



REPORT

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

FAITH, POWER AND CONQUEST

| JAMES SHERR | KAAREL KULLAMAA |

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Cover page photo: A Russian Orthodox priest blesses new Kalashnikov machine guns during a ceremony presenting the new weapons to recently enlisted members of Russia's elite "OMON" riot police corps in Stavropol, 29 January 2008. AFP PHOTO / DANIL SEMYONOV

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ABBREVIATIONS AND RELIGIOUS TERMS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EAOC	Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church
EOC-MP	Estonian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate
GRU	Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff [<i>Glavnoe Razvedyvatel'noe Upravlenie General'nogo Shtaba</i>]
KGB	Committee of State Security [<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti</i>]
MP	Moscow Patriarchate
OCE	Orthodox Church of Estonia
OCU	Orthodox Church of Ukraine
OGPU	United State Political Administration [<i>Ob'edinyennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie</i>] (precursor of the NKVD and KGB, 1923-34)
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
UAOC	Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church
UGCC	Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
UOC-KP	Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate
UOC-MP	Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate
apostasy	the abandonment of Christianity by someone who was once a Christian
autocephaly	(from Greek <i>autokefalia</i>) being self-headed; canonical independence from a higher church authority
canon law	in Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, ecclesiastical law, based on scripture and tradition, upheld by the church authorities
communion	a Christian sacrament celebrated with other communicants; spiritual union between churches (thus 'breaking communion' means severing ecclesiastical ties)
exarch	a metropolitan granted authority (but not independence) over a jurisdiction/territory by a patriarch
metropolitan	a position in the hierarchy (<i>mitropolit</i>) with authority over several dioceses – in Russia but not always elsewhere, senior to an archbishop (arkhiiepskop)
primate	the presiding metropolitan or bishop of an ecclesiastical jurisdiction or region
see	the seat of a primate's ecclesiastical authority or the area of his jurisdiction
<i>sobor</i>	a concilium (council) comprising bishops, clerical delegates and laity
synod	a council of bishops
<i>tomos</i>	a decree (literally 'document') from a patriarch that usually defines the level of a church's independence

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Because this is an English language publication, we have adopted the British Standard, rather than the Estonian/ISO system of transliterating Russian names and terms. But where it would be unnatural or cumbersome to do so, especially in the case of several proper names, we have employed common English usage: thus Peter rather than Petr or Pyotr the Great, Nicholas rather than Nikolay I, Alexander rather than Aleksandr II; also tsar instead of tsar'. In the absence of a single agreed system of transliterating Ukrainian (Skoropadskyi, Skoropadskyy and Skoropadsky are all found in scholarly texts), we have adopted the most conventional form.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Western Europe as well as North America, many have tended to view Eastern Orthodoxy and Russian Orthodoxy as synonymous. This is not only an erroneous perception of relations in the Orthodox world today; it is historically inaccurate as well. The Eastern Orthodox Church, with its patriarchate in Byzantium, had a presence on the territories of the future Russian Empire half a millennium before the princely state of Novgorod was founded. The Orthodox faith spread northwards from Kyiv to Vladimir and Moscow, not the other way around.

From early modern times, the unity of Church and state has been a matter of principle in Russia. But in Ukraine, the Orthodox faith, like the Ukrainian nation itself, evolved in the absence of a state or in opposition to one. Some of Ukraine's most celebrated national figures were ardently Orthodox. In Estonia too, the Orthodox Church (whose clergy and laity before the Soviet occupation were largely ethnic Estonians) not only provided shelter from the province's Germanic and Lutheran *de facto* rulers; it also mitigated the Russification policies of Tsar Alexander III. From the time of Catherine the Great, if not before, Russian authorities have done their best to suppress and rewrite this history. It deserves to be recovered.

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The dissolution of the USSR not only restored the prestige of the Church in Russia, it brought the relationship between Church and state back into focus. When Metropolitan (and future Patriarch) Kirill addressed a military collegium in 1992 and defined Church, Army and State as pillars of the Motherland, he spoke not only for the Church hierarchy but for an influential albeit less visible network of figures in the army, the political elite and former KGB seeking a new doctrinal basis for the Russian state. His condemnation of 'radical sovereignty' in countries described as 'near abroad' set the tone for Russia's policy then and since.

It is therefore not surprising that national independence swiftly brought the independence (*tomos* of autonomy) of the Estonian and Ukrainian Orthodox churches onto the agenda. In the former, where autocephaly had been a reality between 1923 and 1940, the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, reactivated the original *tomos* in 1996. Prefiguring the dispute in Ukraine twenty-two years later, Moscow broke communion with Constantinople. Although a compromise was soon reached, the ROC contested it from the start and in 2018 insisted that it 'had not recognised this decision and do[es] not recognise it.'

But in Ukraine, where no previous *tomos* had been granted, the Ecumenical Patriarch was more circumspect. Instead, without Constantinople's blessing, the serving metropolitan, Filaret Denysenko, separated from the ROC and established what became the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate.

It was the war of 2014 and the ROC's partiality to Russia's cause that brought Constantinople back into the equation. The granting of a *tomos* to the newly established Orthodox Church in Ukraine by Bartholomew was perceived by the Kremlin as a political act. Moscow is now responding on several axes at once: by provoking dissension within the new Ukrainian church, by trying to mobilise support amongst other Orthodox patriarchates, by inducing the Holy See to support its campaign for 'unity' and by attempting to depose Patriarch Bartholomew himself.

Russia's stance on autocephaly is the latest incarnation of a four hundred year quest to ensure that no Ukrainian national church establishes itself in Ukraine. It complements an equally long determination to compromise or crush any significant manifestation of independent policy or

belief. From 1992 to the present moment, Moscow has labelled all Ukrainian churches (not to say the sizeable Greek Catholic Church) as schismatic, with the singular exception of that part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church affiliated with Moscow.

In both Ukraine and Estonia, each Orthodox church has evolved in its own national context. Both countries have been home to Eastern Orthodox churches that looked to Byzantium/Constantinople for spiritual inspiration and worldly support. Each church's outlook was formed in relation to

The 'war of narratives and arms' that erupted in 2014 is but the latest war of identity that has characterised Russia's imperial history

'significant others' outside the Orthodox world: Germanic Lutheranism in the case of Estonia and Polish Catholicism in the case of Ukraine. But whereas Ukraine's Orthodox church was russified well before it was

sovietised, the national ethos of Estonian Orthodoxy managed to survive until 1945. Moreover, Estonia can look back at a legacy of religious tolerance *as a state*. Ukraine's rich and diverse heritage developed in the context of 'semi-statehood'.

The 'war of narratives and arms' that erupted in 2014 is but the latest war of identity that has characterised Russia's imperial history. It is also part of its hybrid conflict with the liberal democratic order. The Russian Orthodox Church has played a central role in these conflicts. For new democracies, this relationship between faith, power and conquest poses serious policy dilemmas and security challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The Russian Orthodox Church has become a foundation stone of Russia's political order, its political influence abroad and its 'civilisational' project. Yet its role in Russia's matrix of power is hardly new. Many of the motifs and methods that we associate with Church and state under Putin acquired doctrinal and military significance during Russia's age of enlightened absolutism. Today, Russia's 'civilisational' project is again a war of narratives and arms. In the view of Patriarch Kirill, 'men of arms number amongst the saints', and in the view of President Putin, the Church has an important role to play in Russia's Armed Forces and its hybrid wars. For these reasons, this four-part report is subtitled 'Faith, Power and Conquest'. It presents

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the historical antecedents of today's richly endowed and state empowered Church as well as its relationship with others, with particular emphasis on Ukraine and Estonia. It concludes with policy recommendations for Estonia and the West.

1. ORTHODOXY AND THE ABUSE OF HISTORY

One of the many tributes earned by the Soviet Union was that its past was unpredictable. Under Russia's present state leadership, history once again confers legitimacy on what

has taken place and on what has yet to take place. But whose history is it, and who should write it? This is an unavoidable question, not least for those whose faith is rooted in the life and message of Christ. For many Christians, the unity of the church and temporal power is an apostasy. For Russia's Orthodox Church, it has been a point of principle reinforced by the current policy of the Russian Federation. Russia also has a long history of incorporating the history of other peoples into its own. Of late, it has also enjoyed much success in persuading others to use its historical narratives as the baseline of their own perceptions. Russia and its Orthodox Church deserve and require a more truthful history. So does the religious heritage of Russia's neighbours. We cannot possibly understand the role of the Church today

Russia has a long history of incorporating the history of other peoples into its own

without rehabilitating this history. In order to do so, we must first rehabilitate the term 'Eastern Orthodoxy'. The Eastern Orthodox Church, with its patriarchate in Byzantium, had a presence on the territories of the future

Russian Empire well before the early fourth century, when the faith it propagated became the religion of the (now Georgian) Kingdom of Iberia/Kartli.¹ In 988, Volodymyr the Great,² a descendant of the Varangian (Viking) Rurik³, established Orthodoxy as the official religion

of Kyiv, 66 years before the Great Schism between Constantinople and Rome, almost 150 years before one of his own descendants, Yuriy Dolgorukiy, founded Moscow and almost

¹ The future Georgian Orthodox Church was a fully autocephalous (independent) part of the Eastern Orthodox Church from the early 11th Century until its status was abolished by the Russian Empire in 1811. Although the Kingdom of Armenia was the first state to adopt Christianity as its official religion (in 301), the Armenian Apostolic Church, which traces its origins to the first century, never professed allegiance to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople. Despite persecutions, neither the tsars nor the Soviets abolished its autonomy.

² Volodymyr, his name in modern Ukrainian, was also his name in Old East Slavonic (Володимѣръ).

³ The principle sources of Rurik's rule are the 12th century *Primary Chronicle* compiled by the Kyivan monk, Saint Nestor the Chronicler and the early 15th century Hypatian Chronicle or Codex, which combined the *Primary Chronicle* with the Kyiv Chronicle and Galician-Volhynian Chronicle.

300 years before the Grand Principality/Duchy of Muscovy was founded in 1283. Today's Moscow Patriarchate describes Volodymyr's son, best known as Yaroslav the Wise – Prince of Novgorod (1010–19) and, after a war of succession for his father's title, Grand Prince of Kyiv (1019–54) – as a 'Russian prince', but this attempt to link him to the Russian state, where today he is immortalised, is a fraudulent modernism that would have been devoid of meaning in his own time.⁴

The relationship between Kyiv, *Rus'*, Muscovy and Russia is one that respected historians rightly approach with temerity.⁵ To treat

To treat 'Kyivan Rus' as synonymous with Russia is as much a travesty as to deny the common roots between Kyiv, Novgorod and Moscow

'Kyivan *Rus'* (itself something of a modernism) as synonymous with Russia is as much a travesty as to deny the common roots between Kyiv, Novgorod, Vladimir-Suzdal and Moscow, which for some Ukrainian scholars has also become a point of principle.⁶ There is little controversy in stating that Volodymyr was a descendant of Rurik, who established his seat of power in Novgorod around 860 and whose dynasty ruled Russia until 1598. But it is a different matter to claim that Kyiv itself was founded by Rurik's descendants, as is common among Russian historians. Before 1991, the founding of Kyiv was customarily dated at 882, though both the current Ukrainian state and the authoritative *Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine* date its founding at 482. Novgorod might have preceded Kyiv as a princely realm. But Kyiv was the first *Orthodox* polity in *Rus'*, and it maintained its cultural and political prominence until the Mongol Conquest.

That geopolitical and civilisational cataclysm destroyed the unity of *Rus'* and set in train the developments that differentiate Ukraine from Russia. Unlike the city of Moscow (*Moskva*), the Grand Duchy/Principality of Muscovy (*Velikoe Knazhestvo Moskovskoe*) was a princely realm, and southern *Rus'* (the territorial precursor of Ukraine) did not form part of it.⁷

We can plausibly date the emergence of the *Russian* Orthodox Church from 1299, the year that Metropolitan Maximus sought refuge from the Tatar Mongols by moving the see from Kyiv to Vladimir – from where his successor, Metropolitan Peter, moved it to Moscow in 1325. The expansionist phase of this story was launched in 1476, the year that Ivan III (the Great), declared independence from the Golden Horde and launched the 'gathering of the Russian

lands', tripling the size of the duchy, which in 1478 became the Russian State [Russkoe gosudarstvo] until 1547.⁸ In that year Tsar Ivan IV The Terrible established the Kingdom of Russia [Russkoe tsarstvo], alternatively, Kingdom of Muskovy [Moskovskoe tsarstvo].⁹

The dubious proclamation (variously dated 1510 or 1523) by the church elder Filofey that, after the fall of Rome and Byzantium, Moscow had become the Third Rome ('and there will not be a fourth') built upon ambitions and apprehensions expressed by several metropolitans and bishops of Muscovy in the decades after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.¹⁰ The ambitions were encapsulated in the dictum of Iosif Volotskiy (later canonised by the ROC): the tsar was a 'man in essence but his power is that of God'.¹¹ The apprehensions dated from the Council of Ferrera-Florence from 1438 to 1439, when the Greek and Roman churches agreed a brief but unsuccessful

⁴ See, e.g., Estonian Church of Moscow Patriarchate, "Historical Background of Orthodoxy in Estonia", Estonian Church of Moscow Patriarchate, http://www.orthodox.ee/estonian_orthodox_eng.html.

⁵ For one inevitably controversial attempt to disentangle history from 'propaganda', see Andrey Sidorchik, "Moskoviya, Kiyevskaya *Rus'* i propaganda. Putevoditel' po istoricheskim terminam" [Moscovia, Kiyev Rus and propaganda. A guide to historical terms], *Argumenty i Fakty*, February 19, 2016, https://aif.ru/society/history/moskoviya_kievskaya_rus_i_propaganda_putevoditel_po_istoricheskim_terminam.

⁶ For a recent example, see Yaroslav Dashkevych, "How Moscow hijacked the history of Kyivan Rus," *Euromaidan Press*, 14 May, 2014, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2014/05/14/how-moscow-hijacked-the-history-of-kyivan-rus/>.

⁷ At that time, *knyaz'* could mean either duke or prince.

⁸ Bol'shaya rossiyskaya entsiklopediya [Great Russian Encyclopedia], <https://bigenc.ru/domestic-history/text/3522371> and <https://bigenc.ru/geography/text/3515925>.

⁹ Empire is a legitimate translation, but the Russian Empire was only founded officially in 1721.

¹⁰ David M. Goldfrank, "Third Rome," *Encyclopedia.com*, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/third-rome>.

¹¹ David M. Goldfrank, "Old and New Perspectives on Iosif Volotskiy's Monastic Rules," *Slavic Review* 34, No. 2 (June 1975): 279–301.

reunion.¹² But the tsar himself did not embrace this appellation.

For all this, before the late 16th century, Moscow's place in the pantheon of Eastern Orthodoxy was far from pre-eminent. Under the Ottoman Turks, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople never lost its right to appoint metropolitans throughout the lands of what the Church still called *Rus'*. Talk of the Third Rome had no practical import until Moscow, without leave from Constantinople, consecrated itself as the Patriarchate of Moscow and All *Rus'* in 1589. Extraordinary as this development was, Constantinople refused to concede to Moscow the right to ordain the Metropolitan of Kyiv until it was constrained to do so by military blackmail in 1686. Moreover, in Russia itself, relations between Church and state were far from stable. During the 16th century, the tsar gradually lost his power over ecclesiastics until Ivan IV (the Terrible) had Metropolitan Filip murdered in 1569. During the Time of Troubles (1598–1613), when tsarist authority nearly collapsed, the Church assumed the leading role in preserving the state.

1.1. ENLIGHTENED ABSOLUTISM

It was Peter I (the Great) who turned the Church into a compliant state institution, abolishing the Patriarchate in 1721 and replacing it with a Holy Synod that functioned as a department of state. In the same year, he proclaimed the establishment of the Russian Empire [*Rossiyskaya Imperia*]. In the course of these accomplishments, Peter transformed the Church from a complement into an instrument of territorial expansion, a process that acquired still greater scope under Catherine II, who brought imperial dominion to a more intensive level. Romantic nationalism was added to the mix by Nicholas I, whose minister of education and court ideologist, Sergey Uvarov, devised the quasi-mystical triad, 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nation' (*Pravoslaviye, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost'* – ethno-national consciousness and 'spirit').¹³ It is these years of 'enlightened absolutism' that furnish the most useful precedents for the 'civilisational'

doctrines of present day Russia and the Church that, once again, marches in step with the state.

But it need not have been so. Possibly the greatest casualties of 'reform' inside the ROC – which started under Peter the Great's predecessor, Tsar Alexei Mikhaylovich and Patriarch Nikon – were Russia's Old Believers, who emphatically denied any basis in scripture for unity with the state and viewed the Gospels as eternal testimony to the injustices of power in this world. Despite the near evisceration of the Old Believers by Church 'reformers', the twilight of Russian tsarism witnessed the birth of a similar impulse by younger clerics who adopted the reformist label. Not only did they advocate the separation of Church from state. Under the banner of *sobornost'* (conciliarism), they sought a significant devolution of decision-making authority inside the Church itself. Pressure upon the tsar to convene a *sobor* in the years after the Revolution of 1905, deflected and resisted by Nikolas II, came to fruition only after his abdication. After six months of preparation, the All Russian *Sobor* (Church Council) – the first since 1681/2 – convened on 15 August 1917 in the midsummer of the Provisional Government and continued until it dispersed under the shadow of War Communism on 20 September 1918. After much preparatory work, it restored the Patriarchate, re-established the Holy Synod and instituted major reforms that in theory are still valid. Had these tendencies been allowed to flourish, the spirit of Orthodoxy in Russia might have been very different from what it is today.¹⁴

1.2. SOVIET ABSOLUTISM AND POST-SOVIET RESTORATION

To state the obvious, the Soviet Union was an atheist state. Within weeks of coming to power, the Bolsheviks had turned the relationships described in this chapter upside down. In 1918/1922 the *Sovnarkom* (Council of People's Commissars) nationalised, then confiscated Church property, whilst the OGPU waged a war

¹² "Council of Ferrara-Florence, Religious History [1438–1445]," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Ferrara-Florence>.

¹³ Similar to the German term, *Volkstum*.

¹⁴ Orthodox Wiki, "All-Russian Church Council of 1917–1918," Orthodox Wiki, https://orthodoxwiki.org/All-Russian_Church_Council_of_1917-1918; "The Russian Orthodox Church and the Impact of Bolshevism," *Moscow Times*, November 3, 2017, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/11/03/the-russian-orthodox-church-and-the-impact-of-bolshevism-a59462>.

against the clergy as sanguinary as the later war against the kulaks. Whereas in 1914, there were over 55,500 churches in the Empire, by 1940 there were fewer than 500. Official statistics are full of gaps, but they put the number of Orthodox priests arrested between 1917 and 1935 at 130,000 and a further 168,000 'clergy' in 1937/38 alone. Of these, the vast majority were executed. It was, paradoxically, the war that lightened this yoke. Stalin realised that he could not revive the sentiments of the nation without reviving its symbols, including the imagery of the Church. Yet this theological thaw had a corollary: NKVD oversight and the embedding of agents inside the Church. By penetrating the Church, instead of persecuting

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it (though the one did not exclude the other, and further repressive waves took place in 1958 and 1975), Stalin and his successors subordinated it. According to Konstantin Kharchev (Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs, 1984-9), '[n]ot a single candidate for the office of bishop or any other high-ranking office, much less a member of Holy Synod, went through without confirmation by the Central Committee of the CPSU and the KGB'.¹⁵ No institution was more thoroughly infiltrated by the *organii* than the Orthodox Church. That is a point of departure for understanding the Church's role today.

For the Church, the demise of the Marxist-Leninist regime was not only an emancipation, but a restoration. That restoration was facilitated by an ambivalence at the heart of the 'new Russia'. Although the more celebrated architects of Yeltsin's policy were economic reformers with a pro-Western bent, the political essence of Yeltsin's project was the 'rebirth

of Russian statehood'.¹⁶ That cause attracted reactionary as well as progressive elements, and after the demise of *perestroika*, the former had begun to recover their voice. In this they were assisted by some of the more far-sighted thinkers of the KGB, the GRU and the Party's International Department, people who from Gorbachev's twilight years were seeking a new doctrinal basis for the state. In this enterprise, the Church not only became a vehicle but a protagonist.

The key figures in this transformation were Patriarch Alexei II and his successor, Kirill (Vladimir Mikhailovich Gundyayev). In November 1989, the latter was appointed Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, a position expressing the KGB's utmost trust. In the view of the defiant and courageous Father Gleb Yakunin, 'Kirill took on the function of the KGB as if it was his own'.¹⁷ His vantage point in the Patriarchate afforded him a privileged view of the spiritual hollowness of Soviet 'stagnation' and the ideological vacuum that had emerged at the heart of the state.

When a conclave of 5,000 military commanders convened in January 1992, presided over by Boris Yeltsin, Kirill appeared as a keynote speaker. His speech was a summons to the Church, the armed forces and the state. In essence, Kirill set out Putin's future credo. At the outset, he presented Church, army and state authority as the pillars of the 'Motherland', thereby invoking a focus of loyalty transcending the Imperial, Soviet and democratic constitutions of Russia.¹⁸ The

¹⁵ Yevgeniya Albats and Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, "The State Within a State: The KGB and Its Hold on Russia – Past, Present, and Future" (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1994), 46.

¹⁶ "Vozrozhdeniye Rossiyskoy Gosudarstvennosti i Stanovleniye Sovremennoy Sistemy Gosudarstvennogo Upravleniya v Rossiyskoy Federatsii (1991–92 gg)" [The Rebirth of Russian Statehood and Establishment of the Contemporary System of State Management, 1991–92], https://studme.org/1973021112610/istoriya/vozrozhdenie_rossiyskoy_gosudarstvennosti_stanovlenie_sovremennoy_sistemy_upravleniya.

¹⁷ Yelena Masyuk, "Sviashchennik Gleb Yakunin: Patriarh Kirill funktsii KGB vzial kak by na sebia" [Clergyman Gleb Yakunin: Patriarch Kirill took on the function of the KGB as if it was his own], *Novaya Gazeta*, January 24, 2014, <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2014/01/24/58082-svyaschennik-gleb-yakunin-patriarh-kirill-funktsiyu-kgb-vzyl-kak-by-na-sebya>.

¹⁸ The words he uses for what I have translated as "state authority" are *vlasti* and *prederzhashchie vlasti*.

‘destiny of the people and the state’ depended on the authorities and the army. The duty to safeguard the ‘moral and spiritual’ foundations of this trinity rested on the Church. ‘Conscious of the high responsibility of warriors, the Church has surrounded them with care, attention and love’. Their ‘glorious deeds’ are ‘moral and spiritual...for which reason men of arms number amongst the saints’.

Kirill also invoked the historical communion [*obshchnost*] of the ‘peoples who inhabit our Motherland’ and the ‘Slavs who were christened in the common baptism of Kiev’. This communion ‘was not formed in the past seventy years...but a thousand years’ The emergence of ‘national consciousness’ and independent, sovereign states was now ‘historical fact’, but it could not alter the reality that ‘we by and large have become one people’. There followed two

polity, their resonance was far more limited. The new (1993) Constitution defined the Russian Federation as a secular state, and that dispensation broadly reflected the values of Yeltsin’s political establishment.²⁰ Even the first Concepts of Foreign Policy signed by Putin (June 2000), with all its emphasis on the creation of a ‘belt of firm, good neighbourliness’, the joint ‘cultural inheritance’ of the CIS, and the ‘defence of the rights of Russian citizens and compatriots’ abroad, was secular in tone. Its only references to religion (combating ‘religious extremism’) were negative.²¹

1.3. THE PUTIN ERA

In today’s Russia, the Kremlin imparts a spirit of religiosity to all state pursuits, including religion itself. As early as 2000, Putin declared that Orthodoxy had ‘determined the character of Russian civilisation’ and that it was the source of its ‘spiritual and moral rebirth’. But this theme only acquired full ideological resonance after Ukraine’s Orange Revolution of 2004/05. The ‘civilisational’ counter-offensive that it inspired is widely seen as the work of Putin’s court ideologist, Vladislav Surkov. But Surkov was responsible for only part of its programmatic content.

Putin’s abhorrence of the Westernised values of ‘colour revolutionaries’ well predates colour revolution itself, and his feelings and

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warnings. The pursuit of ‘radical sovereignty’ dividing this historical communion will ‘embed a bomb that inevitably will explode’. Moreover, ‘the division of the unified army alarms the Church’. ‘For a frontier between armies can turn into a military front’. And here, ‘the Church is impelled to raise its voice’.¹⁹

Consequently, months before the publication of the Russian Federation’s first official documents on military policy, national security and the ‘near abroad’, Kirill set out a set of principles that eventually evolved into practical policy. These principles resonated with the army and largely came from it. (His comment that ‘the moral and ideational decomposition of the enemy army has always been the especially important task of the opposing sides’ is Russian military boilerplate). But with the broader Russian

In today’s Russia, the Kremlin imparts a spirit of religiosity to all state pursuits, including religion itself

resentments against those who ‘humiliated Russia’ are deep and long-standing. Therefore,

¹⁹ Metropolitan Kirill, “Speech to the All-Army Conference” (speech, Moscow, January 17, 1992), <http://pobeda.ru/prilozhenie-1.html>.

²⁰ “Everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with others any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them,” *Constitution of the Russian Federation*, Chapter 2, Article 28, <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-03.htm>.

²¹ “Kontseptii Vneshnoy Politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii” [Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation], *Novaya Gazeta*, July 11, 2000, http://www.ng.ru/world/2000-07-11/1_concept.html. Putin had signed the document on 28 June.

his search for ideas and sound bites that can prove useful in ‘restoring Russia’ and in waging linguistic struggle with liberal democracy has been wide-ranging. One of many sources has been Georgiy Aleksandrovich Shevkunov, now Metropolitan Tikhon of Pskov and Porkhov. Less than a year before taking monastic vows in 1991, he argued in a celebrated article that democracy in Russia ‘would inevitably try to weaken the most influential church’.²² In 2008, Tikhon, a graduate of the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography, produced a film that became a prime-time documentary on state television. ‘Death of an Empire’, portrays Byzantium’s collapse as a consequence of internal fragmentation and the import of Western (Catholic) values (a view originally propagated by Russian clerics in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). Putin, having already described the collapse of the USSR as the ‘greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century’,²³ warned in 2007 that the lesson of the Soviet collapse was that ‘transplanting Western institutions and values would create chaos’,²⁴ a term that heatedly resurfaced whenever the subject of Ukraine was raised.²⁵ The correspondence between Putin’s ideas and those of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (whom he first met in September 2000) is also worthy of note, given the latter’s abhorrence of everything Soviet. In general, however, the search for a Putin ‘guru’ is a fool’s errand. He has shopped for ideas far and wide, and he has found them. The important point is that the reservoir of these ideas is Russian conservative thought.

For many Russia watchers, 2007 was the year of Putin’s anti-Western diatribe at the Munich Security Conference. But at his annual press conference, less noticed in the West, he also managed to astonish a largely Russian audience. Asked to comment on the place of the ROC in Russia’s future and on nuclear strategy, Putin replied:

*The two themes are closely connected. Traditional confessions and the nuclear shield are those components that strengthen Russian statehood and create the necessary preconditions for providing the state’s internal and external security.*²⁶

Here, Putin was only marking the midpoint in a process begun in the 1990s by Kirill, designed to bind the ROC into the fabric of Russia’s nuclear forces and the defence-industrial complex. Dmitry Adamsky, who has charted this process in all its unsettling dimensions, attests that ‘the ROC has systematically and openly supported the Kremlin’s foreign policy gambits involving nuclear weapons’.²⁷ In this respect alone, it has set itself apart from mainstream Christian denominations in the West. Far from all Christian theologians endorse Pope Francis’s condemnation of nuclear deterrence and the ‘very possession’ of nuclear weapons.²⁸ But few would accord them moral and spiritual status.

There is one further dimension to this story – governance of the ROC itself. Here one can also observe an affinity between the course set by Kirill and that adopted by Vladimir Putin. Kirill’s accession followed a much criticised period of stagnation under his predecessor, Alexiy II. He swiftly rejuvenated the composition and structure of the Patriarchate, recruiting an impressive number of younger bishops and establishing an entirely new structure, the Interconciliar Presence [*Mezhsobornoe prisutstvie*] designed to strengthen connectivity between the Synod and the Council of Archbishops [*Arkhiepeyskiy sobor*]. To this was added an administrative secretariat, analogous to the President’s Administration. According to the Church insider, Sergey Chapnin, the purpose of this exercise was to concentrate power. Yet by the time this became apparent, a ‘reverse course

²² “Tikhon (Shevkunov) Biografiya,” [Tikhon (Shevkunov), Biography], https://web.archive.org/web/20160823031425/http://www.ortho-rus.ru/cgi-bin/ps_file.cgi?3_378.

²³ Vladimir Putin, “Poslanie Federal’nomy Sobraniyu Rossiyskoj Federatsii” [Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation] (speech, Moscow, April 25, 2005), <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>.

²⁴ Cited in Dmitry Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy: Religion, Politics and Strategy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), Kindle edition, location 1689.

²⁵ The author witnessed this at two meetings of the Valdai Club (2008 and 2009).

²⁶ Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy: Religion, Politics and Strategy*, 167.

²⁷ Ibid., 184.

²⁸ Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the International Symposium ‘Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and For Integral Disarmament’” (speech, Vatican, November 10, 2017), https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco_20171110_convegno-disarmointegrale.html.

was no longer possible'.²⁹ Adding piquancy to this story, the late Father Yakunin notes that a large number of the young intake personally selected by Kirill were homosexuals, and thus particularly subject to pressure and blackmail.³⁰ The result is that the elder episcopate, hitherto a balance to the Patriarch's authority, became a marginal influence.

Yet Kirill's greatest reforms were financial. Under his patriarchate, annual levies were imposed upon all churches from the most modest rural parishes to the most prestigious monasteries in the country. Effectively, priests, abbots and bishops were expected to buy their positions. In time, the scale of contributions became systematised, ranging from a minimum

In Kirill's Patriarchate, money is the sin that dare not speak its name

of 100,000 roubles per year (about €1,400) to several million roubles for the most opulent establishments. From this revenue stream alone, the Patriarchate was able to secure an estimated annual income of one billion roubles (€14 m). Moreover, under the 2017 law, 'On State Protection', both the income of the Church and the disposal of that income have become state secrets.³¹

Therefore, to the newly expanded unity of Orthodoxy, State and Army, a further pillar was added: money. Here as in matters of political and religious doctrine, the KGB led the way. In 1988, Gorbachev had authorised its participation in newly legalised domains of commercial enterprise and trade, both at home and abroad; in 1990, the privilege was extended to the GRU.³² Given his readiness to sanction

'non-public finance' for defence and security, the Church assumed that it too would be allowed to commercialise and enrich itself. Nevertheless, its call for the restitution of its vast and valuable properties put it in conflict with a number of vested interests. But it also produced new alliances, notably with Russia's emerging oligarchs, many of whom have found the Church's commitment to Russia's *obshchnost'* a natural complement to their more material interests in the 'near abroad'.³³

Today, the Church is a corporation whose fixed wealth and revenue (from the state, from 'sponsors' and from its own businesses) are enormous, but like its spending and budget formation, is very much unknown despite the research of Chapnin and others.³⁴

Its affluence is exceptional in the Orthodox world (and amongst the other patriarchates, a source of influence). The ROC is also a

strategic actor in Russia's networked state, where money, power and ambition are interwoven in ways that are far from transparent. None of this is fundamentally new. In Russian history, Orthodoxy and opulence have often coalesced. In Kirill's Patriarchate, money is the sin that dare not speak its name. In practice, in Father Yakunin's estimation, the hierarchy has created a church that elevates power, icons and ceremony over truth, that practices 'fetishism' and has lost interest in the gospels.³⁵ As we set out in the following chapters, this was neither the history nor the spirit of Orthodoxy in Ukraine or Estonia,

The symbiosis between Orthodoxy, opulence and power, which led to discord and protest in the 16th and 20th centuries, might do so again

and the same point might be applied to other neighbouring states.

The symbiosis between Orthodoxy, opulence and power, which led to discord and protest in the 16th and 20th centuries, might do so again. On a small scale, this was recently foreshadowed

²⁹ Sergey Chapnin, "Den'gi, kadry, poslushanie: Reformirovanie RPTs: chto predstoit pomenyat' posle okonchaniya epokhi patriarkha Kirilla?" [Money, personnel, obedience: The Reform of the ROC: what stands to change after the conclusion of the epoch of patriarch Kirill?], *Novaya Gazeta*, September 6, 2019, <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2019/09/06/81865-dengi-kadry-poslushanie/>.

³⁰ Yelena Masyuk, "Sviashchennik Gleb Yakunin: Patriarh Kirill funktsiu KGB vzial kak by na sebia."

³¹ Sergey Chapnin, "Den'gi, kadry, poslushanie: Reformirovanie RPTs: chto predstoit pomenyat' posle okonchaniya epokhi patriarkha Kirilla?"

³² James Sherr, "Russia: Geopolitics and Crime," *The World Today* 51, no. 2 (February 1995), 32–33.

³³ Svetlana Reiter, Anastasia Napalkova and Ivan Golunov, "How Much is the Russian Orthodox Church Worth?" *Meduza*, February 24, 2016, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2016/02/24/how-much-is-the-russian-orthodox-church-worth>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Yelena Masyuk, "Sviashchennik Gleb Yakunin: Patriarh Kirill funktsiu KGB vzial kak by na sebia."

by the public outcry that arose over the recent cathedral project in Ekaterinburg.³⁶ Possibly more significant is the letter signed ‘out of pastoral duty’ by 182 clerics in the wake of the July 2019 Moscow protests.³⁷ This to be sure is a miniscule number in a country with 40,000 clergy. But as Sergey Chapnin has observed, the letter is significant for three reasons. First, ‘[t]his is the first time that Orthodox clergy have shown their solidarity with detained civil activists and their readiness to discuss publicly the defence of those innocently convicted as a Christian task.’ Second, the generational and geographical diversity of the signatories is astonishing. Third, the letter has exposed a potentially serious divide between the priesthood and the Church hierarchy. (No bishop signed it).³⁸

1.4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, however impressive the revival of the ROC as the incarnation of a recently repressed religious faith, its worldly importance derives from the role that it plays in state policy. Russia remains a relatively secular society in which faith in God and the Christian gospels is largely perfunctory.³⁹ Without integration of its resources and its networks of power into

the state, the Church would be little more than a grandiose artefact. Today, it is a force not only inside Russia but abroad. In this revival, the Church hierarchy has upheld the state’s authority as much as its own. It has also played an instrumental role in advancing Russia’s ‘civilisational’ model beyond Russia’s borders.

Therefore, the political role of the Church should command attention even, perhaps especially,

Without integration of its resources and its networks of power into the state, the Church would be little more than a grandiose artefact

when it presents itself as a spiritual one. The latest incarnation of ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nation’ does not become spiritual merely because it is articulated by a patriarch rather than a secular official. Dignifying the ‘glorious deeds’ of soldiers as ‘moral and spiritual’ does not make them less military.

Nevertheless, it would be a gross mistake to perceive the views of the Church as ‘made to order’ by Kremlin political technologists. They are the latest incarnations of a belief system that matured alongside tsarist absolutism and then found itself anathematised by an atheistic Soviet state. At the twilight of the Soviet era, that belief system was rejuvenated and refurbished in alliance with powerful secular forces as alarmed by the moral vacuum inside ‘Socialism’ as by the degeneration of the Party-State itself. The collective West largely overlooked this phenomenon. Instead it became enamoured of the secular liberals who were crafting the slogans and policies of *perestroika* and the early Yeltsin era. Whether Richard Pipes is right to say that Russian conservatism has been neglected by Western scholars, it is perfectly fair to say that before the Putin era, it was given insufficient attention by Western policy-makers and those who advised them.⁴⁰ Putin is as much the product of this conservative revival as Kirill, however ‘pragmatically’ he reconciles his own beliefs with the ideas he expresses and the political challenges before him.

³⁶ “Russian Orthodox Church Backs Down in Ekaterinburg Church Dispute,” *RFE/RL*, June 16, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russian-orthodox-church-backs-down-in-yekaterinburg-church-dispute/30002425.html>.

³⁷ “Otkrytoe pis’mo svyashchennikov v zashchitu zakliuhennykh po ‘Moskovskomu delu’” [Open Letter of the Priesthood in defence of the detained in the ‘Moscow affair’], *Pravmir*, September 18, 2019, <https://www.pravmir.ru/otkrytoe-pismo-svyashchennikov-v-zashchitu-zaklyuchennykh-po-moskovskomu-delu/>.

³⁸ Sergey Chapnin, “Russian Orthodox Clergy Support Justice and Respect for the Law,” *Public Orthodoxy*, October 14, 2019, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2019/10/14/russian-orthodox-clergy-support-justice/>; Victor Madeira, “The Real Russian Church Rises: A public letter by Orthodox parish clergy defies the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchy,” *Standpoint*, October 23, 2019, <https://standpointmag.co.uk/issues/november-2019/the-real-russian-church-rises/>.

³⁹ A Pew Research survey in early 2014 found that “Across all three waves of [International Social Survey Programme] data, no more than about one-in-ten Russians said they attend religious services at least once a month.” Pew Research Center, *Russians Return to Religion But Not to Church* (Pew Research Center, February 10, 2014), <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/02/religion-in-Russia-full-report-rev.pdf>; A 2017 survey of church attendance in 18 central and eastern European countries places Russia fourth from the bottom. Neha Shagal and Alan Cooperman, *Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe* (Pew Research Center, May 2017), <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/05/CEUP-FULL-REPORT.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

2. CONTESTED ORTHODOXIES IN UKRAINE

When Ukraine's former president, Leonid Kuchma wrote a book entitled *Ukraine is not Russia*, he might have extended the point to the Orthodox faith. Yet the notion that there is something Ukrainian about Orthodoxy

The notion that there is something Ukrainian about Orthodoxy in Ukraine has been anathema to Russian patriarchs, tsars and presidents for hundreds of years

in Ukraine has been anathema to Russian patriarchs, tsars and presidents for hundreds of years. When President Medvedev, in a celebrated message to President Yushchenko in 2009 stated that the two countries 'are united by a common history, culture and religion', he at least was pretending to soften a dispute rather than enflame it.⁴¹ Yet what is axiomatic in Russia is very difficult to reconcile with the history of Ukraine or the role that the Church has played in it.

As noted in Chapter I, when Kyiv adopted Orthodoxy in 988, it was a functioning polity that quickly emerged as the pre-eminent cultural and religious centre of *Rus'*. The Orthodox see migrated to Vladimir in 1299 and thence to Moscow in 1325. Nevertheless, it was not until 1686 that the Moscow Patriarchate acquired the authority to appoint metropolitans of Kyiv. But canonical authority is only one part of the story.

Geopolitics forms the second part. The Mongol conquest gave Moscow pre-eminence but without authority. In 1303, twenty-two years before the Metropolitan of All *Rus'* moved his see from Vladimir to Moscow, Constantinople allowed Halychyna (Galicia) to establish its own metropolitanate, which became the Metropolitanate of Little *Rus'* – a term which now arouses derision, but which then served

to distinguish territorial jurisdictions and allegiances. It is not that relations between these two parts of *Rus'* were antagonistic. They just were limited and distant, impeded by the presence of the Horde in the east, but also by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the north. By the end of the fourteenth century, the Grand Duchy, not Russia, effectively became 'heir to Kyivan *Rus'* in every respect but dynastic continuity'.⁴² It was Lithuania rather than Russia that defeated the Mongols who posed the most immediate threat to Kyiv from the east and south. It would be over a hundred years before Muscovy under Ivan III established its rule over any

part of Ukraine – and not in the east, but in the northern region of Chernihiv.

The broader point, cultural as much as geopolitical, is that from the waning of *Pax Mongolica* to the age of Enlightened Absolutism, the territories that we now call Ukraine either formed part of other entities or lay on their fault lines. These were fluid and unsettled fault lines, and the Orthodox (not all of whom were Ukrainians) and Ukrainians (not all of whom were Orthodox) straddled them. From this history emerges Ukraine's tradition of pluralism, accommodation to rival jurisdictions (in today's lexicon, poles) and its celebrated instinct for balancing and manoeuvre (now officially termed a 'multi-vector' policy). But it also opened Ukraine up to a plurality of cultural and religious influences that were denied to Russia, and these influences were to some extent reciprocal. Thus, a portion of the Lithuanian elite, most of whom remained pagan until the 15th century converted to Orthodoxy before the state embraced Catholicism in 1387. Yet it did so as a result of its cultural encounter (and conquest) of southern and south-eastern *Rus* (Ukraine) rather than Russia.⁴³ The Greek Catholic (more pejoratively, Uniate) Church, arising from the 1596 Treaty of Brest, was the result of a movement amongst Orthodox

⁴¹ President of the Russian Federation, "Poslanie Prezidentu Ukrainiy Viktoru Yushchenko" [Appeal to President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko], President of the Russian Federation (official website), August 11, 2009, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/5158>.

⁴² Serhiy Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015): 60.

⁴³ It is characteristic of the times that a good and concise account of this process, written by in 1968 by a Lithuanian doctoral student at Yale, uses the word 'Russia' to refer to Kyiv and southern *Rus'*. Romuald J. Misiunas, "The Orthodox Church in the Lithuanian State (1315–1377)," *Lituanus* 14, No 3, Fall 1968.

Christians in western Ukraine and today's Belarus to overcome the division between eastern and western Christendom by entering into full communion with Rome (thereby accepting Roman Catholic doctrine) whilst preserving the Byzantine rite. Yet it was also a means to escape repression by the Polish monarchy. Therefore, for political as well as doctrinal reasons, the Treaty of Brest created a religious fissure on Ukrainian lands. The Orthodox hierarchy in Muscovy was spared these challenges, but by comparison with its counterparts in Kyiv, it was remote and insular.

The third part of the story, implicit in all that we have described, is political culture. Probably nothing differentiates the Russian and Ukrainian political cultures more than the question of *gosudarstvennost'* (statehood/state mindedness). There has long been a close, even symbiotic, relationship between the Russian nation and the Russian state. Some, possibly including Putin himself, would go so far as to say that without the state, there is anarchy, not

The Ukrainian nation developed independently of the state and did so largely without it

Russia. Although Russian *gosudarstvennost'* has sometimes been conservative and sometimes modern, it has almost never been democratic. Moreover, from the 18th century if not before, state and empire were intermingled in minds as well as policies.

In contrast, the Ukrainian nation developed independently of the state and did so largely without it. In Russia, this difference is widely perceived as a weakness. Nevertheless, this Ukrainian 'weakness' accounts for the resilience of Halychyna-Volhynia during the Mongol conquest, the defiance of the Cossack Hetmanate (1648-1764), the Maidans of 2004 and 2013 and the volunteer battalions, who emerged in 2014 when the state was threatened with collapse. As Serhiy Plokhy encapsulates it, the Ukrainian nation is not the product of one polity or another, but of its members. One of Ukraine's finest political documents, the 1710 Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk, was crafted after the army of Hetman Ivan Mazepa was destroyed. Whilst Mazepa's nemesis, Peter the Great, was building Russia on the basis of autocracy, centralism and modernity, the

Orlyk constitution enshrined the principles of the separation of powers, the election of parliaments and the rights of towns. These were principles of statehood at a time when there was no state. But they also were a system of values. Both before and after Mazepa and Orlyk, whenever Ukrainian rulers capitulated to superior powers, they sought to do so on the basis of codified autonomies and rights, and when these rights were denied or abridged, they fought for their re-establishment.

Orthodoxy in Ukraine evolved in this national context. It was the faith of Ivan Mazepa and proclaimed the faith of all Ukraine in Orlyk's constitution. It was not a creature of power. The Metropolitan's authority was challenged repeatedly by nobles and by Orthodox brotherhoods. Before its subordination to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686, the Church's spiritual reference point was Constantinople and its base of support the Ecumenical Patriarch, whom Moscow regarded as a rival and a hindrance. But after the Union of Lublin (1569), which incorporated much of Ukraine into Poland, its cultural reference point became Europe, and in right-bank Ukraine, this remained

the case well after the Moscow Patriarchate acquired titular pre-eminence. In the early 17th century, following the establishment of the Greek Catholic Church, Kyiv became a refuge for Galician Orthodox clerics and a focal point of resistance to Polish authority. These combined pressures placed it at the centre of the so-called Orthodox Reformation, which made a profound contribution to the arts and scholarship, and which soon began to influence Moscow and the Russian Orthodox Church. This cultural and religious cross-fertilisation explains why Russia's ascendancy failed to have a profound effect on the character of Ukraine or the Orthodox Church inside it even after the Zaporizhian Cossacks ceded political primacy to Russia in 1654 at the Council of Pereyaslav.

2.1. AN IMPERIAL SUBJECT

What changed this state of affairs was the battle of Poltava. Peter the Great's defeat of Charles XII and Ivan Mazepa in 1709 paved the way for Ukraine's incorporation into the full rigours of the Russian imperial system. The

Imperator sought to fill every vacuum open to him with centralised authority, both political and ecclesiastical. Yet even he only partially succeeded. It was the ultimate practitioner of Enlightened Absolutism, Catherine the Great, who brought this vision to fruition. In crushing the autonomy of Sloboda Ukraine (the greater Kharkiv region) and conquering ‘Novorossiya’ (the region north of the Black Sea stretching from today’s Odessa to Donetsk), her intentions were not only political but historical: to ‘eradicate from memory’ the period of the hetmans. The

Peter the Great’s defeat of Charles XII and Ivan Mazepa in 1709 paved the way for Ukraine’s incorporation into the full rigours of the Russian imperial system

expansion of her dominion was complemented by an equally far-reaching expansion of the holdings of a now subordinated Orthodox Church, which along with a newly russified Cossack gentry became the landlords of 90 per cent of the peasants in the former Hetmanate and Sloboda Ukraine.⁴⁴

In the event, the memory of the Hetmanate was not eradicated but revived in scholarship and literature under the impetus of the Napoleonic wars, the 1830 Polish Uprising and the revolutions of 1848. The crushing of the later rebellions by Nicholas I (1825–55) was but the prelude to a cultural counter-offensive. The banner of ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nation’ was also a banner of Russification. Greek Catholic parishes were converted to Orthodoxy virtually at gun point, the more radical Orthodox and secular brotherhoods suppressed, the Polish language banned, as was the education of peasants in the Ukrainian language. In a foretaste of Soviet practice, the authorities also created a historical commission with the task of rewriting history. Right-bank Ukraine, Podolia and Volhynia became ‘historical’ Russian lands.

The obvious question is why Alexander II (1855–81), the ‘Tsar Liberator’, who abolished serfdom in the Russian Empire, did not reverse these trends. Initially, it seemed that he

would do so. The Crimean War had exacted a disproportionate toll on Ukraine, and the peasantry reacted accordingly. Some 180,000 had to be crushed during the war by tsarist troops; between 1856–60 there were 276 peasant disturbances.⁴⁵ This was a powerful impulse towards the Emancipation Decree, which freed the serfs in 1861.

Yet the reactionary impulse soon prevailed. The catalyst was yet another Polish uprising (1863), which stimulated a new wave of ‘Ukrainophile’ activism, but also fear in St Petersburg that ‘Polish intrigue’ would turn Ukraine against the Empire. The protests of the Ukrainophiles that their objectives were purely cultural were to no avail.⁴⁶ There was also a religious dimension, brought to

a head by translations of the Holy Scriptures into scholarly Ukrainian. Just as Nicholas had turned to his Minister of Education, Sergey Semyonovich Uvarov, for doctrinal support, so Alexander turned to his Minister of Internal Affairs, Pyotr Aleksandrovich Valuev. The Valuev Circular of 1863 decreed that ‘the authorization of books in Little Russian with either spiritual content or intended generally for primary mass reading should be ceased’. It also stated that ‘[t]he Little Russian tongue has never existed and, despite all the efforts of the Ukrainophiles, still does not exist’.⁴⁷ In words still reiterated by many Russian intellectuals, the author of this passage, the historian Mikhail Katkov, also made it plain that ‘Ukraine has never had its own history’.⁴⁸ When Ukrainophiles recovered their bearings nevertheless and the *hromadiy* (societies) resumed their activity, the tsar responded with the Ems Decree of 1876, a yet more systematic and ruthless attempt to ‘paralyse the Ukrainian movement’ and move the ‘Little Russian dialect’ to the margins of discourse.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1988), Kindle edition, location 5163.

⁴⁶ Twenty members of the Kyiv *hromada* wrote, ‘our goal is only to educate the people,’ and ‘all talk of separatism is a silly joke since we neither need it nor will we benefit from it,’ cited in Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, Kindle edition, location 5781.

⁴⁷ Andrii Danylenko, ‘The Ukrainian Bible and the Valuev Circular of July 18, 1863’, *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, Tomus 28, (1863): 3.

⁴⁸ M. N. Katkov, 1863: *Sovranie Stat’ey po pol’skomu voprosu* [1863: Collected Articles on the Polish Question], (Moscow 1887): 276. Cited in Danylenko, ‘The Ukrainian Bible and the Valuev Circular of July 18, 1863,’ 3.

⁴⁹ Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, Kindle edition, location 5816.

⁴⁴ Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, 135, 137, 141. During the 17th–18th centuries Sloboda Ukraine, the Kharkiv-Sumy region, was one of the Cossack heartlands. As Plokhy notes (p 141), Novorossiya never included Sloboda Ukraine, contrary to the claims of Russian ideologists in 2014.

From the 1654 Pereyaslav Agreement until the close of the Imperial era, three continuities emerge. First, the impulse to maintain political independence steadily weakened, and after the wars of Catherine the Great, rapidly so. Increasing numbers of Ukrainians looked to the Empire for opportunity, security, and of course, power. Yet the determination to preserve historical autonomies and a Ukrainian cultural space endured; when thwarted by coercion and more judicial forms of repression, efforts were made to manoeuvre around obstacles and preserve Ukraine's pluralities and distinctiveness. Second, and most paradoxically, it was not only conservatives like Nicholas I and Alexander III who sought to eradicate these tendencies, but Russia's most committed modernisers. This was even true of Pyotr Stolypin (Prime Minister 1906–11), despite the fact that the impact of his agrarian reforms was greater, and in some respects more beneficial in Ukraine than anywhere else. Like Pyotr Valuev, Stolypin believed that the main threat to 'Orthodox Russian civilisation' lay in the national revival of *inorodtsiy* (non-Russians), and in 1910, he published a circular banning the registration

It was not only conservatives like Nicholas I and Alexander III who sought to eradicate tendencies, but Russia's most committed modernisers

of all societies and publishing houses of 'non-Russian societies, including Ukrainian and Jewish, regardless of their goals'.⁵⁰ The third was the difficulty of divorcing Orthodoxy in Ukraine from the trends in Ukrainian society.

2.2. WAR AND SOVIETISATION

It was the Great War that gave birth to authentic Ukrainian national independence movements, and it was the February 1917 Revolution in Petrograd that brought them to fruition. Decades after these chaotic times, myths abound. To this day, the conflict is widely portrayed as a part of the 'Russian Civil War' and the struggle between Reds and Whites.

⁵⁰ Cited by Serhiy Hrabovsky, "The Stolypin Myth: Chimerical and Dangerous," *Ukrainian Week*, September 15, 2011, <https://ukrainianweek.com/History/30879>.

Yet in Ukraine, this was a war of national independence. The White Army was a Russian commanded formation seeking the restoration of the imperial status quo. It was opposed to ceding any form of autonomy, let alone independence, to Ukraine, which is why its aims were anathema to the factions of Ukraine's own provisional government, the Central Rada (and the ensuing Ukrainian People's Republic), who came overwhelmingly from the moderate and radical left. The Red Army fought the Ukrainian republic, and it fought the Whites, but their conflation is another historical untruth.

The second, home-grown Ukrainian myth is that Ukraine established an independent state whose viability was only threatened by the determination of its enemies to destroy it. The fact is that over the course of four years, the country was subjected to three episodes of state failure that were as much the result of internal deficiencies as external intervention. The first and most promising of these was the Central Rada, formed swiftly after the tsar's abdication. It had a massive wellspring of support from across the country and in July 1917, secured recognition by Russia's Provisional Government. But its leaders, well-motivated, some of them even gifted, lacked the qualifications and temperament to assume responsibility for a country in the throes of economic breakdown and military collapse.

The Rada (and the Ukrainian People's Republic it established) was a mirage of a state, and its support vanished as swiftly it materialised. Three months after the Bolshevik coup, it was thrown upon the mercies of the Central Powers. The Hetmanate, led by General Pavel Skoropadskyi, a descendant of Polish and Russian nobility, but a former Cossack officer and Ukrainian patriot backed by conservative elements, was far more successful in establishing a proper state apparatus. But it was a bogus state entirely beholden to its German patrons, whose armed forces intervened repeatedly to enforce onerous grain requisitions. After the armistice of November 1918, the Hetmanate swiftly disintegrated. Now united with the insurgent West Ukrainian People's Republic in the former Habsburg territories, the reborn People's Republic was immediately paralysed by internal disagreements. The Russo-Polish War and the

Riga Peace Treaty of 1921 brought Ukraine's first modern experiment in statehood to a dismal denouement.

The Orthodox Church was thrown into turmoil by these events. Peasants who failed to receive the land they were promised by the Central Rada went on the rampage against the Church's landowners. The silver lining in this cloud was the impetus it gave the lay intelligentsia and lower clergy to transform the Church. The *sobor* (council/concilium) that proclaimed the founding of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) in May 1920 was an innovation in itself because unlike a synod (a council of bishops), a *sobor* comprises bishops, clerical delegates and laity. The principles it proclaimed sought to recapture the ethos of the Church before its subordination to Moscow in 1686, which it deemed uncanonical. Its tenets were: autocephaly (full independence), separation of church and state, the use of the vernacular in church rites (in place of Church Slavonic) and the complete democratisation and decentralisation of church life, with the *sobor* replacing bishops as the supreme ecclesiastical authority.⁵¹

The remarkable point is not that Tikhon, the Moscow Patriarch, denounced the UAOC as uncanonical, nor that the vast majority of Ukrainian parishes supported him, but that the victory of Soviet power did nothing to check its astonishing growth. By early 1924, it had 1,100 parishes (out of 9,000) and 30 bishops.⁵² How was this possible? First, as practitioners of 'divide and rule', the Soviet authorities initially saw national churches as one means of undermining the Russian Orthodox Church, their principal religious opponent. But these tactics command less attention than the wider policy. One side was the NEP (New Economic Policy), adopted by the Tenth Party Congress (1921). The other was 'federalism', on the basis of which the USSR was constituted in December 1922. The latter had no firmer proponent than the Commissar of Nationalities, Iosif Stalin, who in April 1918 had called for the creation of 'schools, courts, administrations, organs of power and social,

political, and cultural institutions in which the labouring masses use their own language.'⁵³ 'Ukrainisation' was one incarnation of the policy of *korenizatsiya* (indigenisation) adopted by the 12th Party Congress of 1923. It vigorously promoted the use of Ukrainian and Ukrainian language teaching in all spheres of life and afforded Ukraine a renaissance in intellectual and cultural activity that would have been anathema before and unthinkable since.

But there would be no federalism in Party affairs, where the norms of 'democratic centralism' remained inviolate. When Ukrainisation showed signs of evolving into 'national Communism', Moscow reacted. In December 1932, the CPSU ordered its Republican branch in Ukraine to halt the 'mechanistic' implementation of Ukrainisation and purge 'national deviationists' from its ranks. By 1933, a new Russification drive was underway. In the background to these tremors were larger tectonic shifts: collectivisation and the *Holodomor*. The policy of Russification – as thoroughgoing as the policy of Ukrainisation had been only ten years before – brought to its grim culmination an increasingly repressive policy towards the UAOC that had begun in the late 1920s. By 1930, its entire hierarchy had been wiped out. Whereas it had been regarded as a 'conditional ally' against the ROC in the early 1920s, scarcely ten years later, the position was reversed. The ROC had become an instrument in the second Russification of Ukraine.

As we noted in the previous chapter, the war led to the revival of the ROC in Russia because it was national. We note here that it led to the ROC's revival in Ukraine because it was not. When the Polish territories were incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1939–40, fugitive UAOC parishes and the Greek Catholic Church were suppressed, their property transferred to the ROC and the greater part of their clergy executed or sent to the GULAG. The limited resuscitation of both churches under Nazi occupation was grist to the mill of fresh persecutions after Soviet power was restored. Although Stalin's death in 1953 put a stop to executions, there was no change in general policy. After some loosening of the

⁵¹ "The Ukrainian Autocephalous Church," *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine* [hereafter, *Encyclopedia*], <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CU%5CK%5CUkrainianAutocephalousOrthodoxchurch.htm>. The encyclopedia is produced by scholars from the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) (University of Alberta/University of Toronto).
⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Cited in Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power* (Penguin Press, 2014): 350.

cords, they were tightened again against Greek Catholics in 1958-9 and yet again in 1974. For Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the position was as clear as it had been for Catherine: there would be no Ukrainian national churches in Ukraine.

2.3. SOVIET DISSOLUTION AND UKRAINIAN INDEPENDENCE

Only in the last few years of Gorbachev's leadership were the cords untied. In December 1989, the Greek Catholic Church regained its legal right to propagate the faith, but not the

From 1992 until 2018 Ukraine has been home to three Orthodox churches, as well as the Greek Catholic Church

return of its property, thereby setting off ugly confrontations with the ROC and provoking a rupture in relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican. Two years earlier, a number of parishes seceded from the ROC and re-established the UAOC under its own Patriarch, Mstyslav Skrypnyk; by the time of the dissolution of the USSR, it had 944 parishes in Ukraine.⁵⁴ Still more portentous developments occurred inside the Ukrainian exarchate. Unsettled by the re-establishment of the UAOC, the new Moscow Patriarch, Alexiy II, convened a *sobor* in October 1990, which resolved to rename its exarch the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and grant it administrative independence. It was also granted the right to choose (effectively, nominate) its own metropolitan pending the Patriarch's approval, but not the right to conduct its own foreign relations. Rather than resign himself to this arrangement, the serving metropolitan, Filaret Denysenko, convened a *sobor* of the Ukrainian Church in November 1991 and petitioned the Moscow Patriarchate for autocephaly. When Alexiy not only refused that request the following April but dismissed Filaret as well, the

latter, his following and their parishes separated from the ROC and established the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP).

By that time Ukraine had become an independent state. From 1992 until 2018 Ukraine has been home to three Orthodox churches, as well as the Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic (Latin) Church, the Ruthenian and Armenian Catholic churches and several small but rapidly growing Protestant denominations. Before the war in 2014, the largest of these were the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), claiming over 12,000 parishes, the UOC-KP (some 4,500), the UGCC (3,800) and the UAOC (1,200). The Roman Catholic Church has 905 'communities' and 713 churches. Apart from the UOC-MP and the Roman Catholic Church,

the Moscow Patriarchate regards all of these denominations as *raskol'nicheski* (schismatic), even the Greek Catholics, who never lost this mark of opprobrium from the time they entered into communion with the Church of Rome in 1596.

In church matters, as in many other domains, Ukraine is congenitally pluralistic, while Russia insists on 'unity'. Although the ROC has aimed to foster good relations with Jewish and Muslim communities since the Soviet collapse, it is harshly intolerant of other Christian denominations. This state of affairs

In church matters, as in many other domains, Ukraine is congenitally pluralistic, while Russia insists on 'unity'

is doubly paradoxical. As noted in Chapter 1, only 7 per cent of Russians who believe in God regularly attend church. But in Ukraine, the corresponding number is 37 per cent. In Russia, a country of 145 million people, only 4.4 million attended Easter service in 2019;⁵⁵ in Ukraine, a

⁵⁴ "Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church," Encyclopedia, accessed September 17, 2019, <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CU%5CK%5CUkrainianAutocephalousOrthodoxchurch.htm>.

⁵⁵ "Dannye o posetivshikh paschal'nye bogoslužheniya v 2019 godu" [Data on attendees of Easter services in 2019], COBA, <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/discussions/how-many/2019/04/d40953/>; "Dannye o posetivshikh paschal'nye bogoslužheniya v 2018 godu" [Data on attendees of Easter services in 2018], COBA, <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/discussions/how-many/2018/04/d39207/>.

country of 42 million, 6.7 million did so.⁵⁶ These differences are not reflected in the foregoing figures about UOC-MP and UOC-KP parishes, insofar as the former have lower attendance than those of the latter. Nevertheless, before 2014, the Moscow Patriarchate affiliated a clear majority of the 68 per cent of Ukrainians who described themselves as Orthodox.⁵⁷

2.4. HYBRID WAR AND AUTOCEPHALY

Thanks to the war that began in 2014, this no longer is the case. The UOC-MP was the only Orthodox church to oppose or at least ignore the Euromaidan. Even before the appointment of the submissive Metropolitan Onufriy, in August 2014, it put itself in the vanguard of pro-Russian demonstrations, a number of priests calling on

The UOC-MP was the only Orthodox church to oppose or at least ignore the Euromaidan

their parishioners to join the fighting and some joining it themselves. One sacristan of the Kyiv Pecherska Lavra (cave monastery) boasted that he and four others were placed by the Moscow Patriarchate in the FSB detachment that fought in Slovyansk.⁵⁸ This was echoed in October 2018 by Igor Girkin (*aka* Strelkov), former Moscow-appointed Defence Minister of the 'Donetsk People's Republic', who not only confirmed these claims but added that his own security detail was 'exclusively composed of sons of

father confessors, monks and celibate priests'.⁵⁹ The result is that parishioners left the Moscow Patriarchate in droves. According to an August 2018 poll by three respected Ukrainian centres, 45.2 per cent of Orthodox Christians by then affiliated themselves with the Kyiv Patriarchate and only 16.9 percent with the Moscow Patriarchate. (The second largest group, 33.9 per cent, were those who declared themselves 'simply Orthodox').⁶⁰

In other respects, too, the ROC overplayed its hand. Whereas every Ukrainian president except Viktor Yanukovich had supported autocephaly since 1992, Patriarch Bartholomew was most reluctant to grant it even after President Yushchenko made it one of his core priorities between 2005–10.⁶¹ Until the events of 2014, relations between the Ecumenical and Moscow Patriarch had been complicated, but correct and manageable. But they became severely strained when Moscow at the last minute declined to attend the Pan Orthodox Church Council (*sobor/synaxis*) in Crete in June 2016. The council was long in the making, and every effort had been taken to accommodate Moscow's requirements. Yet the subject of autocephaly had been placed on the agenda and, after finding fault with the proceedings on other spurious grounds, Moscow boycotted the conclave, and so also did three other patriarchates, Antioch (Damascus), Bulgaria and Georgia – in Bartholomew's view, at Moscow's instigation.

Whether or not this affront tipped the scales, by the time Patriarch Kirill descended upon Phanar, the Ecumenical see, with an armed security detail on 31 August 2018, the impact of the spirit of the Third Rome on Bartholomew's forbearance differed little from the impact of the Great Russian mentality on the affections

⁵⁶ "Velykden' 2019: skilky ukraiintsiv vidvidali bogoslužhinnya" [Easter 2019: How many Ukrainians attended service], *Fakty*, April 28, 2019, <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/20190428-velykden-2019-skilky-ukrayintsiv-vidvidaly-bogoslužhinnya/>; Razumkov Centre, *Osoblivosti religijnogo i tserkovno-religijnogo samoviznachennya ukraiins'kikh gromadyan: tendentsii 2010–2018* [Specific Features of Religious and Church-Religious Identity of Ukrainian Citizens: Trends 2010–2018] (Kyiv: Razumkov Centre, 2018), http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2018_Religiya.pdf.

⁵⁷ Andrew Wilson, "Russia, Ukraine and the battle for religion," European Council of Foreign Relations (hereafter ECFR) Commentary, October 11, 2018: 2, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_orthodox_redox_russia_ukraine_and_the_battle_for_religion.

⁵⁸ Yuriy Butusov, "Perviy boy ATO 13 aprelya 14-go – boeviki Moskovskogo patriarkhata v otryade FSB" [First Battle of the ATO 13 April 2014 – Fighters from the Moscow patriarchate in FSB detachment], *Censor.net*, July 17, 2016, https://censor.net.ua/resonance/397750/pervyyi_boyi_ato_13_aprelya_14go_boeviki_moskovskogo_patriarkhata_v_otryade_fsb_girkina_otkryvayut_ogon.

⁵⁹ Girkin can be a most unreliable source, but here his claims are consistent with those of others. Igor Girkin, "Moya lichnaya okhrana sostoyala iz monakhov Svyatogorskoy Lavry" [My personal security guard consisted of monks of the Svyatogorsk Lavra], *Info Resist*, October 12, 2018, <https://inforesist.org/girkin-priznal-uchastie-monahov-upts-mp-v-voynе-na-donbasse/>.

⁶⁰ Wilson, "Russia, Ukraine and the battle for religion."

⁶¹ Andreas Umland and Christine Borovkova, "Ukrainian Autocephaly and the Moscow Patriarchate," *New Eastern Europe*, August 27, 2019, <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/08/27/ukrainian-autocephaly-and-the-moscow-patriarchate/>.

of Ukrainians. But Kirill was not expecting serious opposition. In February 2016, the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill had ceded everything the latter could have wished for on the Ukrainian question, and he seems not to have suspected that where the Pope was compliant, the antiquarian primacy of an Ecumenical Patriarchate might stand in the way of a Russian Church that was paymaster of much of the Orthodox world. The words exchanged were harsh. Kirill told Bartholomew, '[y]our All-Holiness, if you give autocephaly to Ukraine, blood will be poured out'— to which the latter replied: 'Your Beatitude, we neither have an army at our disposal nor any weapons. If blood is to be poured out, it will not be spilled by us, but by you!'⁶²

What followed that discordant meeting on 11 October was the convening of a synod by the Ecumenical Patriarch, which first decided to re-establish Constantinople's jurisdiction over Kyiv (thereby rescinding the decree of 1686) and then proceed with the *tomos*. In response to Moscow's blunt protests that Constantinople had encroached upon its 'canonical territory' (and, moreover, since the Kyiv Patriarchate was schismatic, there was

For the Kremlin, the significance of the tomos bears comparison to Ukraine's admission into NATO – not as an attack on Russia's security but its identity

no subject in Kyiv to whom a *tomos* could be granted), Bartholomew was equally blunt. Moscow had become a Patriarchate in 1589 of its own volition, not through the granting of a *tomos*. In 1686, Constantinople had granted it the right to ordain the Metropolitan of Kyiv and no more than that. It was given no title to exercise jurisdiction over his affairs. Moreover, the Ecumenical Patriarch had acted out of constraint. 'Our Patriarch, my predecessor, went to collect church revenues in Russia [in 1685]. But then he was not allowed to return to Constantinople without concessions over Kiev'. As Bartholomew informed experts from

the European Council on Foreign Relations, 'I told him [Kirill], you took ecclesiastical control of Kyiv in a non-Orthodox manner'.⁶³ In stating this, he virtually repeated the charge of the UAOC in 1920. On 15 October, the ROC broke communion with Constantinople.

More salient to the Ukrainian Orthodox and those outside the Orthodox world is Russia's political reaction. On 12 October, Putin raised the matter at a specially convened meeting of the Russian Federation Security Council. Immediately afterwards, two long-standing political toxins were sounded. Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov reaffirmed Russia's defence of 'Russians and Russian speakers, and as *Putin has said more than once*, of the Russian Orthodox'. No less ominously, Foreign Minister Lavrov characterised the *tomos* as a 'provocation with the direct public support of Washington'. Any student of Russian policy will know that these formulae are flags of warning. For the Kremlin, the significance of the *tomos* bears comparison to Ukraine's admission into NATO – not as an attack on Russia's security but its identity.

It therefore stands to reason that neither the ROC, nor the Kremlin leadership that stands behind it, will accept that this is the end of the story. Moscow is now responding on several axes at once. For now, the most difficult is provoking schism among the schismatics. As noted above, the enlisting of the ROC-MP into hybrid war did not deliver the results Moscow sought. Yet there are fissures that can be widened and fault lines that can be exploited in the fullness of time. The main condition attached to the *tomos*, duly signed on 5 January 2019, was unity within a newly established Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). While Patriarch Skrypnyk of the UAOC had rejected Filaret's original appeal for unity in 1992, his successor, Metropolitan Makariy (Mykola Ivanovych Maletych) obliged, but with equivocation. Only on 19 August 2019 did the UAOC formally dissolve and legally become part of the UOC.

A related issue is Filaret, who turned 90 in 2019. When Constantinople called for the creation of

⁶² Kadri Liik, Momchil Metodiev and Nicu Popescu, "Defender of the Faith? How Ukraine's Orthodox Split Threatens Russia," ECFR Policy Brief, May 2019: 14, https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/defender_of_the_faith_how_ukraines_orthodox_split_threatens_russia.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 15.

a new unified church in the interests of avoiding conflict, it also expressed a wish that neither the UAOC nor UOC-KP primates put themselves forward as primates of the new church. On 15 December 2018, a unification council accepted the dissolution of both Orthodox churches and elected the 40-year-old Epiphanius I (Serhii Petrovych Dumenko) Primate/Metropolitan (*arkhiiepiskop*) of the new OCU, designating Filaret as Honorary Patriarch. Yet in May 2019, Filaret declared that the conditions of the council were not being met. But when he defied Epiphanius and convened a Local Council of the Kyiv Patriarchate (which he claims 'still exists') one month later, only four clerics of the sixty invited turned up in support.⁶⁴ For now at least, the new Orthodox Church of Ukraine shows no sign of falling apart.

A second and more promising axis for Moscow is the mobilisation of support amongst the other patriarchates and autocephalous *mitropolis*. The fact that before August 2019, none of these other churches had joined Constantinople in recognising the OCU's autocephaly hands Moscow a considerable opportunity. Amongst these churches, it has several firm allies. There are also other churches that will hesitate to displease it. Three years after the Pan Orthodox Council that he declined to attend, Patriarch John of Antioch (whose see is in Damascus) called for the convening of another. The appeal was reiterated on at least three occasions, including a joint ceremony in Moscow with Kirill in January 2019, at which John stated: 'Our first pain is connected with the situation of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, and the second is the pain of the Antiochian Church and our brothers due to the situation in Syria'.⁶⁵ Each of John's intercessions claims that Bartholomew acted unilaterally, and each presents a stark choice between 'unity' amongst the Orthodox and 'permanent division' (and, in the Moscow statement, 'a schism in the world'). In his response in March 2019, Bartholomew stated:

[A]fter four Orthodox churches, without reason from an ecclesiological and theological point of view, refused to be

*present during the work of the Great and Holy Council, for which there is no excuse – and your ancient church was one of them – the Ecumenical Patriarchate has good reason to refrain from such a meeting at the Pan-Orthodox level, which would be useless inasmuch as it would only lead to agreement that the participants are in disagreement with each other.*⁶⁶

At yet another Moscow conference in June, John's representative, Kaiys, Bishop of Ezurum, took the cause one step further. If the Ecumenical Patriarch would not convene a *sobor*, then the individual churches could decide to do so. And 'if the Orthodox Church convenes a *sobor* without him and decides to depose him, that is also possible'. Better that the Ecumenical Patriarch reconsider his course, 'in order that the Ukrainian crisis be resolved peacefully and *the schismatics returned to the canonical Church*'.⁶⁷ Here, as at Phanar, the choice is set out clearly: either liberty or 'unity' and 'peace'. It still remains to be seen how many other churches accept this logic and how Moscow applies it. In August, Moscow suffered a rebuff: the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church recognised the OCU's autocephaly and established eucharistic communion.⁶⁸ On 8 November, there was a second blow: the Patriarch of Alexandria and All of Africa recognised the OCU.⁶⁹ That these developments will deflect the ROC in its campaign against Kyiv and Constantinople is most unlikely.

The third axis is the Holy See. In the Catholic Church, Pope Francis's friendly attitude to Putin has been cause for comment. As summarised by Fr Raymond de Souza in the *Catholic Herald*:

⁶⁶ "Patriarch Bartholomew's Response to Patriarch John X's Request for a Council," <https://orthodoxsynaxis.org/2019/03/02/patriarch-bartholomews-response-to-patriarch-john-xs-request-for-a-council/>.

⁶⁷ "Episkop Erzurumskiy Kaiys: Episkop erzurumskiy kaiys patriarkha varfolomeya mogut nizlozhit" [Bishop Erzurumskiy Kaiys: Patriarch Bartholomew might be deposed], *Radonezh*, January 6, 2019, <https://radonezh.ru/2019/06/01/episkop-erzurumskiy-kays-patriarka-varfolomeya-mogut-nizlozhit>.

⁶⁸ "Greece starts procedure for recognizing Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church," *Ukrinform*, September 1, 2019, <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-society/2615872-greece-starts-procedure-for-recognizing-ukrainian-autocephalous-orthodox-church.html>.

⁶⁹ "Srochno: Patriarkh Aleksandriyskiy i vsej afriki Feodor II priznal OTsU" [Breaking News: Patriarch of Alexandria and All of Africa Feodor Recognised the OCU], *RISU*, November 8, 2019, https://risu.org.ua/ru/index/all_news/orthodox/orthodox_world/77728/.

⁶⁴ "Filaret's efforts to restore Kyiv Patriarchate 'irreversible aging symptoms': OCU cleric," *UNIAN*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.unian.info/society/10591263-filaret-s-efforts-to-restore-kyiv-patriarchate-irreversible-aging-symptoms-oculeric.html>.

⁶⁵ "We Continue to Call the Patriarch of Constantinople to Dialogue," *Orthodox Christianity*, January 30, 2019, <http://orthochristian.com/118996.html>.

There is no doubt that Putin has a special place in the Holy Father's heart....The Holy Father is accommodating, at the ready whenever Putin arrives. Their conversations are lengthy and apparently enjoyed by both parties. It's hard to think of any other government leader that Pope Francis is so favourably disposed to, with the possible exception of Bolivia's Evo Morales.⁷⁰

The Pope's relationship with the ROC has also been developing largely along Moscow's preferred trajectory. In the Joint Declaration after the meeting between the pontiff and Patriarch Kirill in February 2016, three points caught the attention of Ukrainian Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches alike: 'it cannot be accepted that disloyal means be used to incite

In Moscow, in Russia, there is only one Patriarchate, yours. We will not have another.

He then added:

The Catholic Church, the Catholic Churches, should not interfere in the internal affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, not even in political matters. This is my position and the position of the Holy See today. Those who meddle do not obey the Holy See.⁷²

These words could not have brought much comfort to Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of the Greek Catholic Church, which supported the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in its quest for autocephaly.

The Pope's relationship with the ROC has also been developing largely along Moscow's preferred trajectory

believers to pass from one Church to another, denying them their religious freedom and their traditions' (point 24); '[i]t is today clear that the past method of "uniatism"....is not the way to re-establish unity' (point 25); '[i]t is our hope that the schism between the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine may be overcome through existing canonical norms' (point 27).⁷¹ The pontiff's meetings with Metropolitan Hilarion, Chairman of the ROC Department of External Church Relations, have proceeded in the same vein. On 30 May, the Pope assured him:

the Catholic Church will never allow an attitude of division to be born on its own. We will never allow it. I do not want it.

In cultivating Pope Francis, the Kremlin and the ROC are not only seeking a most powerful religious ally, but a potent means of influencing Western opinion as a whole. For its part, the Kremlin

also has geopolitical objectives transcending Ukraine: support for Russia's role in Syria (where it claims to be the protector of the Christian minority), as well as in Venezuela (where the

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Pope's distrust of globalisation and market economies creates a reservoir of sympathy). In September 2013, Francis appealed to Putin, as President of the G20, to prevail upon Obama not to undertake military action in Syria. What Pope Francis believes is possibly easier to discern than what he knows. What he believes is that 'militarism' is evil and even the possession of nuclear weapons is a sin. But does he know that the Moscow Patriarch presides over a church that consecrates these weapons with holy water?

⁷⁰ Fr Raymond De Souza, "Putin's unlikely friend," *Catholic Herald*, July 11, 2019, <https://catholicherald.co.uk/magazine/putins-unlikely-friend/>.

⁷¹ "Meeting of His Holiness Pope Francis with His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia: Signing of the Joint Declaration," Vatican, Havana, Cuba, February 12-18, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/february/documents/papa-francesco_20160212_dichiarazione-comune-kirill.html.

⁷² James Roberts, "Francis rules out 'interference' in the affairs of the Orthodox," *The Tablet*, May 31, 2018, <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/9170/francis-rules-out-interference-in-the-affairs-of-the-orthodox>.

2.5. CONCLUSIONS

They are few and simple.

First, to invert Professor Katkov's mid-19th century dictum, Ukraine has its own history. Where it has been intertwined with Russian history, as it has for much of the past millennium, the experience has bred a mixture of intimacy, ambivalence and hostility. Moreover, it has not

Ukrainian Orthodoxy is not an extension of Russian Orthodoxy

been the same history in every part the country. Ukraine is, in the over-worn cliché, a 'divided country', but so are many thriving democracies in Europe. Russia's use and misuse of this history, as well as these divisions, has been a source of hostility in itself. Since the time of Catherine the Great, the 'eradication [of] memory' has complemented a policy designed to compromise or crush any significant manifestation of independence in policy or belief. The denial of the 'existence' of a Ukrainian language or of a proper Ukrainian nation has coexisted with the dread that they will spring to life and be used against Russia, whether in a 'Polish intrigue' (in tsarist times) or in a 'colour revolution' (in Putin's time), which Russia's General Staff now defines as a 'state coup organised from abroad'.⁷³ What cannot be controlled must be opposed.

Second, Ukrainian Orthodoxy is part of this history. It is not an extension of Russian Orthodoxy. This is less because the latter also sprang from Kyiv, but because it too evolved in its own national context. For at least three centuries, the ROC was isolated from the cultural and religious influences that shaped the loyalties and beliefs of the faithful in Ukraine. It had a relationship to power that Ukrainian churches found unfamiliar and unsettling. Before the Orthodox Church in Ukraine became an instrument of Russian domination, it first had to become one of its subjects. Yet, as the battles for autocephaly in 1920 and 2018 demonstrate, parts of its pre-imperial and national ethos survived.

⁷³ Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii" [Considerations on the Experience of Syria], *Voenna-promyshlenniy Kur'er Military-Industrial Courier*, March 9, 2016, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29579>.

Third, as we have noted more broadly in the previous chapter, there is little that is fundamentally new in Russian-Ukrainian relations. The expressions, 'Ukraine will never be able to stand by itself' and 'Russian democracy ends where the question of Ukraine begins' were not invented yesterday or even in Soviet times.

Finally, while today's Russian orthodoxies, secular and religious, are used programmatically, manipulatively and opportunistically, they reflect genuine beliefs and apprehensions, not only about the 'Russian world' but the forces beyond it. These beliefs might be distorted, but they are not delusional. Nevertheless, they belong to Russia, and Ukrainians have every right to insist that 'Ukraine is not Russia'.

3. THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES OF ESTONIA

In 1030, forty-two years after Prince Volodymyr the Great adopted Orthodoxy as the religion of Kyiv, his son, Yaroslav the Wise founded an Orthodox monastery in Tartu. From the late 12th century, crusades, forced baptisms and conquest by Teutonic knights led to a centuries-long association in Estonia between Catholicism (and after the 16th Century, Lutheranism) and foreign overlords. The full establishment of the Russian Orthodox church on Estonian territory in the wake of Sweden's defeat in the Great Northern War and the 1721 Peace of Nystad did not altogether alter this connection, as the tsars recognised the privileges of Germanic nobility, who transformed themselves into reliable stewards of Russian Imperial authority.⁷⁴ In Russia, Orthodoxy was the state religion; in Estonia, the Lutheran Church remained dominant. Consequently, as in Ukraine, the equation between Orthodoxy and power was not native to Estonia. In large part, for this reason, Old Believers, decimated by the reforms of Patriarchs Nikon and Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, found Estonia a welcome place of refuge when they fled Russia in the 1650s.

The character of Estonian Orthodoxy was altered only partially by two significant changes

⁷⁴ Matias Palli, n.d. "A brief history of the orthodox church of Estonia," <http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/estonia/documentsEOC/a%20brief%20history.htm>.

in the mid-19th century. First, the establishment of the Riga Orthodox Vicariate in 1836 extended the Church's jurisdiction from northern Estonia into Livonia (today's southern Estonia and north and central Latvia). It also produced serious efforts to expand membership by building

In Russia, Orthodoxy was the state religion; in Estonia, the Lutheran Church remained dominant

new churches and schools and by publishing canonical texts in Estonian and Latvian.⁷⁵ At a time when the vernacular was being suppressed in Ukraine, it was flourishing in Estonia.

Concurrently, the hardships of the 1840s and the indifference of local landlords began to awaken in Estonians the national consciousness that was also emerging elsewhere in east-central Europe. Given the nexus between Baltic-German authority and Lutheranism, the result was a wave of conversions to Orthodoxy, albeit partially reversed by promises of land that were seldom honoured.⁷⁶ By the end of the 19th century, Orthodoxy was still a minority faith, but it had established deep roots in Estonian society, and most

At a time when the vernacular was being suppressed in Ukraine, it was flourishing in Estonia

Orthodox clergy were of Estonian origin. Paradoxically, it fell upon the latter to mitigate the Russification policy of Alexander III.⁷⁷

3.1. WAR, INDEPENDENCE AND SOVIETISATION

The Great War set in train the events that culminated in the granting of a *tomos* of autonomy for the Estonian Orthodox Church by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople in 1923. The open hostility of the new Bolshevik regime to religion of all kinds and the Estonian War of Independence (November 1918 – February 1920)

made a change in the pre-war status of the Church unavoidable.⁷⁸ Facing threats to its own existence, the Moscow Patriarchate granted autonomy to the Estonian Orthodox Church in May 1920, three months after the conclusion of the Tartu Peace Treaty. But, rather like its offer of autonomy to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church some seventy years later, it was not

The open hostility of the new Bolshevik regime to religion of all kinds and the Estonian War of Independence made a change in the pre-war status of the Church unavoidable

willing to cede ultimate jurisdiction. In 1922, the Moscow Patriarch, Tikhon, was arrested by the Bolshevik authorities. These conditions, which made communication between the two churches impossible, compelled Bishop Alexander of Reval and Estonia to request a *tomos* from Constantinople, which was duly received on 7 July 1923.⁷⁹ Alexander became Metropolitan of Tallinn and All Estonia and

the church itself was renamed The Estonian Orthodox *Metropolis*. In 1935, it was renamed the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAO). Under the First Republic, Estonia enjoyed a period of unfettered religious independence for a church that by 1940 encompassed 158 parishes and embraced 210,000 faithful, 20 per cent of the population, 80 per cent of them Estonian, including President Konstantin Päts.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Moskva Patriarhaadi Eesti Õigeusu Kirik, "Õigeusu Ajaloost Eestis" [Orthodox History in Estonia], Moskva Patriarhaadi Eesti Õigeusu Kirik [Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate], http://www.orthodox.ee/estonian-orthodox_est.html.

⁷⁶ "Usuvahetusliikumine ja lõplik agraarreform" [Religious conversion and final agrarian reform], *Estonica*, n.d. http://www.estonica.org/et/Ajalugu/1710-1850_Balti_erikord/Usuvahetusliikumine_ja_l%C3%B5plik_agraarreform/;

⁷⁷ Yuri Moroz, n.d. "Russkiy blagodel' estonskogo naroda" [Russian benefactor of the Estonian people], <http://www.zlev.ru/cont96.htm>.

⁷⁸ Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, *Op.Cit.*

⁷⁹ Orthodox Church of Estonia, "Presentation of EOC," Orthodox Church of Estonia, <http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/estonia/documentsEOC/historyEAOE.htm>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

It was Soviet rule that altered the character of Estonian Orthodoxy profoundly and possibly for good. Two months after the Soviet occupation in June 1940, the newly formed 'popular front' government appealed, literally at gunpoint, for the country's incorporation into the USSR. In November, this parody was re-enacted by the Synod of the Estonian Orthodox Church, who, under Soviet pressure, petitioned to restore the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. This abrupt introduction to sovietisation was truncated by Operation Barbarossa in June 1941. Two months into the German occupation, Metropolitan Alexander renounced his forced submission

It was Soviet rule that altered the character of Estonian Orthodoxy profoundly and possibly for good

to Moscow's jurisdiction and reaffirmed the establishment of the EAOE under the Ecumenical Patriarch. In September 1944, just prior to the restoration of Soviet rule, he established the Estonian Church in Exile with 22 clergy and 8,000 believers. In all, some 80,000 people fled Estonia before the Soviets reoccupied the country.⁸¹

Full-scale sovietisation, economic and political, changed the sociological map of the country and,

Whereas the pre-war Church was national in its ethos as well as its jurisdiction, by 1970, the Orthodox majority was Russian, and its affinities lay with the Moscow Patriarchate

with it, the character of the newly subordinated Estonian Orthodox Church. Whereas in 1945, ethnic Russians comprised 7.3 per cent of the population, by 1970 their numbers had grown to 40 per cent. Whereas the pre-war Church was national in its ethos as well as its jurisdiction, by the latter date, the Orthodox majority was Russian, and its affinities lay with the Moscow Patriarchate. The character of the ROC had also changed. Threatened with extinction by the Bolshevik regime after 1917, it did what it could to support its Estonian counterparts. By 1945, it had become a tool of the Soviet state, thoroughly penetrated by the KGB. A noteworthy example was Alexiy

II (Alexey Mikhailovich Ridiger), Metropolitan of Tallinn and All Estonia (1968–1986) and subsequently Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (1990–2009), but also a KGB agent who went on to receive the state's highest award for intelligence work.⁸²

3.2. ORTHODOXY IN THE SECOND ESTONIAN REPUBLIC

Content as it was to be free of Soviet authority, the ROC was not prepared to endorse the religious freedom of those who once enjoyed 'spiritual and political unity with the Russian people'. Just as the Russian Federation preserved the Soviet line that the Baltic states had joined the USSR voluntarily, so the ROC maintained the fiction that the

EAOE had returned to the jurisdiction of the MP in 1940 at its own request.

In 1993, a full-blown dispute erupted over the designation of the legal heir of the 1920 EAOE and the rightful owner of its pre-war property.⁸³ In response to the MP's unilateral establishment of an 'autonomous' Orthodox Church of Estonia under its own jurisdiction, the Estonian State Department of Religious Affairs registered the Synod of the Church in Exile as the sole legal successor of the EAOE. The collapse of all attempts to resolve the dispute persuaded the Ecumenical Patriarchate on 24 February 1996 to reactivate the *tomos* of 1923. Explaining the

decision to Moscow Patriarch Alexiy II, Patriarch Bartholomew wrote:

*the Patriarchate of Russia [after 1940] trespassed in countries under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate...always by the power of the Soviet Army. The Church of Russia did not at the time seek the opinion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, nor was any respect shown it.*⁸⁴

⁸¹ Palli, *Op.Cit.*

⁸² Christopher Andrew and Vassili Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhini arhiiv* [Mitrokhin Archive] (Tallinn: Sinisukk, 2002).

⁸³ Palli, "A brief history of the orthodox church of Estonia"

⁸⁴ S. C. Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire Within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Prefiguring the dispute in Ukraine 22 years later, the new *tomos* resulted in a schism and the ex-communication of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by Moscow. Formally, the schism was repaired at a conclave in Zurich that May. Since 2002, Estonia has been the *locus* of two

Just as the Russian Federation preserved the Soviet line that the Baltic states had joined the USSR voluntarily, so the ROC maintained the fiction that the EAOE had returned to the jurisdiction of the MP in 1940 at its own request

Orthodox Churches, the Orthodox Church of Estonia (the renamed Apostolic church) and the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarch (EOC-MP). Yet in practical terms, the issue has not been settled. In November 2000, the Moscow Patriarchate restated its view that 'the Orthodox communities on the territory of Estonia have been part of the Russian Orthodox Church for seven centuries'.⁸⁵ As to the more contemporary matter of autocephaly, on 15 October 2018, Metropolitan Hilarion, Chairman of the MP's Department for External Church Relations reiterated that the ROC 'had not recognized this decision and do[es] not recognise it'.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, the status quo is far from disadvantageous to Moscow. Although at the time of the renewed *tomos of autonomy*, the majority of the parishes (58 out of 83) had voted to affiliate with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, thanks in part to Moscow's hard diplomacy, the number of Estonian Orthodox Church faithful today is 27,000–30,000, whereas the parishioners affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate number over 150,000.⁸⁷

Like the Orthodox Church in Russia, the EOC-MP also enjoys the support of its 'sponsors' as well as the Russian state. By no means are all of the former ethnic Russians. One of the most noteworthy examples of the implementation of ROC business interests comes from the

aforementioned church property dispute, where Patriarch Alexiy II invited Aadu Luukas, Chairman of the Board of the Estonian Large Enterprises Association, Jüri Kõo, Chairman of the Norma Group and Hannes Tamjärv, Chairman of the Board of Hansabank, the largest

bank in Estonia at that time, for discussions in Moscow regarding the dispute. After that meeting, at the Patriarch's instigation, Luukas wrote a letter to Olari Taal, then Minister of the Interior, asking him to treat the EOC-MP as the legal successor to the Estonian Orthodox Church in the interests of resolving the

Like the Orthodox Church in Russia, the EOC-MP also enjoys the support of its 'sponsors' as well as the Russian state

dispute.⁸⁸ Given that Luukas was also chairman of the board of Pakterminal, an importer of petroleum products mainly from Russia, it would appear that corporate as well as religious interests were in play. This suspicion was confirmed by Tiit Sepp, Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior at the time, who said that the 'intervention of tycoons was not motivated by an interest in resolving the church dispute but rather by a personal interest in whether Pakterminal could import oil or not'.⁸⁹

With the financial support of oligarchs, the EOC-MP also actively supports Russia's policy regarding 'compatriots', a term that Russia uses as flexibly and permissively in Estonia as it does anywhere else. In addition to several new churches financed by oligarchs in areas with a mainly Russian-speaking population, it has been alleged that under the umbrella of

⁸⁵ The Russian Orthodox Church, "Statement of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church 8 November 2000," The Russian Orthodox Church, Department for External Church Relations, November 12, 2000, <https://mospat.ru/archive/en/2000/11/se011081/>.

⁸⁶ "Constantinople's annulment of 1686 decision counter to historic truth – Moscow Patriarchate", TASS, October 15, 2018, <http://tass.com/society/1026090>.

⁸⁷ Jason Van Boom, "Moscow-Constantinople split highlighting Estonia's role in Orthodox church," ERR News, October 20, 2018, <https://news.err.ee/870633/moscow-constantinople-split-highlighting-estonia-s-role-in-orthodox-church>.

⁸⁸ "Verine vara jagamise tüli" [A bloody asset-sharing quarrel], Äripäev, October 8, 1998, <https://www.aripeev.ee/uudised/1998/10/07/verine-vara-jagamise-tuli>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

financing the new ROC church in Lasnamäe (Tallinn's largest district, mostly inhabited by Russian speakers), the Russian Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called also funded the Centre Party, which has a cooperation agreement with United Russia.⁹⁰ The foundation's website voices the intention of 'implementing projects and programmes aimed at preserving the spiritual and cultural foundations of Russian society'. Its chairman is Vladimir Yakunin, former president of the 'public joint-stock corporation' Russian Railways (OAO RZhD), a board member of the *Russki Mir* Foundation and in the view of

With the financial support of oligarchs, the EOC-MP also actively supports Russia's policy regarding 'compatriots'

the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service and others, a close friend of Vladimir Putin with a foreign intelligence background.⁹¹ According to Ilmar Vihmann, a former political prisoner who grew up in Pärnu together with Yakunin, real estate bought through the foundation is a tried and tested means of funding agents overseas, citing by way of example a former militiaman in Pärnu whose mother was Yakunin's form master during his schooldays and who became a millionaire overnight after working with him.⁹²

In practice, the formal autonomy of the EOC-MP has proved to be a facade. When the time came

to replace Metropolitan Bishop Kornelius, who passed away in April 2018, the Church sobor, consisting of 32 local congregation members, rejected the respected local candidate, the long-serving Bishop Lazar of Narva and Peripriveere in favour of the virtually unknown the Archbishop of Vareya, Yevgeniy (Valeriy Reshetnikov) whose background is entirely different. Born in Kazakhstan, he was appointed Rector of the Moscow Religious Academy in 1995 and in 2011, elected a member of the Supreme Church Council of the ROC. Two weeks after Crimea's annexation, he was despatched to Sevastopol in order to establish relations with the newly deployed Russian Federation Armed Forces and law enforcement personnel. Whilst rejecting any political role for the Church, he stated that he 'will be strengthening ties with the Moscow Patriarchate'.⁹³ Nothing is known about the process that approved him apart from the fact that his candidacy was put forward by the MP.⁹⁴ The month of Yevgeniy's election coincided with Russia's retaliation against Estonia for adopting the 'Magnitsky list'. As expected, many ethnic

In practice, the formal autonomy of the EOC-MP has proved to be a facade

Estonians known for their 'russophobic' views feature on the list, though there are some surprising omissions. At the same time, several ethnic Russian (but Estonian-minded) figures are also included. The appointment of Yevgeniy was complemented by a plan for the reassignment to Estonia of several priests expelled from Ukraine because of their active support of pro-Kremlin positions in the Donbas war.

Possibly, the most likely personal connection between Yevgeniy and higher state policy

⁹⁰ "Lukoili endise tippjuhi tihe seos Eestiga" [Close ties of Lukoil's former top manager with Estonia], *Äripäev*, June 3, 2015, <https://www.aripeev.ee/uudised/2015/06/03/lukoili-endisel-tippjuhil-sergei-tsaplogini-tihe-seos-eestiga>; Karin Paulus, "Areeni kaanelugu: Lasnamäe uus kirik- hingerahu teenindusmaja" [Arena Cover Story: New Church in Lasnamäe – house of mental tranquillity], *Eesti Ekspress*, October 11, 2013, <https://ekspress.delfi.ee/areeni/areeni-kaanelugu-lasnamae-uus-kirik-hingerahu-teenindusmaja?id=66874847>; "Julgeolekukomisjon: Savisaar küsis Venemaalt salaja raha" [Security Commission: Savisaar asked secretly for Russian money], *Delfi*, December 21, 2010, <https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/julgeolekukomisjon-savisaar-kusis-venemaalt-salaja-raha?id=37010481>.

⁹¹ Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, *International Security and Estonia 2019* (Tallinn: Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2019), <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/pdf/raport-2019-ENG-web.pdf>; Russkiy Mir, "Predsedatel' popechitel'skogo soveta," [Chairman of the Board of Trustees], Russkiy Mir, 2019, <https://www.russkiymir.ru/fund/the-board-of-trustees/>; Victor Yasmann, "Russia: Could Yakunin Be 'First-Called' As Putin's Successor?" *RFE/RL*, June 21, 2006, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1069345.html>.

⁹² Ilmar Vihmann, "Kes on Vladimir Jakunin?" [Who is Vladimir Yakunin?], *Pärnu Postimees*, December 29, 2010, <https://parnu.postimees.ee/363652/kes-on-vladimir-jakunin>.

⁹³ "Video: Uus metropoliit soovib Eesti õigeusu kiriku ja Moskva patriarhi suhteid veelgi tugevdada" [Video: The new metropolit wants to further strengthen the relationship between the Estonian Orthodox Church and the Moscow patriarch], *Postimees*, May 29, 2018, <https://www.postimees.ee/4496255/video-uus-metropoliit-soovib-eesti-oigeusu-kiriku-ja-moskva-patriarhi-suhteid-veelgi-tugevdada>.

⁹⁴ Joosep Värk, "Õigeusklikud valivad uue juhi" [The Orthodox believers choose a new leader], *Postimees*, May 28, 2018, <https://leht.postimees.ee/4495198/oigeusklikud-valivad-uee-juhi>.

is the aforementioned Tikhon (Georgiy Aleksandrovich Shevkunov), who was appointed to the Supreme Church Council in 2011 at the same time as Yevgeniy and then, in the same month as Yevgeniy's elevation in Estonia, appointed Metropolitan for Pskov and Porkhov. As noted in Chapter 1, Tikhon's is allegedly connected with the FSB as well as Putin, and these connections are believed to run deep. He is proving to be a valuable steward of the Russian World project, which in Pskov (as well as south-eastern Estonia) includes the reclassification of the ethnically Estonian Setu people as ethnically Russian, despite the fact that only 200 out of 20,000 in their registration documents chose the appellation 'Setu' rather than Estonian.⁹⁵

Whatever the proof of these connections, their inner consistency is difficult to ignore. So is their purpose: to undermine Estonia's cohesiveness and, instead of making Russia's 'compatriots' 'a part of Estonian society...push them outside it and lead them into confrontation with it'.⁹⁶

3.3. CONCLUSIONS

Several points of comparison between the Estonian and Ukrainian churches bear underscoring. As in Ukraine, Orthodoxy in Estonia evolved in its own national context. Both were Eastern Orthodox churches that looked to Byzantium/Constantinople for spiritual inspiration and support. But whereas Ukraine's Orthodox church was Russified well before it was sovietised, the character of the Estonian church was only lightly touched by tsarist Russification. Even after its titular subordination to Moscow, it remained national in ethos, language and ethnic composition until the Soviet occupations and, especially, the dramatic influx of ethnic Russians after the Second World War. There is a second point of

comparison. The outlook of both churches was formed in competition and conflict with 'significant others' outside the Orthodox world: Germanic Lutheranism in the case of Estonia, and Polish Catholicism in the case of Ukraine. As a cultural and religious hegemon, Russia arrived relatively late on the scene in Estonia thanks to its willingness to delegate authority to loyal Baltic German landlords and the *de facto*

The greatest divergence is that Estonia has been spared the dubious privilege of being designated one of Russia's 'tripartite peoples'

primacy of the Lutheran Church. But even in left-bank Ukraine, where Orthodoxy was the majority faith, Russia did not become a force to be reckoned with until the mid-seventeenth century.

Yet there also are two significant divergences. Estonia can look back at a legacy of religious tolerance *as a state*. The first Estonian Republic provided a civic resource for the second. After 1991, Ukraine had to draw upon a profoundly rich but sharply contested heritage that developed in a context that the Ukrainophile Russian historian, Dmitry Furman called 'semi-statehood'.⁹⁷ In both countries, new elites and old have had to battle against a phenomenon that Imbi Paju calls 'memories denied'.⁹⁸

But the greatest divergence is that Estonia has been spared the dubious privilege of being designated one of Russia's 'tripartite peoples'. In tsarist times, it was a subject. In Soviet times it was sovietised almost to the point of extinction. But it was never forced to be Russian.

⁹⁵ "Moskva peab setusid eestlastest eraldi rahvuseks, Eesti setud mitte" [Moscow considers the Setu as a separate nation from the Estonians, the Estonian Setus do not], *Postimees* / *BNS*, July 6, 2010, <https://www.postimees.ee/284667/moskva-peab-setusid-eestlastest-eraldi-rahvuseks-eesti-setud-mitte>.
⁹⁶ Juhan Kivirähk, "How to Address the 'Humanitarian Dimension' of Russian Foreign Policy?" ICDS Blog, February 3, 2010, <https://icds.ee/how-to-address-the-humanitarian-dimension-of-russian-foreign-policy-2/>.

⁹⁷ Dmitry Furman, "Kuchme dostalsya ne tot narod" [Kuchma has got the wrong people], *Moskovskie Novosti*, October 15, 2002, <http://dmitriyfurman.ru/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Московские-новости.-21.10.2002.pdf>.
⁹⁸ Imbi Paju, *Memories Denied* (Helsinki, Like, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

In 2015, we described the conflict in Ukraine as ‘a war of narratives and arms’.⁹⁹ This type of war is not new for Russia. Many of its imperial wars, tsarist and Soviet, have conformed to that description. Many have also been wars of identity, which to Russians is a subject of immense importance. Over sixty years ago in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, Sir Isaiah Berlin, the British historian of ideas, observed:

*There has surely never been a society more deeply and exclusively preoccupied with itself, its own nature and destiny. From the eighteen-thirties until our own day the subject of almost all critical and imaginative writing in Russia is Russia.*¹⁰⁰

True as this insight is, it is also incomplete. Well before the 1830s, Russia incorporated others into its sense of self, and its ‘acute self-consciousness’ stems in part from an apprehension that these others might take issue with this and chart a path of their own.

In practice, Russia has found it difficult to impose what Imbi Paju calls its ‘forcible narratives’ without forcibly imposing its rule.¹⁰¹ In some domains, including Estonia, where the subjects of Russian dominion were recognisably foreign and posed no threats to its stability or identity, the rigours of this process were postponed until the Soviet era. But amongst the ‘tripartite [three] Russian people’, the implanting of Russian narratives has entailed the selective or wholesale rewriting of history and the ‘eradication of memory’. Invariably, this proved to be a protracted and bloody process. In Ukraine, this process also entailed the displacement of Eastern Orthodoxy by Russian Orthodoxy

in both spiritual and canonical terms. Values and ways of life have been affected by this displacement.

It is no accident that the memes of *Malorossiia* and *Novorossiia* have reappeared in recent years. The identities in contest in Ukraine and the ‘Russian civilisation’ juxtaposed against Western liberalism are historical rather than Soviet identities. It is mainly in the West that NATO and EU enlargement are discussed in the language of ‘security’, ‘integration’ and, amongst critics, ‘Cold War’. In Russia, they are increasingly presented as ‘civilisational encroachments’ on the ‘Russian world’ and Russia’s ‘historical zone of influence’. The principle that Russian civilisation transcends the borders of the state is as central to Putin’s conception of Russia as it was to that of Nicholas I.

For this reason alone, Russia is not only a ‘revisionist’ power but a reactionary one. Its self-definition and its models are more tsarist than Soviet, as is the Europe it wishes to restore. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Kremlin’s dread of legitimising the national consciousness of those whom Alexander II termed the ‘tripartite Russian people’. During the brief but remarkable interregnum of the 1920s, the USSR afforded broad scope to the linguistic and cultural development of other

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nations until its leaders realised that, by doing so, they were reawakening political aspirations as well. Still, until its final dissolution, the USSR was at pains to portray itself as a fraternal union of equal nations.

Today, that is no longer the case. Inside *Russkiy Mir*, it is *Russian* civilisation that claims to have shaped the identity of others, and within Russia’s own constellation of ‘peoples’, it is only the Russians who are deemed to have ‘state forming qualities’. In these sentiments, Putin repeats Sergey Uvarov almost word for word. When he sought historical authority for

⁹⁹ James Sherr, “Ukraine: A War of Narratives and Arms,” in *The Russia Challenge*, ed. Keir Giles, Philip Hanson, Roderic Lyne, James Nixey, James Sherr and Andrew Wood (London: Chatham House, June 2015): 73, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20150605RussianChallengeGilesHansonLyneNixeySherrWoodUpdate.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Isaiah Berlin, “The Silence in Russian Culture,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1957, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1957-10-01/silence-russian-culture>.

¹⁰¹ Imbi Paju, *Memories Denied*, p 73.

his assertion that ‘even thinking about splitting Russia [is] a crime,’ he did not invoke Stalin or his *chekist* predecessor Yuriy Andropov, but Anton Denikin, Commander of the White Army that subjected Ukraine to a white terror almost as horrific as the red terror of the Bolsheviks.¹⁰² The thinkers whom Putin claims to venerate are entirely pre-Soviet in their outlook, and at least one of them, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, was a mortal foe of the Soviet system. That this reshaping of ‘Soviet power’ into *Velikaya Rossiya* has been calculating and pre-meditated is undeniable. But its effectiveness stems from the fact that people believe in it.

The Russian Orthodox Church has been intimately involved in Russia’s war of narratives, as well as its hybrid conflict against Western liberal-democracy. Yet like ‘memories denied’, values repressed can survive and recover their resilience. Neither the Russian state nor Russian

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Orthodoxy has been prepared for this. When the Ukrainian Orthodox Church demanded autocephaly, first in the 1920’s, more recently after the Orange Revolution, it was a shock as well as an outrage. The establishment of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in full communion with Constantinople is a seminal development. But if Putin and Patriarch Kirill have their way it will be reversed.

The Church has also played a role in Russia’s war of arms. In Ukraine, some of its ecclesiastics have been ideologists of hybrid war, some of

The Church has also played a role in Russia’s war of arms

them have borne arms and fought, and some might have migrated to parishes elsewhere in

the ‘Russian world’. As to the latter, Estonians can neither be ignorant nor indifferent.

However, history has also shown that the Church is not immune to dissension from within, whether in the form of resistance to the ‘reforms’ of the 17th and 18th centuries, the *sobor* of 1917-1918, the clerical dissidents of the 1960s and 1970s and then, of course, the clerical intercession following the July 2019 Moscow protests. Nevertheless, one would have to ignore this history to believe that a revolution in the Church could be possible without a revolution in the state. To dismiss the latter possibility would also be unhistorical.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In the view of Sergey Chapnin, ‘the Russian Orthodox Church, as an organisation, less and less resembles a church in the traditional understanding of this word’.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union, an insufficient number of people understand this. It would appear that even the Holy See does not. Here, as in other domains,

education is the beginning of wisdom, but how is it to take place? It is not clear that governments should be the primary purveyors of this education, not least because they as much as anyone else need educating, and not all of them are willing to accept this. Nevertheless, progress is possible. Only a decade ago, few were prepared to accept that Russian business was anything more than business. Now there is a far greater understanding of how business, power and geopolitics are related in today’s Russia. There is no reason in principle why Western governments and churches should not be able to understand that the Orthodox Church, as much as *Gazprom*, serves and depends upon the interests of the Russian state. But in order for this understanding to take root, those

who have knowledge of these matters have a responsibility to share it.

¹⁰² “Russian PM quotes White general on indivisibility of Russia and Ukraine: Text of report by corporate-owned Russian news agency Interfax,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts: Former Soviet Union*, May 24, 2009.

¹⁰³ Sergey Chapnin, “Den’gi, kadry, poslushanie: Reformirovanie RPTs: chto predstoit pomenyat’ posle okonchaniya epokhi patriarkha Kirilla?”

Chapnin's insight poses especially sharp challenges for Russia's immediate neighbours, not least those on the front line of Russia's policy towards 'compatriots'. But these challenges also pose a dilemma. Although it is doubtless true that many of the ROC's parishioners view the Church as an embodiment of Russianness, indeed as a bulwark against a lax, post-modern and ultra-liberal West, it would be perilous as well as unjust to forget that most of them are also Christians who attend church in order to worship God. Freedom of religion is enshrined in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles of the civilised world. How are states to protect themselves

Although it is doubtless true that many of the ROC's parishioners view the Church as an embodiment of Russianness, it would be perilous as well as unjust to forget that most of them are also Christians who attend church in order to worship God

against the unlawful and dangerous practices of the ROC without trespassing upon the religious freedom of parishioners or appearing to do so?

The Moscow Patriarchate's enlisting of Russian Orthodox churches as protagonists in the 'Russian World' project and, in the case of Ukraine, as supporters of insurgency brings this question into focus, not least in Estonia, where proponents of Crimea's annexation and Russia's military intervention in Donbas can now be found in Orthodox parishes. In some of these cases at least, loyalty to the Estonian state and fidelity to harmonious inter-communal relations between the Estonian majority and Russian 'compatriots' cannot be assumed. What gives point to the issue is that a number of Estonian clerics are Russian citizens appointed by the Moscow Patriarchate. In the United Kingdom, by way of contrast, it would be unheard of for the Vatican to appoint non-British citizens to positions in the Catholic hierarchy, and British Catholics would be the first to object.

But this comparison has its limitations. In their overwhelming majority, British Catholics are neither migrants nor non-citizens. What we

now call Catholicism was England's original faith. Therefore, there is no need for British law to articulate the provision enshrined in Chapter 2, Section 9 of the Estonian Constitution:

The rights, freedoms and duties of each and every person, as set out in the Constitution, shall be equal for Estonian citizens and for citizens of foreign states and stateless persons in Estonia.¹⁰⁴

But should that provision confer a right upon Moscow to appoint abbots, bishops and metropolitans who support Russia's policy of providing 'comprehensive assistance' to its 'compatriots' abroad?¹⁰⁵

That is far from clear. The inescapable and far from new question is how the state's security can be maintained in a country with (as of January 2019) 76,148 non-citizens and almost 88,785 Russian citizens.¹⁰⁶ Latvia, a country with (as of January 2016) 252,017 non-citizens

and 50,700 Russian citizens, faces a similar problem.¹⁰⁷ In response, the Law on the Latvian Orthodox Church, as amended in June 2019, now stipulates that:

The Head, metropolitans and bishops of the Church, as well as candidates to the posts shall be clergymen of the Church and citizens of the Republic of Latvia [who have] permanently resided in Latvia for at least 10 years.¹⁰⁸

Yet in Estonia the psychological climate is somewhat different. The bronze monument

¹⁰⁴ Ringo Ringvee, "Religious Freedom in Post-Soviet Estonia," *BYU Law Review* 2001, Issue 2 (May 2001): 636.

¹⁰⁵ "Obzor vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [Foreign Policy Review of the Russian Federation], *Intelros*, March 27, 2007, http://www.intelros.ru/strategy/gos_rf/316-obzor_vneshnej_politiki_podgotovlennyy_ministerstvom_inostrannykh_del_rossii.html.

¹⁰⁶ "Number of stateless residents drops by over 2,200 in 2018," *ERR News / BNS*, January 3, 2019, <https://news.err.ee/891967/number-of-stateless-residents-in-estonia-drops-by-over-2-200-in-2018>.

¹⁰⁷ Latvian State Revenue Service, "Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc valstiskās piederības" [Distribution of Latvian population by nationality], Latvian State Revenue Service, July 1, 2017, https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/assets/documents/iedzivotaju%20re%C4%A3istrs/010717/ISVP_Latvija_pec_VPD.pdf.

¹⁰⁸ *Latvijas Pareizticīgās Baznīcas likums* [Law of the Latvian Orthodox Church], *Latvijas Vēstnesis Latvian Herald*, June 26, 2019, <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=184626>.

affair of 2007 has left an enduring mark on Estonian as well as Russian speaking communities. As Anna Tiido has set out in a separate ICDS/EFPI analysis, considerable efforts have been taken over the years to deepen the integration of a Russian-speaking population, a portion of whom still regard themselves as outsiders.¹⁰⁹

Fortunately, existing law affords Estonia a firm legal basis to defend itself against the worst practices of the Moscow Patriarchate. According to the Constitution, '[b]eliefs shall not excuse a violation of the law'.¹¹⁰ Moreover, the Law on Churches and Congregations (2002), like its 1993 predecessor, mandates that the spiritual leader and board members of foreign churches be in the Registry of Alien Voters, and therefore, in practice, legal residents for five years.¹¹¹ These provisions are more lenient than Latvia's. But even today, they are probably adequate. But they will only remain adequate if they are enforced.

Ukraine is not only on the front line of Russia's policy on compatriots, it is on the front line of war. Had the war not taken place and much of the Ukrainian branch of the ROC not chosen to align itself with the aggressor in this war, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine might still be an aspiration rather than a fact. Russia is determined to undo this fact. That it has not yet succeeded does not diminish its determination

to prevail in the fullness of time. As long as Russia and its Church are governed by the mindset that exists today, that determination will survive, and so will continual efforts to suborn and coerce the Ukrainian state into subservience. Europe can help itself as well as Ukraine by sharing knowledge and practice. In this pursuit, we should recognise that we have as much to learn as to teach.

There are no inevitabilities in these matters. If Russia's neighbours lose heart, if the EU pursues pipedreams about building 'Europe with Russia' then the Kremlin will continue

As long as Russia and its Church are governed by the mindset that exists today, so will continual efforts to suborn and coerce the Ukrainian state into subservience

to exploit its civilisational, spiritual and harder instruments to the detriment of the independence of its neighbours and the cohesion of Europe as a whole. Europe and the West have all the material prerequisites to make that course unattractive to Russia, but material strength will not accomplish this in the absence of moral fibre and strategic purpose. The Russian Orthodox Church has a stake in these matters because it has tied its fortunes to those of the state. Without the state, it is a 'colossus on feet of clay'.¹¹² Much depends on whether Europe will recognise these facts and turn them to its advantage.

¹⁰⁹ Anna Tiido, "Russians in Europe: Nobody's Tool – The Examples of Finland, Germany and Estonia," ICDS/EFPI Analysis, September 2019, https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ICDS_EFPI_Analysis_Russians_in_Europe_Anna_Tiido_September_2019.pdf.

¹¹⁰ Ringo Ringvee, "Religious Freedom in Post-Soviet Estonia," 634.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 636.

¹¹² Sergey Chapnin, "Den'gi, kadry, poslushanie: Reformirovanie RPTs: chto predstoit pomenyat' posle okonchaniya epokhi patriarkha Kirilla?"

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