels. Collaboration with state environmental management agencies is essential. Additionally, we should support Buddhist organizations across all provinces and cities in the development and replication of environmental protection and climate change response models tailored to the specific Buddhist practices of each locality. Propaganda and education should raise awareness of environmental protection and resource sustainability, emphasizing the responsible use of natural resources and waste management (Thanh Viet Nguyen, 2024).

Seventh, in addressing new religious phenomena and those related to belief and spirituality, prompt and thorough measures are imperative.

For new religious phenomena where there is no consensus in identification, it is necessary to promptly conduct research and surveys in the area, thereby unifying awareness, classification, and evaluation to have appropriate management measures. Regarding groups practicing new religious phenomena requiring centralized or registered religious activities, a careful examination and resolution following current laws and practical situations are warranted. This approach should align with the people's beliefs and religious needs while simultaneously preventing these phenomena from violating the law. Specific actions include:

Regarding new religious phenomena that meet the legal conditions, consideration should be given to addressing them. In the short term, religious activities may be centralized for each group as specified in Article 2, Article 16 of the Law on Beliefs and Religions, and Articles 5 and 6 of Decree No. 162/2017/ND-CP.

For new religious phenomena that are strongly religious but do not meet the criteria as defined by law, consideration should not be given to registering centralized religious activities, religious activities, or organizational recognition.

For new religious phenomena containing elements of superstition and fanaticism, affecting local law and order and harming public health, community mobilization efforts should be deployed. This should be combined with administrative measures to encourage understanding, abandonment, and public awareness to deter participation.

For new religious phenomena with negative political implications, posing a danger to national cultural identity and security, resolute actions should be taken to eliminate them based on legal provisions such as Article 5 of the Law on Beliefs and Religions and other relevant regulations. Comprehensive propaganda, educational, and administrative measures should be employed to eradicate them from society.

It is crucial to disseminate information to dignitaries, officials, and followers of religions so that they can accurately identify the nature of new religious phenomena and refrain from believing in those with content and activities that violate the law. It is essential to fight against activities exploiting new religious phenomena to sabotage the Party and State and create divisions in national and religious unity.

The CPV and State must strengthen their efforts to understand the operational situation of new religious phenomena and those related to belief and spirituality in the area. Regular discussions with departments, branches, organizations, and authorities are needed to reach a consensus on solving problems arising from new religious phenomena.

5. Synopsis of the Main Research Outcomes

The study seeks to protect freedom of belief, preserve cultural heritage and promote social

stability in the context of evolving religions and the complex realities of the global context. Globalization and national integration have had a profound impact on the religious landscape, initiating an era of unprecedented cultural connection and exchange. Rooted in human history, religion is a dynamic force, constantly evolving to adapt to the changing historical and socio-economic environment, which has led to the diversification of religious sects, religion and the emergence of entirely new belief systems. In Vietnam, religion reflects this dynamic nature, evidenced by fluctuating trends including secularization, nationalization, pluralism, modernization, and the emergence of new faiths. Drawing on historical and socioeconomic contexts, the analysis of religious dynamics explores the complex interaction between tradition and modernity, shedding light on how religious practice is shaped by globalization, technological advances and contemporary challenges. Adopt appropriate recommendations on state management in Vietnam: Firstly, strengthen the Party's leadership role in the state management of religion. Secondly, complete legal documents on religion. Thirdly, plan, build, and consolidate the organizational apparatus for the state management of religion at all levels, following the provisions of the Law on Belief and Religion, to effectively execute the task of state management of religion. Fourthly, enhance specialized inspection efforts and ensure the implementation of laws regarding beliefs and religions; guide religious activities in alignment with fine customs, national cultural traditions, and legal regulations. Fifthly, strengthen advocacy and propaganda on the Party's policies, guidelines, and the state's legal policies regarding religious work to raise awareness among religious individuals. Sixthly, enhance close coordination between functional agencies involved in the state management of religion. Seventh, in addressing new religious phenomena and those related to belief and spirituality, prompt and thorough measures are imperative.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the intricate interplay of economic, political, cultural, and social forces on a global scale has given rise to a complex mosaic of religious trends and transformations. This phenomenon is evident not only in the global context but also manifests itself distinctly in the religious landscape of Vietnam. The multifaceted nature of this evolving religious tapestry encompasses the coexistence of traditional beliefs with the emergence of new and unconventional religions, creating a dynamic and diverse environment.

The impact of globalization, technological advancements, and changing societal norms has led to a significant shift in religious dynamics. While traditional religions often face the challenge of adapting to the modern world, new religions and spiritual movements have found space to thrive. The trend towards religious diversity and individualization highlights the evolving nature of faith, with people seeking personalized spiritual experiences that align with their unique beliefs and lifestyles.

Moreover, the phenomenon of secularization adds another layer to this evolving landscape, reflecting a shift towards integrating religious practices into secular aspects of life. This movement towards a more grounded and pragmatic understanding of faith is particularly pronounced among the younger generation, who often rely more on their innate capabilities than supernatural forces.

Vietnam, within this global context, experiences its unique blend of religious shifts. The coexistence of traditional beliefs and the emergence of new religions pose challenges and opportunities for the Party and State. Strengthening state management of religion becomes crucial not only to preserve cultural identity and moral values but also to navigate the complexities of a changing religious landscape.

In essence, as Vietnam strives for social stability and sustainable development, a nuanced approach to religious management is imperative. Balancing the preservation of cultural traditions with the recognition of evolving spiritual needs is a delicate task. The CPV and State's commitment to ensuring freedom of belief and religion, coupled with an understanding of the diverse and dynamic nature of contemporary faith, will play a pivotal role in shaping the future trajectory of religious life in Vietnam.

7. Limitations, Implications, and Further Directions of Research

The current views and policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the State of Vietnam towards religion aim to well realize the goal of religious unity and solidarity of the entire Vietnamese nation. Viewpoints and policies on religion have not only been the basis for religious activities in Vietnam to always be stable and law-abiding, but have also created great momentum from consolidating the great national

unity bloc. nation, contributing to the success of the industrialization and modernization of the country. The views and policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the State of Vietnam on religion are a thorough and consistent policy in the entire development path of Vietnam and always meet the requirements of being consistent with the national and international situation in the context of globalization and international integration. To achieve the goal and ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of viewpoints and policies towards religion, the political system at all levels needs to be very proactive in promoting the right to ownership, as well as the political activism of religious people in the process of formulating and implementing viewpoints and policies.

Further Directions of Research: The problem arises from the implementation of current religious policies: The system of policies and laws on religion in Vietnam still requires continued improvement in accordance with the views of the Communist Party of Vietnam; Religious work requires unified coordination, from awareness to action, of organizations in the political system; The work of mobilizing the masses to build political forces in religious areas needs attention, creating positive and stable changes in political security and social order. Orientation to improve the effectiveness of religious policy implementation in the reform period: Focus on raising awareness, unifying the views and responsibilities of the political system and the entire society on religious issues; Strengthen mass mobilization and build political forces at the grassroots; Improve the effectiveness of state management of religion; Strengthen organizational work and cadres doing religious work; Effectively implement guidelines, policies and programs for socio-economic development, improving the material and spiritual lives of people in religious areas.

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