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*Valeriia Syzoniuk*

*Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University*

*Vinnitsia*

*Research Supervisor: M.I. Pryhnenko, PhD in Political Science,*

*Senior Lecturer*

*Language Advisor: O. O. Odintsova, Senior Lecturer*

## **FORMATION OF THE IMAGE OF ISLAMIC STATES IN THE REGION OF WESTERN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA**

**Introduction.** The image of the state in the international arena is one of the main factors in shaping international relations, a tool for solving the country's competitive problems, and the growing influence of Islam on international relations is one of the important features of modern political life. As a holistic system that encompasses not only the religious worldview in the countries of religion, but also in the world, the definition of the issue is becoming increasingly controversial and ambiguous, attracting much attention from critics and supporters of key principles of the Islamist idea.

**Review of recent publications.** We used works that focus on the theoretical basis for coverage of the issue, namely: Chechel Y. "Formation of the image of the state in the international arena" [8], Palinchak M. "Religious factor in international relations" [5], Byun-Ok Ch. "Islamic fundamentalism, jihad and terrorism" [2]. The materials of the meetings were studied: Granchak T. ISIS as a civilizational challenge (based on the materials of the round table "Islamic State: Genesis and New Trends") [3]. Analytical articles: Osadchy T. "Geopolitical challenge of the Islamic world" [6]. Also considered: Kurzman C. Muslim-American terrorism in the decade since September 11 [4], Buzan V. "The impact of the Cold War on the formation and

implementation of US policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict" [1], Olivier R. The failure of political Islam [7], etc.

**Objectives of the paper.** The aim of the paper is to highlight the perception of Islamic states in the liberal-democratic community.

**Results of the research.** The question of the state's ability to influence foreign and domestic policy through ideas and purposeful information flows is becoming increasingly important, because its perception in the world community depends on its importance in the system of international relations, its ability to solve competitive problems, investment attractiveness, expanding opportunities for economic development, potential partnerships, business cooperation and tourism. States see a solid positive image as a significant competitive advantage that allows to make the country's voice heard on the world stage, its ideas, and concepts – worthy of attention, and itself – an attractive place for both external target audiences and for their own citizens. Therefore, in addition to the inalienable state priorities, an important place belongs to the formation of its image as a necessary condition for strategic development and national security of the country.

The image is deliberately constructed in accordance with clear goals and is formed by assessing the following elements: country policy (political leaders, government reputation, diplomacy and military action), economy (financial power, features of GDP and its quality, income), social sphere (social cohesion), security and stability, national identity, national character), culture (technological development, level of education, cultural heritage, customs, values), geographical factor (geographical location, natural resources, population) and some others. Images should not be based on anything manipulative: they must correspond to their object, otherwise, firstly, the ethical principles of social communication are violated, and

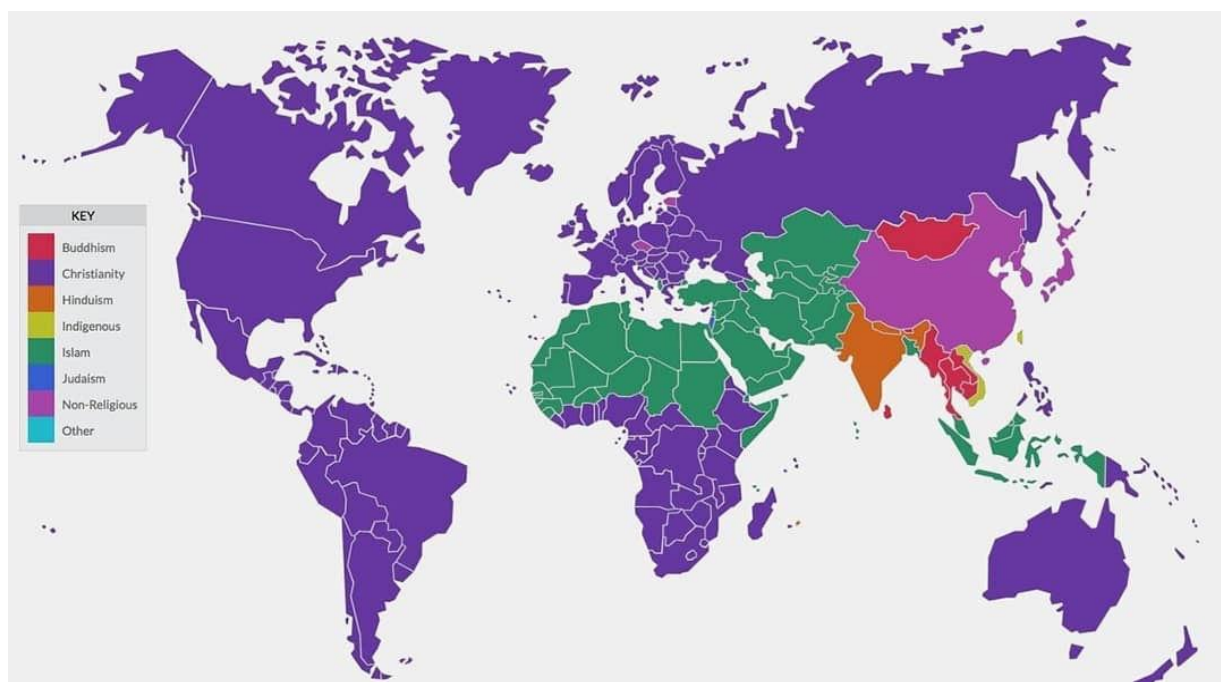


Fig. 1 The spread of religions in the world.

*Source: created by the author*

secondly, such activities would still not be successful for a long period of time [1].

Religion can have a significant impact on the formation of the image of the state, especially when it comes to one of the most influential religions in the world - Islam. In the countries of his religion, he acquires a global character and often sets the pace of international relations. Being an exceptionally "strong" religion, which is not limited to faith in God, Islam is a way of life, a direction of thought, moreover – the basis of an entire civilization.

Islam largely determines the direction of economic relations, forms of government, social structure – in short, it has retained its viability as a powerful religious and cultural tradition. It is a religion that is dynamically developing and actively expanding not only its geographical but also its political borders, holding the position of a factor of world development in the new millennium. Evidence of this is the rapid increase in the number of its followers: they are in more than 120 countries, and Islam itself ranks second, after Christianity, in the world in the number of believers [see Fig. 1]. The largest Muslim countries are Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh [see Fig. 2]. In most countries of the Middle East (and in some African countries, where Muslims make up a significant part of the population), Islam is declared the state religion.

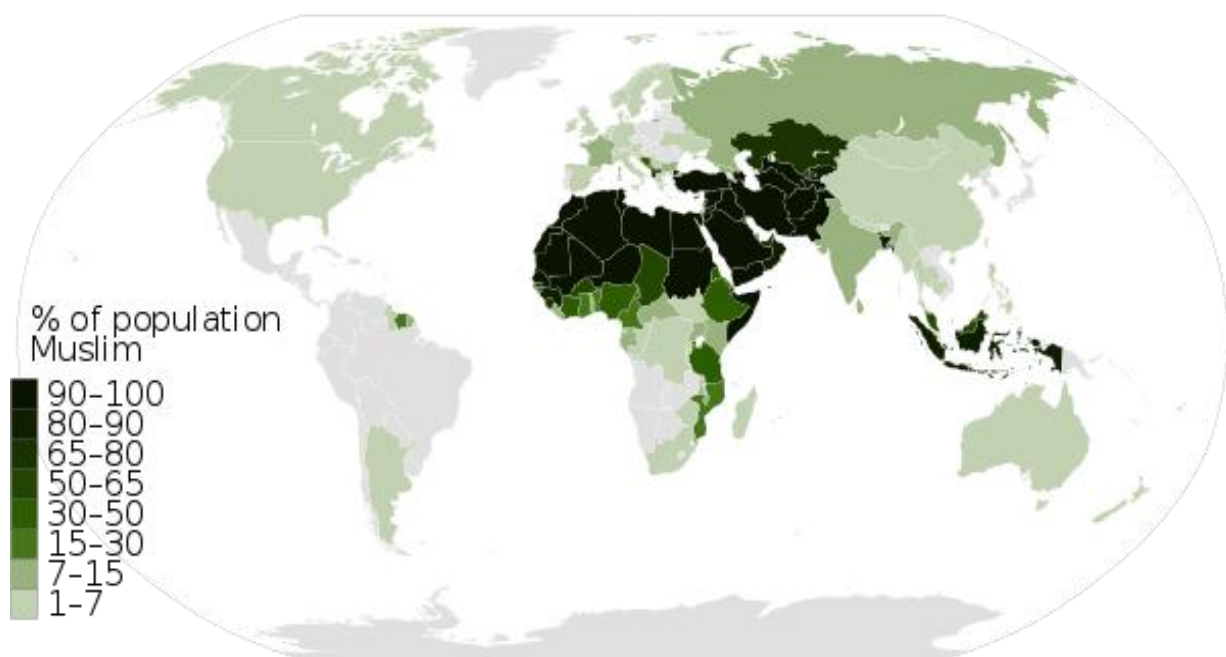


Fig. 2 The number of Muslims in the world

*Source: created by the author*

Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan are striking examples of countries in which Islam serves not only as the basis of state power in political and ideological terms, but also by sharia, a system of precepts and norms that regulates public and private spheres of life and religion itself is often used as a mechanism for manipulating people's minds to achieve their own selfish goals.

Not much is known about the Muslim world, except for the definability of religion in it and, to a greater extent, the dominance of conservative views. The image policy of the countries of the region needs to be reformed, modernized, more structured and concretized, because to date the reputation of Islamic countries has not been covered from the best angle. The image of Islam is often accompanied by such an associative series, which includes obligatory prayer, certain food bans, clothing regulations (especially women's), resembling patriarchy and "remnants of the past."

It is impossible not to mention the proliferation of terrorist organizations, which under the pretext of "religious mission" carry out criminal activities, pursuing their own goals of planting Islamist ideas in radically harsh methods [see Annex B]. Thus, September 11, 2001 was the starting point for intensifying discussions on religious violence. We still live under the influence of footage from the American television channel CNN, where planes with terrorists crash into the Twin Towers in New York. From now on, the event will undoubtedly be considered a kind of negative marker of the new image of Islam, and the Islamic world on the geopolitical map of today looks like one of the most troubled regions of the planet.

**Conclusion.** There is a growing trend in the role of public image in the field of international relations. The concept of "image of the country" for their own citizens is interpreted as "internal image", and for foreigners as "external image" or, as it is called, "international". Both these audiences, internal and external, are important for the prosperity of a country.

Thus, the image of the state can be defined as a multifaceted phenomenon that includes many completely different aspects: from culture to foreign policy. The image of the state should be based on a single ideological and semantic project of its development, but it should be quite flexible and, if necessary, be subject to timely correction in connection with changes in the socio-political situation on the world stage.

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**Kyrylo Mieliekiestsev**

*Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University*

*Vinnitsia*

*PhD in History, Senior Lecturer*

## **FROM “FAKE NEWS” TO “FAKE HISTORY”: “THE SUN OF RUTHENIAN LAND” AND INFORMATION WARFARE**

**Introduction.** This article concerns rampant falsification of a quote from the hagiographic text “*Life of Alexander Nevsky*” on Russian popular science and culture websites to promote a specific interpretation of Ruthenian history, along with promoting related current political stances, such as Kremlin authoritarianism and general anti-Western sentiment. Furthermore, it shows how the current historical paradigm in the Russian Federation is centered on appropriating Ukraine’s old Ruthenian history, rather than studying the actual regional history of Muscovy’s own central historical regions.

**Review of recent publication.** This issue of “modifying” the original quote has been noticed previously by a Finnish researcher Mari Mäki-Petäys, along with American researchers such as Serhii Plokhyy, Chris J. Chulos and Johannes Remy. In her article “*Warrior and Saint: the Changing Image of Alexander Nevsky as an Aspect of Russian Imperial Identity*” Mari Mäki-Petäys details “the cult of Nevsky”, noting the transformation of his image into that of a warrior-lord, and a “son of Rus” in Muscovite literature tradition [2: 68]. Serhii Plokhyy, quoting her, adds that the Nevsky quote situation shows how “the Suzdal Land also served as the immediate forerunner of the notion of the Rus Land in the political discourse of Northeastern Rus” [3: 74]. A peculiar notion, considering it acknowledges that the “Northeastern Rus” did not actually consider itself “Rus” at the time the “*Life of Alexander Nevsky*” was written, before it became a geopolitical statement for Muscovy centuries later.