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## RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

This article discusses some theoretical aspects of nation-building in the case of the United Arab Emirates and the social changes produced by COVID-19. Countries across the world responded very differently in their prevention and control of coronavirus disease and state capacity is likely driving these differences. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the related public health measures taken to mitigate the spread of the disease, and the varied public responses to the virus have far-reaching social implications. This case study explores United Arab Emirates' experience on controlling pandemic in terms of state capacity.

The main goal and purpose of this study is to analyze how social changes caused by COVID-19 pandemic affected religious life and state-society relations in terms of state capacity in the United Arab Emirates. The results of this study showed that state capacity has played an important role in effectively mitigating the widespread impact of the pandemic, which has led to a paradigm shift in all spheres of human life, in particular in religious life. Based on the results of empirical research, we see that the society in the UAE quickly adapted to new realities and perceived these restrictions as temporary and a sense of trust in the state increased, thus emphasizing the importance of having a capable state.

**Key words:** COVID-19, religious practice, nation-building, UAE, state capacity, rentier state theory.

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### Біріккен Араб Әмірліктеріндегі COVID-19 пандемиясы кезіндегі діни тәжірибе мен әлеуметтік өзгерістер

Бұл мақалада Біріккен Араб Әмірліктері мысалында ұлт құрылысының кейбір теориялық аспектілері мен COVID-19 пандемиядан туындаған әлеуметтік өзгерістер қарастырылады. Мемлекеттік әлеуетке қарай, әлем елдері коронавирустық инфекцияның алдын алу және онымен күресу шараларына әр түрлі жауап берді. Жалғасып жатқан пандемия, аурудың таралуына жол бермеу үшін қабылданған қоғамдық денсаулық сақтау шаралары және халықтың бұл құбылысқа деген әр түрлі реакциялары түрлі әлеуметтік салдарларға әкеп соғады. Бұл зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты – COVID-19 пандемиясынан туындаған әлеуметтік өзгерістердің Біріккен Араб Әмірліктеріндегі мемлекеттік әлеует тұрғысынан діни өмірге және мемлекет пен қоғам арасындағы қарым-қатынасқа қалай әсер еткенін талдау. Зерттеу нәтижелері пандемияның кең ауқымды әсерін тиімді жұмсартуда мемлекеттік әлеуетінің маңызды рөл атқаратынын көрсетті, бұл адам өмірінің барлық салаларында, соның ішінде, діни бағытта парадигманың ауысуына әкелді. Эмпирикалық зерттеулердің нәтижелері бойынша, біз мемлекеттің тиімді араласуының арқасында БАӘ қоғамы жаңа өмірге тез бейімделіп, бар шектеулерді уақытша деп қабылдағанын, әрі мемлекетке деген сенімнің жоғарылағанын көреміз. Бұл ел өміріндегі мемлекеттік әлеуеттің маңызды рөл атқаратынын көрсетеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** COVID-19, діни тәжірибе, ұлт құрылысы, БАӘ, мемлекеттік әлеует, рантье мемлекеті теориясы.

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### Отправление религиозных ритуалов и социальные изменения в период пандемии COVID-19 в Объединенных Арабских Эмиратах

В данной статье рассматриваются некоторые теоретические аспекты нациестроительства в случае Объединенных Арабских Эмиратов и социальные изменения, вызванные COVID-19. В

зависимости от государственного потенциала страны по всему миру по-разному отреагировали на меры по профилактике и борьбе с коронавирусной инфекцией. Продолжающаяся пандемия, соответствующие меры общественного здравоохранения, принятые для смягчения распространения болезни, и различные общественные реакции на данное явление имеют далеко идущие социальные последствия. Основная цель данного исследования – проанализировать, как социальные изменения, вызванные пандемией COVID-19, повлияли на религиозную жизнь и отношения между государством и обществом с точки зрения государственного потенциала в Объединенных Арабских Эмиратах. Результаты исследования показали, что государственный потенциал сыграл важную роль в эффективном смягчении широкомасштабного воздействия пандемии, которая привела к смене парадигмы во всех сферах человеческой жизни, в частности, и религиозной. Основываясь на результатах эмпирических исследований, мы видим, что благодаря эффективному вовлечению государства общество в ОАЭ быстро адаптировалось к новым реалиям и восприняло данные ограничения как временные, а чувство доверия к государству возросло, что подчеркивает важность наличия государственного потенциала.

**Ключевые слова:** COVID-19, религиозная практика, нациестроительство, ОАЭ, государственный потенциал, теория государства-рантье.

## Introduction

Today, the COVID-19, which captured every country in the globe without exception, will be remembered as one of the most significant events of the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Following its first emergence in December 2019, in the city of Wuhan in China and its subsequent outbreak throughout the world in the following months it was characterized as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. (World Health Organization, 2020).

On January 29, 2020, the UAE reported the first verified case of COVID-19. It was the first Middle Eastern country to report a confirmed case. (Turak, N., 2020). COVID-19 has had an impact on all area of society, including religious life, all across the world and presented a fundamental challenge for the crisis management capacities of the modern state (Boin, A., Lodge, M., & Luesink, M., 2020). Arab countries, in general, differ from each other in different health infrastructures, economic levels, government policies, which poses all sorts of challenges for effective control of the pandemic. Given the importance of religion in the region, the suspension of religious practices across the region was unexpected, and many countries were unprepared for a sudden change in their faith. Religious communities in the UAE, like government health services, have never experienced an infectious disease pandemic before. Since the start of the pandemic, saving lives has relied on swift and effective government involvement, as well as temporary regulatory measures that have curtailed communal religious meetings. Along with the measures used in the majority of countries across the world, the UAE has implemented complete and partial blocks, early vaccination campaign, as well

as delivery services such as medicine distribution to another countries and city sanitization at night, as part of the National Disinfection Program. Moreover, early understanding of the importance of vaccination and digitalization enabled the state to swiftly respond to the various problems posed by the COVID-19 epidemic.

## Justification of the choice of article

The religious factor has been highlighted globally and regionally over the last decades, and contributes significantly towards shaping people's identity. Since the state as well as other actors and stakeholders are invested in nation-building, this process becomes crucial to the performance of society and to state sovereignty and independence (Yerekesheva, L., 2020). Religion is the most significant factor in bringing individuals together in organizations based on shared religious beliefs. Religious institutions, religious organizations, and associations are religious subsystem components, much like every other social subsystem. Religious organizations were among the earliest socially important means of connecting individuals based on worldview principles. These institutional forms are formed and run to satisfy people's religious needs, and they are frequently involved in charitable, educational, and other activities that have a substantial influence on society as a whole. As a result, an ill-conceived system of state-religious interactions, as well as the absence of good tendencies in the religious domain, can have severe implications for both believers and the state. (Fedorov, B. I., 2020). The last two years have shown how certain states responded to the policy challenges posed by COVID-19, which impacted religious life of citizens and demonstrated state capacity. State capacities are important to

all policy areas such as economic development, regulation, public goods supply, conflict resolution and off course, religion.

The main **goal** and **purpose** of this study is to analyze how social changes caused by COVID-19 pandemic affected religious life and state-society relations in terms of state capacity in the United Arab Emirates. For this purpose, the following **objectives** were created:

- to analyze some theoretical conceptual aspects of nation-building in the case of the UAE

- to identify the attitude of respondents based on the survey to the religious rituals in the UAE in the context of a pandemic and social distancing.

- to define the role of state capacity in responding to COVID-19

### Scientific research methodology

To study the impact of COVID-19 on religious practice in the UAE, a survey was taken as a basis, compiled by the project leader Dr. L.Yerekeshva, and translated into Arabic language. The purpose of the project, as well as the specifics of the country under study, were included in the questionnaires for the survey. Invitations to participate in an online survey in Google Forms were distributed using social media platforms, e.g. WhatsApp™. Data were collected from February to March 2021. All data were collected anonymously with no indication of any personal information. Basic demographic factors were assessed including age and gender. The survey contained two blocks of questions related to religious education and the direction of religious practices during the COVID-19. There were questions about the transition from the general to the specific in each of these blocks. For the analysis we have selected the answers on religious practices during the COVID-19.

During the study of impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on religious practice in the UAE data were collected from reliable sources including the WHO COVID-19 database, official websites of UAE governmental organizations, Arab media news, research reports, books and journal articles. By comparing these multiple data sources, we can verify the empirical evidence to ensure the reliability and replicability of the research.

According to D.Galeeva's research, the pandemic has highlighted the UAE's development on the global scene as a potentially «strong» state, and its economic strength, allied with the low number of COVID-19 cases in the country, has allowed it to become the world's greatest

humanitarian giver during the epidemic. Small states with a small population but a high economy and strong state capacity appear to be able to solve their national security challenges caused by pandemic successfully, rather than large states with big populations and territory, such as the US, China and Russia, which have proven to be among the most challenged by the COVID-19 outbreak. What is more, small states can use more flexible tactics that raises questions about the neo-realist tradition which considers small territories with small populations as 'weak' (Galeeva. D., 2020).

The Arabian Peninsula's states have historically been «weak» due to the climate: deserts meant nomadic life predominates, and organizations can rarely assemble the resources needed to run an effective bureaucracy and in such countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, colonial powers had only limited interests in building the state's capacity. After the discovery of oil in the 1930s, Anglo-American interest in the region was renewed. Oil extraction generated significant revenues that the Gulf governments could use to build their capacity. However, because these revenues were derived from external resource rents rather than traditional taxation, the Gulf countries bypassed a typically crucial step in the state development process. Building a bureaucracy capable of managing the process of levying and collecting taxes is a big undertaking, and as history has shown in Europe and Asia, once a government succeeds in doing so, its potential to exert influence throughout society vastly grows (Omar Al-Ubaydli, 2020).

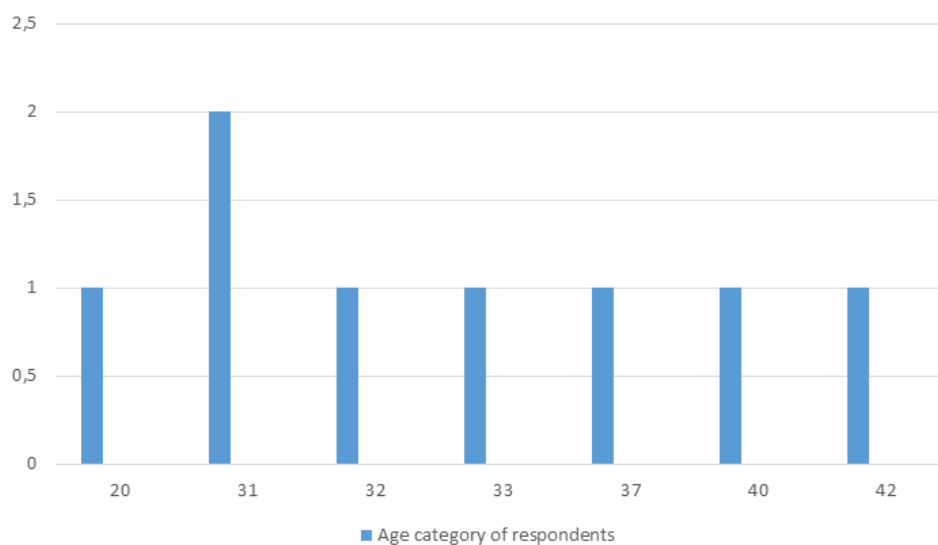
The United Arab Emirates and other Gulf Arab governments are often classified in political economic scholarship as «petro» or «rentier» states because most of their revenue is generated through the sale of oil or the rental of oil prospects (Neha, V., 2011). From Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates at one end of the spectrum to Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and eventually Iran and Iraq (as well as Algeria) at the other, Mehran Kamrava describes the political economy of rentiers, from the wealthiest to the poorest based on Michael Herb's categories (Kamrava, M., 2018). To distinguish between the three distinct types of rentier states, Michael Herb uses categories like «extreme rentiers» (Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE), «middling rentiers» (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman), and «poor rentiers» (Algeria and Iran) (Herb, M., 2014). As we see from the Arabian Peninsula's petro-states UAE solely fall into the first category.

Since this topic is an object of interdisciplinary sciences, we decided to consider this study in the UAE within the framework of the Rentier state theory (RST). RST remains the dominant literature on state-society relations in the Arab States of the Gulf. Hossein Mahdavy first developed RST for the poor development performance of pre-revolutionary Iran. Mahdavy defined a «rentier state» as a state that receives a substantial amount of rental income from other states or foreign entities. Thanks to such a rent, the «rentier state» gets the opportunity to finance public expenditures without levying taxes on the population or with minimal taxation (Mahdavy, H., 1970). Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani were also among the first authors to deeply question the impact of externally generated rent on the type of state, political regime and economic structure of a country. According to authors, income streams not earned domestically, flowing exclusively to government circles, distort the political and economic structure of the state, as a result of which the underdevelopment of the state system is preserved. An obstacle to democratic change in the system is the control of government circles over natural resources, which ensures the fiscal independence of the state from taxes and from the need to exercise «tax pressure» on the population (Beblawi, H., Luciani, G., 1987). One of the original intuitions of the rentier state theory – beyond the slogan «no representation without taxation» – is the idea that there is a «social contract» in the region between rulers and ruled. The basic terms of the contract are that rulers would provide citizens with oil revenues and citizens would provide allegiance, or political quiescence, to their rulers.

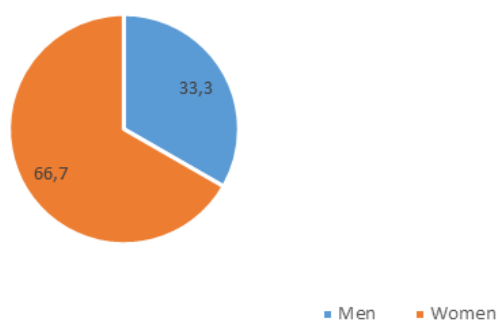
Prior to 2014, there were no income taxes, no Value Added Tax (VAT), no corporation tax, no sales taxes, no payroll tax, no inheritance taxes, and no property taxes in the Gulf countries and residents could expect to pay a small customs duty at most, and many basic commodities, such as fuel, flour, and meat, were heavily subsidized by the government. However, between 2014 and 2016, oil prices fell from \$120 per barrel to \$30 per barrel, making existing budgeting projections unworkable. The Gulf countries needed to boost non-oil earnings to balancing their budgets, which demanded considerable enhancements to the state's capacity as we see in an example of the UAE. Many of these subsidies to basic necessities were drastically reduced in the Gulf countries. Levies on the employment of migrant workers, as well as fees on a wide range of commercial activity, were imposed

and raised in a conscious attempt to produce non-oil fiscal income. Moreover, VAT was implemented in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 2018. (Omar Al-Ubaydli, 2020). The state's bureaucratic powers had to be significantly enhanced in order to generate this new income and adjust the subsidy programs.

As many experts said, the social contract helped the Gulf countries to avoid the wave of indignation during the Arab Spring, which swept through many authoritarian states of the Middle East and recently developed state capacity has facilitated some of the response measures on COVID-19. By M.Kamrava state capacity may be viewed along five, interrelated dimension like functions, institutions, legitimacy, identity, and agenda setting, where the last two dimensions of state capacity are unique to the states of the Arabian Peninsula. The measurement of identity revolves around the success of the government's efforts to shape and influence the «national» identity in the country. This is one of the main state projects that attracts a lot of attention and resources of the state. Likewise, the state's small demographic size and relatively exorbitant hydrocarbon-based wealth provide state leaders with ample opportunity to shape public discourse and thinking (Kamrava, M., 2018). According to recent research on the rentier state in the region, social contract is a social construction that must be constructed and updated over time. Michael Herb argues that, nowadays Gulf states must make difficult decisions about how to move away from their existing reliance on oil and foreign labor. There are no guarantees about how governments will structure or citizens will understand these choices. Regimes will attempt to frame residents' perceptions of forthcoming changes, in some cases by overt social engineering. Social engineering like culture plays limited role in rentier state theory. According to Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (1987) rentier states do not need to create national mythmaking since they can build loyalty through the distribution of their large stores of resource wealth (Beblawi, H., Luciani, G., 1987). As a counterpoint to this view, we can observe how the monarchies Arabian Peninsula, swept along by social engineering, established museums and stories to legitimize ruling families as legitimate political leaders, particularly during the first oil boom. Likewise, religion is part of a culture and requires effective engineering by the state, especially in the Gulf countries, where religion is an element of national identity.



**Figure 1** – Age category of respondents on UAE who participated in survey.  
**Source:** Compiled by the author based on the results of survey



**Figure 2** – Gender of respondents.  
**Source:** Compiled by the author based on the results of survey

## Results and discussion

According to the results of the survey, it is possible to see that the age category of respondents from UAE is from 20 to 40 years (Figure-1), of which 33,3 % are men and 66,7 % are women (Figure-2).

The following responses were received to the question «How digitalization and social distancing could have an impact on the religious practices in the UAE»:

- The closure of some mosques at the start of the pandemic had both positive and negative impacts.
- People are used to giving up some important religious rituals, such as Friday prayers.
- Religious rituals will not be affected because we all know that the epidemic has spread to the entire world.
- The most important religious rituals are performed in a group and due to the pandemic and

the presence of many complications, the practice of religious rituals is not the same as before.

- Has no influence.
- The influence is not as strong as the present distance is maintained all over the world.
- This will greatly affect the practice of religious rituals. As an oriental and religious society, we are used to performing our own rituals. It is difficult to adapt to social distancing when performing rituals, but at the current stage of the pandemic, I think there is no harm.
- This can reduce precious time that can be used for worship.

On March 3, the UAE Fatwa Council under the chairmanship of Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, has issued a «Fatwa» (Islamic ruling) No. 11 on «Pertaining to the Rulings of Performing Congregational Rites in Light of the Spread of COVID-19» which prohibit congregational worship

and urging all Muslims in the country to follow official regulations in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (UAE Council for Fatwa, 2020). On March 16, in an effort to reduce COVID-19 infections among worshippers, UAE's The National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA), the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments (GAIAE) or (Awqaf) has banned public prayers in all houses of worship. The Fatwa included six points that «all organizations and areas of society» must adhere to. They include «following all UAE authorities' health and regulatory requirements to prevent the virus from spreading.» The fatwa exempts the elderly or immunocompromised, children and people with disabilities from attending group prayers. Since the collective Friday prayers, Eid prayers, and Tarawih, held in Ramadan have been suspended, people could pray at home. Pandemic has undoubtedly triggered organizational changes, triggered a rethinking of state strategy and served as a catalyst for digitalization in healthcare and education and of course in religious life too. State's early recognition of the necessity of digitalization allowed it to quickly respond to the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 outbreak. The official Fatwa center under the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments has provided an e-fatwa service available 24/7 on official web-site and phone apps as well as services via social medias like Twitter, Instagram, where nowadays youth get the most available information. Also, people could join Quran memorization classes on smart platform provided by Authority. Moreover, throughout the country was developed «The Al-Hosn app» which individuals can receive COVID-19 test results and get vaccination status on their smartphones by entering Emirates ID and phone number. This app is a joint initiative between Ministry of Health and Prevention, Department of Health - Abu Dhabi (DoH) and Dubai Health Authority. We can say that the introduction and use of this application made it possible to control the epidemiological situation in the country and subsequently, contributed to the early opening of places of worship. As we can see, COVID-19, on the one hand, limited it to bring its own adjustments to the lives of people and the state in general, but at the same time made it possible to develop digitalization and new technologies in different sectors of government. As His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, noted, «Anyone who thinks that the world after COVID-19 will be the same as the one before it, is mistaken». Realizing the importance of

digitalization, the state has launched an initiative available to both residents and non-residents of the UAE in an attempt to attract the most qualified coders and graduates specializing in coding. This announcement is in line with the national efforts to create 1,000 large digital companies in the UAE over the next five years, to build the country's digital marketplace and prepare the necessary infrastructure for innovation and creativity to keep pace with rapid global change across a variety of vital industries.

When asked whether religious communities can remotely perform socially important rituals online (Friday prayers, Ramadan / Eid al-Adha), many respondents answered negatively, justifying this by the fact that since a person is by nature a social being, regardless of race or religion, he needs *Jamaat* and besides, the solidarity of the Islamic community lies in their unity, and this is especially manifested in the performance of religious rituals.

Since the beginning of the pandemic came in the month of Ramadan, Tarawih prayers in the UAE were not allowed, and the only prayer held in grand Mosques with an Imam and two people was broadcast daily for Muslims to watch at home. The special annual prayers, held daily during Ramadan, were streamed live from the UAE's largest mosque on state TV channels and radio stations across the country. Authorities said the decision to broadcast the prayers from the mosque was made to preserve the spiritual atmosphere of Ramadan.

It was also asked if religious communities (Islamic or others) can carry out major social rituals (Friday prayers, Ramadan / Eid al-Adha) while preserving social isolation. It was pointed out that this approach is widely utilized in the UAE. Furthermore, it was highlighted that performing religious rituals in a socially distant manner is the ideal decision for religious societies, since a full prohibition on rituals might lead to feelings of spirituality deficiency. By the time the survey was conducted from February to March 2021., Friday prayers were already allowed in the UAE from December 4, 2020. The National Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA) announced that mosques across the country will host Friday prayers with 30% capacity and compliance with sanitary standards and social distance. This decision has been taken in line with the efforts to resuming normal religious rituals across the UAE. Dr Omar Al Hammadi, UAE government's official spokesperson, stated that the country recorded a 14 percent increase in COVID-19 recoveries at 5,614 in the week between November 18 and November 24 over the previous week. The UAE also recorded

its lowest weekly death rate at 0.3 of the total cases since the beginning of the pandemic outbreak. It is among the lowest death rates due to COVID-19 across the world. Such indicators allowed the state to decide on such a step.

On December 23, 2020 Dubai announced that it has commenced its COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Dubai Health Authority provided the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccination, which approved for use by the US Food and Drug Administration and registered by the UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention. Campaign were targeted for four main categories, first to UAE nationals and their household workers, senior citizens and residents (those who are 60 years old and above), people of determination, people with chronic illnesses and those working in the health and education centers. There are five available vaccines in the UAE against the virus. They are: Sinopharm, Pfizer-BioNTech, Sputnik V, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Moderna. Together with that the UAE has become the first country in the Arab world manufacturing locally-made COVID-19 vaccine called «Hayat-Vax» by a joint venture between Abu Dhabi's G42 and Sinopharm (Sahim S., 2021), During the announcement of a vaccination campaign the UAE Fatwa Council, chaired by Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, has issued a 'fatwa' enabling coronavirus vaccinations to be used in accordance with Islamic Sharia's goals for human body protection and other pertinent Islamic rulings. This comes in response to growing Muslim concerns about the halal status of Covid vaccinations, as well as a request for an advisory opinion on the same matter from Malaysia's Minister of Religious Affairs to the UAE Fatwa Council. Even if the vaccination in question contains non-halal chemicals that are prohibited by Islam, the Fatwa Council stated that it is legal to use it in accordance with the Islamic rule that allows the use of such items when there are no other options. (UAE Council for Fatwa, 2020). UAE's The National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA) updates daily statistics on vaccination rates and cases in country. According to statistics, by August 2021, UAE has administered about 17,909,062 doses of vaccines and percentage of population fully vaccinated has reached 75.03 %. There is total 713,402 cases of the disease were registered in country, 2,031 people have died and 697,419 have recovered. Compared to other countries in the region, the data prove effective crisis management in a country where every citizen can feel safe and loyal to the government.

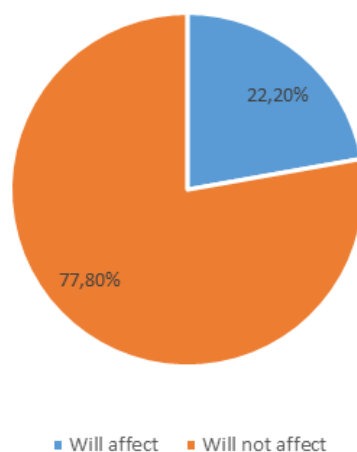
When asked whether Muslims or other people are ready to accept and implement a new format (online) for performing religious rituals, respondents were divided, because some believe that we live in the age of new technologies, and that it is now possible to introduce a lot, even through social networks. Since Islam is appropriate for every time and location and can keep up with progress, it can adapt to any change. Another group of respondents feels that it is impossible to establish a new format for conducting religious rituals since the idea of doing religious rituals such as combined prayer, Hajj, and Umrah is primarily collective, which might diminish the value of the rituals themselves. There was also a question on how current traditional religious practices and rituals (Friday prayers, Hajj, Ramadan / Eid al-Adha) are changing in the setting of reduced social interaction and an increase in internet communication. Many respondents stated that these rituals are continuously altering in response to changing circumstances, and that network communication is growing and evolving as a result. These changes, however, are viewed as transient.

When asked if the changes occurring as a result of the pandemic of religious rituals will impact debates between religious followers and society as a whole, 77.8 % said no (they will not), and 22.2 % said yes (they will). Figure-3. In order to prevent and avoid such debates Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah on the behalf of the UAE Fatwa Council called on everyone to work with the authorities and support efforts to eradicate the disease and prevent rumors from spreading. He also added that official information must be obtained from official sources, and those who interfere with the security and stability of the country and spread rumors must be suppressed. To avoid misinformation on religious issues during the pandemic, the only way out was to move to an online space accessible to everyone.

Those categories that answered yes to the previous question were asked which religious practices might be more important for the discussion. According to the respondents, these are such important, collective rituals as Friday prayers, Eid prayers and the Taraweeh prayer during the month of Ramadan.

## Conclusion

The past two years have been difficult for all countries around the world. No country has fully confronted the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Importantly, the UAE's state



**Figure 3** – Whether the changes due to the pandemic of religious rituals could also affect the debates between religious followers and society as a whole?

**Source:** Compiled by the author based on the results of survey

capacity has played an important role in effectively mitigating the widespread impact of the pandemic, which has led to a paradigm shift in all spheres of human life, in particular in religious life. Based on the results of empirical research, we see that the society in the UAE quickly adapted to new realities and perceived these restrictions as temporary and a sense of trust in the state increased, it is emphasize the importance of having a capable state. The state has invested all resources to prevent the spread of the virus throughout the country, and low mortality rates and, in general, cases in comparison with other neighboring states prove the well-coordinated work of state institutions, including religious ones. It is important to note that the calls for cooperation with government agencies and for following the decree were on behalf of religious authorities. The pandemic has shown that the world will not be the same as

before, and all states need to quickly adapt and be flexible, and enhance the state capacity. In the case of the UAE, we see the government embarking on a long-term strategy to develop new technologies to keep pace with rapid global change across a variety of vital industries.

### Funding

This article is carried out within the framework of the project «Religious institutions and practices in the context of digitalization and changes in social space during the COVID pandemic in Kazakhstan» funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Grant No. AP08956706, 2020-2021)», project leader Dr. L.Yerekesheva, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi.

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