



Article

## Expanding Islamic Studies Epistemological Apparatus with Futures Studies Tools: The Three Tomorrows

Yelena V. Muzykina<sup>1\*</sup>, Nurlykhan K. Aljanova<sup>2</sup>, Toirshik Yuldashev<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Center for Postnormal Policy & Futures Studies; Academy of Public Administration under the President of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan

<sup>2</sup>Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty; The Nazarbayev University's Research Centre for Entrepreneurship (NURCE), Astana, Kazakhstan

<sup>3</sup>Republican Islamic Institute for Imams' Advanced Studies under the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan, Almaty, Kazakhstan

### Abstract

*The article presents research that demonstrates a way of incorporating futures studies instruments into the arsenal of Islamic Studies. The authors argue that futures studies can substantially expand the traditional limitations of Islamic Studies and benefit the stockholders. Using the "Three Tomorrows" (3Ts) approach, one can launch what can be called "futures ijihad." By the latter, the authors mean the informed mental struggle for creating alternative perspectives on the future. The 3Ts include three basic overarching alternatives: Extended Present, Familiar Future(s), and Unthought Future(s). Each option can incorporate several variations. Their spectrum depends on the methods used for their building. The present research utilizes the 2x2 Matrix that helps elaborate on the futures of imams in post-pandemic Kazakhstan and comes up with twelve scenarios ranging from possible to unthought. As the scenarios suggest further practical steps, integrating new tools can facilitate Islamic studies' transition from predominantly theoretical to practical discipline.*

### Keywords

Three Tomorrows, Scenarios, 2x2 Matrix, Imams, Kazakhstan

### Introduction: Expanding Islamic Studies Horizon

Over the past few years, the world community has faced many challenges that have come quite unexpectedly, causing numerous crises in various spheres of socio-cultural life. A clear understanding started to dominate that the focus and nature of the ongoing changes are characterized by incredible speed, scale, scope, and simultaneity, thereby transforming us into a new era of postnormal times (Sardar, 2010). World religions also responded to the shift, making efforts to comfort their adherents during critical trials. Along with the issues related to the impact of religious institutions, beliefs, and practices on the ongoing crisis, specific questions about their futures have emerged. What challenges are coming? How can religious institutions adjust to a new environment? What should be considered perpetual and transitory in religion? Where do the worst threats / the best opportunities to religion come from?

Among the most recent and unexpected changes are the interference of Artificial Intelligence in Transcendent-human relations that historically have been dominated by attempts of human intellect to reach the Divine mind. With the advent of generative AI and large language models in the form of chatbots like ChatGPT, nothing seems to be sacred or untouchable, including religion. The generalized chatbots provide answers to theological questions, write sermons, and give advice by collecting information from countless internet sources (Bhuniyan, 2023). In addition, more specialized religious chatbots have emerged, like HadithGPT, which give advice rooted in Islamic texts, including a collection of 40,000 Hadith, to create new assertions similar to those found in historical Hadith

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [yelena@andrews.edu](mailto:yelena@andrews.edu) (Y. Muzykina)

(Ali, 2023). However, little has been studied about the phenomenon with an ambiguous and contradictory nature so typical for postnormal things (Sardar, 2010, pp. 436-437).

Such examples obviously point out to the context of increasing uncertainty and instability of postnormal times, when “old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have yet to be born, and very few things seem to make sense” (Sardar, 2010, p. 435). Keeping them in mind, contemporary scholars of Religious Studies cannot but understand that traditional approaches and methods in the field need to be updated. For the discipline development, they need to look around and search for inter- or even transdisciplinary tools that can help to broaden the Religious Studies horizons. Our choice fell on futures studies’ arsenal that bears a critical role for Islamic Studies in particular that currently concentrate primarily on the past. This tandem helps explore new methodologies in dealing with problems following the accelerating development process and the advancement of science. It also provides a fresh paradigm in thinking that can safeguard Islamic culture and identity in the future.

Therefore, the paper’s main objective is to elaborate on the applicability of instruments from futures studies to religious research and answer the main research question: How can Islamic Studies benefit from futures studies’ methodology and expand their limitations? The current study gives insights and contributes to Islamic Studies in two ways. Firstly, it demonstrates how researchers can apply innovative for this field instruments. Secondly, it advances the ability of stakeholders to operate in the postnormal context and learn to navigate uncertainty and unpredictability, for it is a matter of surviving to react correctly, effectively, and efficiently.

Both goals will stand on a specific example of modeling the future roles of imams (Muslim ministers) in Kazakhstan in the post-pandemic context. First, the paper explains the study context and methods and presents the detailed results of two surveys consecutively conducted among Muslim ministers during the pandemic in the Republic. After that, the paper discusses the findings and demonstrates a step-by-step process of scenario building, thus giving a picture of different futures that imams in Kazakhstan can face under certain circumstances. The Three Tomorrows approach serves as a framework for creativity. The paper concludes with a summary.

### **Bringing Scenarios into Religious Studies**

The key premise of futures studies lies in a multiplicity of future options, thus distinguishing it from standard forecasting. Moreover, futures studies contribute to our understanding of some essential points. Firstly, working on distinguishing internal mechanisms involved in the ongoing changes, it helps see what dangers and opportunities are revealed in this process. Secondly, futures studies stimulate an awareness of the changes’ range and the directions ahead. Finally, research participants start considering using the opening opportunities to prevent and overcome possible dangers to form the preferred future.

Another vital characteristic of futures studies and futures thinking that is critical in the Muslim context is their ability to prevent what Sardar (Sardar et. al., 2019, p. xi) defines as “colonizing the future,” when “we do not think about our own futures, others will.” There is no guarantee that we will like that version when it becomes our present. Therefore, “playing ahead of the curve” is an integral component of futures studies that can be embodied in various scenarios.

The term “scenarios” is widely used in futures studies and commonly denotes stories or narratives of alternative futures. Peter Schwartz (1996, p. 3) defines scenarios as the most effective means to challenge our “mental models” about the world around us and remove blinders that limit our creativity and ingenuity. The latter two are the components that scholars of religious studies often need to apply for their work in our radically changing world. It has always been in the air that creativity and ingenuity do not fit into religious studies because the discipline is quite conservative. The research object itself has set the mode. Stability and sustainability can be considered advantages of religion in an ever-changing world that increases the change speed. Indeed, for centuries, the religious factor served as a societal component, which withstood severe trials and remained a longed-for harbor where many sought a refuge in turbulent times. Despite numerous statements about the “death of religion,” it continues to exist (Berger, 1999; Berger, 2010; Uzlaner, 2019). Moreover, images that people closely associate with different religions receive a new meaning nowadays. It brings us to a critical point of futures studies that aims to identify existing and historical images of the future within a society and analyze their structures and content (Polak, 1961). For Religious Studies the active application of scenarios might mean creating images of alternative futures to provide an intellectual pivot to critique the present and present-day customary assumptions that are so needed.

Furthermore, postnormal times require a prompt reaction to shifts in beliefs and practices occurring in various religions, thus calling to expand methodological means. We suggest the Three Tomorrows as a contribution to the innovation process. Let us briefly introduce it.

### The Three Tomorrows as an Approach

The Three Tomorrows (hereafter the 3Ts) were initially presented in the article by Sardar and Sweeny (2016) as a method prompted by Three Horizons, a tool that aimed to “wind tunnel” strategy and policy initiatives using successive S-curves to model changes over time (Curry & Hodgson, 2008, p. 4). Later on, Jordi Sera del Pino developed it as an approach for further scenario planning (Serra, 2021). The approach navigates and provides “guidance and insight about which method to use in every case, or tomorrow while keeping theoretical and methodological consistency with the postnormal tenets.” (Serra, 2021, p. 101). Let us summarize the key characteristics of each Tomorrow.

*The First Tomorrow* is called *the Extended Present*. The basic assumption is that the future will be similar to what we have now, or it can be comparable to our past and present. This is how the modern cognitive process often looks, making us turn to the knowledge from the past, collect the data, and develop and filter some useful information that can help us go through a crisis. The cognitive process that prevails at this stage dominates the current research practice and includes four main characteristics, which can serve as obstacles in the futures modeling process. They are the following (Serra, 2021, pp. 102-104):

- 1) *Linear Thinking*, which is based on cause-and-effect relations. At the same time, with their immense complexity and chaos in postnormal times, such an approach might lead to a rise of unjustified expectations and intellectual sluggishness.
- 2) *Induction* when an inference about a general category is based on limited observation. However, an insignificant fact can lead to severe changes in the chaotic reality of postnormal times. Therefore, induction based on observation may give a partial picture, and collected facts might be false if you give them a closer look.
- 3) *Dichotomous thinking* based on the idea that if something is true or correct, the opposite is false or wrong. Here arises a two-fold problem. Firstly, such a presupposition reduces analytical efforts by half, and secondly, it does not work in the quantum world.
- 4) *Specialization*, which is a strict classification and compartmentalization of knowledge. Under these conditions, the analysis is simplified since the objects of study are deconstructed into components and the overall direction is lost (Berendzen, 2017). In addition, in postnormal times, complex systems cannot be recreated by a simple mechanical connection of individual parts. Specialization works perfectly with linear thinking but prevents pondering over alternatives, which is particularly important for building futures options.

Thus, the first Tomorrow is called *the Extended Present* since its scenarios show great continuity with the present; in other words, as it was so that it will be, but in a slightly different way. This very assumption determines the singleness and unidirectionality of this future perspective in contrast to the next two Tomorrows.

The main difference of the *Second Tomorrow*, also called the *Familiar Future(s)*, is the study of more destructive situations without trying to connect the future with the present. The starting point, in this case, is the assumption that the future will differ from the present in some way, but we do not know in which direction the changes will go and what impact they will make. Nothing can be taken for granted, including sources of information and their characteristics. These conditions urge us to apply an interdisciplinary approach to research since, for example, particular behavior can be inexplicable from an economic point of view but quite understandable from a religious or cultural one. However, we may encounter situations that are so unusual and new that we simply do not have previous experience and knowledge to interpret them. Then, building the future, we have to ignite speculative reasoning, putting forward assumptions about futures developments.

Therefore, the Second Tomorrow bases its options not (only) on familiar empirical data and statistics but the insights, intuition, knowledge, and images sparkling from science fiction novels, games, movies, or TV shows. Such expansion of disciplinary limitation helps to re-adjust our thinking, and our cognitive system becomes more open and perceptive to new, unusual data and horizons.

It is important to note that the results of the First Tomorrow can serve as a trampoline for the Second Tomorrow, elaborating on the components that got neglected for some reasons on the first level. The Second Tomorrow requires a certain amount of imagination to create truly alternative futures. This can be quite challenging for people accustomed to working within a rigid (dogmatic) framework. As Jameson noted, sometimes “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism” (Jameson, 2003). What he meant is our frequent favor for specific images of the future while completely ignoring other perspectives.

Finally, the *Third Tomorrow* or the *Unthought Future(s)* helps to expand the boundaries of preferred options. For this type of Tomorrow, the concept of unthought plays a critical role. Mohammed Arkoun, an Algerian scholar and thinker, originally conceived it (Arkoun, 2002). According to the philosopher, the unthought lies beyond the conditions or axioms of our worldview. *Unthought* is not unthinkable but difficult to anticipate because it is beyond the boundaries of our imagination, which is heavily determined by our worldview and our current cognitive system. To imagine the collapse of the European Union – as was the case with the Soviet Union in due time – is an example of unthought, not because we cannot think of that but because the Western worldview is built and based on it. «Likewise, a true believer cannot truly consider that God does not exist; it may be an argument in a theoretical debate, but it cannot be something he countenances with all of its implications» (Serra, 2021, p. 110).

The research objective at this level is not to collect as much information as possible about what we do not know but to answer the question, “what do we *really* understand?” The question that Jordi Serra likes to ask his students illustrates the complexity of the Third Tomorrow: “Do we think what we think because of what we see, or do we see what we see because of what we think?” It is not a word game but a recognition of the fact that our brain plays a crucial role in precepting the world around us. Modern research in neurophysiology indicates that when we are asked to think about the future, the parts of the brain responsible for memory start to work actively (Schacter & Szpunar, 2012). Therefore, to create options within the Third Tomorrow, we must question the part of our knowledge that prevents us from moving forward. Understanding what we must learn and need to *unlearn* is crucial to review our worldview critically.

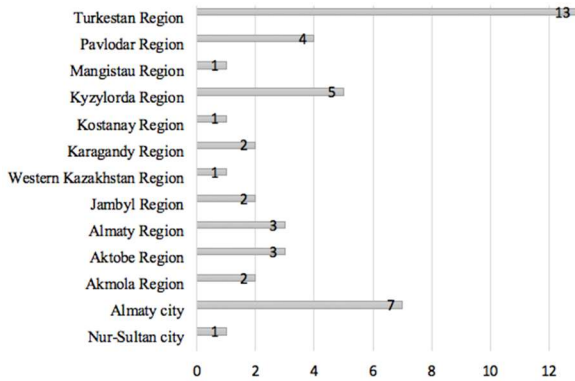
Finally, moving from one Tomorrow to the next, we might desire to correct or change previous scenarios. It is a natural impulse since each Tomorrow is a snapshot of a new perspective or fragment of the future. However, each subsequent scenario is not built to refute the previous one. Instead, combining multiple pieces creates a cohesive picture that conveys a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of what might happen in the future. It helps us better navigate Postnormal Times by reshaping our perception of reality and cognitive processes. The practical application of this theoretical foundation will be presented in the next section, using the study of the post-pandemic Muslim ministers’ roles in the Kazakhstani *ummah*.

### **Research Design: Building Empirical Foundation and Collecting Data**

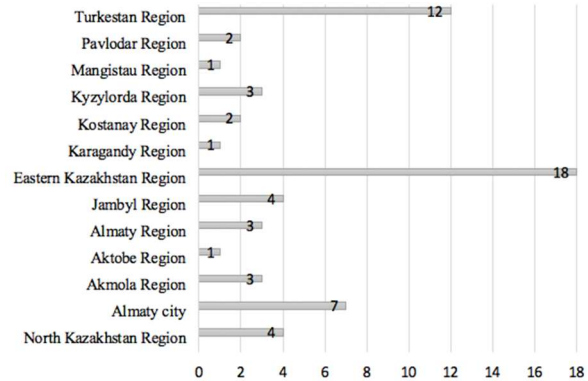
The research uses the qualitative and quantitative approaches as its methodology because they help get rich and detailed perspective for future scenarios, especially in complex situations with high levels of uncertainty and the data difficult to quantify (van Notten et al., 2003).

The empirical foundation for building futures options for the Three Tomorrows scenarios were the results of online surveys conducted among Kazakhstani imams in two stages: (1) from April 15 to May 13, 2020, and (2) from February 5 to 15, 2021. The first stage was reconnaissance and descriptive and aimed at identifying the difficulties that the imams faced during the first wave of quarantine in Kazakhstan (Muzykina & Aljanova, 2022). The second stage focused on changes in the changes themselves, which logically were expected in ten months that Kazakhstan lived under restrictions and isolation. Minding the postnormal nature of the COVID-19 pandemic itself (Jones, Serra & Liam, 2021), such changes should have happened. Therefore, seeing their dynamics, scale, and driving forces were essential.

Imams that took part in the surveys represented various regions of Kazakhstan. 45 ministers completed the questionnaires the first time (Graph 1.1), and 61 ministers did the second time (Graph 1.2):



Graph. 1.1: Imams Ministry Regions



Graph. 1.2: Imams Ministry Regions

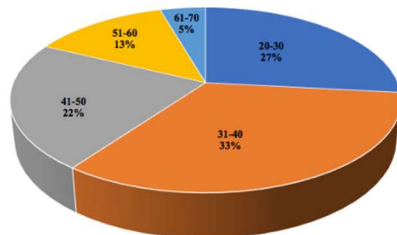
Combining both results, we received a better representation of Muslim ministers’ around the country. They prove the official figures that the main number of imams is located in the southern regions of the Republic since the most significant number of mosques are there (Mosques and educational institutions of Kazakhstan ).

In both surveys, participants answered ten closed-ended questions that offered alternative and multiple-choice answers. However, imams also had opportunities to express their thoughts by answering questions related to imams’ primary duties. Thus, they helped clarify the preparedness of Kazakhstani Muslim ministers for the impact of COVID-19 on their daily work. Researchers focused their attention on three key components while collecting the data and making an analysis:

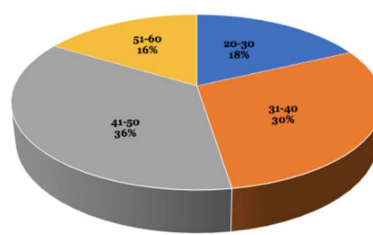
- 1) *Trends* as a visible pattern of events that show changes within a specific period (e.g., statistics).
- 2) *Weak signals* that have the potential to disrupt current events in the future and lead to significant changes.
- 3) *Drivers and/or uncertainties* as forces or events that cause critical changes of a diverse nature, influencing and shaping the future (Saritas & Smith, 2011).

All the components are the building blocks of future scenarios using the Three Tomorrows approach described above.

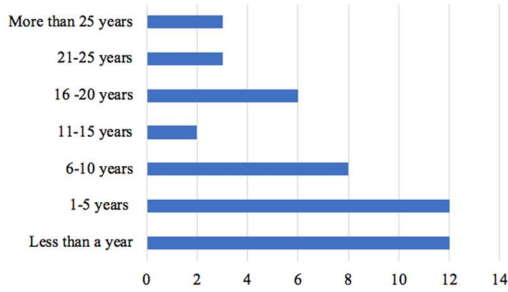
The surveys’ results compiled a general picture of the respondents, presenting them as representatives of the middle age group, who matured in the era of Kazakhstan’s independence and got well-versed in the present moment reality (Graph 2.1 and Graph 2.2). These imams are in the ministry for up to 5 years (Graph 3.1 и Graph 3.2) and serve in small mosques of 50 to 300 people (Graph 4.1 и Graph 4.2). Their educational level is limited to the courses taken at the Republican Institute of Imams Advanced Training in Almaty. The Institute provides continuous education after studying at a madrasah, the first stage of Islamic education in Kazakhstan (Graph 5.1 и Graph 5.2).



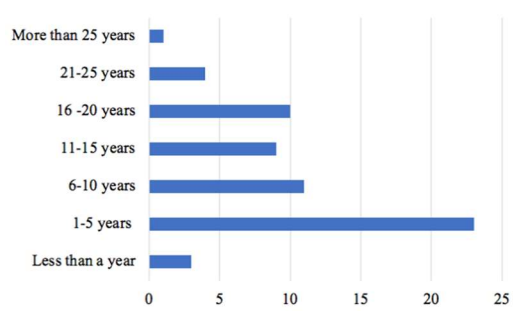
Graph. 2.1: Respondents by Age Group



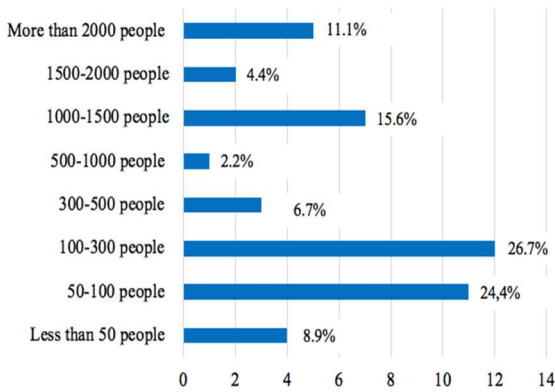
Graph. 2.2: Respondents by Age Group



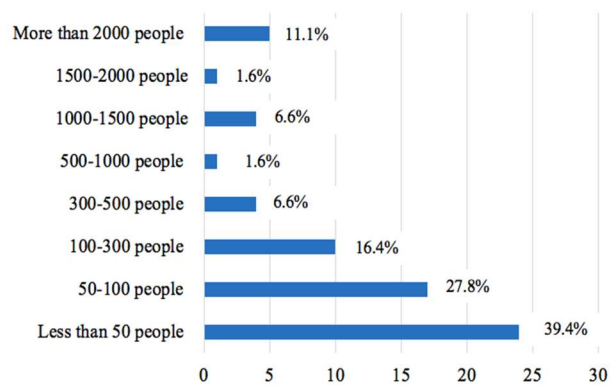
Graph. 3.1: Respondents by Ministerial Experience



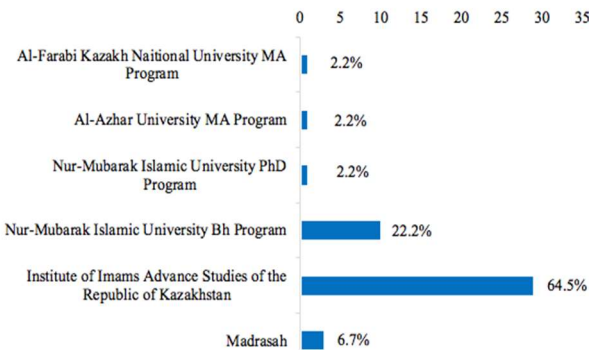
Graph. 3.2: Respondents by Ministerial Experience



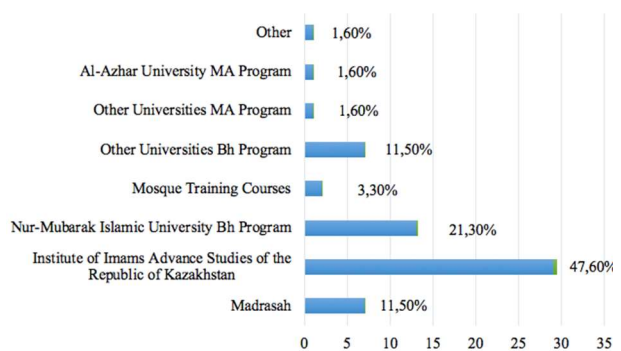
Graph. 4.1: Mosque Size (Friday Prayers Attendees)



Graph. 4.2: Mosque Size (Friday Prayers Attendees)



Graph. 5.1: Respondents by Educational Level



Graph. 5.2: Respondents by Educational Level

The analysis of the respondents' answers showed that within a period under consideration – from April 2020 to February 15, 2021 – from a quarter (in the 2020 survey) to a third of imams (in the 2021 survey) experienced no change in their ministry. As for the majority, the new circumstances influenced their daily duties starting the first day of the quarantine and kept pushing them (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Answers to the question «How has your ministry changed due to COVID-19 and the quarantine?»

Answers	(%)	
	Survey 1	Survey 2
1 No change	24.4	29.5
2 Slightly changed	51.2	39.4
3 Seriously changed	24.4	29.5
4 Other (we understood that we have to labor to keep the Muslim community)		1.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Furthermore, the ratio of answers to the question “Is it possible to stay a Muslim, communicating [with others] only remotely/virtually?” started to change after ten months of the new reality. Though the affirmative responses kept their half, doubts and negative answers gained the second piece of the pie, thus indicating the shift in imams’ perception (Graph 6).



**Graph. 6:** Answers to the question “Is it possible to stay a Muslim, communicating [with others] only remotely/virtually?”

These figures reflect the shift in such a trend as the socialization of Muslims, including the virtual one. Because the majority of the respondents are Millennials, also known as Generation Y, plus some representatives of Generation Z, they are pretty digitally literate and familiar with the Internet, mobile devices, and social media (Prensky & Chen, 2012). While staying physically detached from others, keeping one’s identity is not an enigma for them but a daily practice, at least for those who live in big cities. However, for imams in remote villages, the reality differs, and the very access to the Internet might be a big problem because there is none. Moreover, this trend aligns with a specific characteristic of Kazakhstani religiosity described in the previous publication of the first survey results (Muzykina & Aljanova, 2022). In a nutshell, Islam in Kazakhstan bears more of a cultural and ethnic dimension. Kazakh people widely invite imams for special ceremonies: funerals and weddings that often include a *nikah* ceremony at a mosque, or for the so-called “*at qoyu*” or “*azan shaqyryp at qoyu*,” a Kazakh tradition of giving a name to a baby after pronouncing an *azan*. Still, Islam and Muslimness are kept on the surface without letting them go deep into daily life.

However, the socialization of Kazakhstani imams during the pandemic had to become more agile and invite more virtual reality into their routine. Answers to the question “Please, evaluate how the frequency of your usage of electronic means changed during the quarantine” prove that (Table 2). The results on the learning demands triggered by the situation from Table 3 support them.

**Table 2:** Answers to the question “Please, evaluate how the frequency of your usage of electronic means changed during the quarantine”

Answers		%	
		Survey 1	Survey 2
1	Started to use it much more often	46,7	57,4
2	Learned new communication programs	35,6	34,4
3	Almost unchanged: use quite often	13,3	4,9
4	Almost unchanged: use quite rarely	2,2	3,3
5	No Internet at my place	2,2	0
TOTAL		100	100

**Table 3:** Answers to the question «The current situation has shown that you as an imam need more knowledge on the following discipline (multiple choice)”

Answers		%	
		Survey 1	Survey 2
1	<i>Aqidah</i> (a creed, system of beliefs)	68	69
2	<i>Fiqh</i> (jurisprudence)	61	56
3	Modern electronic means of communication	44	36
4	Arabic language	41	39
5	<i>Tafsir</i> (the science of the Qur’ān explanation)	36	23
6	Psychology	24	26
7	<i>Tasawwuf</i> (the process of realizing ethical and spiritual ideals)	20	18
8	Interpersonal communication	18	8

Indeed, many imams had to learn new technical skills and even cope with the lack of access to the Internet. It has become an urgent issue in the face of rapid technological developments; in the future, serious problems might occur if the situation is not mastered. Therefore, this category - modern technologies skills mastering - can be attributed to trends with a strong presence in society.

In addition, the two main problems that Muslim ministers in Kazakhstan identified for themselves during the lockdown were:

- 1) Maintaining and strengthening one’s spiritual conditions as an imam (*Survey 1: 51%* and *Survey 2: 44.3%*)
- 2) Supporting interaction and direct communication with the community of believers or *jama’at* (*Survey 1: 35.6%* and *Survey 2: 46%*)

Such a choice indicates the functional role of an imam, widely propagated in Kazakhstani society. Traditionally the term “imam” means a prayer leader in the mosque and does not carry any divine designation (Usuf, 2009, p. 531). However, a different idea was developed in the post-Soviet territories due to historical reasons. To be an imam means to occupy the official, professional position of a “mosque chief” and subordinate to an institutionalized (quasi-state) structure - the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK). Therefore, an imam is one who majored in Islamic Studies and whose status is confirmed by the SAMK. The activities and influence of such a person are limited exclusively to the religious sphere. Therefore, the desire to improve one’s spiritual conditions and maintain ties with believers are two tasks that reflect the main functions of imams in Kazakhstani.

In general, among the key difficulties of the pandemic period, the imams identified the following (Table 4):

**Table 4.** Answers to the question “What was the most difficult for you in the quarantine situation?”

Answers		%	
		Survey 1	Survey 2
1	Continue to fulfill your mission as an imam (under quarantine conditions)	46.7	44.3
2	Use electronic means of communication and social networks	37.8	44.3
3	Answer all incoming calls	6.7	6.6
4	Mosques closure	4.4	1.6
5	Inability to participate in funeral ceremonies	2.2	-
6	Worries whether I will get infected if I go to funerals?	-	1.6
7	Nothing	2.2	1.6



The above list indicates two fundamental driving forces that can seriously impact the development of the Muslim community’s futures and imams’ activities in Kazakhstan. They include: (1) society functioning conditions and (2) the level of technological development; and they will serve as uncertainties and foundations for scenario building presented later.

In addition to the repeated questions, the second survey was aided by five personal – one-to-one – interviews of imams to identify emerging issues and catch glimpses of unthought futures. This approach helped the interviewers share their personal views on the events (of different natures) that might have a critical impact in the long run. The interview was designed as semi-structured, with three predefined opened-ended questions as guidance (see Table 5); each interview was recorded for analysis purposes.

**Table 5.** Predefined Opened-Ended Questions for Interviews with Local Imams

Examples
What problems have become entirely unexpected for you during the pandemic?
What things started causing problems for you during the pandemic?
What problems might occur in Kazakhstani Islam in the future?

The interviewers were ministers from the mosques in Almaty, Almaty region, and Shymkent, Southern Kazakhstan. After transcribing the interviews and segmenting their parts, the following list of problems emerged (Table 6). The questions and answers are condensed to deliver the core meaning of them.

**Table 6.** Categorized Answers

	Questions	Answers
1	Totally Unexpected Issues	<i>Burial rules for those who died of COVID-19</i> <i>The need to operate mosques online</i> <i>A complete loss of contact with congregations</i> <i>The need to work with believers online</i>
2	Issues Emerged and Aggravated by the Pandemic	<i>The algorithm for funeral ceremonies under the pandemic</i> <i>Economic stratification in Kazakhstani society</i> <i>The loss of income by many citizens</i> <i>Demonstration of negative personal characteristics, e.g., selfishness</i> <i>Financial challenges to support mosques activities</i> <i>Distrust in the government</i>
3	Coming Issues	<i>Active work of destructive Islamist movements on the Internet</i> <i>A subordinate position of religion to the state</i> <i>The need for autonomy for ministers, especially in regional and rural areas</i> <i>A possibility of religious division in the country</i> <i>Technical equipping of mosques for working online</i> <i>The decreasing level of religious education of ummahs</i>

The data shows that the interviewers identified the same categories during the discussion. Therefore, following the nature of the questions that focused on the forthcoming or little-discussed things, we can highlight emerging issues that correspond to the chosen drivers. The first group relates to the social-economic situation, e.g., the growing financial stratification. The second group refers to technical-ideological context, e.g., the Internet, as a tool to form a new mindset. Finally, the answers also led to unthought futures prompted by changes in political system and technological achievements.

The scenario-building process will help us to combine all the data into neat narrative structures.

### Applying the 3Ts for Building Futures Scenarios

After gathering the information, we can start the actual process of scenario building. This process is the very step that helps answer our main research question that targets to demonstrate the benefits of applying futures studies' methodology to Islamic Studies and expanding their limitations. Instead of confining to the traditional analysis of the received results, we will explore possibilities of looking beyond a visible horizon into the futures of imams' roles and activities under simulated circumstances. Also, we will see what insights might occur from the scenarios if imams want to form correct, effective, and efficient reactions in times of uncertainty and unpredictability. Let us start with the choice of the instrument.

The Three Tomorrows can offer a variety of methods for each one and within each Tomorrow. Thus, the First Tomorrow (Extended Present) mainly operates with information about the present and past; therefore, the apparent instrument will be the trend analysis that has a long-standing tradition in foresight (Bell, 1997; Masini, 1993; Bishop, Hines & Collins, 2007). To refine the obtained results, some other tools can be used, for example, 2x2 Matrix (Rhydderch, 2017) that helps to consider two critical trends and come up with four possible versions of scenarios. For more variables, researchers can utilize other methods, like morphological analysis (Duczynski, 2017), impact analysis (Helmer, 1981) or structural analysis (Godet, 1986). All in all, any method will highlight that the future is a projection of the present.

The Second Tomorrow (Familiar Futures) uses the received information to promote a broader and more profound outcome of changes in action. Therefore, among methods, emerging issues identification (Dator, 2018) can accompany trend analysis; futures wheel (Glenn & Gordon, 2009) can help recognize novelties and consequences of changes; archetypes developed by Jim Dator within the Manoa School (Dator, 2009) can provide an easy way to formulate alternatives to the First Tomorrow. The mentioned above 2x2 Matrix can also be applied to analyze disruptive developments.

The Third Tomorrow (Unthought Futures) deals with the preference mechanisms integral to our cognitive systems. To overcome our cognitive biases and explore possibilities for the emergence of postnormality in the present and future, we can use such an instrument as the *Menagerie of Postnormal Times* (Postnormal Times. Essentials). This tool consists of three creatures allowing us to study accelerating changes (Sardar & Sweeney, 2016, p. 9):

- *black elephant* or phenomena widely discussed by experts but ignored by the general public;
- *black swan* or phenomena entirely beyond even experts' imagination;
- *black jellyfish* or phenomena considered quite normal at the moment but have the potential to go postnormal under certain circumstances due to rapid, even instantaneous escalation.

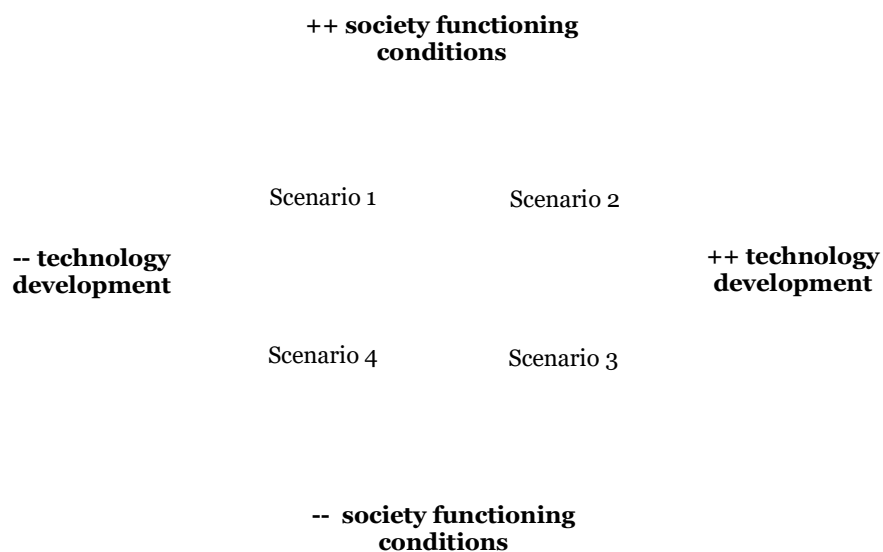
We can use more specific scenario-building techniques to dive deep into our worldviews and discover their implicit parts at this level. For example, the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) helps to explore humans' unconscious assumptions that are products of culture, tradition, religious beliefs, myths, and narratives – the things that are rarely explored by “conventional” futures studies tools (Inayatullah, 1998). Narrative foresight stands in the same line, as it is described by Ivana Milojević and Sohail Inayatullah (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015). The advantage of this method is in moving futures thinking from a focus on new technologies and the “*what is next?*” to an exploration of the worldviews and myths that lavishly underline human actions (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015, p. 151). It can help to discover their shortcomings and detect the barriers that stop us from moving beyond the Extended Present and Familiar Futures.

For the futures section of our research, we chose the 2x2 Matrix, focusing on specific components to build on. It will help us to follow what we know and can easily trace, what we try to learn because we do not know yet, and

what we cannot learn due to the limitation of our cognitive system, and we must speculate only. The method is well-known and even called the “gold standard of corporate scenario generation” (Millett, 2003, p.18). This instrument is easy to learn and use and does not require many variables and only a few hours to develop scenario options.

There are only two basic steps for modeling. The first one includes the choice of two drivers with the highest level of uncertainty that can lead to the most remarkable changes. The second step brings drivers’ extremes to interaction, thus forming four scenario quadrants created by the intersection of the two axes. Ideally, each scenario should then be transformed into a narrative that reflects the impact of previously identified trends, events, or emerging issues in addition to those already reflected on the two axes.

So, our basic matrix includes two drivers that dominate and demonstrate the highest uncertainty according to our research results: (1) society functioning conditions, and (2) the level of technology development (Graph 7). It will be modified according to the context of each Tomorrow.



Graph 7. The Basic 2x2 Matrix

The context of each Tomorrow will depend on their distinctive characteristics. For the Extended Present, the key components are trends highlighted throughout both surveys. The Familiar Future(s) scenarios will add emerging issues to the picture; they flash out in the imams’ answers to the open-ended questions. The Menagerie of Postnormal Times will help to expand on two previous Tomorrows and build scenarios for Unthought Futures. Table 5 summarizes the specific items with their extremes for each Tomorrow that will govern scenario building:

Table 7. The Summary Table of Futures Scenarios Components Using the Three Tomorrows Approach

Tomorrows	Key Component	Drivers			
		Society functioning conditions		Technology development	
		Extreme 1	Extreme 2	Extreme 1	Extreme 2
Extended Present	<i>Trends</i>	Unlimited socialization	Lockdown	High digital literacy of imams	Low digital literacy of imams
Familiar Future(s)	<i>Emerging issues</i>	Universal social wellbeing	High social stratification	Islamized Metaverse-KZ	Back to forefathers
Unthought Future(s)	<i>Menagerie of PNT (black swan)</i>	Constitutional democracy	Islamic State	AI rulership	Digital collapse

Below, we present three matrixes that feature the outlines of futures scenarios illustrating the 3Ts. Each scenario has a title that captures its essence.

**The Extended Present (*The First Tomorrow*)**

**Unlimited Socialization**

**Low Digital Literacy**

**High Digital Literacy**

**“What has been will be again...”**

Social communication norms have returned to their "business-as-usual"; public places, including mosques, function without restrictions. Imam is a guest of honor at funerals, weddings, and other social events.

The urgent need to master modern technologies fades away. Direct communication is welcomed again among those over 40, while the younger generation is slipping away from the control of Muslim ministers to the virtual space of foreign Internet preachers. It is almost impossible for imams to resist the influence of outsiders.

**“The Internet boom”**

Social communication in its direct form has been back. Regular public events, including Friday prayers, are renewed. Kazakh-language Muslim content on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and GoDaddy is growing exponentially because the number of posts and videos is a reporting unit for imams’ state reassessment. The Institute of Imams’ Advanced Training has introduced a unique programming and web design course developed by the Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of Kazakhstan and technical universities of the Republic. All mosques offer Friday services broadcasting and online courses on Introduction to Islam, Muslim Family, Islamic Psychology, etc.

**“A ticking bomb”**

The government has imposed severe restrictions on social communication. Everyone is locked down in their own space. Not all imams have Internet access. Therefore, the control over reality is lost, and the understanding of how believers live is fading. The separatist sentiments are growing in the southern regions of Kazakhstan, pumped by the radical Islamist ideas that leak through the Internet. The result is a social explosion and the introduction of martial law.

**“The isolation is not a problem!”**

Rigid rules limit social communication; mosques’ operations and all religious events are put on hold. But not in the virtual space. Imams create and recreate believers’ communities via social media; videoconference technologies help to conduct funerals, weddings, and baby naming ceremonies. International connections are growing because of Internet technologies that also helped launch a permanent virtual platform for the Muslim culture and art festival. Imams are its active organizers and moderators there.

**Lockdown**

**The Familiar Future(s) (*The Second Tomorrow*)**

**Universal Social Wellbeing**

**Back to Forefathers**

**Islamized Metaverse-KZ**

**“A delicate balance”**

The post-pandemic society is relatively homogeneous due to the rigid state control of the population income and state support. The Kazakhstani Muslim community has generated a new three *zhuzes* (traditional Kazakh territorial clans) division that maintains a shaky parity: Astana (north) - pro-governmental, Almaty (southeast) - classically scientific, and Turkestan (south) - fundamentalistic. Each *zhuz* has a leader who employs modern technologies accessible only to the chosen. Ordinary believers receive the dozed and carefully selected information from the Committee of Muslims of Kazakhstan. This quasi-state body controls TV, news portals, and social network content.

**“Forward to *tajdid* (renewal)!”**

Kazakhstani imams have developed highly praised skills in managing metaverse and actively employ them to transform two main fields of society. The first one is socio-cultural critically influenced by the Multilanguage Universal Interactive Islamic Encyclopedia. This local start-up has received worldwide acknowledgment. The second field is economy, where the Islamic Revenue Agency actively promotes such Islamic financial instruments as *waqf* (an endowment), *sadaqah* (a voluntary charity), and *zakat* (a religious financial obligation) through new interactive apps and virtual meeting rooms. As a result, Kazakhstan is among the top five countries where the share of the Islamic economy reaches up to 50%.

**“Degeneration”**

The economic decline, as a result of the global pandemic, is leading to deep stratification in Kazakhstani society. People turn again to religion as a last refuge. Tengrism, perceived by many as the traditional religion of the Kazakhs and their forefathers, competes successfully with Islam. Objective reasons also contribute to the situation: mosques are closed, and many imams quit their ministry in search of work for income. There are neither human nor technical resources to prepare new ministers. As a result, Islam in Kazakhstan is gradually degenerating.

**“The Game of Thrones: a Kazakhstani Case”**

Society is split into a large group of insolvent people being saddled with debts and a wealthy elite that controls everything. Once again, religion has been weaponized by the ruling few. Polarization has also affected the imams in both social and ideological terms. The Muslim metaverse has split into adherents of many groups: social justice advocates, “court mullahs,” supporters of “Zhanah Alash-Orda” (an Islamic political party), and others. Violent virtual battles spill over into city streets. The society of Kazakhstan is on the brink of civil war.

**High Social Stratification**

**The Unthought Future(s) (The Third Tomorrow)**

**Constitutional Democracy**

**Digital Collapse**

**“Akhlaq (ethics) prevails”**

As a result of a massive external cyberattack, Kazakhstan’s electronic system collapsed. All databases have crashed, leaving no hope for recovery. The country would have been threatened with complete demolition if it were not for the sense of civic responsibility that distinguishes the new generation. It emerged and was nurtured during the years of democracy and the rule of law. Muslims organically fit into the new society and became an example of carriers of high ethical standards and principles. Islamic finance was the first to generate positive results by working literally on the word of honor. Investments went to the restoration of industry, the development of renewable energy sources, and research projects. Very soon, the Islamic economy might predominate in Kazakhstan because it relies not so much on algorithms but on moral character. Anyone with a crystal-clear reputation and leading a God-fearing life can become an imam today.

**“Virtual Spirituality”**

Kazakhstan has become genuinely democratic with the rule of law and division of powers. Religion is really separated from the state; Islam is no longer declared a “traditional religion,” and all religious holidays cease to be public. The virtualization of religious life is gaining momentum. Any spiritual practices and rituals can now be performed online, thus making simplicity and accessibility the main criteria for choosing a religious affiliation. Therefore, Tengrism has spread widely due to its uncomplicated nature and the lack of strict canons and requirements. The number of Muslims in the country has declined critically and does not exceed 10%. A handful of android-imams is enough to meet the needs of such an ummah. They are connected 24/7 and have all the necessary knowledge and characteristics to comfort the needy and perform rituals.

**AI Rulership**

**“Strange Islam?”**

After the victory of the Kazakh Islamic revolution, the country has suffered massive sanctions from its neighbors and former partners. China recalled tensions about Xinjiang Kazakhs, the EU reminded of the “multi-vector politics,” and the US claimed the betrayal of democracy ideals. The Middle East turned away because the Kazakh version of Islam did not fit the classical image. Indeed, in Kazakhstan, Kazakh is the language of Islam; Turkestan is the site of *Hajj* (pilgrimage); *Qantar* (January) is the sacred month of fasting; *Nauryz* (March) is the month of festivities and *tois* (parties). Both men and women can take the position of imam. A new type of Islam has emerged, abolishing any division and tightly merging with the local culture.

**“CyberIslam”**

The Islamic revolution has triumphed in Kazakhstan. It was a response to a deep socio-economic crisis that dragged on for years after the pandemic. A fundamental revision of the education system led to the obligatory study of Islam fundamentals with the help of a self-learning AI bot. As a result, HE accumulated incredible knowledge and grew into an authoritarian ruler. Now HE issues *fatāwā* (legal rulings) and ostracizes all who disagree. Who is ruling the state in reality: people or machines?

**Islamic State**

The twelve scenarios described above demonstrate how the 2x2 Matrix can be applied in the context of the 3Ts approach. To summarize them, we want to present a more concise version with only three variants. The input data stays the same.

### ***The Extended Present: The Illusion of Normalcy***

In times of turbulence, digital literacy among imams in Kazakhstan plays a critical role in determining their connectivity to the local *umma* and the mode of socialization applied. While urged to use modern technologies during lockdown and isolation, they go to “business as usual” when the storm calms down. The habit of personal contacts prevails, thus obscuring the truth that younger Muslims are becoming increasingly addicted to Internet resources and virtual consulting and learning. Only a handful of technically advanced Muslim ministers can keep pace with the youth trends. Their efforts are a drop in the bucket which boils separatist sentiments that can lead to a social explosion and an introduction of martial law.

### ***The Familiar Futures: Facing a Tough Choice***

The religious resurgence is gaining pace, and imams are leading the move. They have developed highly praised skills in managing metaverse and actively employ them to transform two critical fields that drive the futures. Firstly, religious education is successfully promoted through the Multilanguage Universal Interactive Islamic Encyclopedia, a learning tool. The second one is the economy, where active integration of block-chain and virtual banking technologies helps Kazakhstan champion the Islamic economy worldwide. However, these initiatives, popular among ordinary people, find little support among the state elite. The anti-*Tajdid* (renewal) lobby forms the Committee of Kazakhstan's Muslim counter-unit, which includes “court mullahs” skilled in AI and LLM. This quasi-state body controls the Internet, news portals, and social network content. Rough virtual battles become increasingly rampant, putting Kazakhstan society on the brink of a real civil war. Who is going to win?

### ***The Unthought Futures: Virtual Spirituality Strikes Back***

The curve of Islam's development in Kazakhstan has taken an unexpected turn. The economic boost promoted by Islamic finance instruments stabilized the growth and increased the state and ordinary people's revenues. The high level of tech development brought everything into the virtual form, and the virtualization of religious life is gaining momentum. Any devotional practice and ritual can now be performed online. Imams are losing their ground as spiritual guides, pushed away by AI analogs on duty 24/7. Consumerism in everything accompanies the transformation, thus making simplicity and accessibility the main criteria for choosing a religious affiliation. Islam, as well as Christianity and Judaism, are considered too complicated. Therefore, Tengrism has spread widely in Kazakhstan due to its uncomplicated nature and the lack of strict canons and requirements. The number of Muslims in the country has declined and does not exceed 10%. Kazakhstan has been declared a genuinely secular state.

## **Discussion**

The study focuses on the results of two surveys conducted during the pandemic among imams of Kazakhstan. The findings illustrate the dynamics of the situation and the changes those imams went through during the quarantine period. The primary objective of our research was to explore how Islamic Studies can benefit from futures studies' methodology and expand their limitations. To answer this question, we carefully analyzed the data and identified drivers for applying the 2x2 Matrix in the Islamic Studies context. That work helped us see critical points impacting imams' ministry and roles. By placing the drivers in the framework of the 3Ts, we managed to construct anticipated futures. In addition, the Matrix served as a gear to generate brief descriptive narratives in the form of scenarios on imams' roles in Extended Present, Familiar Futures, and Unthought Futures.

One of the apparent benefits of integrating the futures into Islamic Studies is the expansion of Muslims' worldview and the academic research field. Instead of discussing theological or socio-cultural implications – mainly for the past and sometimes for the present – as it is a standard mode for Islamic Studies, we identify trends. Trends show us how the world and certain factors change over time. In our study context, we identified obvious trends in

Kazakhstani society and evident changes in technology development. These leading trends were accompanied by livability, family, social networks, and digital literacy trends strongly present among imams.

Secondly, we focus on emerging issues or weak signals that serve as critical building blocks of futures studies that may be considered embryonic and fragmented data that appears irrelevant at first sight but could heavily impact shaping futures. In Islamic Studies, identifying such items can help the academy shift from reacting to being pro-acting. Emerging issues are heralds of change but may not strike the eyes. However, they can turn into valuable information and yield futures insight when placed in an appropriate context. In our research, we identified emerging issues as the rise of social injustice and inequality, adherence to selfishness in the group-oriented culture, open recognition of a subordinate position of religion in the state, a call for religious independence, and fears of religious division among the population.

After identifying trends and emerging issues through the surveys' analysis, we further explored their interconnectedness through a wide range of scenarios. Scenarios help us to clarify thinking about alternative futures that can be multiple. In our study, we devised four scenarios for each Tomorrow and summarized them in three final ones. This multiplicity plays into the hands of Islamic thought tradition that has never limited itself to one opinion or option. Let's take, for example, Al-Farabi, a prominent Muslim thinker who is a beacon of religious thought for Kazakh Muslims. He was an ardent proponent of multiplicity in all spheres of life (Parens, 2012): from political life and diversity of opinions for promoting theoretical and practical virtues to religious multiplicity, expressed in his famous "multiplicity argument." Elaborating the latter in his *Attainment of Happiness*, Al-Farabi, though a devoted Muslim and a fervent follower of Islam, states that "each religion must be suited in each time and place to the national character of each people" (Parens, 2012, p. 8). Therefore, multiplicity can be considered an integral part of Muslim thought and can re-establish itself in Islamic Studies with the help of scenario planning.

In our study, we used a descriptive scenario based on the extrapolation of trends (socialization and digital literacy of imams) and emerging issues (societal conditions and heritage evoking) in the framework of the 3Ts. The Extended Present scenarios presented their linear narratives, using the past as a source for the future. They tell the stories of imams going back to "business-as-usual" in their ministry, revolutionary technical break-through in their daily activities, or adjusting poorly or successfully to new social restrictions using internet technologies. The Familiar Future(s) scenarios added emerging issues to the picture and explored more disruptive situations. They narrated about politicizing religious movements that had undergone the influence of Kazakh cultural trends, e.g., tribalism or Tengrism, a revived pre-Islamic cult. In addition, the positive signal of progress in the Islamic economy pointed out how to battle social inequality and poverty. Finally, the Unthought Futures scenarios employed the Menagerie of PNT and expanded on two previous Tomorrows. Their narratives cataloged a syncretic Kazakh Islam, CyberIslam, virtual religiosity, and ethical spirituality. At first sight, they look preposterous, but they help us understand that the very idea of normality is toxic from a postnormal viewpoint.

Therefore, the scenario and analytical work conducted in the futures studies' context reignited the ancient Muslim practice of *ijtihad* that called all Muslims to the reasoned struggle for interpretation and understanding. Though it is usually applied to the Qur'an, from the interdisciplinary perspective, we can call it the *futures ijtihad*. It is the reasoned struggle about perspectives that Muslims can face in the future, guide their thinking, and illuminate their choices in the present in the light of potential alternative futures. Thus, this tandem of Islamic and futures studies helps anticipate change while motivating all stakeholders to be engaged in desirable change.

## Conclusion

The changes that take place in modern society require changes in research fields. Our complex and interconnected world necessitates going beyond an interdisciplinary approach and moving to a transdisciplinary realm. Until today, immersion into the past of the Islamic civilization is more common than thinking about the future. The time has come to change the situation. Futures studies and foresight analysis help to break down this limitation. In addition, they make common Muslims and religious scholars think about both the reality perceived and the cognitive processes they use to understand it, refocusing on the future.

The research presented in this paper shows that the Three Tomorrows approach, together with the integrated scenario planning process, opens a new perspective for Islamic Studies. The multiplicity that emerges as a foundation for scenario building is greatly needed for Kazakhstani Islamic Studies stuck in the linear, rigid



understanding of Islamic thought. While the state legislation, particularly the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on religious activities and religious associations, forces Muslim intellectual life into the strict boundaries of a “singular traditional Islam,” futures studies help to expand them and return to the historical Islamic thought multiplicity. Applying futures instruments, Islamic Studies can become a path to explore the anticipations of Muslim communities in a given society and deepen the essence of their futures. As the scenarios suggest, practical steps have to follow. Integrating futures studies tools can facilitate Islamic Studies transition from a predominantly theoretical to a practical discipline.

Such a transformation is a requirement of our interconnected, complex, and rapidly changing world that calls out to life new epistemologies. These epistemologies should be based on anticipatory imagination, which is future-focused, embedded in reflective practice, double loop learning, “in which participants identify a problem, posit a solution, apply this solution, assess the outcome and reflect on the questions: what happened, did it work, and where next” (Miah & Mayo, 2022, p. 96). The symbiosis of futures studies and Islamic Studies can provide new opportunities and futures perspectives for those interested in the development – not stagnation – of Muslim societies.

## Notes

The article was prepared with the grant support of the National Research Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (PCF BR21882428).

## References

- Ali, I. (2023, March 1). *HadithGPT: AI Trained with 40,000 Hadith*. Neemopani. <https://neemopani.com/hadithgpt-ai-trained-with-40000-hadith/>
- Arkoun, M. (2002). *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*. London: Saqi Books.
- Bhuiyan, J. (2023, April 7). *Are chatbots changing the face of religion? Three faith leaders on grappling with AI*. The Economist. [https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/apr/07/chatgpt-artificial-intelligence-religion-faith-leaders?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/apr/07/chatgpt-artificial-intelligence-religion-faith-leaders?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)
- Berendzen, J. C. (2017). “Max Horkheimer.” In the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2017 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford: The Metaphysics Research Lab. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/horkheimer/>
- Bell, W. (1997). *Foundations of Futures Studies*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Berger, G. (1967). *Etapas de la prospective*. Paris, France: PUF. Quoted by Michel Godet. (2004). *Scenarios and strategies: A toolbox for problem solving (3rd issue)*. Paris, France: LIPSOR.
- Berger P. L. (1999). *The desecularization of the world: resurgent religion and world politics*. Ethics and Public Policy Center; W.B. Eerdmans Pub.
- Berger P. L. (2010). *Between relativism and fundamentalism: religious resources for a middle position*. W.B. Eerdmans Pub.
- Curry, A., & Hodgson, A. (2008). Seeing in multiple horizons: connecting futures to strategy. *Journal of Futures Studies* 13(1), 1–20.
- Dator, J. (2009). Alternative Futures at the Manoa School. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 14(2), 1–18.
- Dator, J. (2018). Emerging Issues Analysis: Because of Graham Molitor. *World Futures Review* 10(1), 5–10.
- Duczynski, G. (2017). Morphological Analysis as an Aid to Organisational Design and Transformation. *Futures* 86, 36–43.
- Faith and COVID-19: Resource Repository. Retrieved January 18, 2022 from The Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs, Georgetown University: <https://covidfaithrepository.georgetown.domains/>
- Glenn, J. C. & Gordon, T. J. eds. (2009). *Futures Research Methodology - Version 3.0*. Washington, DC: The Millennium Project.
- Godet, M. (1986). Introduction to *la prospective*: Seven key ideas and one scenario method. *Futures* 18(2), 134–157.

- Hancock, T. & Bezold, C. (1994). Possible futures, preferable futures. *Healthcare Forum Journal* 37(2), 23-29.
- Helmer, O. (1981). Reassessment of cross-impact analysis. *Futures* 13(5), 389–400.
- Inayatullah, S. (1998). Causal Layered Analysis: Poststructuralism as Method. *Futures* 30(8), 815–829.
- Jameson, F. (2003). “Future City.” *New Left Review* 21, 65-79.
- Jones Ch., Serra del Pino J. & Liam M. (2021). The Perfect Postnormal Storm: COVID-19 Chronicles. *World Future Review*, 13(2), 71-85.
- Kahn, H., & Wiener, A. J. (1967). *The year 2000*. New York: Macmillan.
- Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Religious Activities and Religious Associations # 483-IV, dated October 11, 2011 (with amendments and additions as of 06/27/2022). *Online.Zakon.kz* [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=31067690&pos=3;-106#pos=3;-106](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31067690&pos=3;-106#pos=3;-106)
- Masini, E. (1993). *Why Futures Studies?* London: Grey Seal.
- Mayo, L. & Miah, Sh. (2022). Zombie Disciplines, Anticipatory Imagination and Mutually Assured Diversity in Postnormal Times (pp. 84–108). In Z. Sardar (ed.) *Emerging Epistemologies. The Changing Fabric of Knowledge in Postnormal Times*. International Institute of Islamic Thought in cooperation with Centre for Postnormal Policy & Future Studies.
- Menagerie of Postnormal Potentialities. *Postnormal Times. Essentials*. <https://postnormaltim.es/essentials/menagerie-postnormal-potentialities>.
- Millett, S. (2003). The future of scenarios: Challenges and opportunities. *Strategy & Leadership* 31(2), 25-28.
- Milojević, I. & Inayatullah, S. (2015). Narrative Foresight. *Futures* 73, 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2015.08.007>.
- Mosques and educational institutions of Kazakhstan. *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan*. <https://www.muftyat.kz/ru/kmdb/map/>
- Muzykina, Y. & Aljanova, N. (2022). Modeling Alternatives for Imams’ Role and Islam Development in Post-Pandemic Kazakhstan. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 26(4), 79-97.
- Parens, J. (2012). *An Islamic philosophy of virtuous religions: introducing Alfarabi*. State University of New York Press.
- Polak F. L. (1961). *The image of the future; enlightening the past orientating the present forecasting the future*. A.W. Sythoff; Oceana Publications.
- Prensky M. & Chen M. (2012). *From digital natives to digital wisdom: hopeful essays for 21st century learning*. Corwin, Thousand Oaks.
- Rhydderch, A. (2017). Scenario Building: The 2x2 Matrix Technique. *Research Gate*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331564544\\_Scenario\\_Building\\_The\\_2x2\\_Matrix\\_Technique](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331564544_Scenario_Building_The_2x2_Matrix_Technique).
- Sardar, Z. (2010). “Welcome to Postnormal Times,” *Futures* 42(5), 435–444.
- Sardar, Z. & Sweeney, J. (2016). “The Three Tomorrows of Postnormal Times,” *Futures* 75: 1-13.
- Sardar Z., Serra J. & Jordan S. (2019). *Muslim societies in postnormal times: foresights for trends, emerging issues and scenarios*. International Institute of Islamic Thought in cooperation with Centre for Postnormal Policy & Future Studies.
- Saritas O. & Smith J. (2011). The Big Picture – trends, drivers, wild cards, discontinuities and weak signals, *Futures* 43(3), 292-312.
- Schacter, D. L. & et Szpunar K. K. (2012) “The Future of Memory: Remembering, Imagining, and the Brain,” *Neuron* 76(4), 677–694.
- Serra, del Pino J. (2021) “Building Scenarios with the Three Tomorrows,” *World Futures Review* 13(2):101-114. <https://doi:10.1177/19467567211025562>
- Usuf, I. (2009). Imam. In J. L. Esposito (Ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World. Vol. 2*. Oxford University Press, pp. 531–535.
- Uzlaner D.A. (2019). *Konets religii? Istoriya teorii sekulyarizatsii (The End of Religion? The History of the Theory of Secularization)*. Moscow: The High School of Economics.