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Kyle Chapman

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GOD AND CAESAR IN SYMBIOSIS: RUSSIAN CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONSHIP

by

Kyle Chapman

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for graduation with Honors in the Political Science

William M. Reisinger
Thesis Mentor

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John S. Nelson
Political Science Honors Advisor

God and Caesar in Symbiosis: Russian Church and State Relationship

Kyle J. Chapman

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Advisor: William M. Reisinger

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Abstract

Using primarily news articles from 2000-2018, legislation of the Russian state, and official stances of the Russian Orthodox Church. I seek to answer what motives are at play in the relationship between the Russian state under President Putin and Russian Orthodox Church. Literature on the subject views the relationship as one in which the Church is a mere tool of the state. Viewing it in this way restricts analyses through the lens of the Russian state's domestic and international interests. This view underappreciates that the Russian Orthodox Church is an institution with its own ends. Through an examination of services each provide the other, I find that the two exist in a symbiotic relationship in which each other's existence is important for the prosperity of the two. From this, I suggest that the Russian Orthodox Church should be elevated more in status than simply a junior partner of the state. This lens captures a bigger picture of Russian foreign and domestic affairs in suggesting that the root of some Russian motives stem by extension from the Russian Orthodox Church, due to this symbiotic relationship.

God and Caesar in Symbiosis: Russian Church and State Relationship

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) today is a significant part of Russia's political, cultural, and spiritual identity. Historically, the Principality of Muscovy took up the role as the protector of Orthodoxy following the sack of Constantinople in 1453, being viewed as the "Third Rome" (Casanova 1994, 240). This status as the protector disappeared when the Bolshevik Party came to power and established the Soviet Union. With the Communist Party of the Soviet Union formally adopting atheism as a part of their ideology, the influence of the ROC diminished and largely became dormant. This severed the formal connection between the institutions of the state and church. Because visible practice of the faith could be subject to persecution and repression, practice of the Orthodox Faith became a hidden act.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Orthodox Church began to reemerge as a strong influence in society. Its influence has only increased over time, with Russians increasingly identifying as Orthodox Christian. The institutional connection between the church and the state has also reemerged, with each reinforcing the other in domestic and foreign policy. What is clear is that the Church and state have a working relationship. What may be less obvious is why the relationship has occurred. Literature generally describes this relationship as cooperative but more so that the church is merely a tool in Russian interests. This way of viewing their relationship ignores that the ROC has its own agenda and does not consider that the state is a means to an end for the Church. This paper seeks to address the question of what motivates these two institutions to work together, in particular during the timespan of the

Putin regime. To do this I use news articles, interviews, Russian legislation, and the ROC's official positions on its goals and relationships. This research covers 2000 through 2018.¹

My findings lead me to conclude that the relationship is not one in which the ROC is simply a tool of the state, nor are the two loosely cooperating with each other. Cooperation implies that a loose relationship in which severance of the relationship does not dramatically harm the ability of each to thrive independently. I conclude that given how much each has to lose in the absence of their relationship that they exist in a symbiotic relationship. I go about this by first identifying key services that the ROC provides for the Russian state. These are national identity/ideology, an alternate medium of international diplomacy, and the ability to conduct diplomacy in areas in which the Russian state cannot given hostilities. I then discuss the importance of these services for the vitality of the state and what it would stand to lose in the absence of them. Then I go into identifying key services that the State provides for the ROC. These are the implementation of ROC social policy, protection from foreign religious competition, and the promotion of the ROC internationally. As I did with ROC services, I discuss how services that the state provides the ROC are crucial to maintaining its role in society and position internationally. These services they provide each other help ensure the survival of each as an institution. The well-being of each is what I identify as the key motive of their relationship as each need each other to thrive. Because of this dependency, I describe the two as being in a symbiotic relationship.

After addressing the church/state connection, I will then discuss why viewing this relationship as symbiotic and weighing more strongly the ROC's influence in the states actions is

¹ I treat Dmitry Medvedev's presidency (2008 – 2012) as a functional continuation of Putin's influence as head of state. .Englund, Will, and Kathy Lally, 2011

more accurate than viewing the ROC as a mere tool of the state. I will then briefly talk about the implications of this relationship for Russia's participation in the Georgian war in 2007 as well as its intervention in Eastern Ukraine from 2014 on. Analysts typically view Russia's foreign conflicts through the lens of the state's interests, there is room for an analysis of the Ukrainian and Georgian conflicts through a lens that, given the Russian state and the Church's ties, takes into consideration the interests of the ROC.

ROC Privilege

To begin to understand the motives that go into the Russian state and ROC relationship, one must go back to the pre-Putin time of 1997. This is a significant year in which state prioritization of the ROC is clearly demonstrated. Data reveals that 1997 was a year in which minority religions in Russia experienced considerable restriction and regulation that Orthodox Christianity did not (Fox 2008, 167). In 1997, minority religions in Russia experienced discriminating treatment in many areas. For example, Russia went from having public observance of religious services and holidays only slightly restricted for some minority religions to dramatically restricting some of them. Private observance of religious services was also restricted for some minority religions (Fox, *Religion and State*). While formerly the new Russian state had been relaxed towards formal religious organizations, their activities were more sharply restricted from 1997 on.

Regulations were implemented that prohibited or sharply restricted minority religions from building, leasing, and maintain their places of worship. Discriminatory regulations were also implemented on religious education. Post-1997, heavy restriction was implemented on clergyman of minority religions in their ability to be accessed in hospitals, jails, and military

bases when compared to clergyman of the majority religion. The majority religion in this case is Christian Orthodoxy.

The explanation for data's reflection of change in treatment of minority religions in 1997 is found in Russia's passing of the 'Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations (Fox 2008, 167). The law formally created three levels of religious communities recognized by the state. The law was the result of strong lobbying by the ROC, who feared the influence of what it called "psuedoreligious groups" and their effect on Russian society (Papkova 2011, 77). Each level represents different categories that have their own legal status and privileges. The lowest level of these categories is "religious group." This group is able to hold services and preach its doctrine to its members. However, groups in this category are not registered with the state and thus lack the ability to possess a bank account, own property, receive tax benefits, or operate within state-owned spaces, including hospitals, prisons, and military bases (U.S. Department 2010). Though members of a religious group have the right to organize and practice their beliefs, in reality this can be difficult given their lack of privileges as non-registered entities.

"Local religious organizations" make up the next level of religious communities. To qualify, the organization must have at least ten citizens as members and either be a branch of an organization in the top category or have existed in a local area as a bottom-tier religious community for at least 15 years. Groups in this category gain significant benefits including the ability to possess bank accounts, property, and organize services in state-owned hospitals, prisons, and military spaces.

The category with the most privileges is also the one most difficult to be placed into.

‘Centralized religious organizations’ can be registered by combining at least three local organizations of the same denomination. In addition to all the legal rights enjoyed by local organizations, centralized organizations also have the right to open new local organizations without any waiting period. Centralized organizations that have existed in the country for more than 50 years have the right to use the words "Russia" or "Russian" in their official names” (U.S. Department 2010).

These categories prioritize and elevate religious communities that have historically been well established. The requirements for registration in the highest category of religious communities are such that the Russian Orthodox Church can easily fall into the category. The ROC before the passing of the 1997 law possessed a well-established array of dioceses which are under a greater diocese. Thus already having a structure that allows the ROC to combine “at least three local organizations of the same denomination.” The longstanding presence of these parishes in communities and them being under the jurisdiction of the ROC ensures that these local Russian Orthodox communities at the very least fall into the category of “Local Religious Organization” which then through the combination of “at least three local organizations of the same denomination” easily allows the ROC to be a member of the top level “Centralized religious organizations.” The ROC’s long standing in Russia also gives it the privilege of officially using the words “Russia” and “Russian” in its official names.

Though the requirements for the top category of religious communities allows other religious communities to belong, it guaranteed a privileged status for the ROC in a time when the number of people professing to believers in Orthodoxy was less than 50% (Levada Center 2013). This elevation of the ROC above other minority religions offered it some protection from other potentially rivaling ideologies during a time when professing membership was decreasing.

The regulation of religious communities in this way appears to contrast with the spirit of article 14 of Russia's constitution. It directly contrasts part two of article 14,

1. The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be established as a state or obligatory one.
2. Religious associations shall be separated from the State and shall be equal before the law (Stetson University 1997).

Creating different categories of religious community memberships with different privileges demonstrates that Russia even before the Putin era began to violate provisions for religion in its constitution. Organizing religious organizations into levels that each have their own rights violates the "equal before the law" phrase. The ability for "centralized religious organizations" to use the word "Russia" or "Russian" in their name if they have existed as a centralized religious organization at least 50 years, appears to indicate a certain endorsement by the state that contrasts the spirit of the line "the Russian Federation is a secular state." Enforcement of the 1997 law has drawn attention from the European Court of Human Rights. An ECHR ruling in in 2006 found Russia in violation of "Articles 9 and 11 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" for its refusal to register the Church of Scientology of St. Petersburg (U.S. Department 2014).

Understanding why the state would go out of its way to create a tiered registration system that ensures privileges for the ROC at the risk of violating international norms can be understood by analyzing the connection between the ROC and the state under President Putin as a symbiotic relationship. With this lens, ROC interests are considered along with those of the state.

What the ROC Does for the State

In the view of the ROC, the moral purpose of the state as an institution is to exercise its power to reduce evil and support good. The church's role in society is distinctly separate from that of the state. As stated in part III, sect. 3 of the ROC's "The Basis of the Social Concept," "the goal of the Church is the eternal salvation of people while the goal of state is their well-being on earth." The Church's stance on state interference in church matters is very clear. It prescribes that the state does not interfere in matters of church "government, doctrine, liturgical life, counselling, etc." Though there is a clear distinction between the two institutions, the ROC prescribes for its followers that they submit to the state no matter the theology of those who run it. This is because the state as an institution is viewed as a God ordained phenomenon and the idea of anarchy as stated in part III, sect. 2 is "contrary to the Christian outlook."

Church doctrine outlines areas where it may cooperate with the state. Areas fair game for cooperation as stated in part III, sect. 8 of the Social Concept, include "spiritual, cultural, moral and patriotic education and formation," "dialogue with governmental bodies of all branches and levels on issues important for the Church and society, including the development of appropriate laws, by-laws, instructions and decisions," and "preservation, restoration, and development of the historical and cultural heritage, including concern for the preservation of historical and cultural monument." Though there are other areas permissible for church-state co-operation, these particular areas have the effect of filling the ideological void created in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Provides a National Ideology/Identity

In the absence of the communist ideology of the Soviet Union, Russian society lacked a strong alternative ideology to help build a new national identity. One of the clearest definitions of

identity is phrased by Manuel Castells (Jayaram 2012). In his words, the word identity in reference to people in a society is the result of, “the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning” (Castells 1997). Religion is often this cultural attribute that identity is constructed around. In the case of Russian people, construction of identity was done in large part by the Russian Orthodox Church. It did this by offering its adherents (the majority of Russians) an institution with set values, social stances, and traditions/rituals that allowed for an identity to be constructed around. Today, Church leaders are very aware of this role that the ROC played. In an interview with *The Economist*, Metropolitan Hilarion, Chairman of the ROC Department for External Church Relations, acknowledges this when he said,

“if you look at the Russian culture, not speaking of the medieval culture with its churches and icons and church singing, even if we look at the Russian culture of the 19th century, it is still very Christian, not only by its roots but also by its self-understanding and self-identity” (Economist 2018).

The powerful role of national identity in Russian society was underestimated by the communists. Failure to appreciate and handle appropriately how ingrained national identities can be in a people with deeply rooted cultures and traditions was a large oversight on part of the Soviet Union. Castells points out,

“Thus, the failure of integrating national identities into the Soviet Union did not come from their recognition, but from the fact that their artificial institutionalization, following a bureaucratic and geopolitical logic, did not pay attention to the actual history and cultural/religious identity of each national community, and their geographical specificity” (Castells 2009, 43)

This mistreatment of identities played a role in the fragmentation of the Soviet Union and identity of religion took its place. The Soviet attempt to crush the concept of religion was

unsuccessful. The people who emerged from the failure of communism needed a new way to make sense of their collective existence. Russia became “increasingly religious as the remaining ashes from the historical communist drive to subdue alternative idols have been reignited” (Castells 2009, xix). Orthodox Christianity proved to be the best way for people to express their identity (even if many do not go to church) and make sense of who “we” is and who “they” are. “They” were largely portrayed as the West and Western liberalism. In an address to Orthodox Church bishops, Putin acknowledges the role that the church played in uniting Russian people. “Much credit goes to the Russian Orthodox Church and other Russian religious organizations for keeping Russia together and preventing conflicts from growing into a new civil schism” (President of Russia 2017)

Ideology accompanies identity. Anthony Smith finds that “the ancient beliefs in divine election have given modern nationalisms a powerful impetus and model, particularly among peoples in the monotheistic traditions” (Smith 2004). Orthodox Christianity being monotheistic, is therefore a useful asset in helping Putin build Russian nationalism. With orthodox Christianity and the ROC being established as a point of identification for many Russians, the formal doctrine of the church and statements made by its leaders helps shape the ideology of its followers.

The Social Concept of the ROC places great importance on fostering patriotism and love for the fatherland. It calls on its followers to have an active sense of patriotism. This patriotism is expressed in part II, sect. 2, “when he defends his fatherland against an enemy, works for the good of the motherland, cares for the good order of people’s life through, among other things, participation in the affairs of government. The Christian is called to preserve and develop national culture and people’s self-awareness.” It is further expressed according to part III, sect. 4, that when an individual is mindful of the historical heritage of one’s country, being active in civic society,

and mindfulness for the status of society's morality. The Church's call for its followers to participate in society in this way provides the state with a population that is conscious of its heritage and culture as a nation. This population's duty to preserve and develop national culture also makes it aware of and sensitive to external actors who might be perceived as a threat to it. If there is a perceived or real threat to the state or society, the ROC as the spiritual head would be a powerful actor in mobilizing its followers for service in defense of the fatherland/state.

Demonstration of the church's emphasis of Patriotism and fostering nationalism starts at the very top of the Church hierarchy, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Since his elevation to Patriarch in 2009, he has effectively used modern mediums of communication in order to spread this message (Kishkovsky 2009). Kirill is given credit for the church's taking advantage of television and the internet to communicate information and spread the church's influence. This, along with the church's cooperation with the state in numerous institutions such as the military, prison system, and education, makes the church an effective promoter of patriotic and nationalistic ideas. President Putin formally acknowledged and thanked Patriarch Kirill's role in this at the 2013 anniversary of the Patriarch's ascension: "You do much for patriotic education, so that even when abroad our people do not lose their spiritual ties to their homeland" (Kishkovsky 2008).

The ROC's support for the state has not been limited to its support and role as outlined in its Social Concept. Patriarch Kirill is also a known supporter of the Putin Regime itself. The Patriarch has used his position to formally and informally support the administration of Putin. Kirill was first seen as a potentially neutral mediator in ROC and Russian state relations. Since enthronement in 2009, he has used passionate rhetoric to condemn protests against Putin's rule. This allegiance to Putin was criticized by the punk band "Pussy Riot" when they entered the Christ the Savior Cathedral in February 2012 and sang lyrics criticizing that the Patriarch does not believe

in God but “believes in Putin” (Agence France-Presse 2012). As Castells mentions, “States are organizations (systems of means oriented toward certain goals) whose performance is shaped by the interests and values that have institutionalized their domination in the historical process” (Castells 2009, 360).

This relationship has the effect of making the ROC an institution that legitimizes Putin’s authority. Under Tsarist Russia, the ROC and state had a much closer knit relationship than is seen today. However, this historical role of the ROC in Russia has carried over into modern times. Patriarch Kirill’s views Putin as a sort of messianic figure, a “miracle of God” (Soroka 2016). A man whose position of power is blessed by and a part of the greater will of God. Towards the end of Putin’s address to Orthodox Church bishops, Patriarch Kirill offered a closing statement making clear his view of Putin. “On behalf of the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, I would like to wish you, Mr. President, a long life, good health and God's help in the noble mission that God entrusted to you through the will of the people” (President of Russia 2017)

Given the Patriarch’s role as head of the ROC, his attitude towards the President is an indicator of the attitude of church. Approval of the state by the church and more importantly the Putin regime, gives not only legitimacy to the state but also to Putin, whose long tenure in office tends to make the two indistinguishable.

Offers a Non-State Medium of International Diplomacy

President Putin is highly aware of the role that the ROC can play in international affairs. As Marcel Van Herpen stated, “In his eyes, the Orthodox Church’s vocation was to become the privileged instrument of a new soft-power offensive of the Russian state in the service of the reconstitution of the former empire” (Van Herpen 2016, 132-133). Though the Russian state has fixed borders with limited influence in areas outside the “Near Abroad” he knows that “the Russian

Orthodox Church knows no boundaries” (President of Russia 2017). Estimates indicate that the number of orthodox Christians throughout the world approaches close to 260 million people (Pew Research Center 2017).

Near Abroad (Georgia/Ukraine)

It is of use for the Russian state to utilize alternate mediums of diplomacy. The Russian Foreign Policy Concepts states its motive to increase the connection between it and its neighboring states.

“Russia intends to actively contribute to the development of interaction among CIS Member States in the humanitarian sphere on the ground of preserving and increasing common cultural and civilizational heritage which is an essential resource for the CIS as a whole and for each of the Commonwealth's Member States in the context of globalization” (Ministry of Foreign 2013).

A strong tool that Russia uses to accomplish this mission is by using the shared religious affinity it has with many of its neighboring states through the Orthodox religion. Though the CIS is not considered to have the force and effect of its rival the European Union, relations with its member countries are still a high priority for Russia. Use of the ROC is an effective way to have relations with countries in the near abroad that are considered problem areas in Russian Foreign policy. This is particularly true for Georgian-Russian and Ukrainian-Russian relations.

Even though the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) is independent and possess canonical territorial integrity, the two churches have a close working relationship. The heads of these churches often send delegations to visit each other for occasions ranging from ceremonies for the publication of church literature (British Broadcasting Corporation 2007), to the high profile funeral of Aleksei II, the former Patriarch of the ROC (Department for External 2008). The ROC exhibits influence through its funding of church youth camps in Georgia amongst other things.

Given the strong religious affinity between Russia and Georgia, the Orthodox Church has served as a medium of diplomacy throughout low points in Russian-Georgian relations. Most notable of this was GOC Patriarch Ilya II's visit with then president of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, shortly after the Russo-Georgian war. This visit came after a GOC delegation's visit with then Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin, serving as the first official contact between the two countries since war broke out in South Ossetia in August of 2008. Though the meeting included clergy from Georgia, the discussion was described as "quite frank and quite critical," concerning the geo-political situation in the region (Kishkovsky 2008). This active diplomacy through the two Orthodox Churches is a significant medium during times of low relations. Given the unity between the ROC and the GOC, it is interesting that Russia and Georgia continue to have poor relations, especially when the two churches on multiple occasions have formed a united front in desiring peace between the two Orthodox Christian nations.

The answer to the question of why the two churches are strongly connected even when their respective states are not, may be found within the legacy of the Orthodox faith in Russia and the way the leaders of the GOC seem to offer subtle cues acknowledging the position Russia has as the protector of the Orthodox faith. Patriarch Ilya II acknowledges, "Georgia needs a strong Russia, like Russia needs a united and friendly Georgia" (Marcus 2008). He has also been recorded admiring the strength and wisdom of current Russian president Vladimir Putin. With the ROC and the GOC being on good terms and the Orthodox religion being amongst the most prevalent in all the former Soviet republics, (including Russia itself) boasting an 83.4% of the population identifying as orthodox (U.S. Department 2016), the ROC as a means of conducting back-channel and public diplomacy is an invaluable asset to implementing Russia's foreign policy.

In the case of Ukraine, the ROC has been used to interact with Ukraine in cases where state Russian state officials cannot. Ukrainian-Russian relations have been complicated since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Where certain Russian state officials have been barred from the country, ROC leaders have had a way in. This was the case in 2005. State Duma deputy Konstantin Zatulin's travel to Kiev was restricted for state visits due to his anti-Ukrainian independence ideology. Despite the tension between the ROC and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), Patriarch Aleksei II still had the ability to travel to Kiev and advocate for Russia. Though ROC visits to the Ukraine generally concern matters of the church, such as the controversial issue of ROC recognition of the independence of the UOC, these issues are often parallel with social and political issues between the two countries (British Broadcasting Corporation 2008). ROC leaders have spoken out against Ukrainian treatment of Russian speakers in the country as well as state policy towards ROC churches in Ukraine (Economist 2018).

The ROC is well established in eastern Ukraine. It's some 1,100 dioceses allow officials to travel to Ukraine relatively uninhibited. This large following in the Ukraine prevents the state from restricting travel of ROC leaders as doing so risks alienating a significant portion of its population. This potential backlash from ROC followers in Ukraine is especially useful since the state and media in Ukraine is generally suspicious of the intentions of ROC leaders due to the closeness of the Russian church and state. This was clear in Patriarch Kirill's visit to Ukraine shortly after his enthronement to patriarch (Radio Free Europe 2009).

Beyond the Former Soviet Union

The worldwide presence of the Orthodox Religion allows the ROC to make progress in international relations outside the near abroad. In 2010, representatives of the ROC and the

Roman Catholic Church in Poland arranged for a bilateral commission to discuss national reconciliation (Mattingly 2016). Bad blood between Poland and Russia goes back centuries and only continued due to events during WWII and the direct influence of the Soviet Union afterwards. Using religion instead as a medium through which the two can indirectly communicate with each other allows Russia to bypass the difficulties that can come from state visits in a hostile environment. Where reconciliation through stately interactions had not been found, interaction from the ROC and Catholic Church brought progress. The result of this effort at national reconciliation came to fruition when Patriarch Kirill visited Poland in 2012 where a reconciliation document was signed by Kirill and Archbishop Jozef Michalik. This high profile meeting was the result of lower level work done by Chairman of ROC Department for External Church Relations. The document worked to improve relations “marred by hatred, wars and enmity.” However, this act between churches relations was seen as being an act on behalf of Putin, to soften the heard of the Polish people to help prevent the state from being an important NATO base (Bigg et. Dzikavitski 2012).

Another notable event was the visit to Moscow by a delegation from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) at the invitation of Patriarch Kirill in 2012. This visit was seen as the resuming of relations between the ROC and the EOC that formerly existed in the in the span of 1950 to 1980. The lay work for this meeting was built the year prior by Metropolitan Hilarion and former Patriarch Mathias Abba Paulos (Ethiopian Herald 2017). Improved relations between the two churches at the effort of ROC leaders can be seen as an indication that Russia seeks to advance foreign affairs in Africa. The first step in this agenda being the reestablishment of ties with orthodox churches in Africa.

One of the most important events in ROC diplomacy was the meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill in 2016. A meeting between a Pope and Patriarch had not taken place since the separation of the two Christian denominations in 1054 AD. In the visit, the two leaders united in their stances on the nature of marriage, abortion, and the rise of secularism. This visit affirmed the position of traditional values in the form of shared understanding. The preservation of these values are an interest of the ROC and therefore, the state. Some questioned the motives behind the reconciliation, suggesting that this meeting was an attempt by Putin to gain support from the Catholic community for Russia's direct involvement in Syria, a controversial topic amongst many countries and particularly the West. The allegations of a Putin agenda through the meeting stems from one of the conversation topics being on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, an issue addressed in their joint declaration (Mattingly 2016).

Allows Access to Otherwise Politically Hostile Areas

The use of the ROC is critical to Putin in conducting relations with countries hostile to Russia. In what can be seen as an act of public diplomacy, Metropolitan Hilarion in 2011 spoke to a large Presbyterian Church in Dallas Texas. This happened under the context of the Obama-Putin relationship whose decline climaxed during Russia's annexation of Crimea. The purpose of the visit in his words was "to find friends and in order to find allies in our common combat to defend Christian values." He then met with leaders the conservative Dallas Theological seminary (Mattingly 2011). Hilarion later returned to the United States in 2017 where he gave a major address at the "World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians" (Mattingly 2017). This event was also attended by Vice-President Mike Pence. The event was important because it provided a way for a significant member of the Trump administration and the ROC (and indirectly Russia)

to find solidarity in a shared issue. This issue being persecuted Christians in the region. This solidarity came at a time when the U.S. and Russia disagreed on how to handle the Syrian Civil War. Hilarion's visits to the U.S. can be seen as way for Russia to find common ground with Christians and more specifically, conservative Evangelicals. Use of the ROC is instrumental in Russia's efforts at public diplomacy in the United States.

In Western Europe, the ROC left its footprint in France with the consecration of an Orthodox Church in 2016. Putin, who had planned to inaugurate the building, chose to cancel the occasion over French frustration at Russia's actions in Syria. Despite this, Patriarch Kirill conducted the church's consecration. Kirill later met with then French President Francois Hollande in an attempt cool tensions between the two states (Charlton 2016).

What the State has to Lose

It is clear that the relationship between the ROC and state is strong and connected on many levels. The ROC has demonstrated that wants to increase this unity by creating "one community" with "two autonomous powers" (U.S. Department 2010, 8). However, the ROC states in its social concept that there are conditions in which it is willing to distance itself from and speak out against authorities of the state and state policy. The social concept emphasizes that believers must follow state laws despite its imperfections. The loyalty demanded of the Church and the believer is not without limits. This line is well drawn in part IV sect. 9 of the church's social concept.

"In everything that concerns the exclusively earthly order of things, the Orthodox Christian is obliged to obey the law, regardless of how far it is imperfect and unfortunate. However, when compliance with legal requirements threatens his eternal salvation and involves an apostasy or commitment of another doubtless sin before God and his neighbour, the Christian is called to perform the feat of confession for the sake of God's truth and the salvation of his soul for eternal life.

He must speak out lawfully against an indisputable violation committed by society or state against the statutes and commandments of God. If this lawful action is impossible or ineffective, he must take up the position of civil disobedience (see, III. 5).”

If the state does cross this line that the church establishes, the consequences would be troublesome. The role that the church has as a non-state actor in diplomacy would instead work against the state, with the possibility that the ROC’s international influence would have the effect of undermining the Putin Regime abroad. The new identity that Putin has worked to create through areas of morality, spirituality would be working against him. The unifying force that the ROC creates in Russia has the potential to influence its followers to call out the state and weaken the legitimacy the state currently possesses. To a degree, this kind of defection has already been seen in post-Soviet Russian history. The common consensus concerning the administration of Russia’s first President, Boris Yeltsin, was that it was largely corrupt and ineffective. Certainly the fact that Russia was a new state emerging from the rubble of the Soviet Union and all of the bureaucratic, social, and political problems that came with it, can be used to forgive Yeltsin to an extent. These excuses however was not enough for the Russian people, especially given Yeltsin’s crippling alcoholism. This failure of his administration was enough for even the ROC to speak out against it. As Metropolitan Hilarion stated, “There was a time during the presidency of Mr. Yeltsin when the church was quite outspoken against certain decisions and certain positions taken by the state. I suppose if the current president or the current authorities would take positions which are contrary to the church’s understanding, the church would speak up” (Economist 2018).

Given how closely the state and ROC cooperate in areas of social policy and how much symbolic support the leaders of the ROC provide for Putin and the state, the possible defection of approximately 70% of the population that identifies as Orthodox at the cue of the Patriarch would

have the effect of pulling the carpet of the Putin regime out from its feet, at worst. At best, the regime's moral and spiritual legitimacy would be undermined in the eyes of many citizens. In this situation, if the state does not concede to the demands of the ROC, it would likely need to either use aggressive tactics to suppress the resistance or otherwise step down from power. It would be possible for the state attempt to develop a new national ideology, but it would no longer be able to rely on the influence of the ROC to implement it. For this reason, the force that the ROC provides as an institution that legitimizes the state's rule is important for the survival of the Putin regime and it is in his best interest to maintain that support.

What the State Does for the ROC

Not only does the church provide key services for the state, the state also works to support the ROC. In a symbolic event, then-President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin attended the enthronement of Kirill to the position of Patriarch (Kishkovsky, 2009). This move foreshadowed later events which prove how the state has gone out of its way to protect this crucial institution. As a matter of policy, state support of civil society is outlined in its foreign policy concepts of 2008 and 2013. The state "supports relevant initiatives of the civil society and actively interacts with the Russian Orthodox Church and other main confessions of the country." This contrasts with the 2000 version which lacks such a line and overall mention of the church. The wording that describes the states working relationship with the ROC evolves in the 2016 version, indicating a stronger working relationship between the two. The state "proactively works with the Russian Orthodox Church and the country's other main religious associations" Attention should be payed to the word "proactively" along with the distinct separation of the Russian Orthodox Church from the "other main religious associations."

Not only does the ROC provide services to the state as explained earlier, the state must support the ROC in return. The independence that the church maintains from the state means that the Church has goals and priorities of its own. Its motive goal in society both domestic and abroad is clear in its social concept (Part XVI sect. 4). “[T]he Church seeks to assert Christian values in the process of decision-making on the most important public issues both on national and international levels. She strives for the recognition of the legality of religious worldview as a basis for socially significant action.” (Castells 1997, 360).

Implementation of ROC Social Policy

As a part of the ROC’s idea of traditional family values, their stance on marriage is that it is to be between man and woman. The state has made considerable effort to pass legislation to restrict homosexuality in society. Russia’s ban on gay propaganda in 2013 has reached further than its seemingly narrow focus. Though not outright banning homosexuality, it has provided officials with a tool to strongly discourage it in society. This is seen in the firing of a lesbian teacher in a St. Petersburg school (Dolgov, 2015). Though the teacher was not formally charged with breaking the propaganda law, the school faced pressure from education officials to handle this case of “amoral action.” Teachers have been targeted in Russia due to their regular proximity to children. This proximity has the potential for any interaction between an allegedly homosexual teacher and their students to be seen as being prosecutable within the scope of the gay propaganda ban.

The state doubled-down on this ban when the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi came around. Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko was clear that the law would apply to all athletes and visitors that participated and attended the Olympics (Moscow Times 2013). This announcement contrasted with statements made by the International Olympic Committee that the law would not. Though the

law does not outlaw homosexual individuals, the arbitrary nature of its enforcement has the possibility of affecting all members of the LGBTQ community.

In the case of abortion law, accommodation of ROC desires in social policy is more directly seen. Patriarch Kirill gave his first speech to the Russian parliament in January 2015. He spoke on the protection of traditional values and more specifically on the banning of abortions provided at state health clinics (British Broadcasting Corporation 2015). Less than five months later, a bill was proposed for the parliament that sought to eliminate abortions as a free service provided by state health-clinics and ban abortions from being performed outside of these clinics (Fedorishina 2015). Though not an outright ban, the bill falls largely in line with the Patriarch's desires for eliminating state-performed abortions. Controlling who performs them and incurring a cost to the recipient of the abortion would have a significant impact on the number of abortions performed.

The bill itself has yet to pass (Fedorishina 2015). Passage of such a law would go against the desires of the approximately 70% of the population that do not support abortion restrictions (VTsSOM 2016). Though the attitude towards abortion in Russian society is favorable, activism by the church has brought the issue to the forefront in public and in parliament. The correlation if not causation of the Patriarch's speech having on the proposed bill is clear. Even though such a bill may not be politically feasible, it is likely that the bill or one similar to it will come to pass as the state continues to try to implement social policy in line with the ROC.

Shielding ROC from Foreign Competition

If there is one thing that the Church and state agree on, it is their distaste for Western influence (Ziegler, 2016) and social values (Rozanskij, 2017) (Russian Orthodox Church 2017). A series of bills signed in 2016 has improved the state's ability to control and remove smaller, non-traditional Russian religious groups. Described as bills designed to combat terrorism, they

“ban proselytizing, preaching, and praying outside officially recognized religious institutions,” and have affected many members and groups whose origins are foreign (Seymour, 2017). In early 2017, Christian groups prosecuted included Baptists, Pentecostals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and a Ukrainian Reformed Orthodox archbishop. Having the ability to prosecute people for conducting religious meetings within homes and advertising them without permission grants the state considerable control in how these often foreign religious groups operate within Russia. Notable is how the bill disproportionately affects religious associations that are not registered or are registered in a low tier group. If your group does not have the ability hold property, it becomes immensely difficult to practice your faith in a way that does not fall within the prosecutable scope of the 2016 laws.

The interest that the ROC has in this law is that restricts religions that are perceived as a threat to the social agenda it has in Russian society. Metropolitan Hilarion expressed the ROC’s attitude towards western religion when he said,

“some Western Protestant Christian communities look for compromises with secular ideology. For example, there are some Protestant communities which say that we should accept homosexual lifestyles and the church should bless homosexual couples and they even invent rituals of such blessing. We in the Orthodox Church believe that the doctrine of the church, and here I mean not only the faith, not only the dogma, but also the moral doctrine, it should remain unchanged.” (Economist 2018)

That such religious organizations would compete with the ROC for the spirituality of Russian people is not only a threat to the ROC’s promotion of traditional social values, but also to the national identity of Russian people which is tied to the church.

Promoting the ROC Abroad

Russian foreign policy documents from 2008 and 2013 outline its interest in expanding and strengthening Russian culture abroad and protecting the interests of Russian diaspora. A major step in this effort was the reunification of the ROC with its parishes abroad (Holley, 2007). This event of reconciliation bolstered the international presence of the ROC, adding at the time some 400 parishes and approximately 400,000 followers back into the fold with the Russian church. The reestablishment of Russian influence was an important project for the Putin regime as reconnection with church diaspora, whose schism was caused by the Soviet Union, bolsters his foreign policy options overseas.

Another key way the state has bolstered the ROC abroad is by facilitating the construction of new churches in various countries. This has a way of leaving a permanent mark of the ROC and Russian culture on the soil of these states as opposed to typical cultural exchanges that are temporal in nature. In 2009, an Orthodox Church was constructed on Russian embassy territory in Beijing, China thanks to strong attention given by Putin on the subject (Russian Orthodox Church 2009). The construction could on the church could only begin once negotiations by Russian and Chinese officials had concluded. This event would likely not have been possible without strong intervention and advocacy by the Russian state. We see this advocacy occur again in 2010 when a similar event occurred in Madrid (Russian Orthodox Church, 2010). After requests from of the Russian Embassy in Spain for an Orthodox church to be constructed, the mayor of Madrid conceded and both gave then President Medvedev a key to the city and allotted space for the building of a church (Russkiy Mir Foundation 2010). Even recently, France allowed an orthodox church to be opened on French territory owned by the Russian state (Charlton, 2016). This support for the church in France came

at a time when relations between the two countries were low over Russia's intervention in Syria and Ukraine.

Other notable mentions are construction of Orthodox churches in Argentina and Thailand. A church servicing the orthodox community of Mar del Plata went up in 2009 (Interfax 2008). The new church in Thailand was constructed in 2015 and is one of six orthodox churches in Thailand (Orthodox Christianity 2015). Though there is not a large orthodox following in Thailand, the churches still act as a cultural center for Russians living there as well as a spiritual center for Thai converts.

What the ROC Has to Lose

If an event were to occur that would heavily damage the working relationship between the ROC and the state, the church would lose a valuable partner in achieving its ends. In the area of social policy, the church relies heavily on the state to promote the church's social values in the form of legislation. By itself, the church would struggle to create significant change in society. Evidence of this is the resistance by Russians towards abortion regulation. Attitudes towards abortion have been strongly influenced by the Soviet Union's regular use of them as a means of birth control. For this reason, favorable abortion attitudes are very prevalent in Russian society today. The state is the only effective power that can use legislation and the coercive power of law enforcement as a way of shaping society's stance on this issue. Without the alliance of the state, the ROC would not have tangible power to promote traditional values.

The state's indirect and direct prioritization of the ROC has helped cement its place in society as a key institution. The church's position in the highest level of registered religious associations gives it privileges that other religions and denominations otherwise do not have. The state's role in the regulation of religious activity has ensured that those Christian denominations

that have not have a traditional role in Russian society, struggle to possess property and other assets. Because of the lack of land to practice their faith on, the state has also succeeded in prosecuting those who proselytize in public spaces and areas otherwise requiring written permission to do so. Without the state's role in the regulation of other religions, the ROC would be in competition with them for the hearts and mind of its followers and the role of defining societal values. Privilege from the state was especially important during the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the church was in a young and vulnerable state due to the effects of the USSR's official state ideology. Had other religions made considerable growth during the 1990s with lack of state intervention, it is likely the religious demographic of the Russian population would look different today.

The ROC prominence in the international sphere would certainly not be at the level it is today without the state's promotion of it abroad. Putin's efforts in reconciling the church with its counterparts abroad was essential to giving the ROC an instead foothold in these countries overseas. The constructing of other Russian Orthodox church's overseas has largely been dependent on the state's efforts in negotiating with officials of these other countries and in some cases, using the states own land for the churches. Though the ROC has the influence to engage in negotiations with the political leaders of other countries, this is not their specialty and is not a formal part of the church's mission. A situation in which the state no longer promotes the ROC abroad would greatly stunt church expansion abroad and the church would risk losing churches that really more heavily on state resources to exist.

The Symbiosis

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state benefit greatly from cooperation with each other. The Church is being harnessed as a way of promoting a common national identity,

legitimizing the Putin regime, and its use as a non-state diplomatic actor both near and abroad, is critical to the unity of the people, existence of the Putin regime, and the implementation of Russian interests abroad. The Church likewise has a significant amount to lose in the absence of this close relationship. Though these two institutions cooperate significantly, they each do so for their own ends. For the state, these are state unity and the promotion of Russian interests abroad (as outlined in its Foreign Policy Concepts). For the church this is its “mission of the salvation of the human race” and “to this end, she enters into co-operation with the state” as outlined in part I sect. 4 of its social concept.

This cooperation between the church and state is characterized by how they each stand to lose significantly in the absence of each other’s support. The two exist in a symbiosis of institutions. The term derives from the definitions of symbiosis as broadly understood in the areas of biology and sociology. The former being the existence of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship, and the latter being between people but with dependency being a characteristic. I suggest that the dissimilarity of the church and state, each independent with their own goals, and the dependency that exists between the two as evident in what each has to lose, the description of the relationship as a Symbiosis of Institutions is appropriate. This leads me to the answer of my original question concerning the motive that drives the relationship between the two. The motive is the vitality of the church and state. Each draw upon the other specific services that are used to reach each’s respective end goal.

Understanding their relationship in this way causes me to question the way in which analysts typically see the role of the ROC. A summation of their view is well captured in Samuel Huntington’s line, “in Orthodoxy, God is Caesar’s junior partner” (Huntington 1996, 70). The implications in this line are misleading when viewing the Church and Russian state relationship.

It is easy to view it in this way since the two cooperate on many issues, but a junior partner status implies that the two work together as part of the same group. The ROC has established from Patriarch Alexei to Kirill that it has no desire to be formally recognized as the official church of Russia (Papkova 2011, 29). Formal incorporation of the church into the state runs the risk of obstructing the Church's ability to reach its own ends. Irina Papkova summarizes the ROC's hesitation to rejoin the state based on historical examples,

“The total subjugation of the church to the state under the Soviets, with its ensuing near total destruction of Russian Orthodoxy is an obvious example. In broader historical perspective, the entire imperial period of Russian history, from the reign of Peter I onward, was characterized by state control of religion, a situation that, by the early 1900s, had become untenable. In the decades before the Revolution, many Orthodox clergy and active laity openly complained that state tutelage had led to the evisceration of the church's spiritual capacity to minister meaningfully to its flock” (Popkova 2011, 29)

It should not be misunderstood that I argue that the Church and state occupy the same power space in Russian society. To the outside observer, the ROC has a far greater influence in politics than it does in reality, though this is not to say that the Church's role in politics and society is inconsequential (Popkova 2011, 200). Evidence of the Church's inability to unilaterally sway the opinion of society is well demonstrated in Russia's generally favorable view toward abortion as mentioned earlier. That being said, the impact of the Church on Russia should not be underestimated. Putin himself states that if not for the ROC, “Russia would have difficulty in becoming a viable state” (Cohen 2015). This is what in part leads me to conclude that though their

independence is clear and can stand alone without cooperation, they each stand to lose greatly in the absence of it.

Popkova concludes that the ROC's influence on domestic politics is overstated (Popkova 2011, 200), but my analyses does not look at the Russian state and ROC as a relationship in which each actively use each other. I instead frame it as each using what is offered to the other as a way of reaching their own ends and that in order for each other's services to remain available, they each offer their services as a way of bolstering the other. When you take into consideration the role the Church has in forming a national identity and the services it provides in foreign affairs, it is clear that the ROC should be treated as a serious actor in Russia rather than just an instrument of the Putin regime. Though Putin does see the Church as a powerful instrument of soft-power (Van Herpen 2016, 132-133), it should also be taken into consideration the Church's goals throughout all areas where the Church and state cooperate, regardless of whether these areas are domestic or international in nature. The survival of the Church as an institution throughout history, especially during Soviet rule, shows that it demonstrates its own independence and strength regardless of the form that the state takes. It should be considered, to some degree, as a force of its own.

Understanding the ROC and Russian state relationship as cooperation with an element dependence will be useful in assessing Russia's motives domestically and abroad. It would be interesting to investigate how this might have a role in Russia's foreign conflicts today and in the past. Notable is how both Georgia and Ukraine, countries in the near abroad, indicated strong intentions of establishing ties with the west but have found themselves caught up in frozen conflicts, each dealing with issues of secession or civil war. Given the strong prevalence of orthodox Christianity in both countries and the influence of the ROC in Ukraine, it would

interesting to analyze Russian aggression in these countries as a way of preserving the sanctity and/or influence of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Conclusion

I have analyzed the relationship between the Russian state and Russian Orthodox Church and find that it can be viewed as an exchange of services. The ROC assists the state in forming a national identity/ideology that is pro-deference to state authority, offers an alternate medium of conducting international diplomacy, and allows the State to access areas otherwise difficult to reach. The state uses offers its coercive powers to implement ROC social policy, shields the ROC from competing theological ideologies, and helps spread the ROC's influence internationally. The services provided to each other allows each to better pursue their respective ends. The preservation of this exchange of services for the vitality of each other is what I conclude to be the motive of the Russian state and ROC cooperation. The need to preserve this exchange of services leads me to label the relationship as symbiotic in nature as each stand to lose significantly in the absence of this service exchange.

The symbiotic nature of this relationship leads me to find that literature tends to overemphasize the power imbalance the two exist in. Since the two need each other's services for the vitality of each, the ROC should be elevated as having a stronger influence in Russian domestic and international policies. This is not because the ROC is as much a serious actor, but since the motive of the state is to preserve the symbiotic relationship, the state considers the interests of the ROC as well as its own. Consideration of the ROC's interests by the state leads me to view that the ROC is not just a tool of the state, but an actor that has a role in affecting Russian policy.

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