



# The Seoul Times

**Middle East & Africa**

*2016 Nation Brand Ranking*

**Islamic State Continues Its Meteoric Rise**



Patrick Robertson, FRSA, Founder and CEO of WorldPR S.A.

*"This new study shows the appalling success that Islamic State has had in enhancing its international profile, especially among potential recruits, through its policy of highly-publicised torture and killing. It is very worrying indeed that Islamic State will soon enjoy the same global name recognition as the major global powers, with all the authority and influence that that gives in today's geopolitical environment."*

*— Dr. Andrew Roberts*

*Visiting Professor at the War Studies Department, King's College London*

WorldPR Global Leadership Ranking 2016©, a statistical analysis published today that measures the level of public recognition of 193 sovereign states and 18 autonomous financial zones according to six different indices, has revealed that:-

- Islamic State continues to grow at an alarming rate in the public eye, rising 56 places to 107th in the Western Perception Index from 2015 – ahead of such well known country brands as Bahrain and Bahamas. This proves that the death cult's strategy of drowning the airwaves with terror, torture and destruction has successfully secured a very high degree of public recognition for Islamic State in all countries.

- This development follows the startling revelation in the WorldPR Global Leadership Ranking 2015©, widely reported in the international media including The Sunday Times and The Daily Mail, that Islamic State now has a stronger international brand than The Vatican, seat of the world's 1.2 billion Catholic community, which in 2016 drops 19 places to 211th overall.
- The impact of Islamic State activity outside traditional trouble spots over the past year has led to Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq and Tunisia dropping down the rankings. By contrast, Libya and Syria have pivoted upwards nine and six places respectively on the Western Perception Index in a clear reflection of heightened global concern with the civil wars in these countries.
- Overall France retains 1st place and Germany follows in 4th place (up from 7th in 2015), with both countries registering higher scores on the Western Perception Index than in 2015. This data likely reflects the impact of the as yet unresolved refugee and EU migration crisis over the last twelve months. (NB: These results were collected immediately before the recent terrorist attacks in Nice and Bavaria and their impact on France and Germany's overall score has not been reflected in the 2016 ranking.)
- Perhaps surprisingly, given the almost exclusively negative foreign media coverage of the EU referendum campaign, the United Kingdom climbed four places to 8th on the Investor Perception Index in the run-up to the "Brexit" referendum in June. This appears to suggest that, contrary to expectations of the majority of international observers, global investor interest in the UK actually increased during this period. This view is reinforced by the strong performance of the UK economy in the period after the vote to leave the EU: the FTSE 100 is now near a record high, retail sales are booming and both the Bank of England and Moody's have issued upbeat assessments of the UK economy in the period ahead.
- Russia and Iran are up three and four places respectively in the Western Perception Index, due to the lifting of international sanctions on Iran, both nations' intensifying involvement in the Syria conflict, and with each other over the past year, and to widely publicised criticism of President Barack Obama's Iran policy by Donald Trump, the Republican candidate for the US presidency.
- Turkey rose 31 places to 20th in the Western Perception Index due to several factors including the country's key role in neighbouring Syria's civil war, the ongoing EU migration crisis in which Turkey plays a pivotal role, and terrorist attacks by domestic and foreign extremists.
- Brazil has reaped the whirlwind of negative publicity over the last two years, much of it focused on the political corruption scandals and parliament's move to impeach President Dilma Rousseff. But our research data shows that the country's brand has nevertheless remained surprisingly static across all indices. This strongly indicates that the positive impact of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games has played a stabilising role in portraying a balanced international image.

- South and North Korea rose 37 and 61 places respectively in the Western Perception Index as tensions escalated between the neighbouring states and the United States moved to bolster South Korean missile defences against the North's ballistic missile and nuclear tests.

- Myanmar dropped 30 places to 111th, reflecting the fact that the international media spotlight on the country has started to wane following historic general elections and the formal start of the reform process.

WorldPR Founder and CEO Patrick Robertson said today: "These results show that, for those nations with suboptimal country images that are seeking to build a positive and influential international brand, it is essential to develop policies and programmes that 'put them on the map'. In our experience over nearly twenty-five years as leaders in this business, government strategists should, first and foremost, consider major structural reforms in spheres that will produce concrete and positive results. Whatever the initial impressions may be, over a relatively short time this approach will make it much easier to convert a negative country brand into one that shines."

Head of Research Dr. Debra Buchholtz, the Oxford-based academic and leader of the GLR research programme, who points to a number of "intriguing correlations" in the WorldPR Global Leadership Ranking 2016©, said today: "We believe our unique approach offers a more accurate and objective understanding of a country's global brand image than any upfront assessment of whether that image is 'positive' or 'negative'. Such determinations are by definition subjective and frequently lead to simplistic or predictable results, whereas our findings allow government strategists to accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of their country's brand."