

This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 03 Oct 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



## Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy

Andrei P. Tsygankov

### The Russian Orthodox Church

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315536934-15>

Nicolai N. Petro

**Published online on: 29 Mar 2018**

**How to cite :-** Nicolai N. Petro. 29 Mar 2018, *The Russian Orthodox Church from:* Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Oct 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315536934-15>

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## 13

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX  
CHURCH*Nicolai N. Petro*

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND, USA

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has emerged as an influential actor in both Russian domestic and foreign policy. This chapter explores the relationship between church and state in Russia. It examines the scholarly debate over the actual role of the ROC in Russian foreign policy, as well as arenas for potential for conflict and cooperation between the church and the state in foreign policy.

**Is the ROC a tool of the state?**

A fundamental question needs to be addressed at the very outset. Does it even make sense to discuss the role of the ROC in Russian foreign policy?<sup>1</sup> For many scholars this topic does not exist. According to this view, there can be no foreign policy influence of the ROC because it is not an autonomous political and social actor.

Most books published about the ROC in recent years argue that little has changed Church-state relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union. For one group of scholars the ROC is a reliable tool of the state (Knox, 2004; Mitrofanova, 2005; Blitt, 2011; Papkova, 2011; Fagan, 2013). Since there is no distinguishable ROC foreign policy agenda, it need not be examined separately from the state's own foreign policy agenda.

A second group grants the ROC some autonomy, but contends that its freedom of movement is severely constrained (Marsh, 2004; Payne, 2010; Curanović, 2012; Richters, 2012). Its foreign policy agenda is therefore of interest only as an expression of what has already been decided within state institutions. For both groups the foreign policy agenda of the ROC derives entirely from the Russian state.

There is much in Russian history that supports this view, which makes its uncritical acceptance today so dangerous. Rather than looking at how relations have changed since the collapse of communism, most scholars have tended to fall back on familiar stereotypes.

The most common stereotype is the casual assumption that because the ROC supports the Russian state in many arenas, such support must derive from its subordination to the state, rather than a similarity of views. As a result, the actual views of the ROC on social partnership are generally dismissed, since it is assumed that the state would instruct the ROC to insist that it was not subordinate to the state, in any case. The argument is thus non-refutable.

A *prima facie* case for the autonomy of the ROC in foreign policy, however, can easily be made by pointing to religious priorities that have become part of the Russian foreign policy agenda. Professional diplomats are notably reluctant to adopt “values agendas” of this sort because it complicates their work. When this happens in the case of religious or human rights concerns, therefore, it is generally viewed as an indirect measure of the influence of these outside actors on state policy.

I, however, propose that we go even further and take seriously not just the Church’s social agenda, but also its eschatological agenda. I believe this sheds new light on how the Church deals with issues of political conflict and where it will draw the line on cooperation with civil authorities. In areas where the social interests of the Church and the state overlap, the weight of the ROC in society is now such that it cannot be simply ignored. Moreover, as that weight has grown, the ROC has gained greater autonomy, pursuing its own agenda, and becoming a true partner of the Russian state.

To demonstrate the rise of this influence, I will briefly discuss the Orthodox approach to politics, then explore how this approach affects Russian foreign policy thinking through the concept of the *Russky mir*, or Russian World. Finally, I will look at areas where the agendas of the ROC and the Russian government are likely to diverge over time.

### The historical Orthodox attitude to politics

Within the broad framework of Christian political thought, Orthodoxy’s perspective on proper church–state relations derives from the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire. Since it was in the Eastern Roman Empire that the Christian doctrine of church–state relations were first formalized, this gives it several specific characteristics.

While the Patriarch of Rome (the Pope) faced the difficult task of preserving the Church in the face of the collapse of political institutions so vividly described by St. Augustine, the Patriarch of Constantinople held onto his place of honor within Byzantine society, even during times of conflict with the Basileus (for a good overview, see Gvosdev, 2000). Church–state relations therefore evolved very differently in the Eastern and Western halves of Europe.

In the West the Church struggled to survive the collapse of the state and to preserve its independence from state control, once it had been re-established. The march of Western progress, from the Renaissance, to the Reformation, to the Enlightenment, has been widely equated with the rise of the modern concepts of personal liberty and individual freedoms (Swidler, 1986; Casanova, 2003). The loss of “Christendom” – the social and political manifestation of a common Christian social ideal – is usually seen as a small price to pay for the establishment of individual freedom and modern relations between church and state.

By contrast, the pattern of church–state relations that emerged in the East presumed that the Patriarch and Basileus should continue to work together to accomplish God’s purpose on Earth. As described in Roman Emperor Justinian’s (482–565) *Sixth Novella*, their respective spheres of competence might overlap, but remained distinct:

There are two greatest gifts which God, in his love for man, has granted from on high: the priesthood and the imperial dignity. The first serves divine things, the second directs and administers human affairs . . . if the priesthood is in every way free from blame and possesses access to God, and if the emperors administer equitably and judiciously the state entrusted to their care, general harmony will result, and all that is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race.

(Meyendorff, 1968: 48)

The ideal relationship between church and state was thus one of *symphonia*, or harmony, between religious and state institutions. Though this ideal was rarely achieved, it thrived in the East because that is where Greek culture survived, after the fall of Rome. By the time of the Reformation, much of the Middle East and Greece was under Ottoman rule, and Russia had emerged as the “Third Rome.” As the last surviving ruler of an Orthodox country, it fell to the princes of Moscow, according to this legend, to preserve the “one true faith.”

Peter the Great’s reign created a new caste of people, more sympathetic to Western patterns of development. It also leaves the ROC in a subordinate position to the Tsar, and unable to exercise its customary tutelary function over the state and its regents. Peter the Great’s reign thus marks the end of *symphonia* and the beginning of modern, Imperial Russia.

Over the next two centuries the intellectual elite drifted away from the weakened and isolated Church, embracing Western ideas that seem to provide ways to overcome Russia’s backwardness. Among the most ambitious and radical solutions is Marxism.

The victory of the Bolsheviks in 1917, as we know, led to an all-out assault on the Church that nearly ended in its extinction. On the eve of the Russian revolution, the ROC had more than 55,000 churches and more than 66,000 priests. Two decades later, in 1939, the ROC had just 300 open churches and roughly as many priests (‘Russkaya pravoslavnaya tserkov’, 2016). While the regime failed to achieve its declared objective of a totally atheist population, the effort left profound wounds in the country’s historical and cultural tapestry.

A quarter century after the collapse of the Soviet regime, the situation is strikingly different. Survey data shows that between 1991 and 2008 the share of Russian adults considering themselves orthodox has grown from 31% to 72%, while the share not considering themselves religious dropped from 61% to 18% (Romeo, 2015). Today the ROC has more than 34,000 churches and more than 35,000 priests (‘Russkaya pravoslavnaya tserkov’, 2016). If we are to believe a 2011 Ipsos survey of 23 European countries, Russia has become the most religious country in Europe (Weir, 2011).

This “miracle of the rebirth of faith in our secular age,” as the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus, Kirill (Gundyaev) calls it, has been accompanied by a seven-fold increase in corporate philanthropy, and a level of social activity that has made the ROC, in the words of former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, “the largest and most authoritative social institution in contemporary Russia” (Anishyuk, 2011; ‘Slovo Svyateishego Patriarkha Kirilla’, 2016). It would seem that the rise of Orthodoxy has been good not only for business, but for political stability as well.

Many analysts, however, regard this new found piety as superficial, since the vast majority of Orthodox do not attend church regularly and do not follow strict religious practices. But as Stephen Prothero (2008) has shown, religious literacy is on the decline almost everywhere, including the United States. What is different in Russia, and what makes it such a remarkable social phenomenon, is the conflation of confessional attachment with national identity, something that Jerry Pankhurst calls “the confessionalisation of political culture” (Pankhurst and Kilp, 2013: 228).

### Modern day *symphonia*

Today the ROC insists on the validity and importance of *symphonia* in church–state relations, and routinely touts the Eastern Roman Empire as a model in this regard. According to the Patriarch of Moscow, modern day *symphonia* allows the Church and the state to “spiritually coordinate their service” to society, even when they are formally separate institutions (Mite, 2004).

While many elements of the relationship have yet to be perfected, the Church is very clear about how it would like this partnership to evolve. First, it says, instead of a separation of church and state, there should be a “separation of sphere of competencies.” Second, spiritual and secular

authorities should cooperate in areas of common interest and mutual benefit. Third, whereas in the past the Church has been relatively passive, today it needs to be more assertive and work alongside the government to create a healthy spiritual and moral social climate, social peace and solidarity. Central to its teaching is the concept of the *co-authorship* of policy with the state (Kirill, 2009).

Additionally, the state should have a special relationship with the ROC because not all religions carry the same weight in Russian society. Sometimes this is justified in terms of the singular importance of Orthodoxy in Russian history ('Doklad Patriarkha Moskovskogo', 2013). At other times, Patriarch Kirill has suggested that the state should follow the established pattern of relations among Russia's four established religions, based on the length of their historical presence, population, civic position, and contribution to the formation of the common national culture ('Vystuplenie Svyateishego Patriarkha Moskovskogo', 2009). This should lead to more extensive state interaction with minority religions in those regions of where they predominate, and with the ROC throughout the Russian Federation as a whole.

Although the parameters of this relationship are still being worked out, it is already clear, from the experience since the late 1990s, that the new *symphonia* takes for granted that Russia is a pluricultural, multi-confessional, and democratic society. But while the ROC now explicitly endorses the view that church and state are properly separate institutions, it insists that no such distinction should be made between the Church and society.

While this formulation removes the ROC from all *formal* aspects of the political process, it *reinforces* its role as the moral guide and spokesman for society. As Fr. Vsevolod (Chaplin), the controversial former head of the Synodal Department for Church and Society Relations, put it, "[the Church] cannot but have a position that would give it the right to speak to those in power, in all spheres of public life, in fulfillment of its prophetic role . . . as the voice of God in politics, in economics, and in any social processes" ('Vsevolod Chaplin', 2012).

### How does this approach to politics carry over into foreign affairs?

What implications does this grandiose social agenda have for foreign affairs? As a non-state actor, the ROC is limited in its ability to promote any specific foreign policy agenda; neither can it explicitly promote religious views through state organizations. Instead it "piggybacks" on state institutions, promoting moral and cultural values that both the ROC and the Russian state share.

The foreign relations of the ROC reflect the closeness of relations with traditional religions in different regions of the globe. In descending order of intimacy, they go from traditionally Orthodox countries, to traditionally Catholic countries, to traditionally Muslim countries, to traditionally Protestant and now predominantly secularized countries, and finally to non-Christian countries.

Overlaid onto a regionally based view of Russian foreign policy, the resulting matrix of corresponding areas of canonical and political responsibility looks something like this:

<i>ROC regionalization</i>	<i>RFP regionalization</i>
Traditionally Orthodox societies	Former Soviet Union and parts of Eastern Europe
Traditionally Catholic societies	Southern Europe and Latin America
Traditionally Muslim Societies of Central Asia and Iran	North Africa and the Middle East
Traditionally Protestant, secular societies	Northern Europe and North America
Traditionally non-Christian societies	Asia and parts of sub-Saharan Africa

There is obviously a high degree of correspondence between the two, but the non-congruence of what I referred to earlier as the social and eschatological agendas means that their interests will never fully coincide. For one thing, the avowed priority of Russian foreign policy is the pursuit of the national interest, whereas the avowed priority of the ROC is the salvation of mankind.

At first blush, these seem like such different realms that it is not even clear why they would ever overlap. The link between the two, as Andrei Tsygankov (2012) has pointed out, lies in Russia's sense of honor – the basic moral principles that are popularly cited within a culture as the reason for its existence, and that inform its purpose when interacting with other nations. While a nation's sense of honor overlaps with present day interests, it cannot be reduced to the present day national interest alone, because political leaders must also respond to culturally imbedded moral ideals.

A nation's sense of honor, therefore, serves as a baseline for what might be called the *long-term national interest* which, for Russia, revolves around three constants: first, sovereignty or "spiritual freedom"; second, a strong and socially protective state that is capable of defending that sovereignty; and third, cultural loyalty to those who share Russia's sense of honor, wherever they may be. Each of these involves, correspondingly, the defense of Orthodox Christianity, the defense of the ROC, and the defense of Orthodox Christians around the world.

To be clear, government institutions are in the driving seat when it comes to responding to immediate foreign policy concerns. But when it comes to shaping Russia's long-term strategy, these culturally embedded ideals play a prominent role. Having re-assumed its traditional role as the supreme arbiter of morality in Russian society, the ROC has become a key actor in shaping this strategy.

So far, we have focused on the theoretical and cultural framework within which the ROC and the Russian state operate. One critical example illustrates just how the ROC shapes Russia's long-term foreign policy agenda – Ukraine.

Before the current crisis with Ukraine, and in the absence of any other actors willing to provide a culturally rooted vision of Russian-Ukrainian relations, the ROC promoted the idea that Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus constitute a distinct community, a Holy Rus (*Svyataya Rus*), or a Russian World (*Russky mir* or *Rus'kii mir*), that shares a common spiritual destiny ('Doklad Patriarkha Moskovskogo', 2013).

### **The Russian World: a political and religious project**

It is no coincidence that the ROC has taken the lead in the development of the concept of a *Russky mir*, or that Ukraine has emerged as its key focus. It is, after all, a vision that explicitly looks beyond Russia's present borders, to the larger canonical domain of the ROC. It was part of the ROC's response to fragmentation of its pastoral community that occurred with the collapse of the USSR.

For several years after the collapse, the majority of ROC parishes were actually outside the Russian Federation. Responding to this unique historical circumstance, the ROC began emphasizing spiritual unity over the divisions that had been created by new national borders.

The term "Russky" in "Russky mir" is neither a geographical nor an ethnic concept. It is a spiritual identity born in the cradle of civilization of Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarussians – Kievan *Rus* ('Vystuplenie svyateishogo Patriarkha Kirilla', 2009). When Kievan *Rus* adopted Christianity from Constantinople in 988, Church hierarchs say, the Eastern Slavs were consecrated into a single civilization and given the task of constructing Holy Rus.

That mission has survived throughout Russian history. It survived the religious persecutions of the Soviet era, and continues today in democratic Russia (Ryabykh, 2010). The core

of this community resides in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (at other times, Patriarch Kirill has also added Moldova and Kazakhstan), but it can refer to anyone who shares the Orthodox faith, a reliance on Russian language, a common historical memory, and a common view of social development ('Vystuplenie svyateishego Patriarkha Kirilla', 2009).

In June 2007, president Putin helped to inaugurate the *Rusky mir Fund*, a state sponsored entity that promotes Russian language and culture throughout the world ('Stenografichesky otchet', 2007). The use of the same term in both a secular and religious context has led to considerable confusion. While there is some overlap, there are also important differences.

As used by the state, the term *Rusky mir* is a typical public relations initiative. It strives to popularize Russia and the use of Russian abroad. It is an element of Russia's "soft power," increasing her influence among neighboring states, and improving Russia's image as a global power. From the state's perspective, the ROC can be a useful tool for these purposes.

As used by the Church, the term *Rusky mir* is God's project, since it is by God's design that these nations were baptized into one civilization. The ROC thus sees its efforts as the realization of God's plan – the establishment of Holy Rus. To achieve this ideal the Church, here and now, seeks to reverse the secularization of post-Soviet society, a task that Patriarch Kirill has termed the "second Christianization" of Rus ('Patriarch Kirill challenges Church', 2010). From the ROC's perspective, the Russian government, and every other government within its canonical territory, can be useful tools for this purpose.

Public reaction to the Patriarch's use of the phrase has been mixed. It has aroused the most controversy in Ukraine, where the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) church and the non-canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kievian Patriarchate (UOC-KP) dismissed it outright, while the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that is in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), which serves approximately half of all Christians in Ukraine, has been cautiously receptive.

The latter suggests that national identity should, ultimately, be less important to a religious person than religious identity. As Metropolitan Paul (Lebed), head of the Kiev-Pechersk Laura, one of Orthodoxy's oldest monasteries, put it:

[t]o earn the right to call ourselves Holy Rus we must strive to make ourselves holy . . . the venerable Hilarion called our land Rus back in 1051. In this sense we are all Russians. But there is a state called Ukraine on this earth, and I am its citizen. In this sense, we are all Ukrainians. I see no contradiction here. As a Ukrainian I would note that there is no particular merit to being part of a nation. It is deeds that are called for.  
(*Taksyur*, 2016)

But, just as this issue highlights the long-term goals of the Church, it also illustrates the ROC's limited ability to affect immediate policy decisions. The very different approaches to the crises in Crimea and Donbass illustrate these limitations.

Most analysts view the annexation of Crimea as a reaction to the opportunity to secure a strategic advantage for Russia in the Black Sea region. Some feel it was an understandable move given the hostility of the Maidan leadership, while others argue that there was no prospect of such hostility ever actually threatening Russian interests.

To this end, Putin constructed a narrative that portrayed the annexation of Crimea as both a defense against imminent threats to the Russian identity of this region, and a return to its proper Russian cultural sphere – an objective close to the Russian World. Later, during his December 4, 2014 speech to the Federal Assembly, Putin explicitly melded the geopolitical and the religious aspects of the Crimean annexation together, saying:



For Russia, Crimea, ancient Korsun (Kherstones), Sebastopol have enormous civilizational and sacral meaning – just as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem has for those who profess Islam and Judaism . . . this territory is strategically important because it is the spiritual source of the formation of our multifaceted but monolithic Russian nation and centralized Russian state. It was in this very place, in Crimea, in ancient Kherstones, or as Russian chroniclers called it, Korsun, that Prince Vladimir was baptized, and [he] then baptized all of Rus.

*(‘Krym imeet sakral’noe znachenie’, 2014)*

Yet with respect to the uprising in Donbass, which evolved nearly simultaneously, Putin took a very different position.

Rather than encouraging separatism there, Russian officials quickly distanced themselves from the rebels, offering them nothing but statements about the need to respect the will of the people. When the rebels scheduled their own referendum on secession, president Putin publicly urged them not to hold it. Russia did conduct military exercises near the Ukrainian border in late February, but returned these troops to their barracks in late April, after the beginning of Kiev’s anti-terrorist military campaign. In May, Putin recognized the legitimacy of Ukrainian presidential elections, and most importantly, at the end of June, just as the Ukrainian military campaign in the East was ramping up, Putin asked the Russian parliament to rescind his authority to use troops outside Russia.

In the case of Crimea, Russian culture and Orthodox religion were used to popularize a policy that had already been deemed in the strategic interests of the nation, whereas in the case of Donbass similar appeals were ignored (some observers even say suppressed) because they did not correspond to Russia’s strategic interests. The ROC had no discernible impact on immediate policy choices in either instance.

In the long term, however, the question of how to reconcile Russia and Ukraine is still very much on the agenda, and the ROC is the only institution providing a comprehensive alternative to the post-Maidan Ukrainian narrative. It does so by rallying the global Orthodox community behind the UOC-MP, which openly condemns the government’s military operations in Eastern Ukraine and refers to the conflict as a “civil war,” and by expanding cooperation with the Roman Catholics to establish a pan-European Christian social agenda.

Its most dramatic international success to date is the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis I and Patriarch Kirill signed in Havana on February 12, 2016. The two church leaders came up with a formula for reconciliation on the contentious issue of Catholic proselytism in Ukraine. While the Catholic Church deplors the “uniatism” of the past, “understood as the union of one community to the other, separating it from its Church,” the ROC acknowledges that “the ecclesial communities which emerged in these historical circumstances have the right to exist and to undertake all that is necessary to meet the spiritual needs of their faithful” (Petro, 2016).

Second, Pope Francis publicly indicated his hope that schisms within the Orthodox church “may be overcome through existing canonical norms,” phrasing that clearly puts the Pope on the side of the Synaxis of the world’s Orthodox primates, held in Geneva (January 21–27, 2016), which did not invite the UOC-KP to participate in the historical Pan-Orthodox Church Council that took place in August 2016 (Petro, 2016).

Finally, when referring to the hostilities in Ukraine, the Pope and Patriarch called upon their followers “to refrain from taking part in the confrontation, and to not support any further development of the conflict.” This too is a notable step toward the view of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is the only one in Ukraine that has refused to support the Ukrainian government’s “anti-terrorist operation” in Eastern Ukraine.



In response, the Ukrainian government has thrown its full support behind the non-canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kievan Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC). The latter identifies the independence of Ukraine and the resurgence of the UGCC with Paschal theology, while the head of the former has defined the ROC, and its relations with the state, as aberrations spawned by Satan (Denysenko, 2015).

In this struggle for the hearts and minds of Ukrainians, the official Ukrainian press now commonly associates the term “Russian World” with separatism, while in the rebellious Eastern provinces the terms “Russian Spring” and “Russian World” are often seen as synonyms. As Fr. Nicholas Denysenko (2015) observes:

The irony of the intensity of the current religious narratives in Ukraine is that one is doomed no matter where they attend church. Those belonging to the UGCC are hopelessly nationalistic and seek the destruction of canonical Orthodoxy. Those belonging to the UOC-KP are schismatic and enjoy no support within global Orthodoxy. Those belonging to the MP are opponents of Ukraine and keep company with the likes of Cain, Pharaoh, and Judas . . . the space of each church is occupied by scandalous sinners even as they champion old and new saints as models one should pattern their lives after.

These efforts to politicize the religious meaning of the *Russky mir* (“against the will of its authors,” Denysenko notes), appear to be succeeding in inflaming national and religious animosity, but the ROC Church shows no signs of abandoning the concept.

To ignore the spiritual development of the people God has entrusted to the pastoral care of the Russian Church, Patriarch Kirill has said repeatedly, would be to go against God’s will [ослушаться самого Бога] (‘Vystuplenie svyateishego Patriarkha Kirilla’, 2009). Moreover, it has also had some successes. As the influence of the ROC in Russian society has grown, it has influenced political speech. Among the many examples, let me highlight just one – President Putin’s address in Kiev on the occasion of the 1025th baptism of Rus in 2013 (‘Konferentsiya’, 2013). This was also Putin’s most recent visit to Ukraine.

His remarks reflect nearly every religious motif of the *Russky mir* including: the decisive spiritual and cultural significance of the baptism of Rus; the uniqueness of Orthodox values in the modern world; deference to Kiev’s historical significance (before the revolution, he says, it was known as “the second cultural and intellectual capital after St. Petersburg,” ahead of Moscow); and public recognition of Ukraine’s right to make any political choice it wishes which, however, “in no way erases our common historical past” (‘Konferentsiya’, 2013).

In conclusion, it is worth highlighting that the transnational perspective implicit in *Russky mir* puts the ROC at odds with one of the cornerstones of international politics – state sovereignty. While the Church says it respects the sovereignty of states, it takes no position on its merits (‘Vystuplenie svyateishego Patriarkha Kirilla’, 2009). Nation-states are neither good nor bad *per se*. They are merely the current framework within which God intends the Church to accomplish the restoration of Holy Rus (Ryabykh, 2010).

The ROC sees the *Russky mir* as a spiritual complement to national sovereignty – one that allows people to see their common heritage not as a threat to independence, but as a valuable resource in a globalizing world. The Byzantine Empire served as such a model in the past. Today, says Kirill, the European Union and the Commonwealth of Nations (formerly known as the British Commonwealth) serve the same purpose (‘Vystuplenie svyateishego Patriarkha Kirilla’, 2009).

That is also why, according to the ROC, there should be multiple political and cultural centers in the world, a view that coincides with Russia’s official foreign policy position.

The *Russky mir* is one such center because it provides “a system of values which is the basis for several modern states” (Ryabykh, 2010).

### The ROC as a foreign policy actor

If we take seriously the eschatological nature of the Church’s mission, how might we best describe its foreign policy goals? Simply put, it is to save souls. Within its canonical territory it does so by promoting the re-baptism of Rus; beyond its canonical territory it does so by working alongside religious organizations in other countries to promote “all that is good in relations among peoples . . . [and] be a force for peacemaking” (‘V zavershenie vizita’, 2016).

The partnership between Church and state therefore naturally extends to foreign policy, where the ROC seeks to heighten the role of religious diplomacy and assist in the construction of a multipolar world that respects diverse cultural worldviews (Lipich, 2004). In every nation of the globe, Patriarch Kirill (‘Metropolit Kirill otvetil’, 2005) has said, the Church’s task is to make that particular nation “a carrier of Orthodox civilization.”

In his 2009 address to Russian Civil Service Academy, Patriarch enumerated an extensive list of areas where the ROC should collaborate with state institutions. These include:

[c]oncern for the moral upbringing of young people, support for the institution of the family, fighting drug addiction, alcoholism and other dangerous vices, preventing crimes, caring for those in prisons, preserving cultural inheritance, overcoming national and religious intolerance, assisting the preservation of social peace and harmony, opposing the rise of radical and extremist attitudes, opposing pseudo-religious movements, helping to resolve international conflicts, promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue both within the state and globally, as well as in international organizations.

(‘Vystuplenie Svyateishego Patriarkha’, 2009).

Taking note of “our common aspiration for the preservation of our spiritual and cultural identity of our brothers and sisters,” the Patriarch identified the following areas of foreign policy where the ROC could assist:

- Improving the situation of Orthodox churches around the globe;
- Improving contacts with Russians living abroad;
- Expanding the dialogue of religious communities in Russia with state structures and international organizations;
- Promoting a positive image of Russia, its history, culture, and religion abroad.

To this end, the ROC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have set up a number of standing committees to coordinate their activities. One area where cooperation has proven fruitful is in re-establishing relations with Georgia, after the conflict of August 2008. It is worth noting that the ROC opposed the wishes of the Russian state, which was promoting the territorial, cultural, and religious autonomy of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia (‘Russia church says’, 2011). Instead, it deferred to the wishes of the Georgian Patriarchate and continued to recognize the latter’s jurisdiction in these disputed regions (‘Obmen “tserkovnymi poslami”’, 2009).

With respect to its eschatological agenda, the ROC has succeeded not only in focusing the Russian foreign policy establishment’s interest on the defense of Orthodox communities around the globe which, given tensions in Ukraine, Syria, and Palestine would arguably coincide with

Russia's national interest, but in Christian moral values in general. Its greatest success in this arena was Putin's 2013 speech to the Valdai Club, in which he underscored the importance of traditional religious values to human dignity, and asserted that the abandonment of traditional Christian values had led to a moral crisis in the West. Russia, Putin said, intends to counter this trend by defending Christian moral principles, both at home and abroad (Putin, 2013).

In the future we can expect the ROC's influence over the long-term agenda of Russian foreign policy to manifest itself in advocacy for the concerns of Orthodox Christians, even if they are not Russian citizens, and in the promotion of Christian moral and social values in international fora. Where it does not have direct access to such fora, it will use Russian state channels to promote this agenda.

In the promotion of Russian culture and language abroad, however, its eschatological mission differs from that of the Russian state. Whereas the state seeks to promote Russian national interest and culture, the ROC seeks to promote the larger identity and culture associated with Kievan *Rus*. This distinction, the result of a theologically steeped view of how that conflict should be resolved, could become significant in long-term Russian-Ukrainian relations.

Since the Church views the conflict as a civil war within the *Russky mir*, it cannot be resolved by isolating Ukraine from Russia. The only permanent solution is for the Ukrainian government to admit the pluricultural nature of Ukrainian society and, in effect, admit that Ukraine is an integral part of the *Russky mir*. From the Church's perspective, this is the only way to achieve harmony and reconciliation both within Ukrainian society, and between Ukraine and Russia.

But the Church's most important success has been to transform relations with the state from subordination to meaningful partnership. Today the ROC provides intellectual and moral support to state policies not because it has to, but because it wants to. Indeed, to the extent that there is a moral framework guiding Russian foreign policy, it is the Church's moral framework. The Church promotes it because it is convinced that helping the Russian government to create a "congenial international order" will assist the Church in its threefold salvific mission – to save individual souls, to save all national cultures that have been baptized into Christ, and to save all mankind.

### The ROC as a source of future conflict

Having reviewed the benefits that each side derives from a harmonious church-state relationship, let us look at some potential areas of conflict.

The first is that Orthodox Christianity sees no intrinsic value in political beliefs or actions ('Obshchestvennaya deyatelnost', 2011; 'Praktika zavayenii', 2011). As Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) notes, the Orthodox tradition has no set preference for one form of politics over another because those things that are ultimately needful, right, and proper, lie beyond the ken of politics. Yet, while the Church does not see itself as a *political* actor, it does see itself as actively engaged in society. As Patriarch Kirill explains:

We cannot, through our silence, seemingly support the positions . . . that are deadly for people's souls. Without entering into political battle, we must remain true to our religious worldview, including in giving our assessment of the actions of political actors . . . [especially those] whose program documents express ideas contrary to the teachings of the Church.

(Yannoulatos, 2003: 74)

This implies that ROC support for government policy is conditional upon its judgement about the spiritual benefit of that policy.

Second, the ROC does not see itself as just one constituency among many in society. It is, rather, the very “soul of the people and, at its deepest level the Church represents its people externally” (*‘V zavershenie vizita’*, 2016). Its purview therefore exceeds that of any other social groups, even the government, for while the government speaks to the values of society in the present, the Church speaks for the eternal values of Holy Rus. As the Patriarch put it:

From the time of the Baptism of Rus to the present, the Church bears a special responsibility for the spiritual and moral well-being of the people . . . Concern for the people’s souls is the main component of the Church’s service in the past, present, and future.

*(‘Doklad Patriarkha Moskovskogo’, 2013)*

Third, the ROC accords itself a special privilege in offering social solutions (*‘Vsevolod Chaplin’*, 2012). This solution is to “Churchify” all aspects of society. To quote the patriarch, “The Church has a clear vision of reality, revealed to the world by God himself, and it is our mission to bring this vision to our contemporaries, with full confidence in its unique correspondence to the truth” (*‘Doklad Patriarkha Moskovskogo’*, 2013). The ROC therefore cannot support policies, no matter how socially beneficial, that result in movement away from the ideal of Holy Rus. What the Russian Orthodox is looking for can best be described as the modernization of society without its secularization.

One thing that will probably not be a source of friction between the state and the Church is the issue of democracy, particularly in the form of a Protestant style movement that pits the Church against the state. That is not because the Church itself does not value personal freedom. Indeed, as Nicolas Berdyaev (1926) points out, freedom is essential to the Church’s goal of Churchification and the task both sides have set themselves is to work together in harmony). It would therefore be quite out of character for either of them to disagree publicly. Rather, they will simply work separately in arenas where their interest do not coincide, and in concert where they do.

Paradoxically, the establishment of broadly harmonious and mutually supportive relations between Church and state in Russia has itself become a source of conflict with the West, for it leads to conclusions that some in the West find troubling.

For example, Vladimir Putin’s high popularity ratings reflect the popularity of his social and political agenda, which are popular precisely because they have the blessing of the ROC. The success of the Putin Plan, the Putin Model, or Putinism, thus derives from its public embrace of religion in general, and of the ROC in particular. The socially cohesive influence of the latter can be seen in surveys showing that Patriarch Kirill is more commonly identified as the “spiritual leader [and] moral mentor” of the entire Russian nation than he is as the head of a single religious confession (*‘Patriarkh Kirill: chetyre goda’*, 2013).

Putin’s unpopularity in the West, and his extraordinarily high levels of support in Russia, thus stem from the same source – the popularity of the traditional social values being advocated by the ROC.

Such disagreements are often summarized in Western literature as “the values gap.” And while the examples typically given are Russia’s failure to abide by international (read Western) standards, they often can be traced to deep seated cultural disagreements about the role that religious institutions should play in shaping both values and policies. Simply put, many in the West regard partnership between church and state as reactionary, whereas many in Russia regard its absence as a sign of moral decay. According to such logic, conflict between Russia and the West is inescapable until Russia fundamentally alters its values.

I feel this conclusion is premature. After all, this is not the first time that religious differences have played a role in international relations, and as many astute observers have argued, it has not always been a negative role. Most of these studies look askance at the ROC, but it is worth asking if there is the potential to transform the ROC from a source of conflict into a source of reconciliation with the West.

### The ROC as a source of conflict resolution

There are two ways in which the ROC might become a source of reconciliation between Russia and the West. One is by focusing greater attention on peacemaking activities, something that unites most major religious institutions, and also helps to expand our notions of traditional diplomacy. The other is to help dismantle the notion of “the values gap.”

Douglas Johnston, a former diplomat, has co-authored several books and articles on what he terms “religious diplomacy.” He views religious or “faith-based” diplomacy as particularly well suited to “nonmaterial identity-based conflicts,” for it focuses attention on the transformative impact of appeals on the basis of shared spiritual convictions or values. Such appeals allow the participants to appreciate the “emotional stakes” involved in a conflict (Johnston, 1994: 3, 5).

Vendley and Little (1994: 308) provide examples of the ways in which various religious traditions disentangle themes of peace from themes of conflict. In this way, they argue, religions allow us to “turn back to appropriate histories” and work out possible connections that can lead to solutions. Edward Luttwak (1994: 10) argues that in the process of conflict resolution, introducing the authority of religion can allow parties to concede assets by portraying concession as an act of deference to religion.

Finally, R. Scott Appleby (2003: 231) describes religion as “the missing dimension of statecraft.” Retrieving it involves: (1) identifying the genius of each religious tradition, and its ways of producing social harmony; (2) accessing the mystical, experiential, syncretistic dimensions of faith traditions; (3) engaging scholars, theologians, others who view conflict resolution as a normative commitment of their religious tradition; (4) developing experts on conflict resolution within religious communities; and (5) drawing on NGO, state, and private actors to enhance religious-secular dialogue.

In the West, an important obstacle to the development of a robust religious diplomacy has been what Luttwak (1994: 10) calls “a learned repugnance to contend *intellectually* with all that is religion or belongs to it.” He cites the example of Western ignorance of Byzantine approaches to conflict resolution.

Obviously, the Byzantine ideal of *symphonia* provides a highly adaptable and historically significant framework for what these scholars are calling for, which is why it should be no surprise to anyone that the ROC is actively engaged in all of these arenas. Religious or faith-based diplomacy is thus one area where the West can learn from its Eastern brethren.

A second area where the ROC could help is by encouraging a broader and more sophisticated understanding of our common Byzantine heritage. As James H. Billington (1990) has observed, ignorance and neglect of Byzantium has been “a fixture of all the mistaken conventional wisdom” about Russia and Eastern Europe. This is no less true today than when he said it more than a quarter century ago. It will take a great deal of time and effort to change the conventional wisdom, but this is an essential undertaking, without which we will never be able to overcome the corrosive idea that some sort of mystical “values gap” permanently divides the two halves of European civilization.

We did not always think this way. Indeed, in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was widely assumed that Russia would rejoin Europe. Unfortunately, the opposite happened. As NATO expanded eastward, Russia was pushed away from Europe both conceptually and practically, thus fulfilling émigré Russian cultural historian Vladimir Weidlé's (1952) warning of more than half a century ago that failure to see Russian culture as part of Western civilization would lie at the heart of both the West's inability to overcome the Cold War, and Russia's inability to overcome the Soviet era.

To avoid even greater tragedy in the future we should heed the warning of America's most venerated living specialist on Russia, the former Librarian of Congress James H. Billington (1997):

If Americans cannot penetrate into the interior spiritual dialogue of other peoples, they will never be able to understand, let alone anticipate or affect, the discontinuous major changes which are the driving forces in history and which will probably continue to spring unexpected traps in the years ahead.

To put it another way, if we cannot learn to listen to others as they whisper their prayers, we may well confront them later on when they howl their war cries.

### Some issues for further exploration

I have proposed an approach that takes seriously the role of the Church both as a political and an eschatological actor. Treating the ROC as nothing more than secular and political is misleading. Although it clearly is a political actor (as well as an economic actor, a legal actor, a cultural actor, an educational actor), we should never lose sight of the fact that the Church sees itself, first and foremost, as a *supernatural* actor, a tangible manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the world (Lossky, 1998).

This dualism explains the ability of the ROC to help resolve conflicts among Orthodox countries, as well as its failure to do so in Ukraine, where political issues have all but driven out eschatological concerns. It also limits the extent of cooperation between the state and Church authorities.

In looking at how this relationship is likely to unfold, therefore, I believe we must always bear in mind these two distinct contexts, political and religious. Aware of this distinction, scholars should periodically review the degree to which the ROC is becoming a source of tension or consolidation, both within Russian society and in Russia's relations with other countries.

This context has other interesting ramifications. If the popularity of the Russian leadership is, as I contend, partially the result of its utilitarian embrace of religious values, then that leadership and the political system is not only more stable than most Western analysts think, its behavior is also more predictable in the long term, if one includes the views of the ROC in those long-term calculations.

Finally, I would encourage a re-examination of the relevance of the Byzantine inheritance, both for political and international relations. In some respects that heritage diverges from the West, but in others there is considerable overlap. A more systematic appraisal of the inheritance that we share could encourage a reappraisal of Byzantine political ideals along lines suggested by scholars such as James H. Billington (1997), Antonie Carile (2000), Deno Geanakopolos (1976), Judith Herrin, Warren Treadgold, Helene Ahrweiler (1975), Silvia Ronchey, Sergei Ivanov, as well as, more classically, Sergei Averintsev, and Steven Runciman (1970).



The future may well depend on whether Europeans can once again learn to appreciate the values that once united these two, now estranged, parts of European identity.

## Note

- 1 In this chapter the term “Church,” when capitalized, refers to the entire Orthodox community. When uncapitalized, it refers to any other Christian religious denomination.

## References

- Ahrweiler, H 1975, *L'ideologie politique de l'Empire byzantine*, Presse universitaires de France, Vendome (France).
- Anishyuk A 2011, ‘Russian Orthodox Church Allowed to Enter Politics’, *Reuters*, 3 February.
- Appleby, RS 2003, ‘Retrieving the Missing Dimension of Statecraft: Religious Faith in the Service of Peacebuilding’, in D Johnston, (ed.), *Faith Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, pp. 231–258, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Berdyaev, N 1926, ‘Discord in the Church and Freedom of Conscience’, *Put* (October–November). Available from: [www.holy-trinity.org/ecclesiology/berdyaev-discord.html](http://www.holy-trinity.org/ecclesiology/berdyaev-discord.html). [15 November 2016].
- Billington J 1990, ‘Looking to the Past’, *Washington Post*, 22 January 22, p. A11.
- Billington, J 1997, ‘Religion and Russia’s Future’, the Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs, *FPRI Wire*, October 1997. Available from: [www.fpri.org/articles/1997/10/religion-and-russias-future](http://www.fpri.org/articles/1997/10/religion-and-russias-future). [15 November 2016].
- Blitt, RC 2011, ‘Russia’s “Orthodox” Foreign Policy: The Growing Influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Shaping Russia’s Policies Abroad’, *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 33(2), pp. 364–460.
- Carile, A 2000, *Immagine e realta nel mondo bizantino*, Lo Scarabeo, Bologna (Italy).
- Casanova, J 2003, ‘What is a Public Religion?’ in H Hecló & WM McClay, (eds.), *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America*, pp. 111–140. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD and London.
- Curanović, A 2012, *The Religious Factor in Russia’s Foreign Policy*, Routledge, New York.
- Denysenko, N 2015, ‘Civilization, Church, World: Competing Religious Narratives from Ukraine and Russia’, *Bohdan Bociurkiw Memorial Lecture, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies*, 11 February. Available at: <https://lmu.academia.edu/NicholasDenysenko/Papers>. [15 November 2016].
- ‘Doklad Patriarkha Moskovskogo i vesya Rusi Kirilla na eparkhialnom sobranii gorod Moskvyy’ 2013, *Patriarchia.ru*, 20 December. Available from [www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3453393.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3453393.html) [15 November 2016].
- Fagan, G 2013, *Believing in Russia: Religious Policy after Communism*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.
- Gvosdev, NK 2000, *Emperors and Elections: Reconciling the Orthodox Tradition with Modern Politics*, Troitsa Books, New York.
- Johnston, D 1994, ‘Introduction: Beyond Power Politics’, in D Johnston & C Sampson (eds), *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, pp. 3–7, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Kirill 2009 ‘Formirovanie sistemy tserkovno–gosudarstvennykh otnoshenii v sovremennoi Rossii,’ *Religiya, Tserkov’ v Rossii i za Rubezhom*, 4, pp. 21–27. [www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/980244.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/980244.html) [15 November 2016].
- Knox, Z 2004, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- ‘Konferentsiya ‘Pravoslavno–slavayanskie tsenosti – osnova tsivilizatsionnogo vybora Ukrainyy’ 2013, *Kremlin.Ru*, 27 July. Available at: [www.kremlin.ru/news/18961](http://www.kremlin.ru/news/18961). [15 November 2016].
- ‘Krym imeet sakral’noe znachenie dlya naroda Rossii, zayavil Vladimir Putin’ 2014, *Sedmitsa.ru*, 4 December. Available from [www.sedmitza.ru/text/5266564.html](http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/5266564.html) [15 November 2016].
- Lipich, O 2004, ‘Patriarch Alexis II: Time to Re–Comprehend the Role of Orthodoxy in World History’, *RIA Novosti*, 3 February. Available from *Johnson’s Russia List #8047*. <http://russialist.org>.
- Lossky, V 1998, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York.
- Luttwak, E 1994, ‘The Missing Dimension’, In D Johnston & C Sampson, (eds), *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, pp. 8–19, Oxford University Press, New York.



- Marsh, C 2004, *Burden or Blessing? Russian Orthodoxy and the Construction of Civil Society*, Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs at Boston University, Boston, MA.
- 'Metropolit Kirill otvetil na voprosy frantsuzskogo zhurnala 'Diplomatie' 2005, *Pravoslavie.Ru*, 4 October. Available from: [www.pravoslavie.ru/14744.html](http://www.pravoslavie.ru/14744.html). [15 November 2016].
- Meyendorff, J 1968, 'Justinian, The Empire and the Church', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 22: 43–60.
- Mite V 2004, 'Russia: Orthodox Church States Its Case for More Involvement in Foreign, Domestic Policies', *RFE/RL*, 6 February 6. [www.interfax-religion.ru/gry/?act=news&div=33581](http://www.interfax-religion.ru/gry/?act=news&div=33581).
- Mitrofanova, AV 2005, *The Politicization of Russian Orthodoxy: Actors and Ideas*, Ibidem-Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany.
- 'Obmen "tserkovnymi poslami" otchasti vospolnit otsutstvie dipotnoshenii mezhdru Rossiei i Gruzii – patriarkh Kirill' 2009, *Interfax-Religiya*, 29 December. Available from: [www.interfax-religion.ru/gry/?act=news&div=33581](http://www.interfax-religion.ru/gry/?act=news&div=33581). [15 November 2016].
- 'Obshchestvennaya deyatel'nost pravoslavnykh khristian' 2011, *Patriarchia.ru*, February 2. Available from: [www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/1400931.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/1400931.html). [15 November 2016];
- Pankhurst, J & Kilp A 2013, 'Religion, the Russian Nation and the State: Domestic and International Dimensions', *Religion, State and Society*, 41(3), pp. 226–243.
- Papkova, I 2011, *The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- 'Patriarch Kirill challenges Church to "reset" people's minds' 2010, *Interfax*, 16 November. Available from Johnson's Russia List 2010-#215, [www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/](http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/). [15 November 2016].
- 'Patriarkh Kirill: chetyre goda tserkovnogo sluzheniya' 2013, *VCIOM.ru*, February 6. Available from <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=515&uid=113626>. [15 November 2016].
- Payne, DP 2010, 'Spiritual security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: collaboration or cooptation?' *Journal of Church and State*, 52(4), pp. 712–727.
- Petro N 2016 'Historic Meeting in Havana Brings About 'Minor Breakthrough' on Ukraine', *Valdai Club*, 15 February. Available from <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/historic-meeting-in-havana-brings-about-minor-breakthrough-on-ukraine->. [15 November 2016].
- 'Praktika zayavalenii i deistvii ierarkhov, dukhovenstva, monashestvuyushchikh i miryan vo vremya predvybornykh kampanii' 2011, *Patriarchia.ru*, February 2. Available from: [www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/1400896.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/1400896.html). [15 November 2016].
- Prothero, S 2008, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know – and Doesn't*, HarperCollins, New York.
- Putin, V 2013, 'Zasedanie mezhdunarodnogo diskussionnogo kluba "Valdai"', *Kremlin.ru*, 19 September. Available from: <http://kremlin.ru/news/19243>. [15 November 2016].
- Richters, K 2012, *The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: Politics, Culture and Greater Russia*, Routledge, London.
- Romeo, F 2015, 'The Rebirth of the Patriarch of Moscow: Moscow Politics in Harmony with the Russian Orthodox Church?' *GlobalResearch*, 8 August. Available from: [www.globalresearch.ca/the-rebirth-of-the-patriarch-of-moscow-moscow-politics-in-harmony-with-the-russian-orthodox-church/5467928](http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-rebirth-of-the-patriarch-of-moscow-moscow-politics-in-harmony-with-the-russian-orthodox-church/5467928). [15 November 2016].
- Runciman, S 1970, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- 'Russia Church Says It Won't Claim Authority Over Rebel Georgian Regions' 2011, *Reuters*, 15 August. Available from: <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2011/08/15/russia-church-says-it-wont-claim-authority-over-rebel-georgian-regions/>. [15 November 2016].
- 'Russkaya pravoslavnaya tserkov. Dosye,' 2016, *TASS*, 12 February. Available from: <http://tass.ru/info/2659249>. [15 November 2016].
- Ryabykh, P, 2010 'Russky mir – eto tsivilizatsionnaya obshchnost', 17 June, *Patriarchia.ru*. Available from: [www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/26208.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/26208.html). [15 November 2016].
- 'Slovo Svyateishhego Patriarkha Kirilla posle Liturgii v novoosvyashchennom Uspenskom sobore Surozhskoi eparkhii' 2016, *Patriarchia.ru*, 16 October. Available from [www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/4641740.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/4641740.html). [15 November 2016].
- 'Stenografichesky otchet o vstreche s delegatami Vserossiiskoi konferentsii prepodavatelei gumanitarnykh I obshchestvennykh nauk' 2007, *Kremlin.ru*, 21 June. Available from <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/24359> [15 November 2016].
- Swidler L 1986, *Religious Liberty and Human Rights*, Hippocrene Books, New York.
- Taksyur, Ya 2016, 'Vladyka Pavel: "Bratie, zhivite v mire!"', *Ritm Evrazii*, 30 April. Available from: [www.ritmeurasia.org/news-2016-04-30-vladyka-pavel-bratie-zhivite-v-mire-23282](http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news-2016-04-30-vladyka-pavel-bratie-zhivite-v-mire-23282) [15 November 2016].
- Tsygankov A 2012, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

- 'V zavershenie vizita v Velikobritaniyu Predstoyatel' Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi otvetil na voprosy predstavitelei rossiiskikh i zarubezhnykh SMI' 2016, *Patriarchia.ru*, 19 October. Available from [www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/4644339.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/4644339.html). [15 November 2016].
- Vendley, W & Little, D 1994, 'Implications for Religious Communities: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity' In D Johnston & C Sampson, (eds), *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, pp. 306–315, Oxford University Press, New York.
- 'Vsevolod Chaplin opredelil positsiyu RPTs' 2012, *Newsru.com*, 17 May. Available from: <http://m.newsru.com/religy/17may2012/chaplin.html>. [15 November 2016].
- 'Vystuplenie Svyateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na torzhestvennom otkrytii III asamblei Russkogo mira' 2009, *Patriarchia.ru*, 3 November. Available from: [www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/928446.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/928446.html) [15 November 2016].
- 'Vystuplenie Svyateishego Patriarkha Moskovskogo i vseya Rusi Kirilla v Rossiiskoi akademii gosudarstvennoi sluzhby' 2009, *Patriarchia.ru*, 31 December. Available from <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/980244.html> [15 November 2016].
- Weidlé, V 1952, *Russia: Absent and Present* (translated by A. Gordon Smith), J. Day, New York.
- Weir F 2011, 'Russia Emerges as Europe's Most God-Believing Nation', *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 May. Available from [www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2011/0506/Russia-emerges-as-Europe-s-most-God-believing-nation](http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2011/0506/Russia-emerges-as-Europe-s-most-God-believing-nation). [15 November 2016].
- Yannoulatos, A 2003, *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York.

## PART III

# Directions

*Andrei P. Tsygankov*

Part III studies various regional and global directions of Russian foreign policy (RFP) reviewing its formation and implementation toward the United States, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Eurasia, and the Arctic. Each contributor engages with the existing literature and asks (1) what role his/her assigned region has played in RFP relative to other regions; (2) how Russia's position vis-à-vis the region has evolved since the Cold War's end; (3) what helps to explain such evolution; and (4) whether Russia's engagement with a particular region has been on balance successful or not. This part reviews a considerable part of important geographic regions and directions in RFP. It is not meant to cover all existing regions and countries with which Russia maintains international relations. For example, it does not include Africa or Latin America or individual countries and sub-regions such as the Balkans or the Baltics. My hope is, however, that the provided coverage will give the reader a solid idea of Russia's international priorities and principles of foreign policy formation.

In her chapter about Russia's relations with the United States, Kari Roberts recognizes the global significance of the country for the Kremlin. She argues that these relations have evolved through several distinct stages corresponding with Russia's presidencies of Boris Yelstin, Vladimir Putin, Dmitri Medvedev, and the return of Putin. Each of the identified stages saw attempts to both cooperate and conflict over different issues. In the 1990s such issues included expansion of NATO, conflict in the Balkans, and arms control. The 2000s added to this list issues of counter-terrorism, democracy promotion, and stability in the Middle East. More recently, Russia and the United States have clashed over Ukraine, Syria, and the Kremlin's alleged interference with the U.S. presidential elections.

Roberts traces the identified patterns of cooperation and conflict to the U.S. paternalistic attitude, perception of Russia's weakness, and residual Cold War "baggage" as well as Russia's identity crisis and preoccupation with status. Each breakdown in Russia-U.S. relations was expressed in the U.S. accelerated pressures on the Kremlin to comply with the West's expectations over human rights at home and respect for Western global interests. For instance, the breakdown of "reset" during Medvedev's tenure was accompanied by the United States' continued expansion of NATO and development of the Missile Defense System in Europe, rejection of Russia's approach to resolving the crisis in the Middle East, and a growing criticism of Russia's flawed elections and handling of political protests. Roberts maintains that Russia-U.S. overall relations are of mixed accomplishment and leave future leaders with important enduring

challenges. She concludes that the animosity over Russia's annexation of Crimea, the post-Cold War European order, and the Middle East that now permeates the bilateral relations may well endure and even "permanently polarize" the relationship.

Russia's relations with Asia demonstrate an entirely different trajectory moving in the direction of a greater cooperation since the 1990s. As Natasha Kuhrt shows, RFP evolved from its Euro-Western focus to an increased interest in China and the Asia Pacific region. Russia has built stronger economic, political, and military ties with China, improved relations with India and South Korea, preserved special ties with North Korea, and sought to resolve its territorial disputes with Japan. Kuhrt recognizes the growing intensity of Russia-Asia relations yet cautions against overestimating the potential of these relations. In particular, she identifies the risk of a growing dependence on China and suggests that the Kremlin's economic reliance on Beijing following the crisis in Ukraine resulted from necessity rather than a strategic choice. Kuhrt agrees with the view that the Kremlin-hailed cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and China's One Road, One Belt may come at the price of limiting Russia's influence in the region.

Kuhrt identifies three factors behind Russia's Asia turn: identity, considerations of status, and Russia's needs for economic and regional development. In identity terms the Asia turn results from Russia's frustration with the attitude of its Western other toward RFP. Russia also seeks to preserve a great power status by forming an informal alliance with China, while being wary of becoming dependent on Beijing's international priorities. Finally, by turning to Asia and seeking potentially lucrative deals and investors, Russia aims to address its growing development gap that is especially evident in Siberia and the Far East.

On the European direction, Russia's trajectory is similar to that of its relations with the United States although Russia-Europe ties are qualitatively stronger and more historically developed. As Tuomas Forsberg and Hiski Haukkala write, in the 1990s Russia's relations with the European Union progressed in the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation agreement in 1994, but then demonstrated a downward development evident in disagreement over Chechnya and the Balkans. In the early 2000s, Russia and the EU made a new effort to strengthen ties by signing in May 2003 the agreement about developing Four Common Spaces covering economics, politics, security, and education. However, subsequent disagreements over trade, security, and values made it impossible to renew the agreement. Finally, Medvedev's attempts to improve relations by employing the idea of modernization and concluding a Partnership for Modernization in 2010 did not progress and was abandoned with Putin's return to presidency. Russia-EU relations then further worsened over recognition of the Eurasian Customs Union and the Ukraine conflict.

Forsberg and Haukkala maintain that there is no consensus over interpretation of Russia's EU policy, but observers employ multiple factors responsible for the identified changes including domestic politics, ideology, and considerations of status. The authors' assessment of Russia's progress in relations with the EU stresses the Kremlin's considerable interest in developing economic ties, and lack of cooperation in security issues. Forsberg and Haukkala argue that overall the Kremlin bargained hard over terms of relations with the EU and has been generally successful in protecting Russia's sovereignty from European norms and principles.

Moscow has also sought to develop stronger economic and security relations with Central European and Eastern states, including those non-members of the EU. Dmitry Offitserov-Belskiy and Andrey Sushenstov argue in their chapter that Russia has been moderately successful in preserving economic ties and not successful on the security front. As Central and Eastern European states gradually moved from early integration experiments to the idea of an Eastern Partnership formulated in 2009, Russia's perception became centered on issues of sovereignty

and security. Series of the West's actions and policies, including NATO's expansion, intervention in Yugoslavia in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and support for colored revolutions in Eurasia and the coup in Ukraine in February 2014, served to strengthen Moscow's conviction that the West aims to limit Russia's influence in the region. As a result, even economic issues became subject to Russia–West competition with the Caucasus, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine affected. Offitserov–Belskiy and Sushenstov assess the Kremlin's use of various economic pressures to achieve political objectives as not very effective, but argue that the share of mutual economic dependence between Russia and the states of Eurasia remains considerable and may play an important role in the future.

In the Middle East, Russia progressed from being a relatively low key actor immediately following the end of the Cold War to having a much greater prominence since arrival of Yevgeni Primakov as the country's foreign minister in the mid-1990s, and especially since Putin's presidency. Today, following its military intervention in Syria since October 2015, Russia has emerged as a critically important player. Philipp Casula and Mark Katz document and assess the described progression of RFP in the region and attribute it to both strategic and identity factors. Strategic calculations of the Kremlin have to do with its perceived need to balance the influences of the West and protect Russia's own military presence and arms sales in the Middle East. The fact that Russia has well-developed relations with all major countries in the complex region speaks to the Kremlin's ability to tap into these countries' political and economic interests while steering away from forces of an ideological and religious nature. In addition, Russia's identity of a country with special ties to “the East” and its own historically strong school of Oriental studies has assisted Moscow in developing a culturally sensitive understanding of its partners in the region.

As a result, in Casula and Katz's assessment, Russia's diplomatic, economic, and military position in the region is much stronger than it has ever been. Moscow now is well placed to serve as a mediator in solving important political conflicts in the region. This, however, does not mean that the overall record of RFP in the Middle East is one of continuous success. Moscow has important disagreements with Saudi Arabia and other countries. The Kremlin has not been able to build a strong anti-terrorist coalition in the region, and its reputation as Assad's supporter continues to tarnish Russia's image in the West.

RFP in the South Caucasus has suffered from multiple problems and has been only modestly successful. As Maxim Suchkov writes, Russia has done much to pacify and stabilize this critically important region next to its southern border. Its relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan have improved in the 2000s. The situation with Georgia remains difficult following the Russia–Georgia military conflict in August 2008 and is partly dependent on the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia being recognized by the Kremlin as independent states. Russia's difficulties are also linked to its own volatile Northern Caucasus that has suffered from separatism, poverty, and Islamic radicalism. Suchkov argues that Russia's problems in the Caucasus result from a combination of the region's instability, Moscow's sensitivity to what it views as U.S. meddling, and U.S. policies and misperceptions of Russia's motivations. In the author's assessment, future progress of RFP in the region will depend on the Kremlin's ability to engage the states of the region into mutually attractive economic and political projects.

Central Asia is another critically important region in Russia's south. Mariya Omelicheva argues that Russia has complex interests in the region including those of national security, geopolitical influence, and economic development. She identifies four prominent regional concerns that have shaped RFP since the arrival of Putin as the country's president – terrorism, energy, migration, and government practices. Omelicheva takes issue with mono-causal explanations of Russia's behavior such as geopolitics or cultural/civilizational imperialism and argues for complex understanding of the country's domestic and international predicaments.

In Omelicheva's assessment, Russia succeeded in establishing security cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan thereby contributing to the region's stability. However, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan continue to be less cooperative leaving a "major gap in the regional security architecture". Russia also succeeded in developing energy schemes in Eurasia that assume its centrality, although China has broken Moscow's monopoly and continues to challenge Russia's energy position. How Russia and China will harmonize their regional economic/energy priorities remains a critically important issue to watch. Russia continues to benefit from Central Asian migrants and successfully assured Central Asian like-mindedness of government practices (authoritarianism).

Finally, as a northern power, Russia has keen interests in the Arctic. Robert English and Andrew Thvedt challenge the notion of Russia presenting a threat to the West or fighting a new Cold War in the region. They maintain that Moscow has been a "responsible Arctic stakeholder" and that it is natural for Russia to have economic and security presence in the Arctic. Russia has concluded important agreements with other Arctic nations beginning with the creation of the Arctic Council (AC) in September 1996. Since then the AC made by the United States, Canada, Russia, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland has successfully addressed a number of important issues that concern the region. As a rotating chair of the AC, Russia pushed for a Search and Rescue agreement which was concluded in 2011. Russia also settled with Norway competing claims to the Barents Sea and agreed to split evenly a contested zone of 175,000 square kilometers, opening the area to development of petroleum, minerals, fish, and other resources. As to claims of Russia building military bases in the Arctic, English and Thvedt assess that of the 12 to 15 of those identified as part of the Kremlin's "militarization", at least half are Search and Rescue centers, while others are airstrips with few additional constructions. Overall, Russian capabilities, facilities, and intentions are not intimidating and indeed lag behind those of NATO. English and Thvedt conclude by cautioning against a "narrative of rivalry and conflict" and by registering the solid record of international cooperation in the Arctic region.