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THE ISLAMIC FACTOR IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

ІСЛАМСЬКИЙ ФАКТОР В МІЖНАРОДНИХ ВІДНОСИНАХ НА БЛИЗЬКОМУ СХОДІ

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Abstract. *The article analyzes the growing influence of the religious factor as a historical phenomenon of the return of religion to the theory and practice of international relations. The main characteristics of the temporal and spatial dynamics of the influence of the religious factor on international relations both within the framework of universal laws and the specifics of Islam are determined, and the consequences of this influence are clarified. Both general trends (transnationalization, deterritorialization, decentralization of religions) and specific features of the influence of the Islamic factor are identified and characterized. In the context of the changing nature of international actors, it is determined that at the present stage, religious systems are emerging on the world stage in the form of a system of transnational relations between states, religious enclaves within the borders of other states, individual groups and transnational religious movements that are established across national borders, forming an additional transnational system of interactions.*

Key words: religious discourse, Islamic factor, international relations, world politics, Middle East region, Islamism, Sunniism, Shiism.

Анотація. У статті аргументовано посилення впливу релігійного чинника як історичного явища повернення релігії в теорію та практику міжнародних відносин. Узагальнено основні характеристики часової та просторової динаміки впливу релігійного чинника на міжнародні відносини як у рамках універсальних закономірностей, так і

специфіки ісламу, з'ясовано наслідки цього впливу. Виявлено та охарактеризовано як загальні тенденції цього явища - транснаціоналізація, детериторіалізація, децентралізація релігій, так і специфічні риси впливу ісламського чинника. У контексті зміни характеру міжнародних акторів визначено, що на сучасному етапі на світовій арені виникають релігійні системи у вигляді системи транснаціональних зв'язків між державами, релігійними анклавами в межах кордонів інших держав, окремими особами. групи та транснаціональні релігійні рухи, які створюються через національні кордони, утворюючи додаткову транснаціональну систему взаємодій.

Ключові слова: *релігійний дискурс, ісламський фактор, міжнародні відносини, міжнародна політика, близькосхідний регіон, ісламізм, сунііїзм, шіїзм.*

Introduction. The relevance of the study is caused by the growing role of the religious, primarily Islamic factor in international relations and significant changes in the system of scientific views on the role of religious discourse in international political studies. An important megatrend of the last quarter of the twentieth and early twenty-first century is desecularization, the increasing role of religious consciousness and the intensification of religious movements, and the growing influence of the religious factor on world politics (Arjomand, 2004). Within this megatrend, there are some trends that deserve special attention, including the growing role of the Islamic factor in global and regional international relations.

It should be noted that the religious factor in international relations is understood as the influence of a set of religious values that are in close and constant interaction with the specific historical, political, economic, socio-cultural practices of peoples. That is why the religious factor has always been characteristic of any era, state, and international system, the difference being manifested only to the extent to which it influenced social and political life. It is impossible to study the Islamic factor without taking into account its growing influence on the nature and character of modern international relations (Ansari, 2019).

The purpose of the article is to define and analyze the theoretical and practical aspects of the influence of the Islamic factor on the nature and character of modern international relations. In this context, the author identifie*s* the main characteristics of the temporal and spatial dynamics of the religious factor's influence on international relations both within the framework of universal laws and the specifics of Islam, the main directions and trends of the Islamic factor's influence on modern international relations, and the consequences of this influence for the global international political situation.

Literature review. Since desecularization as the return of religion to the theory and practice of international relations is an important characteristic of the current stage of global development, a special layer of literature is being formed in which this process is considered as an important global megatrend. These problems are analyzed by philosophers and sociologists, including P. Berger, D. Grace, T. Lukman, D. Martin, C. Taylor, J. Habermas, and others. The works of H.A. Agram, P. Gorski, K. Lechman, M. Albright, S. Scott, J. Snyder, R. Stark, P. Ferrara, S. Hunter, E. Hurd, S. Huntington and others study the role of the religious factor in international relations, in particular in the context of changing the nature of international actors. Particularly noteworthy is the approach to the consideration of Islam as a transnational or supranational actor in world politics in the works of H. Casanova, S. H. Rudolph and others.

Since the growing role of the religious factor in international relations is most often associated with the phenomenon of the "Islamic revival," a wide range of studies is devoted to this issue. Their main directions are determining the impact of the Islamic factor on international security (D. Esposito, G. Fuller, I. Lesser, F. Halliday), studying the activities of individual religious movements under Islamic slogans (D. Donahue, O. Roy, etc.) and analyzing this phenomenon as a global problem of our time (D. Johnson, S. Sampson, etc.). From a methodological point of view, such an analytical separation is acceptable and makes it possible to identify the essential features and characteristics of this phenomenon. However, this approach somewhat simplifies the analysis of the impact of the trend of desecularization on international relations, not focusing on inter-Islamic

interactions and interactions between Islam and other faiths. Almost beyond the attention of researchers is the definition of the functions of religious discourse in world politics within the framework of an interdisciplinary synthesis of international political science and religious studies.

A separate group of informational sources consists of studies of international relations in the Middle East and the area of spread of Islam. It is worth noting the studies of Adib A., Amar Sohal, Andrzej A. Piwko A. Sawicka Z., Arjoman SA, Glenn E. Robinson, Mattila R., Illman R., Hamid Ansari, Samiei M. and Samih Salah.

Main results of the research. To achieve this goal and objectives, international processes are viewed through the prism of a systematic approach. The constructivist approach within the framework of the study made it possible to determine the influence of the Islamic factor on the formation of the global social context. The civilizational approach provided an opportunity to find out the influence of traditional values on the peculiarities of foreign policy of countries. With the help of comparative and critical analysis, the prospects for the influence of the Islamic factor on international relations were determined. The comprehensive use of a wide range of methodological approaches ensured a holistic perception of the object of study in the entire system of its interconnections and interdependencies and the corresponding analysis.

From the point of view of the systemic approach, the authors consider religion as a complex systemic phenomenon, characterized by structural and hierarchical interconnected elements. This system consists of separate subsystems - specific religions, religious movements, trends, sects, each of which has its own place in the structure, is characterized by its integrity, from which, depending on factors of both internal and external nature, in particular the international political situation, certain components are distinguished.

As the study of religious heritage in international relations shows, religious actors have always been active in the international arena to varying degrees. Gradually, specific complexes of social interactions, such as "state and religion" and "state and civilization," emerged in pre-Westphalian international systems and later gained a strong development, which began to have an increasingly significant impact on international relations (Sohal, 2023).

At the final stage of the development of interconnected international systems (5th - 4th centuries BC - mid-5th century AD), the so-called "Age of Giants", international relations were dominated by large imperial-type state formations, and each of the empires united and structured its own international system. Imperial power found support in monotheism, resulting in the emergence of four cultural worlds - the West, the Islamic world, India and the Far East.

In Europe, the end of the Thirty Years' War marked the beginning of a new Westphalian system of international relations, a system of states respecting each other's sovereignty and generally equal to each other, with its inherent features of tolerance to the internal organization of its systemic elements. An undoubted advantage of the Westphalian model was that it was not built on value-based guidelines, including religion, as this was always the most difficult issue to reach compromises on. This made it possible for this model to be adopted as a global model in the future (Samiei, 2010).

Since the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europe has seen a trend toward a declining role for the religious factor in international relations. Religion was replaced by nationalism as an all-encompassing worldview, turning into a special "religion" that, although it did not imply belief in the supernatural, attached sacred significance to the nation-state and its symbols (Mattila, & Illman, 2018).

After the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR and the destruction of the Yalta-Potsdam system, the classical political structure of the world, which was formed after the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and was based on the institution of the state as the main structural unit, is changing. This is due to the emergence of new transnational actors on the political scene (Nye, 2002). Religion is beginning to act as an independent and powerful political force in society, and as a new, transnational actor in international relations.

With the collapse of the Yalta-Potsdam system, an active change in the architecture of international relations began, as well as significant changes in the global geopolitical situation,

which are now entering their decisive phase. The evolution of the global international system after the end of the bipolar confrontation has released the system-forming potential of the regional level of international relations, which is strengthening as an independent, self-sufficient in all processes related to global segmentation and development of regional interaction, which allows us to state the tendency to restore, in contrast to the vertical horizontal structure of the organization of international political space, when the system characteristics of regional subsystems influence the system of global The Westphalian world political model, the modern international system and international order, political systems of individual countries and regions of the world.

In the context of the crisis of the Westphalian world-political model, the importance of the religious, especially Islamic, factor in international relations is growing. Globalization, with its unevenness and ambiguous consequences, has led to the growth of non-state consciousness, and has made the problem of values, norms, ideas, ideals, and identities - that is, the very problems that are central to religion - extremely relevant. The study of the role of the religious factor in contemporary international relations allows us to identify and characterize both general trends and specific features of the growing influence of the Islamic factor. The general trends include transnationalization (J. Casanova, S. H. Rudolph), deterritorialization (J. Casanova, O. Roy) and decentralization of religions (Casanova, 1997).

The decentralization of religions leads to the formation of transnational religious communities, the emergence of new religious movements with qualitatively new globally organized subcultures that do not associate themselves with belonging to a specific territory, as their main goal is to realize a certain goal on a global scale (the Islamic dual model of world order) (Abid, 2018). The consequence of deterritorialization is a change in the intra-religious landscape and geopolitics of world religions, an increase in the number of adherents of certain religions in both the East and the West. In particular, there is a deterritorialization of Islam, which is currently the most dynamic of all world religions, and an increase in the number of its adherents in the Global South and the Political West, in Europe and the United States. Deterritorialization is closely related to transnationalization, which is characterized by the growing role of transnational actors capable of acting by mobilizing religious identity and using the religious factor to realize their own interests (Piwko, & Sawichka, 2021).

The consequence of desecularization is a revision of the role of the Islamic factor in international relations. In the twenty-first century, the Islamic factor is firmly entrenched in political discourse, appearing on the world stage in the form of a system of transnational relations between states, transnational religious movements, individual political movements, and ethno-religious conflicts. Islam is becoming a political phenomenon, being included in the circle of politically significant factors, being perceived in the mass consciousness as a religious ideology or "political religion," i.e., as a special form of religion that justifies mass political action (Hall, & Paul, 1999). This trend is intensified by the development of global mass communication.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, religion has been firmly entrenched in the political discourse of states, including global ones. In particular, in 2013, the Office of Religion and Global Affairs was established at the U.S. Department of State. In his article "Religion and Diplomacy," Secretary of State John Kerry explained that Washington needed to take into account religious dynamics and engage religious actors (Kerry, 2015).

It should be recalled that professional orientalists have traditionally viewed Islam as an organizing factor in the history of the East, the core and motivating force of Islamic civilization (Said, 2007). Speaking of the "clash of civilizations," S. Huntington meant religions, among which he names Islam as the core and motivating force of Islamic civilization.

Researchers were faced with the need to make adjustments to both their Islamic concepts and recommendations for official bodies involved in the direct implementation of foreign policy. This necessitated a scientific analysis of the causes, essence, social basis, political orientation and prospects of the "Islamic revival", which initially meant the growth of political activity under the slogans of Islam by both governments of Muslim countries and international Muslim organizations, as well as opposition groups within countries, and later to attempts to define the Islamic world as a

single collective transnational subject of international relations. In particular, H. Kissinger draws attention to the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini stated that the map of the Middle East of the twentieth century was a false and un-Islamic creation of "imperialists" and "tyrannical self-serving rulers" who separated different segments of the Islamic Ummah from each other and artificially created separate nations, so all political institutions existing there are illegitimate (Kissinger, 2017).

In this context, it should be recalled that the ideas of a religious and political union of Muslim peoples were formulated in the 70s of the nineteenth century in Pan-Islamism, a religious and political ideology and movement for the unification of all peoples professing Islam, the spread of which was a reaction to the political and economic expansion of European states in the Muslim world. It is based on the thesis of the governing role of Islam in the spiritual and secular life of society, unity and solidarity of all members of the Muslim community regardless of state, race, nationality or social affiliation, and the need to unite all Muslims within a single state. Pan-Islamism became the official doctrine of the Ottoman Empire, which sought to maintain its hegemony in the Muslim world with its help. Turkish expansion in the Arab territories under the slogans of pan-Islamism led to a decline in its popularity and the spread of pan-Arabism there. The history of the twentieth century is the history of the struggle between two ideologies - pan-Islamism with the idea of the global Islamic Ummah as a transnational community of lay people and pan-Arabism. We are currently witnessing the replacement of the pan-Arabism ideology with the Islamist paradigm. The slogans of pan-Islamism are again being used in the foreign policy of modern Turkey, which is especially noticeable after the escalation of the situation in the Middle East in October 2023 and Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip (Salah, 2024).

The alternative Western Islamic concept of world order - the dualistic concept of Dar al-Islam (the territory of Islam) and Dar al-Harb (the territory of war) and jihad as a strategy to achieve this universal system - denies the Westphalian state-centered order. This concept is the official state doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the ideology of terrorist organizations, and the slogan of armed minorities in many states of the Middle East region and beyond.

Since the problem of Islam's "subjectivity" in the modern system of international relations remains controversial, the existing approaches to it are summarized as follows. The first approach considers the Islamic world as a single collective entity, which implies the presence of one or more counter-actors, in particular the West (the antithesis of the West-Islamic world (Robinson, 2020). The second approach distinguishes individual states and transnational structures as independent actors. The third approach considers Islam as a transnational political actor and is based on the ideas of Islam's extraterritoriality and the concept of the formation of a "transnational Islamic Ummah" (O. Roy) - a Muslim community in which there are no territorial, interethnic or interstate barriers.

Conclusions. Desecularization as a historical phenomenon of the return of religion to the theory and practice of international relations has a significant impact on contemporary world politics, qualitatively changing the concept of religion and non-state actors in international political studies. The impact of desecularization on the nature and character of international relations occurs at the global, regional, interstate, national and transnational levels. Religion becomes an instrument of political mobilization, a factor of political identification and political catalysis.

The influence of the religious factor on international relations in the context of their systemic evolution is permanent, but at certain historical stages it manifests itself with different strengths, demonstrating the systemic logic of alternating periods of growth or decline.

Noting the existence of common patterns in the dynamics of the role of the religious factor, we note that individual confessions have influenced international relations in different ways and with different intensity. As for Islam, it acts as an organizing factor in the history of the East, the core and motivating force of Islamic civilization, has an increased ability to mobilize large masses of people, and is currently the most dynamic of all world religions, which gives grounds for forecasts that by the middle of the twenty-first century it will become the first largest world religion, ahead of Christianity. The global role of Islam is supported, in particular, by its deterritorialization. Despite the large number of states, the Islamic world can act as a global geopolitical actor.

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