

# To Whom Much is Given: The Russian Orthodox Church's Role in the Russo-Ukrainian War

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## Abstract

The essence of a war is in its justification. In Vladimir Putin's Russia, the state has turned to Patriarch Kirill and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) to assemble a tranche of religio-legal justifications for the war in Ukraine. Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor was instantaneously colored by theological proclamations from the Kremlin and the Patriarchate. While powerful as mere propaganda, much more is at stake. In March 2024, the ROC officially declared Russia's "special military operation" to be a "holy war," the first time the ROC has made such a statement since the Russo-Japanese War under Tsar Nicholas II. This article argues that the decree is the logical reverberation of a broader urge to revivify Russian imperial mores, particularly in the legitimization of warfare against Ukraine. Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill have instrumentalized one another. Patriarch Kirill gives religious substance to the Russian president's claims of geopolitical slight, while the latter buttresses the ROC's relevance amidst modernization. It is a partnership as nostalgic as it is pragmatic, rooted in the symphonic heyday of tsars and primates. An examination of the historical relationship between the Russian state and *its* church (as the ROC has come to be known) offers a multitude of lessons in the maintenance of the Kremlin's power, the stateward trend of ROC theology, and the lengths to which states go to legitimate revanchist acts.

The Russo-Ukrainian War is sustained at a religio-legal level by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). The converse is also true. The resurgent prominence of the ROC is buttressed—and the war sold to ROC laypeople—by its role legitimating the war in religious terms. At the crux of this symbiotic relationship, two figures loom large. In his first major speech following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin excoriated what he deemed a concerted effort by the West to "turn [...] Ukraine into an 'anti-Russia,'" replete with rampant persecution of "[Russian] culture, the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional religious organizations."<sup>1</sup> The Russian Federation is "not at war with the people of Ukraine," Putin argued.<sup>2</sup> Instead, his were accusations leveled at others, including terrorists in the Donbass, Ukrainian neo-Nazis, homosexual mores forced upon ROC priests in Ukraine, and even Anglican plans to refer to God by gender-neutral pronouns.<sup>3</sup> The Russian president's February 2023 address was decidedly laced with references—and justifications for his war—that waxed religious. Arrayed in all the regalia of an ROC primate, Patriarch Kirill listened intently from the front row.<sup>4</sup> In Putin's Russia, where seating charts matter, this was no mistake.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Presidential Address to Federal Assembly," *President of Russia*, February 21, 2023, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70565>.

<sup>2</sup> Putin, "Presidential Address."

<sup>3</sup> Putin, "Presidential Address."

<sup>4</sup> The Telegraph (@Telegraph), 2023, "Patriarch Kirill can be seen watching the address from the front row as Putin said Russia wanted to solve the conflict in Ukraine peacefully but that Western countries had prepared a 'different scenario' behind its back," Twitter, February 21, 2023, 10:21 a.m., <https://twitter.com/Telegraph/status/1627960974287294467/photo/1>.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael McFaul, *From Cold War to Hot Peace: The Inside Story of Russia and America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018) and Derek Saul, "Putin's Long Tables Explained: Why He Puts Some Leaders, Including Germany's Scholz, At An Extreme Distance," *Forbes*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dereksaul/>

Kirill has proven one of Putin's staunchest allies. The two men have mobilized Russia's largest religious denomination in support of Putin's ill-fated attempts at conquest, theology in tow.

In June 2023, Kirill made his own proclamation—in the voice of a report following the first ROC Bishops' Conference in three years.<sup>6</sup> Of its ten directives for the global ROC, eight referenced the war in Ukraine or its derivatives.<sup>7</sup> Its rhetoric was stark. Citing “religious persecution,” the proclamation situated “the [Ukrainian] government [. . . as] the direct heir of the God-fighting Bolsheviks,” engaged in war “against *Holy Rus'*, [and] wishing to divide and destroy her one people.”<sup>8</sup> The bishopric offered its prayers of protection for the military, its leaders, and the fallen, who “laid down their lives for faith and the Fatherland [. . .]. Eternal memory to them.”<sup>9</sup> The tenor was clear. The frame of the Bishops' Conference only exemplified a broader trend. From the outbreak of the war—and at gradually increasing intensity—Kirill and loyal bishops have exposed the war in deeply theological terms.<sup>10</sup> The ROC has formed an ever-growing corpus of theological justifications and revived laws of war tradition centered on “holy war.” Their rhetoric has parroted the Kremlin (and *vice versa*).

This sort of church–state partnership, defined in Orthodox theology as *symphonia*, defies scholarly predictions which had argued *symphonia* was naught but a relic of Byzantium.<sup>11</sup> This development—imperial in nature and modern in application—comes at a unique juncture in the history of the ROC.<sup>12</sup> Following a rich and storied history, birthed of Kievan Rus' (the medieval fatherland simultaneously claimed by Russia and Ukraine) and reared in Muscovite Russia, the ROC ensconced itself as the seat of imperio-religious authority and sanction under Russia's tsars.<sup>13</sup> Having informally pursued autocephaly from the Patriarchate of Constantinople with the rise of consolidated tsarist power at the turn of the sixteenth century, the ROC came to possess ultimate religious authority over its congregants.<sup>14</sup> ROC churches applied Russian Orthodox canon law, held services in Church Slavonic, and populated the expansive Russian empire, which extended from Prussian borderlands to the shores of the Sea of Japan.<sup>15</sup> The ROC also served as an hegemonic tool, applied by the tsar to manufacture unity across vast imperial holdings.<sup>16</sup> Nowhere was this truer than in Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine, where Russian Orthodoxy was long employed as an “instrument” of St Petersburg's—and, then, Moscow's policy.<sup>17</sup>

[2022/02/15/putins-long-tables-explained-why-he-puts-some-leaders-including-germanys-scholz-at-an-extreme-distance/?sh=32ef7e7670fb](https://academic.oup.com/jcs/article/67/1/1/csa046/7734338).

<sup>6</sup> Sergei Chapnin, “Bishops' Conference—The Major Outcome: Resentment against the Ecumenical Patriarchate,” *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, July 28, 2023), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2023/07/28/bishops-conference-resentment-epl/>.

<sup>7</sup> Postanovlenie Arkhιεrіeіskogo Soveshchaniia (Sviato-Troitskaia Sergieva Lavra, 19 iulіa 2023 goda, Den' Sobora Radonezhskikh Sviatykh) [Resolution of the Bishops' Conference (Holy Trinity Lavra of St Sergius, July 19, 2023, the Day of the Synaxis of All Saints of Radonezh)], *Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church*, July 19, 2023, <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/90539/>. All translations are the author's unless otherwise specified.

<sup>8</sup> Postanovlenie Arkhιεrіeіskogo Soveshchaniia.

<sup>9</sup> Postanovlenie Arkhιεrіeіskogo Soveshchaniia.

<sup>10</sup> For examples of dissension in the ROC's ranks, see Sergei Chapnin, “The Illusion of Unity: Patriarch Kirill's Ideological Ultimatum to the Church,” *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, February 9, 2024), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/good-reads/patriarch-kirills-ideological-ultimatum/>; “At the Heart of Christianity is the Rejection of Violence” Jailed Dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza on the Russian Orthodox Church's Support for the War,” *Meduza*, November 1, 2023, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2023/11/01/at-the-heart-of-christianity-is-the-rejection-of-violence>.

<sup>11</sup> Andrey Shirin, “The Russian-Ukrainian War is Now a Theological Crisis,” *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, April 20, 2023), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2023/04/20/the-russian-ukrainian-war-is-now-a-theological-crisis/>.

<sup>12</sup> For a summary of preeminent Orthodox scholar Stanley Harakas's predictions on *symphonia* in Orthodoxy, see M. Therese Lysaught, “The Work of Fr. Stanley Harakas: A Panel Discussion,” *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 18, no. 1 (1998): 29–34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23561075>.

<sup>13</sup> For a more tedious examination of this relationship, see Zacarias Negron, “When Common Faith Divides: The Paradox of Orthodoxy in Ukraine and Russia,” *Scaffold: A Showcase of Vanderbilt First-Year Writing* 4 (March 2022), <https://ejournals.library.vanderbilt.edu/index.php/UWS/article/view/5307>.

<sup>14</sup> Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Church Slavonic is pronounced, purposefully and practically, in a Russian-sounding mode. See Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Greene, eds., *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice Under the Tsars* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University*, December 14, 2018, <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 103.

Under tsarist rule, Russia was the seat of a transethnic consortium of “Russians,” who were really “[Ukrainians,] Tatars, Livonian knights, Poles, Swedes, Turks, and Persians,” to name a few of its more prominent residential ethnicities.<sup>18</sup> Hyper-nationalist, but not hyper-ethnocentric, Russia was reliant on an external fixative to define what it meant to be Russian. The “Russian Idea” slowly emerged across various permutations between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Defined by Count Sergei Semenovitch Uvarov as “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality,” the “Idea” was an attempt to distinguish a “Russian” identity.<sup>19</sup> Orthodoxy’s central (if not primary) role in imperial identity was no mistake—nor has it been forgotten.

After several centuries with a near monopoly on the Russian identity, the Orthodox-heavy “Russian Idea” was surrendered to revolutionaries. Attempts at the identification of any distinctively “Russian” culture (particularly one defined by religion) stalled with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Under early Bolshevism, the ROC’s prominent role in society was eradicated. Soviet consciousness and identity were to be preeminent, by practice, if not by belief. ROC land holdings were nationalized and theological training was suspended by early Soviet decree.<sup>20</sup> Thousands of churches across the Soviet Union were systematically shuttered, obliterated, and others explicitly converted to serve anti-religious Communist Party (CPSU) functions.<sup>21</sup> A brutal campaign of anti-religious propagandization occurred in tandem, under the self-ascribed label, “militant atheism.”<sup>22</sup> Matters were little better under Joseph Stalin, who continued to repress the ROC, and its role in society.<sup>23</sup> However, faced with the bitter realities of World War II, the ROC was granted limited powers as an instrument of the USSR to preserve beleaguered “Soviet claims on eastern European territories and [to serve] as vectors of political and cultural influence in places with Orthodox traditions.”<sup>24</sup> Among these “threatened” locales were Ukraine, Belarus, and Eastern Poland.<sup>25</sup> It was at this periphery that the ROC was granted a constrained degree of latitude, at the service of the Soviet state. Even still, from Vladimir Lenin to Nikita Khrushchev’s tenure, the Soviet ROC went from castigation to near annihilation.<sup>26</sup> Its only “official” freedoms were those expressly utile to the state. This late-Soviet ROC was an institution gutted, mutilated, and nostalgic for a bygone era.

With Mikhail Gorbachev’s *glasnost* in 1985 and the election of Alexy II as Patriarch of the ROC in 1990, the tides turned. Whether through Gorbachev’s pragmatism or incompetence (depending on who is asked), the ROC was granted unprecedented liberties—and screen-time.<sup>27</sup> The US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Jack F. Matlock Jr., noted the sharp contrast in televised ROC visibility alone. While holiday programs were usually perfumed with Leninist platitudes and Soviet ceremony, during New Year’s Eve 1988, “Lenin was out and religion was in.”<sup>28</sup> It was ROC clergymen who now populated televised talk shows and sermons by ROC

<sup>18</sup> Angela Stent, *Putin’s World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2019), 26.

<sup>19</sup> Stent, *Putin’s World*, 27.

<sup>20</sup> “Early Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda: 1921-1931,” *Merrill C. Berman Collection*, accessed February 6, 2024, <https://mcbcollection.com/early-soviet-anti-religious-propaganda>.

<sup>21</sup> John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 159.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University*, December 14, 2018, <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

<sup>23</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 104.

<sup>24</sup> Kathryn David, “At the Kremlin in 1943,” *Aeon*, March 13, 2023, <https://aeon.co/essays/how-stalin-enlisted-the-orthodox-church-to-help-control-ukraine>.

<sup>25</sup> Jack F. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador’s Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 40.

<sup>26</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 74.

<sup>27</sup> For contrasting views on Gorbachev, *perestroika*, and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union see, Alexander Dallin, “Causes of the Collapse of the USSR,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 8, no. 4 (1992), 279–302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.1992.10641355>; Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Vladislav Zubok, *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021). These are well paired with renditions written in a more popular style, Andrei Kolesnikov, “Gorbachev’s Revolution,” *Carnegie Politika* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 31, 2022), <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2022/08/gorbachevs-revolution>; “Mikhail Gorbachev Did Not Mean the Soviet Union to End That Way,” *The Economist*, August 30, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/obituary/2022/08/30/mikhail-gorbachev-did-not-mean-the-soviet-union-to-end-that-way>; and Leon Aron, “Everything You Think You Know About the Collapse of the Soviet Union Is Wrong,” *Foreign Policy*, June 20, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/20/everything-you-think-you-know-about-the-collapse-of-the-soviet-union-is-wrong/>.

<sup>28</sup> Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, 296.

metropolitans that filled the airwaves.<sup>29</sup> Rumbblings of the Soviet Union's coming dissolution (and growing separatist fervor) loomed eerily over the state. The ROC's public resurgence was once again enlisted to maintain a faltering, now-Soviet empire. When assuming office eighteen months before the fall of the Soviet Union, Alexy II proclaimed that his was a role in precisely such a matrix.<sup>30</sup> For the patriarch, the fate of the Soviet Union and the ROC was one and the same.<sup>31</sup> To him fell the task of preserving their assemblage. Such was a task that required the ROC to recast its mission in symphonic terms, just as it had under the tsars. Alexy II claimed the imperial pedigree of *sergievshchina* (or *sergiantsvo*), a doctrine that declared the "joys and sorrows" of the state (the Soviet Union) as those of the ROC.<sup>32</sup> *Sergievschina* was merely a doctrinal reflection of what "both the Communist Party leadership and the Orthodox hierarchy grasped . . . the close connection between religious affiliation and political identity."<sup>33</sup> While it was an uncomfortable partnership, the ROC belabored the synthesis of Orthodox Christianity with Soviet ideology.<sup>34</sup>

Before this task was complete (or, alternatively, at the apogee of its Soviet "empire-saving" role), peripheral Soviet republics began their march toward independence.<sup>35</sup> Where the sovietized ROC had only recently been revived to cement "national consciousness," the Church lambasted the "downgrading of the Russian language."<sup>36</sup> The domino-like rejection of the Soviet Union, spreading from the Baltics southward, was tantamount to a rejection of the ROC. This fear seems to have catalyzed Alexy II's infamous December 1990 *Letter of the 53*, an "appeal by the Russian military, church, and political leadership to Mikhail Gorbachev to rule ruthlessly as a dictator," which its signatories urged him to do for the "Fatherland."<sup>37</sup> The petition, which called for some variant of martial law, was framed against the backdrop of imminent Baltic revolution, and was responsive to a perception (by CPSU hardliners) that Gorbachev was failing to reign in these westward neighbors. One month later, the attempted putsch of January 1991 rocked the Baltics.<sup>38</sup> Soviet troops entered Lithuania to forcefully quell a declared independence by its Republic. The military deployment, culminating in what would come to be known as Bloody Sunday, was ultimately ineffectual and brutal. Alexy II was forced to renege on his signature, arguing through various channels that he was sick, unaware of the full contents of the letter, or some combination of the two.<sup>39</sup> It was too late. The ROC had tacitly sanctioned "empire-saving" military force against Lithuanian protestors.<sup>40</sup>

Eleven months later, the Soviet Union formally completed its disintegration.<sup>41</sup> As a political vacuum began to form beneath Gorbachev's wavering headship, its frontrunners courted the ROC. The ROC was situated as an "empire-saving institution," credited with the legacy sustaining an otherwise disparate tsarist hinterland.<sup>42</sup> With growing disapprobation for late Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology, conservatives and liberals alike turned to the ROC to bind the state that was disintegrating before their eyes.<sup>43</sup> An ardent critic on Gorbachev's right flank, CPSU leader Ivan Polozkov, called the ROC "a natural ally of the CPSU in the struggle for moral values and against interethnic conflicts."<sup>44</sup> *Soyuz*, another "conservative" communist faction, exuded

<sup>29</sup> Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, 296.

<sup>30</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 160.

<sup>31</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 160.

<sup>32</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 159.

<sup>33</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 107.

<sup>34</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 160.

<sup>35</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 161.

<sup>36</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 118; Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 161.

<sup>37</sup> Konstantin George, "Russian Triad Forms Dictatorship," *Executive Intelligence Review* 18, no. 2 (1991), [https://larouchepub.com/eiw/public/1991/eirv18n02-19910111/eirv18n02-19910111\\_022-russian\\_triad\\_forms\\_dictatorship.pdf](https://larouchepub.com/eiw/public/1991/eirv18n02-19910111/eirv18n02-19910111_022-russian_triad_forms_dictatorship.pdf), 22; Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 161.

<sup>38</sup> For a full treatment, see Alfred Erich Senn, "Lithuania's Path to Independence," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 22, no. 3 (1991): 245–50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43211694>.

<sup>39</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 162.

<sup>40</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 161.

<sup>41</sup> See Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000*.

<sup>42</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 158.

<sup>43</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 158.

<sup>44</sup> Ironic as it may seem, Polozkov's CPSU faction is best situated to the "right" of Gorbachev. Although they professed hardcore Leninism, theirs was an ideology in sharp contrast to the soft liberalism or soft Leninism espoused by Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev, respectively. Furthermore, their politics were also entrenched in nationalism and Orthodoxy. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 158.

similar praise, dubbing the ROC and the military the “two ‘eternal institutes of [Russian] statehood.’”<sup>45</sup> In July 1991, twelve prominent “conservatives” published *A Word to the People*, a “fiery call to save and revive the Soviet Union,” which “appeal[ed] to the Orthodox Church, which, having passed through Golgotha, is, after all the beatings, slowly rising from the Tomb.”<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Boris Yeltsin, (with deep familial roots in a Russian Orthodox movement known collectively as the *Old Believers*, whose “Puritan ethos” and conservatism necessitated their split from the ROC in the fifteenth century), tried to engage the ROC, whose “conservative” constituents, he recognized as “politically inactive” and disaffected by the Soviet project.<sup>47</sup> Insulated from the double-talk of CPSU-affiliated movers, who suddenly “needed” the ROC, Yeltsin could access the electoral confluence of anger over “damage [to] the Russian Orthodox Church [...] from Bolshevism’s militant atheism [and] the destruction of traditional rural life by Stalin’s agricultural collectivization.”<sup>48</sup> Vladimir Gundyayev’s (Patriarch Kirill’s secular name before his monastic tonsure) presence at early maneuvers for democratic reform was telltale.<sup>49</sup> Less subtle was Yeltsin’s prominent attendance at Easter services, a powerful counterfactual to the Soviet stance which vacillated from vilification to discomfort.<sup>50</sup>

The ROC was not inactive during this period. Via one of its proxies, the Russian Alliance of Orthodox Brotherhoods, the Church sharply discouraged Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union. The night prior to the Ukrainian referendum, the group wrote, “The Slavic peoples of Russia and Ukraine have one history, one fate. . . Do not let the enemy of our salvation separate us.”<sup>51</sup> The next day’s overwhelming vote, on December 1, 1991, “separated” the two states—and has ever since. The Soviet Union fell 25 days later, with a triumphant Boris Yeltsin as president of the newly inaugurated Russian Federation. Yeltsin promptly inherited a Russian populace adrift between exuberance and a “deep sense of loss.”<sup>52</sup> Many extolled the empire and lamented their newfound lack thereof.<sup>53</sup> Maxim Sokolov’s 1992 essay *So Which War Did We Lose?* and Svetlana Alexievich’s Nobel Prize-winning *Secondhand Time* exemplify Yeltsin’s inheritance: a “Russian” identity crisis amidst the loss of an already frail empire.<sup>54</sup>

Wary of greater disintegration, Yeltsin mobilized the ROC as a “panacea” for Russian affairs, foreign and domestic.<sup>55</sup> His administration sought legitimation from “the only [trans-Eurasian] Moscow-centered institution” that survived the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> The state provisioned the ROC with a “state protected monopoly on religious proselytism,” in return for its succor.<sup>57</sup> Thousands of decrepit ROC churches across the Russian Federation were reopened.<sup>58</sup> By 1995, the ROC’s “presence [...] was ubiquitous.”<sup>59</sup> In the span of a few years, ROC priests recovered what was practically a pre-Soviet level of access, visibility, and importance in Russian society. They blessed “buildings, military installations, and construction sites throughout Russia.”<sup>60</sup> The ROC lobby also received major legislative wins from the Kremlin and the Duma, including a 1997 national law prohibiting some external missionary work in Russia.<sup>61</sup> Following Yeltsin’s resignation—and Putin’s first term—political fervor for ROC ingratiation underwent a period of

<sup>45</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 158.

<sup>46</sup> Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 164–65.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Treisman, *The Return: Russia’s Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 42; Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 102, 131–32.

<sup>48</sup> Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, 306.

<sup>49</sup> Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, 489.

<sup>50</sup> Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, 506.

<sup>51</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia: The Journey from Gorbachev’s Freedom to Putin’s War* (London: Penguin, 2016), 142.

<sup>53</sup> Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia*, 142.

<sup>54</sup> Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia*, 142; Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 93.

<sup>56</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 93; Ksenia Luchenko, “Why the Russian Orthodox Church Supports the War in Ukraine,” *Carnegie Politika* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 31, 2023), <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88916>.

<sup>57</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 93.

<sup>58</sup> Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 93.

<sup>59</sup> Blair Ruble, “The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics,” *Wilson Center Kennan Institute*, November 2001, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-orthodox-church-and-russian-politics>.

<sup>60</sup> Ruble, “The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics.”

<sup>61</sup> Ruble, “The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics.”



thaw.<sup>62</sup> Initially presenting himself as a secularizer of sorts, Putin eased pro-ROC momentum for much of the early 2000s.

Whether through calculated patience or strategic realignment, Putin's public views radically shifted after Patriarch Kirill's election in 2009 and his reelection as president in 2012.<sup>63</sup> In his rhetoric and geopolitical strategy, a new ideology was recovered from the ashes of Soviet collapse. Some have called it "New Tsarism," but it is better known by its Russian name: *Russkii Mir* (Russian World).<sup>64</sup> First promulgated under the auspices of the "Russian Idea," the "Russian World" idea took root "in the late 1990s [under] a group of thinkers associated with Gleb Pavlovsky," who would later serve as Putin's adviser.<sup>65</sup> The concept attempts a categorization of the Russian identity. Its prime elements, viewed through the peremptory lens of imperial nostalgia, are Russian Orthodoxy and Russian speakers. The "Russian World" envisions a transnational "empire" of Russian-speaking, Russian Orthodoxy-practicing "Russians," who span the breadth of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and beyond.<sup>66</sup> As Patriarch Kirill used to stress, *Russkii Mir* was not tantamount to *Rossiiskii Mir*.<sup>67</sup> While the former related to a transnational religio-ethnic grouping independent of common statehood, the latter centered on the Russian state. In the early post-Soviet age, Ukrainians (and other traditional members of the *Russkii Mir*) were just as much members of the cultural conglomerate despite their borders' separation. Yet, as Putin reshaped the Russian Federation, establishing "the state [. . . as] the foundation of its glory," this distinction rapidly disappeared.<sup>68</sup> The mythos's *pièce de résistance* became the eventual reunification (by force, if needed) of these peoples, who share "unique values" antithetical to the West, under one Russian banner.<sup>69</sup> The "quasi-religious ideology [and] civilizational mythology" found willing proponents in Putin's inner circle, including Aleksandr Dugin (the political philosopher and ardent advocate of Ukrainian annexation rumored to be a "Putin-whisperer" of sorts) long before Putin's public adoption.<sup>70</sup> In 2007, it was even enshrined under the auspices of an eponymous international organization headed by Vyacheslav Nikonov, seated in Moscow.<sup>71</sup> It meshed with Putin's worldview. Putin had long mourned over the loss of the socially conservative *peasant mir*, the simple, communal life of common Russian Orthodox citizens across Russia's rurality.<sup>72</sup> This, he placed against the vignette of an atheist, individualistic West, obsessed with urbanization and consumerism. *Russkii Mir* provided an opportunity to broaden and systematize Putin's role with regard to a transnational "Russian" people lost under the Soviet Union, while differentiating the Russian World from a decadent and deplorable West.<sup>73</sup> Putin rebranded himself as defender of the faithful (and Russian speakers) and restorer of the empire.<sup>74</sup> The ROC became central to this strategy.

The Kremlin's engagement with the ROC, which had slowed, surged as Putin's engagement with the ROC surpassed his predecessors.<sup>75</sup> The ROC, and its Putin-allied patriarch, quickly became a "powerful tool of propaganda [and] a conduit through which to promote a single

<sup>62</sup> Ruble, "The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics." See also Irina Papkova, "Russian Orthodox Concordat? Church and State under Medvedev," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 5 (2011): 667–83.

<sup>63</sup> See Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

<sup>64</sup> Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces Both Russia and the West* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 101.

<sup>65</sup> Sean Griffin, "Russian World or Holy World War?," *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, April 12, 2022), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/04/12/russian-world-or-holy-world-war/>.

<sup>66</sup> For an alternative frame, see Thomas Bremer, "Ukrainian Nationhood, 'Russkii Mir,' and the Abuse of History," *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, March 22, 2022), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/22/ukrainian-nationhood-russkii-mir/>.

<sup>67</sup> Pavlo Smytsnyuk, "The War in Ukraine as a Challenge for Religious Communities: Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Prospects for Peacemaking," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai-Theologia Catholica Latina* 68, no. 1 (2023): 32.

<sup>68</sup> Leon Aron, *Riding the Tiger: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the Uses of War* (Washington: AEI Press, 2023), 8.

<sup>69</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, 119.

<sup>70</sup> Cathy Young, "The Bizarre Russian Prophet Rumored to Have Putin's Ear," *The Bulwark*, April 27, 2022, <https://www.thebulwark.com/aleksandr-dugin-putin-brain-russian-prophet-bizarre/>; Jaroslav Skira, "Patriarch Kirill, the 'Russian World' Myth, and Genocide," *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, March 15, 2022), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/15/patriarch-kirill-russian-world-genocide/>.

<sup>71</sup> Stent, *Putin's World*, 26.

<sup>72</sup> Stent, *Putin's World*, 28.

<sup>73</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, 119.

<sup>74</sup> Stent, *Putin's World*, 148–49.

<sup>75</sup> Ruble, "The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics." See also Papkova, "Russian Orthodox Concordat? Church and State Under Medvedev."

vision of Russian values, at odds with Western liberal societies.”<sup>76</sup> Emblematic of this new relationship, Patriarch Kirill ushered in Putin’s current term in 2012, with the assertion that his return was “a miracle of God.”<sup>77</sup> As Putin excoriated the West in his public speeches, the ROC argued that the West was incompatible with Orthodox faithfulness.<sup>78</sup> Under joint rhetoric, Putin has argued that the West is “turning away from their roots, including their Christian values [while Russia] has always been a state civilization held together by the Russian people, the Russian language and the Russian Orthodox Church.”<sup>79</sup> The ROC and its primate have provided “religious gloss” for Putin’s interpretation of *Russkii Mir*, while engaging the 71 percent and 57 percent of the Russian populace who identify as Russian Orthodox and who deem their ROC affiliation as critical to their “Russian-ness,” respectively.<sup>80</sup> Putin has simultaneously buttressed and profited from what has become Russia’s second most trusted institution (54 percent of Russians trust the ROC, topped only by the presidency at 68 percent).<sup>81</sup>

Putin, Kirill, and the ROC have framed Russian engagement in Syria, the annexation of Crimea, and the Russo-Ukrainian War as *de facto* (if not *de jure*) “holy war[s] for Russia.”<sup>82</sup> Housed within the aegis of Putin’s *Russkii Mir*, the ROC has been employed to recover an imperial laws of war tradition lost to time. In the centuries that followed the ROC’s “medieval autocephal[y]” from Constantinople, Russian theologians occupied themselves with splicing Eastern Orthodoxy’s traditional pursuit of political quietism with the maintenance of tsarist ambition. Far more concerned with the personal, “interior life,” in which “divine-human communion (*theosis*)” was supreme, “the [Eastern] Orthodox are probably most well-known for asserting that [they possess] no just war theory.”<sup>83</sup> For an Eastern Orthodox tradition, divergent in its interpretations of licensed violence or war, the maintenance of internal peace trumped earthly concerns. John Chrysostom, a central figure to the Orthodox tradition, put forth what was long held as the Orthodox spectrum of triage: “For there are three very grievous kinds of war. The one is public, when our soldiers are attacked by foreign armies: The second is, when even in time of peace, we are at war with one another: The third is, when the individual is at war with himself, *which is the worst of all*.”<sup>84</sup>

Chrysostom primarily warns against those wars which hamper communion with God. Maximus the Confessor, central to the Greek Orthodox tradition, similarly argued, “The things which destroy love [and, thereby the virtue necessary to commune with God] are these: dishonor, damage, slander (either against faith or against conduct), beatings, blows, and so forth, whether these happen to oneself or to one’s relatives or friends.”<sup>85</sup> Even justified versions of these acts were to be shunned in pursuit of the ultimate virtue—*theosis*, wrought of love. Largely because of this prioritization, Eastern Orthodoxy (as a tradition) generally neglected the task of forming a coherent laws of war doctrine. In this way, Orthodoxy distinguished itself from the Western laws of war tradition, which flourished under the care of Augustine and Aquinas. Orthodox scholar, Stanley Harakas, argues that in its stead:

<sup>76</sup> “Russia’s Orthodox Church Paints the Conflict in Ukraine as a Holy War,” *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, March 21, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/03/21/russias-orthodox-church-paints-the-conflict-in-ukraine-as-a-holy-war>

<sup>77</sup> Gleb Bryanski, “Russian Patriarch Calls Putin Era ‘Miracle of God’” *Thomson Reuters*, February 8, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-russia-putin-religion-idUKTRE81722Y20120208>.

<sup>78</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, 119.

<sup>79</sup> Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia*, 311–12.

<sup>80</sup> Mark Drew, “How Putin Weaponized the Russian Orthodox Church,” *The Spectator*, April 16, 2022, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/how-putin-weaponised-the-russian-orthodox-church/>; “Russia’s Orthodox Church Paints the Conflict in Ukraine as a Holy War,” *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, March 21, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/03/21/russias-orthodox-church-paints-the-conflict-in-ukraine-as-a-holy-war>

<sup>81</sup> Lucas, *The New Cold War*, 118.

<sup>82</sup> Janine di Giovanni, “The Real Reason the Russian Orthodox Church’s Leader Supports Putin’s War,” *Foreign Policy*, April 26, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/26/ukraine-war-russian-orthodox-church-support-patriarch-kirill-homophobia/>.

<sup>83</sup> Jerry Pankhurst, “Ukraine’s Autocephaly: In The Vortex of Global Change,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs* (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/ukraine-sautocephaly-in-the-vortex-of-global-change>; Perry T. Hamalis and Valerie A. Karras, *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 3; Aristotle Papanikolaou, “The Ascetics of War: The Undoing and Redoing of Virtue,” in *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War*, ed. Perry T. Hamalis and Valerie A. Karras (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 14.

<sup>84</sup> John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom* (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1843), 54 (emphasis mine).

<sup>85</sup> George C. Berthold, trans., *Maximos the Confessor: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 84.

the East developed a different approach to the issue. Rather than seek to morally elevate war and Christian participation in it so that it could be termed ‘just,’ the East treated it as a necessary evil. [...] Contrary to Augustine [...] the Eastern Patristic tradition rarely praised war, and to my knowledge, almost never called it ‘just’ or a moral good. [...] The East did not seek to deal with just war themes such as the correct conditions for entering war [*jus ad bellum*], and the correct conduct of war [*jus in bello*] on the basis of the possibility of the existence of a ‘just war,’ precisely because it did not hold to such a view of war.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, in the fifteenth century, the newly autocephalous ROC was left to chart its own laws of war tradition. Its progenitors turned to Eastern Orthodoxy’s theological tradition (established after Constantine’s conversion), which granted the head of state with unrivaled earthly authority, reinforced by divine right and *symphonia*. The Eastern Orthodox concept considered “the state [...] responsible for civil governance, and the church [for] spiritual issues.”<sup>87</sup> Akin to a church-state Venn diagram, “these realms cannot be separated [meaning] the church cannot completely absolve itself from politics and other civil issues, and the state cannot totally abandon matters spiritual.”<sup>88</sup> In an early manifestation of this *symphonic* relationship, the ROC amended the hagiographic tradition it inherited from the Eastern Church. Those who defended the Russian “fatherland,” often military-political leaders like Alexander Nevsky, became “passion-bearer saints” (similar to being proclaimed a martyr) or as it has been more aptly titled “imperial saints.”<sup>89</sup> Explicit in immaterial sainthood was the notion that defense of Russia was tantamount to a defense of Russian Orthodoxy itself. This view was sustained as the Russian empire continued to expand, finding unlikely advocates, including Vladimir Solov’ev, who argued in the nineteenth century, that the “empire [w]as a providential reality,” in which some “evils,” like war, could be theologically justified to preserve what was a gift of God.<sup>90</sup>

Four years after the death of Solov’ev, a modernizing Russian empire faced a pitched effort by the Japanese to deter further eastward expansion. The Russo-Japanese War, emblematic of imperial expansion, vacillated from a theater of Russian prestige to that of humiliation.<sup>91</sup> The ROC was heavily involved in the war’s justification and perpetuation, providing a prime exemplar of *symphonia* at work. As a result, Russian engagement in Manchuria provided a systematized laws of war tradition promulgated by the ROC, then and now. Its three features were loosely responsive to the Western conceptions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* (legitimate authority, just cause, and right conduct in war). First, in terms of license, the war was touted as led “by a legitimate and holy authority.”<sup>92</sup> Put differently, the ROC elevated the role of authority in the waging of Russian wars. This authority must not only be licit, but in order for such authority to be recognized for war-making, it must also be holy. For this reason, the ROC “hailed [Tsar Nicholas II] as the ‘Supreme Defender’ of the Orthodox Church [replete] with God’s sanction and blessing.”<sup>93</sup> Second, the war was authorized by its just and holy cause.<sup>94</sup> While just cause was not new and had been used in the waging of Russian wars long before 1904, holiness was a novel element. The ROC framed the war as just (Russia had been attacked) but pivoted to rhetoric of holiness to describe an unfaithful Japanese foe (Shinto and Buddhist) ripe for Christianization.<sup>95</sup> In theological terms, the war was not merely a matter of licit behavior (just cause), but of bifacial

<sup>86</sup> “The Teaching on Peace in the Fathers,” in *Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics, part 1, Patristic Ethics*, ed. Stanley S. Harakas (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999), 154.

<sup>87</sup> Shirin, “The Russian-Ukrainian War is Now a Theological Crisis.”

<sup>88</sup> Shirin, “The Russian-Ukrainian War is Now a Theological Crisis.”

<sup>89</sup> James C. Skedros, “Lessons from Military Saints in the Byzantine Tradition,” in *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War*, ed. Perry T. Hamalis and Valerie A. Karras (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 197.

<sup>90</sup> Solov’ev was a “big-tent” religio-political philosopher in Russia who viewed it as the homeland of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Jewish peoples. See Catherine Evtuhov, “Vladimir Soloviev as a Religious Philosopher,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Caryl Emerson, George Pattison, and Randall A. Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). While similar views had been expressed by giants of the Eastern tradition (i.e. Eusebius), its quasi-transactional adoption by those who valued the state above religion (i.e. Solov’ev) paired with a growing political quietism in the Eastern tradition, make this ascription of “providential reality unique.” See Brandon Gallagher, “A Helper of Providence: ‘Justified Providential War’ in Vladimir Solov’ev,” in *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War*, ed. Perry T. Hamalis and Valerie A. Karras (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 286.

<sup>91</sup> See Frank Jacob, “The Russo-Japanese War and the Decline of the Russian Image,” *CUNY Academic Works*, 2015, [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/qb\\_pubs/17/](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/qb_pubs/17/).

<sup>92</sup> Betsy C. Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 7.

<sup>93</sup> Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 7–8.

<sup>94</sup> Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 8.

<sup>95</sup> Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 8–9.



religious duty to the ROC and unrealized congregants under Japanese rule. Third, the military itself was envisaged as emblematic of these same characteristics: justice and holiness.<sup>96</sup> As the ROC termed it, theirs was a “Christ-loving military.”<sup>97</sup> Their conduct was framed less in terms of *jus in bello* restrictions, while more in religious fervor and exhibitionistic valor. ROC organs conducted massive homeland campaigns, which “stress[ed] the soldiers’ willingness to ‘lay down their lives for their friends,’ whether in the narrow sense (for their fellow soldiers) or a broader sense (for their countrymen and/or for their ‘neighbors’ in other countries).”<sup>98</sup> In colloquial terms, the ROC’s message was clear: the Russian military was doing the Lord’s work.

Drawing from this ancestral font (and conveniently flitting over the Soviet lull in *symphonia*), Patriarch Kirill and Vladimir Putin have conceptualized the Russo-Ukrainian War in much the same light.<sup>99</sup> Theirs is the addition of a division of the fraternal *Russkii Mir* to the holiness and justice of the war. The day before Ukraine’s invasion, Kirill spoke for Defender of the Fatherland Day at the Russian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Lauding Russian troops as “heroic,” the Patriarch referenced “threats [...] on the borders of our Fatherland,” which he cast as “sacred.”<sup>100</sup> On the day of invasion, Kirill expressed “deep and heartfelt pain [for the] the suffering of people caused by the events taking place.”<sup>101</sup> He called on both “parties [...] to do everything possible to avoid civilian casualties,” and for the clergy to “provide all possible assistance to all victims, including refugees.”<sup>102</sup> However, Kirill stopped short of indicting any party, instead stressing the party line:

The Russian and Ukrainian peoples have a common centuries-old history dating back to the Baptism of Rus’ by the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir. I believe that this God-given community will help overcome the divisions and contradictions that have arisen that have led to the current conflict.<sup>103</sup>

Three days later, Kirill’s message, delivered in a homily at the famed Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow, was illuminating. He lamented “evil forces that have always striven against the unity of Rus’ and the Russian Church,” while extolling “unity with [...] fraternal Ukraine.”<sup>104</sup> This unity, he argued, should be forfeited if “a terrible line stained with the blood of our brothers should be drawn between Russia and Ukraine.”<sup>105</sup> Then, he prayed over the “common historical Motherland” in unmistakable terms:

May the Lord preserve the Russian land. When I say ‘Russian,’ I use the ancient expression from ‘*The Tale of Bygone Years*’—‘Wherefrom has the Russian land come,’ the land which now

<sup>96</sup> Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 9.

<sup>97</sup> Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 9.

<sup>98</sup> Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 9.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion of other “ancestral fonts,” see Zacarias Negron, “‘There is a Fountain’: Christianity’s Role in the Western Laws of War Tradition” (unpublished manuscript, March 7, 2023), typescript.

<sup>100</sup> “V Den’ Zashchitnika Otechestva Sviatishii Patriarkh Kirill vozlozhil venok k Mogile Neizvestnogo Soldata u Kremlevskoi Steny” [On Defender of the Fatherland Day, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the Kremlin Wall], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, February 23, 2022, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5903402.html>.

<sup>101</sup> “Obrashchenie Sviatishhego Patriarkha Kirilla k arhipastyriam, pastyriam, monashestvuiushchim i vsem vernym chadam Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi” [Address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to the arch-pastors, pastors, monastics, and all faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, February 24, 2022, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5903795.html>.

<sup>102</sup> “Obrashchenie Sviatishhego Patriarkha Kirilla k arhipastyriam, pastyriam, monashestvuiushchim i vsem vernym chadam Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi.”

<sup>103</sup> For a Russian Orthodox dissident’s response to the Patriarch by the former editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* and deputy editor-in-chief of the Moscow Patriarchate Publishing House, see Sergei Chapnin, “Patriarch Kirill and Vladimir Putin’s Two Wars,” *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, February 25, 2022), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/02/25/patriarch-kirill-and-vladimir-putins-two-wars/>; “Obrashchenie Sviatishhego Patriarkha Kirilla k arhipastyriam, pastyriam, monashestvuiushchim i vsem vernym chadam Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi” [Address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to the arch-pastors, pastors, monastics, and all faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, February 24, 2022, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5903795.html>.

<sup>104</sup> “Slovo Sviatishhego Patriarkha Kirilla v Nedeliu o Strashnom Sude posle Liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelia” [The Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the Sunday of the Last Judgment after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, February 27, 2022, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5904390.html>.

<sup>105</sup> “Slovo Sviatishhego Patriarkha Kirilla v Nedeliu o Strashnom Sude posle Liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelia.”

includes Russia and Ukraine and Belarus and other tribes and peoples. That the Lord may protect the Russian land against external enemies. . . .<sup>106</sup>

In one of his longest sermons (to date) on the subject, Kirill proffered a slew of justifications that extended beyond vague references to events and threats. Without irony, the primate synthesized the fraternal rhetoric of *Russkiii Mir* with justifications for Russian hostilities on Forgiveness Sunday, centered on “unholiness” forced upon Ukraine’s faithful by the West. Acknowledging that Christianity “is against death [and] destruction,” he explained its permission to protect against the destruction of “what exists in the Donbass.”<sup>107</sup> Vulnerable in the Donbass was “a fundamental rejection of the so-called [Western] values that are offered today,” central to which was their rejection of “a gay parade” and their “suffer[ing] for their loyalty to the Church.”<sup>108</sup> At the crux of the conflict, Kirill argued, was the “imposi[tion] by force [of] sin condemned by God’s law, and therefore [. . .] the denial of God and His truth.”<sup>109</sup> Thus, Kirill situated the war as existential, “human salvation” itself at stake.<sup>110</sup> Suffused with references to holiness, God’s law, and Orthodoxy, he enjoined his congregants to recognize the war as spiritual in nature—a holy war.<sup>111</sup>

The ROC’s *Basis of the Social Concept*, a living document governing the Church’s doctrine and canon law, has been similarly outfitted. Article VIII, which deals with the ROC’s stance on contemporary warfare, begins with the assertion that “War is evil.”<sup>112</sup> However, the declaration is far from pacifist. In a subsequent section, it continues:

Christians involuntarily come to face the vital need to take part in various battles. While recognizing war as evil, the Church does not prohibit her children from participating in hostilities if at stake is the security of their neighbors and the restoration of trampled justice. Then war is considered to be necessary though undesirable. . . .<sup>113</sup>

Citing John 15:13, the document lauds Russian soldiers as those who sacrifice their lives for those of their friends.<sup>114</sup> There is a certain (and ironic) symmetry with the Augustinian argument that war is a lamentable, but “necessary” evil.<sup>115</sup> In fact, Augustine’s *jus ad bellum* contributions are cited as the touchstone of the ROC’s just cause doctrine—with one caveat. The authors explain:

In the present system of international relations, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish an aggressive war from a defensive war. The distinction between the two is especially subtle where one or two states or the world community initiate hostilities on the ground [sic] that it is necessary to protect the people who fell victim to an aggression[. . .]. *In this regard, the question [of] whether the Church should support or deplore the hostilities needs to be given a special consideration every time they are initiated or threaten to begin.*<sup>116</sup>

<sup>106</sup> “Slovo Sviatetshego Patriarkha Kirilla v Nedeliu o Strashnom Sude posle Liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelia.”

<sup>107</sup> “Patriarshaia Propoved’ v Nedeliu Syropustnuii posle Liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelia” [The Patriarchal Sermon on Forgiveness Sunday after the Liturgy at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, March 6, 2022, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5906442.html>.

<sup>108</sup> “Patriarshaia Propoved’ v Nedeliu Syropustnuii posle Liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelia.”

<sup>109</sup> “Patriarshaia Propoved’ v Nedeliu Syropustnuii posle Liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelia.”

<sup>110</sup> “Patriarshaia Propoved’ v Nedeliu Syropustnuii posle Liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelia.”

<sup>111</sup> While Kirill does not use “holy war” as a phrase, his intent seems clear—and is buttressed by the official proclamation of “holy war” in 2024. See Nakaz XXV Vsemirnogo Russkogo Narodnogo Sobora, “Nastoiashchee i budushchee Russkogo Mira” [Order of the XXV World Russian People’s Council, “The Present and future of the Russian World”], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, March 27, 2024, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6116189.html>.

<sup>112</sup> “The Basis of the Social Concept: VIII. War and Peace,” *Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church*, accessed February 6, 2024, <https://old.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/viii/>.

<sup>113</sup> “The Basis of the Social Concept.”

<sup>114</sup> “Greater love hath no man but this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” John 15:13 (KJV); “The Basis of the Social Concept.”

<sup>115</sup> Gregory M. Reichberg, Henrik Syse, and Endre Begby, eds. *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 79.

<sup>116</sup> “The Basis of the Social Concept.” (Emphasis mine).

Here, the ROC accesses its ability to license aggression in defense of victims (hinting at the present conflict) and elevates its role in doing so. The Church argues its role entails “bringing the military back to the established Orthodox traditions of service to the fatherland.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, while the document mentions standard *jus in bello* protections to be pursued by the Russian military, its larger concern is with the holiness of its forces. The document urges, “War should be waged with righteous indignation, not maliciousness, greed and l[u]st (1 Jn. 2:16) and other fruits of hell.”<sup>118</sup> After all, “it is impossible to serve one’s country by immoral means.”<sup>119</sup> Such gilded doctrines descend from imperial Russia and serve as the backdrop for wartime sermons by Patriarch Kirill which laud Orthodoxy as central to the survival of the “fatherland.”<sup>120</sup>

Motivated by nostalgia for tsarist grandeur—and facing the decline of the ROC’s transnational footprint—“Kirill is betting on Putin’s tanks to preserve the institution of the church throughout the fallen empire.”<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Putin, whose hopes for a united *Russkii Mir* were shattered by the 2014 Euromaidan movement in Ukraine, is reliant on a resurgent *symphonia* to justify his war to a domestic audience.<sup>122</sup> Thus, “divine liturgy [has been used] to justify and sanctify” fratricide, with the emergence of a single rhetoric from the Kremlin and the ROC.<sup>123</sup> As in the Russo-Japanese War, the message is clear: “the Patriarch offers the Russian population as a whole, and the military in particular, religious interpretations that supposedly correspond to the centuries-old faith of the Russians: they are fighting a just battle on the side of the Good, their death is a sacrifice for the fatherland through which they achieve forgiveness for all their sins [...] so that they can enter paradise.”<sup>124</sup>

Orthodox sanction for this newest holy war is clearly of vital importance to Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill. Answers as to why are legion, ranging from practical to oblique. At an ideological level, it is clear Putin desires to be like the tsars of old, flanked by Orthodox priests, gilding his legacy in imperial vestiges.<sup>125</sup> For this reason, the elusive *Russkii Mir* plays its prominent role in Russian strategy, forming a natural relationship between the ROC and Putin for revanchist ends. There are more practical auxiliaries to this understanding, which offer pragmatic (and personal) substance to what otherwise remains rather ethereal. Often discounted is Putin’s own profession of faith. The Russian president claims to be Orthodox, leveraging his identity, to be sure, with world leaders and the body politic alike.<sup>126</sup> While wartime polemic overshadows Putin’s own religiosity, perhaps this facet of his identity has been undervalued. As simplistic as the argument may sound, official and unfettered support from one’s own religious authority—even as a despot (and, perhaps, particularly as a despot, whose means make such a deployment easier)—is compelling. ROC license provides the opportunity for some level of absolution from what has become a bloody “war of attrition,” populated by human rights violations.<sup>127</sup> Putin also knows that his populace is watching. For all his bluster, he is a rational and sharply strategic actor.<sup>128</sup> Through the vigorous cooperation of the ROC, he has left a breadcrumb trail of

<sup>117</sup> “The Basis of the Social Concept.”

<sup>118</sup> “The Basis of the Social Concept.”

<sup>119</sup> “The Basis of the Social Concept.”

<sup>120</sup> “Slovo Sviatishnego Patriarkha Kirilla v Prazdnik Rozhdestva Presviatoï Bogoroditsy posle Liturgii v Zachatievskom Stavropigia’nom Monastyre g. Moskvy” [Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary after the Liturgy in the Conception Stavropegial Monastery in Moscow], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, September 21, 2022, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5961645.html>.

<sup>121</sup> Ksenia Luchenko, “Why the Russian Orthodox Church Supports the War in Ukraine,” *Carnegie Politika* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 31, 2023), <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88916>.

<sup>122</sup> Janine di Giovanni, “The Real Reason the Russian Orthodox Church’s Leader Supports Putin’s War,” *Foreign Policy*, April 26, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/26/ukraine-war-russian-orthodox-church-support-patriarch-kirill-homophobia/>.

<sup>123</sup> Edward Siecienski, “The Liturgical Consent to War,” *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, March 24, 2022), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/24/the-liturgical-consent-to-war/>; George Persh, “War and Eschatology,” *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, January 27, 2023), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2023/01/27/war-and-eschatology/>.

<sup>124</sup> Joachim Willems, “How the Russian Orthodox Church Legitimizes the War,” *Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg*, January 17, 2023, <https://uol.de/en/news/article/how-the-russian-orthodox-church-legitimises-the-war-7338>.

<sup>125</sup> Orlando Figes, “Putin Sees Himself as Part of the History of Russia’s Tsars—including Their Imperialism,” *TIME Magazine*, September 30, 2022, <https://time.com/6218211/vladimir-putin-russian-tsars-imperialism/>.

<sup>126</sup> Ben Ryan, “Putin and the Orthodox Church: How His Faith Shapes His Politics,” *Theos*, February 16, 2023, <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2022/02/16/essay-on-vladimir-putin>.

<sup>127</sup> Seth Jones, “The Bloody Toll of Russia’s War in Ukraine,” *Lawfare Blog*, March 19, 2023, <https://www.lawfare-blog.com/bloody-toll-russias-war-ukraine/>; “Human Rights in Ukraine Still ‘Dire’ Amid Wide-Ranging Violations: OHCHR,” *UN News*, March 24, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1135012>.

<sup>128</sup> See Hill and Gaddy, *Mr Putin*.

legitimation rooted in the ROC's authority and the holiness of the cause, less fallible deliverables for a potentially restive populace.<sup>129</sup> More than being his legacy-seeking mission, Putin knows that if he fails to mobilize the Russian populace and win the war in Ukraine, his fate is likely less than cushy.<sup>130</sup> Unless, however, he can manage to successfully color the war as a righteous fight. Lest it be forgotten, Japan won (decisively, at that) the Russo-Japanese War, in what was a weakening blow for Nicholas II. While discontented populi are known to punish their leaders in retribution for ill-fated campaigns, the tsar was able to deflect early post-war disappointment with the joint religious frame of the war.<sup>131</sup> In a Russian milieu where religiosity is actively growing (and atheism is decreasing), the "notion of a divinely-appointed mission of the Russian people and the Russian State is [...] deeply engrained in Russian consciousness, and [...] require[d little] effort on the part of Patriarch Kirill and Vladimir Putin to re-awaken it in support of the ambition of the Russian Church to dominate world Orthodoxy, and of Vladimir Putin's personal and geopolitical ambitions."<sup>132</sup> He is vying for battlefield victory or a cushioned fall from grace.

Kirill is playing a similar game. As one scholar describes, "The Russian Orthodox Church's cooperation with the Russian state is explicable on the one hand by path dependence (the historical tradition of symphonic cooperation between the Church and the State) and, on the other, by [...] purely opportunist interests."<sup>133</sup> Once its pride (and still lauded in Kirill's sermons), the ROC's transnational footprint is rapidly receding. This, despite the ROC's ardent post-Soviet efforts to maintain some semblance of canonical authority over its holdings afield. Most painful was the loss of Ukraine. Over the past "two decades, the R.O.C. has used state money and propaganda to assert itself in [Ukraine]," fighting to retain the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's fellowship with Moscow.<sup>134</sup> Beyond his subscription to a *Russkii Mir* conception of Ukrainian fraternity, this was personal for Kirill. The primate previously served in "the Department of External Affairs for the Russian Orthodox Church, [where f]or the next two decades, his main mission was to prevent the creation of a canonical, autocephalous church in Ukraine."<sup>135</sup> In what became a geopolitical flashpoint, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was officially granted autocephaly under Bartholomew of Constantinople's blessing.<sup>136</sup> The move, which went unsanctioned by Kirill, set off a still-simmering, chain reaction across the Baltics. Latvia's Orthodox Church ceased cooperation with the Moscow Patriarchate, pursuing its own autocephaly over the last three years.<sup>137</sup> In Lithuania, Orthodox congregations petitioned to join Constantinople or to become autonomous, if not autocephalous. Metropolitan Innokenty of Vilnius and Lithuania received no response from Moscow.<sup>138</sup> While not host to an Orthodox branch nearly as influential as its neighbors, Estonia's church is teetering westward.<sup>139</sup> With the Ukrainian and Baltic primates declining to attend the ROC Synod's Council of Primates, which is endowed with a critical role in Church administration, Kirill's ROC is "becoming ungovernable."<sup>140</sup> More than this, the Church's "empire"—in memory, if not reality—inherited from the ashes of the

<sup>129</sup> "Half of Russians Feel Anxious, Angry About Mobilization: Poll," *Al Jazeera News*, September 30, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/30/half-of-russians-feel-anxious-angry-about-mobilisation-poll>.

<sup>130</sup> Sarah E. Croco, "The Decider's Dilemma: Leader Culpability, War Outcomes, and Domestic Punishment," *The American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (2011): 457–77, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41480852>.

<sup>131</sup> Alexandre Debs and H.E. Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (2010): 430–45, doi:10.1017/S0003055410000195.

<sup>132</sup> "Russians Return to Religion, But Not to Church," *Pew Research Center*, February 10, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2014/02/10/russians-return-to-religion-but-not-to-church/>; Paul Ladouceur, "Orthodoxy, Russia's Manifest Destiny, and the Russia-Ukraine War," *Public Orthodoxy*, (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, July 6, 2022), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/07/06/orthodoxy-russias-manifest-destiny-and-the-russia-ukraine-war/>.

<sup>133</sup> Mikhail Antonov, "The Deep Constitution of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church," *BYU Law International Center for Law and Religion Studies*, January 12, 2023, <https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2023/01/12/deep-constitution-and-the-russian-orthodox-church/>.

<sup>134</sup> Paul Ellie, "The Long Holy War Behind Putin's Political War in Ukraine," *The New Yorker*, April 21, 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-long-holy-war-behind-putins-political-war-in-ukraine>.

<sup>135</sup> Griffin, "Russian World or Holy World War?"

<sup>136</sup> Nicholas Denysenko, "Pastoral or Provocative? Patriarch Bartholomew's Visit to Ukraine," *Public Orthodoxy* (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, September 30, 2021), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2021/09/30/bartholomews-visit-toukraine/>.

<sup>137</sup> Ksenia Luchenko, "Why the Russian Orthodox Church Supports the War in Ukraine," *Carnegie Politika* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 31, 2023), <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88916>.

<sup>138</sup> Luchenko, "Why the Russian Orthodox Church Supports the War in Ukraine."

<sup>139</sup> Luchenko, "Why the Russian Orthodox Church Supports the War in Ukraine."

<sup>140</sup> Luchenko, "Why the Russian Orthodox Church Supports the War in Ukraine."

Soviet Union, is disintegrating within his hands. For Kirill, full-throated support for the Russo-Ukrainian War serves as an opportunity to reclaim, kinetically, what he believes to be lost, recouping decades of failure. It is also a principal deterrent to those elements of the ROC that have made attempts at or contemplated becoming autocephalous. Once more, the ROC has become an “empire-saving” institution. This time it is its own patriarch, who is grasping at a retreating periphery.

A video circulated on Telegram across Russia last year summarizes the relationship between religion, the laws of war tradition, and the war in Ukraine. Surrounded by ashen recruits preparing to enter a bus (which shall presumably transport them toward the frontlines of a brutal conflict) an Orthodox priest with raised hands reminded them, “It’s our [duty] to defend our fatherland and religion. I have nothing more to say. We are standing before truth and we are the truth. The truth is always ours because God is with us.”<sup>141</sup>

Herein lies each tenet of the Russian “holy war.” One scholar of Russian militarism offered three questions asked of those who wage war: “what is the war waged for, and for what purpose, ie, how is victory defined[;] who is being fought against, ie, wh[at] defines the enemy [... and] how the war is fought.”<sup>142</sup> Putin and Kirill have answered each question in Orthodox terms.<sup>143</sup> War is waged to defend Orthodoxy. Those who impugn Orthodoxy are fought against. The war is fought with “truth,” by warriors who bear godly support. These stark terms, more imperial than theological, pair with Putin’s claims at the start of the war. For Russians, Putin argued:

Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture and spiritual space. These are our comrades, those dearest to us—not only colleagues, friends and people who once served together, but also relatives, people bound by blood, by family ties. [...] Since time immemorial, the people living in the south-west of what has historically been Russian land have called themselves Russians and Orthodox Christians.<sup>144</sup>

Their war is concededly fratricidal, but the ROC is willing to sanction it as necessary. “Heroic” soldiers, who bloody the fields of Ukraine, are fighting Putin’s “holy war,” waged for the salvation (practical and theological) of a grander vision of Russia and the ultimate campaign of allegiance to the ROC—for the elusive *Russkii Mir*. Held in March 2024, the 25th World Russian People’s Council passed a sole order. Issued under Kirill’s direction, the order made explicit what was implicit in ROC and Kremlin messaging till that point. It declared holy war. Russian soldiers were standing in the theological breach. The order reads:

[The] special military operation is a Holy War, in which Russia and its people, are defending the single spiritual space of *Holy Rus'*, fulfilling the mission of ‘the *katechon*,’ [and] protecting the world from the onslaught of globalism and the victory of the West, which has fallen into Satanism.<sup>145</sup>

Cementing the maintenance of *Russkii Mir* as the “highest meaning of the existence of Russia,” it identifies Russia’s “spiritual mission [...] as] global ‘*katechon*,’ protecting the world from evil.”<sup>146</sup> This explicit mission and purpose, arrayed in all the splendor of eschatological language

<sup>141</sup> “The Russian Orthodox Priest Preaching For War,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 7, 2023, News video, 2:39–2:55, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFMxjnHZP\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFMxjnHZP_c).

<sup>142</sup> Jüri Saar, “The Russian Holy War and Military Statehood,” *Trames: A Journal of the Humanities & Social Sciences* 27, no. 1 (2023), 3–4.

<sup>143</sup> Saar, “The Russian Holy War and Military Statehood.”

<sup>144</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” President of Russia, February 21, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>.

<sup>145</sup> Here, the Russian word for *katechon* is “uderzhivaushchego” and refers to restraining or holding. It refers to the eschatological concept derived from 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7. The *katechon* is “an unidentified restrainer who delays the antichrist’s worldly supremacy until the end of history, when Christ will defeat him.” For a treatment of the Russian view of the *katechon*, see Nakaz XXV Vsemirnogo Russkogo Narodnogo Sobora, “Nastoiashchee i budushchee Russkogo Mira” [Order of the XXV World Russian People’s Council, The Present and future of the Russian World], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, March 27, 2024, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6116189>; Matija Stahan, “Katechon or Satan? The Russian Deception,” *Providence Magazine*, October 9, 2023, <https://providencemag.com/2023/10/katechon-or-satan-the-russian-deception/>.

<sup>146</sup> Nakaz XXV Vsemirnogo Russkogo Narodnogo Sobora, “Nastoiashchee i budushchee Russkogo Mira” [Order of the XXV World Russian People’s Council, The Present and future of the Russian World], *Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church*, March 27, 2024, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6116189>.



did not grace ROC pulpits or publications until 2024's order. However, it was the logical conclusion—the unspoken underpinning—of ROC rhetoric since the Russo-Ukrainian War's outbreak.<sup>147</sup> It neatly fits into Putin's broader repackaging of Russian "society to fit into an increasingly rigid framework separating the state mandated right from the state-deplored wrong."<sup>148</sup> Like the tsars that came before him, "Putin was now in the business of saving souls [... ] imparting and enforcing correct mores, telling his compatriots what truths they must accept as absolute, what to aspire to and glorify, what to abhor and whom to hate."<sup>149</sup> The ROC was the principal institutional lever Putin could pull to realize such goals.

Much ink has been spilled over Putin's reorganization of the Russian state in 2012. Sidestepping what one scholar calls "the twin hobgoblins that had destroyed the Soviet Union: moral rejection of the regime by a significant share of the urban middle class and a sharp economic downturn," Putin reoriented his platform toward a national cause (anti-Western imperialism, the reunification of *Russkii Mir*, and the like).<sup>150</sup> National approval ratings reciprocated his pivot.<sup>151</sup> It was a lesson Putin would not soon forget as he has wrestled with maintaining his rule over the last several years. In this pursuit, the ROC was a lever to be pulled. Ironically, it would provision an opiate of sorts to the masses. Yet, it was also more. Putin's relationship with the ROC resembles his relationship with key companies, helmed by oligarchs. In Russia, critical corporations, essential to the preservation of the economy and the state, are not owned, but managed "on behalf of the state."<sup>152</sup> Oligarchs must be used—but also appeased. Putin views Kirill and the ROC in a parallel fashion. They serve the state, while legitimating the actions of the same. Their rhetoric is powerful, yet also precarious in its application. Putin, the manager of a small selectorate, seeks license for unholy acts by redefining holiness in his own image. It is not a cost-free transaction. Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill have instrumentalized one another. Kirill and the ROC get untold sway, molding the Russian trajectory in a moderated form of their own image as well. All the while, a partnership of convenience has become existential. The creeping declaration of "holy war" was its necessary product. A resurgent Russian empire—and a beleaguered Ukrainian people—hang in the balance.

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<sup>147</sup> To some extent, the progenitor of this rhetoric could be placed at the 2014 annexation of Crimea as well.

<sup>148</sup> Aron, *Riding the Tiger*, 16.

<sup>149</sup> Aron, *Riding the Tiger*, 16.

<sup>150</sup> Aron, *Riding the Tiger*, 14.

<sup>151</sup> "Prezidentskie reitingi i polozhenie del v strane," *Levada Center*, February 4, 2021, <https://www.levada.ru/2021/02/04/prezidentskie-rejtingi-i-polozhenie-del-v-strane/>.

<sup>152</sup> Aron, *Riding the Tiger*, 9.

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