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# Violence and the Defense of “Traditional Values” in the Russian Federation

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## INTRODUCTION

Prior to 2012, violence carried out by self-identified members of the Orthodox Christian community in Russia was routinely interpreted by outside observers as stemming from intolerant xenophobia and/or nationalist aspirations. The events of 2012, however, introduced a new element into the picture that has yet to be assessed in the literature. Namely, that year saw the adoption of government policy emphasizing the defense of “traditional values” in the face of perceived threats from a secularized West, a policy embodied both in legislation aimed at protecting said values and in official federal-level documents outlining the regime’s governing priorities.<sup>1</sup> Since then, it has become increasingly clear that at least some instances of what would previously have been simply identified as “religious violence” (whether Orthodox or otherwise) can be understood through the lens of the defense of “traditional values.” This paper is, we believe, the first attempt to provide such an analysis, focusing on the way in which this happens in the specifically Orthodox context while suggesting lines for further research into the relationship between “traditional values” and violence within Russia’s other major religious confessions.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, we discuss how the concept of “traditional values” is defined in Russia today, and which elements thereof are most relevant to understanding violence in that country. It should be noted that we understand violence itself to broadly include not just physical assault against persons but also vandalism/destruction of property (especially but not limited to cultural production). The second section of the chapter lays out a presentation of the

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1. For example, the law prohibiting the adoption of children by citizens of most Western countries, and the National Security Strategy of 2015, both of which will be discussed, along with other documents and legislation, in the second section of this chapter.

situation within the Russian Orthodox community. Finally, we draw some lessons from the case presented and propose some policy solutions aimed at lessening if not eliminating violence rooted in the defense of “traditional values” in Russia.

## TRADITIONAL VALUES

The concept of “traditional values” first emerged in popular discourse in Russia around the year 2012, gaining such widespread dissemination in the media so as to become as commonplace as the idea of the “American Dream” in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Today it remains an imprecise notion, although one in which certain themes keep recurring. Here, we sift through the variety of available definitions to arrive at this common ideational core, looking first at “official” understandings on the level of the Russian government and following this with a brief examination of how the concept is reflected within Russian society. The goal is not to claim that government definitions provide society with an ideological construct in this case or that, conversely, the regime has adopted a policy that reflects bottom-up demand for the defense of “traditional values” (this being a question for a separate paper). Rather, we wish to arrive at maximal definitional clarity. Having done so, we consider the extent to which “traditional values” should be understood to mean “religious values,” particularly those of the major confessions present on Russian territory. Finally, we pinpoint those aspects of the term that seem to us to have the most relevance for the question of its relationship to violence: in other words, of all the possible meanings that can be ascribed to “traditional values,” which ones are violent perpetrators “defending?”

Signs that government policy was moving in the direction of prioritizing “traditional values” could be discerned throughout 2011, in the wake of the nationalist riot on Moscow’s Manezh square in December 2010.<sup>3</sup> For example, the term appears in the 2011 Ministry of Regional Development report to the State Council of the Russian Federation, on measures to strengthen interethnic harmony; “traditional values” are assumed here to include “family and religious values.”<sup>4</sup>

By 2012, this turn was clearly evident in the rhetoric of Russian president Vladimir Putin, whose outsize role in the country’s governance renders his interpretation of the concept of particular interest. In early 2012, Putin published an article titled “Russia—National Question” in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, in which he describes the values he sees as common to all the “traditional religions” in Russia: charity, justice, truth, and family values. Crucially, he writes, “these values cannot be replaced by anything else, and we must strengthen them.”<sup>5</sup>

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2. See Chapter 2 by Alexander Verkhovsky in this volume for a cogent discussion of “traditional values” and “tradition” as central elements of Russian public life post 2012 (or more precisely, post the widespread anti-regime protests since December 2011).

3. Alexander Verkhovsky, “Doublespeak. The Rhetoric of the Far Right since 1945,” *Language of Authorities and Radical Nationalism* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 271–300.

4. “On Measures to Strengthen Interethnic Harmony,” Russian Ministry of Regional Development, [http://www.minregion.ru/activities/interethnic\\_relations/national\\_policy/505/902.html](http://www.minregion.ru/activities/interethnic_relations/national_policy/505/902.html). Accessed January 3, 2017.

5. Vladimir Putin, “Rossiya—natsionalny vopros,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 23, 2012, [http://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1\\_national.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html).

In the same article, Putin proposes to explain the crisis of multiculturalism in Europe through the frustration of the “native” European population, which is “shocked by aggressive pressure against their traditions, traditional way of life, and is seriously afraid of losing its national-state identity.” The result is a negative reaction—“xenophobia and harsh attempts to protect their interests, jobs, and social benefits from ‘foreign-born competitors.’”<sup>6</sup> Although the article does not mention “traditional values” per se, the strong correlation presented here between religious values, the current crisis in Europe (allegedly abandoning its traditions), and, in particular, the special role of Russians and Russian culture in the history of Russia, clearly suggests the idea of the necessity to protect “traditional values” (the common core values of Russia’s “traditional religions”) against “aggressive pressure” by newcomers.

Beyond the article in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, of special note is the emergence of “traditional values” as a trope in the Russian president’s annual address to the Federal Assembly. In the edition of this speech given on December 12, 2013, Putin positions Russia as a leading global champion of “traditional values” in the face of their decline in other countries (unnamed, but implicitly the United States and Europe). The values themselves are defined here as “the values of the traditional family, genuine human life, including religious life, life not only material but spiritual, the values of humanism and of the world’s diversity.”<sup>7</sup> They are global in scope, as they have “for thousands of years constituted the spiritual, moral basis of civilization, every nation.”<sup>8</sup> In 2014 “traditional values” once again appear in the annual speech, this time being listed as one of the government’s priorities;<sup>9</sup> they are defined here as “honest work, freedom of entrepreneurship . . . patriotism, respect of tradition, the culture of one’s country.”<sup>10</sup> By 2016, the term had taken on even loftier meaning: “The point of all our policies is the . . . multiplication of human capital as Russia’s greatest treasure. Because of this, our efforts are aimed at supporting traditional values and family, demographic programs [etc.].”<sup>11</sup>

Outside of Putin’s public pronouncements, the vector of the Russian government’s policies in specific areas are usefully traced through published documents outlining the regime’s priorities. The earliest appeal to something like “traditional values” here seems to be in the 2009 National Security Strategy, which identifies, in passing, a set of “common [Russian] values.” These include “freedom and independence of the Russian state, humanism, interethnic peace and the cultural

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6. Ibid.

7. “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly,” The Russian President’s official website, December 12, 2013, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825>.

8. Ibid.

9. To be precise: “Здоровая семья и здоровая нация, переданные нам предками традиционные ценности в сочетании с устремленностью в будущее, стабильность как условие развития и прогресса . . . вот наши приоритеты,” (“Our priorities are healthy families and a healthy nation, the traditional values which we inherited from our forefathers, combined with a focus on the future, stability as a vital condition of development and progress”), “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly,” The Russian President’s Official Website, December 4, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/47173>.

10. Ibid.

11. “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly,” The Russian President’s Official Website, December 1, 2016, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/53379>.

unity of Russia's many peoples, respect for family traditions, and patriotism."<sup>12</sup> Even though the text here does not specify these values as "traditional," they resonate with the norms referenced by Putin in the abovementioned 2013 address, and indeed continue to sound as a common theme in government discourse on the subject.

By 2012 Russian policy documents had adopted the language of "traditional values" wholesale. The Nationalities Strategy implemented that year mentions the "degradation of traditional moral values" as a threat to the various peoples of Russia.<sup>13</sup> Two years later, the 2014 Fundamentals of State Cultural Policy includes the "intergenerational transmission of values and norms traditional to Russian civilization" as one of its main goals;<sup>14</sup> further in the document we find an emphasis on the need to "inculcate traditional values in society's consciousness."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, over time the frequency of references to the concept clearly rises: in the 2015 Strategy for Developing the Moral Education of Youth, "traditional values" show up at least seven times.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, a repeated emphasis on "traditional family values" throughout the text suggests the primary role played by "family" in the authors' conceptualization of "tradition."<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, in sharp contrast to the 2009 National Security Strategy, the 2015 iteration mentions "traditional values" nine times. According to the strategy's article 78, traditional spiritual and moral values encompass the following: "priority of the sacred over the material; protection of human life, rights and freedoms; family; creative labor; service to the Motherland; moral and ethical principles; humanism; justice; mutual aid; collectivism; mercy; historical unity of the people in Russian Federation; continuity of Russian history." Significantly, article 79 proceeds to define threats to Russian security as the "erosion of the traditional Russian morality and the undermining of the unity of Russia's multi-national population as a result of foreign cultural and informational expansion (including the dissemination of low-quality cultural production), propaganda of permissiveness and violence, racial, ethnic and religious enmity, attempts to falsify Russian and World history," and so forth.<sup>18</sup>

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12. "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 12 maya 2009 g. N 537 'O Strategii natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2020 goda,'" *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, May 19, 2009, <https://rg.ru/2009/05/19/strategia-dok.html>.

13. "Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 19 dekabrya 2012 g. N 1666 'O Strategii gosudarstvennoy natsional'noy politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii na period do 2025 goda,'" *Garant*, <http://base.garant.ru/70284810/#ixzz4he6iEgJO>.

14. "Osnovy Gosudarstvennoy Kul'turnoy Politiki," Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, adopted December 24, 2014, <http://mkrf.ru/upload/mkrf/mkdocs2016/OSNOVI-PRINT.NEW.indd.pdf>, 10.

15. *Ibid.*, 16.

16. Throughout the text "traditional values" and "spiritual-moral values" are used interchangeably; the phrase "traditional values" shows up seven times.

17. The expanded list of values includes "love for humanity, justice, honor, conscience, will, personal dignity, belief in the good and desire to fulfill one's moral obligation before one's self, one's family, and one's Fatherland." "Rasporyazhenie Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 29 maya 2015 g. N 996-r g. Moskva 'Strategiya razvitiya vospitaniya v Rossiyskoy Federatsii na period do 2025 goda,'" ("Order of the Government of the Russian Federation of May 29, 2015 N 996-r Moscow 'Strategy for the development of education in the Russian Federation for the period until 2025'"), *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, <https://rg.ru/2015/06/08/vospitanie-dok.html>.

18. "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 31 dekabrya 2015 goda N 683 'O Strategii natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii,'" ("Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of December 31, 2015 N 683 'On the

In short, the 2015 National Security Strategy essentially repeats the definition of “traditional values” of the 2009 version, but expands it to include other characteristics and identifies a (thinly veiled Western) threat to them as a fundamental threat to Russian security. Not coincidentally, the same presidential decree propagating the strategy also established the Presidential Administration’s Department for Social Projects, responsible, *inter alia*, for the strengthening of the “spiritual-moral” bases of Russian society.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, despite the seeming all-encompassing nature of the strategy’s treatment of “traditional values,” definitional questions continued to persist past 2015—for example, in the 2017 Strategy for the Development of Information Society (meant to regulate the online sphere). “The priority of traditional Russian spiritual-moral values and ensuring behavior based on these norms in the use of information and communication technologies” appear among this document’s founding principles. But the values themselves remain here unspecified.<sup>20</sup>

During this time period, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation also meaningfully contributed to clarifying the concept of “traditional values” in Russian law. Thus, in its decision regarding a regional “anti-LGBT propaganda” law in Ryazan, the court stated that “family, motherhood and childhood in the traditional perception are those values that ensure the continuous change generations and the preservation and development of the entire multinational people of the Russian Federation.”<sup>21</sup> On the one hand, this statement gave unmistakable support to the positions of the conservative movement; on the other hand, it practically implemented the concept of “traditional values” into the legal discourse of the Russian Federation.

While the definitions presented above are evidently fluid, in practice the government has prioritized certain elements of the concept over others. As such, the legislative manifestations of the policy pronouncements and court opinion outlined above are particularly instructive. The Russian Duma has focused on legislation in support of two specific (intersecting and indeed inseparable) areas: traditional morality (itself poorly defined in the relevant rhetoric and therefore a relatively permeable concept, but one that seems to include at least the notions of sexual monogamy, premarital abstinence, and the eschewing of pornography) and the heterosexual family. Two pieces of legislation stand out as relevant for our analysis: the ban on the adoption of Russian children by citizens of countries where gay marriage is legal,<sup>22</sup> and the criminalization of homosexual “propaganda” aimed at Russian youth.<sup>23</sup> Both were adopted explicitly with the intent of defending Russia’s

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National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation”), *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, <https://rg.ru/2015/12/31/nac-bezopasnost-site-dok.html>.

19. “Presidential Executive Office subdivisions,” The Russian President’s official website, <http://en.kremlin.ru/structure/administration/departments#department-1024>.

20. “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 09.05.2017 No. 203 ‘O Strategii razvitiya informatsionnogo obshchestva v Rossiyskoy Federatsii na 2017–2030 gody,’” *Pravo*, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201705100002>.

21. Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, Ruling No. 151-O-O, (Jan. 19, 2010), 3.

22. “V Rossii zapretili usynovlenie v strany, gde razresheny odnopolnye braki,” (“Russia prohibits adoption in countries where gay marriage is permitted”), *Kommersant*, February 13, 2014, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2406998>.

23. “Federal’nyi zakon ot 29 iyunya 2013 g. N 135-F3 g. Moskva ‘O vnesenii izmeneniy v stat’yu 5 Federal’nogo zakona ‘O zashchite detey ot informatsii, prichinyayushchey vred ikh zdorov’yu i razvitiyu’ i otdel’nye zakonodatel’nye akty Rossiyskoy Federatsii v tselyakh zashchity detey ot informatsii propagandiruyuschey otritsanie traditsionnykh



"traditional values" from outside onslaught, suggesting that at least for a significant segment of the country's political class it is these issues that stand at the concept's core.

One other legislative episode is relevant here. In 2017, the Duma passed an amendment making first-time nonaggravated assault an administrative offense rather than a criminal one, a move that by implication included first-time instances of domestic violence. In doing so the Russian government actually moved existing legislation closer to Western norms, softening a notoriously onerous Criminal Code. However, the rhetoric of some of the legislators, and throughout the loud public discussion of the issue that accompanied the legislation's passage, placed it squarely within the debate on "traditional values." Among other things, the amendment's proponents often used language suggesting that they see such behavior as an unproblematic family norm.<sup>24</sup>

Turning now briefly to the ways in which "traditional values" are understood within Russian society generally speaking, it should be noted that the situation seems to follow the same pattern as within government circles. Namely, while it is widely (though not universally) accepted that there *is* such a thing and that it is subject to attack by an aggressive West, the definition remains vague and open to wide interpretation.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, traditional moral and "family values" (especially but not exclusively opposition to homosexuality) stand somehow at the core of the concept. To take only one example, the popular social media portal VKontakte hosts a group titled "For Traditional Values," with a current membership of over 135,000; according to the description on the main page, the group is made up of "people adhering to traditional values, prioritizing love between man and women and counteracting the onslaught of sexual minorities."<sup>26</sup>

Generally speaking, despite their vagueness, "traditional values" have become a sort of *lingua franca* throughout various sectors of Russian society, appearing in such disparate contexts as education and business, to name but a few. On occasion this has led to some odd juxtapositions, such as an exhibit at the former Lenin Museum (now dedicated to the War of 1812) glorifying the wives of the Decembrists as examples of the "traditional Russian" love for the family and the unshakeable bonds of marriage.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that their proliferation has occurred with the support of Russian academia, in particular when it comes to juxtaposing

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semeynykh tsennostey," ("Federal Law No. 135-FZ of June 29, 2013 "On Amending Article 5 of the Federal Law" on the protection of children from information harmful to their health and development, and certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation, to protect children from information advocating for the denial of traditional family values"), July 2, 2013, <https://rg.ru/2013/06/30/deti-site-dok.html>.

24. Vera Kholmogorova and Margarita Alekhina, "Shlepki Mizulinoy: K chemu privedet dekriminalizatsiya nasiliya v sem'e," ("Flips of Missoulina: What will the decriminalization of domestic violence lead to?"), RBK, January 25, 2017, <http://www.rbc.ru/politics/25/01/2017/588727459a7947bde03fca37>.

25. V. N. Dezhnev and O.V. Novikova, "Traditsionnye Tsennosti: K Opredeleniyu Ponyatiya," *Vestnik Shchadrinskogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Universiteta*, [http://shgpi.edu.ru/files/nauka/vestnik/2015/4\\_28/20.pdf](http://shgpi.edu.ru/files/nauka/vestnik/2015/4_28/20.pdf); Andrei Mishchukov, "Traditsionnye tsennosti v globaliziruyushchemsya mire," *Vestnik Orenburgskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, no. 178 (2015): 3; see also a roundtable on the topic, moderated by Alexander Arkhangelsky on his TV show *Tem Vremenem*, [http://tvkultura.ru/video/show/brand\\_id/20905/episode\\_id/959913/](http://tvkultura.ru/video/show/brand_id/20905/episode_id/959913/).

26. "Za traditsionnye tsennosti," VKontakte, [https://vk.com/v\\_o\\_g](https://vk.com/v_o_g).

27. Anna Norinskaya, "Institutki sem'i i braka," *Kommersant*, March 25, 2016, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2939206>.

"traditional values" with such concepts as "universal human rights." For example, Elena Lukasheva's work has emphasized that particular civilizations have to follow their own normative and cultural frames when it comes to human rights, in practice seriously questioning the latter's universality.<sup>28</sup> From another point of view, V. Kartashkin has developed the concept of "traditional values" in its "positive meaning," insisting that universal traditional values have to include freedom, dignity, and responsibility.<sup>29</sup>

Standing somewhere in the nebulous space between government and society, the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation has contributed to the public discussion on "traditional values," by hosting, in December 2016, a conference on the topic of "Traditional Values and Business: Faith and Enterprise."<sup>30</sup> And while it is far from clear that Russian political parties function in a way that reflects the bottom-up concerns of society, their embrace—and understanding of—the "traditional values" trope is also of interest. For instance, United Russia responded to Putin's call to protect traditional values by organizing a special project titled "The Sturdy Family" (*Krepkaya Sem'ia*), which lists as its top two priorities "the strengthening of the institution of the family and family values" and the "development of the personality and patriotic education" within the context of family life.<sup>31</sup> For its part, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) has, since 2012, been actively discussing the role of CPRF in protecting "national, family values, the spiritual treasures (*natsional'nykh sviatyn'*) of the Russian people, which are being demolished and degraded by the bourgeois regime."<sup>32</sup>

The question is, to be sure, whether "traditional values," in the term's manifestations across various layers of Russian society and political discourse, should be understood in religious terms. The answer, from our point of view, is a qualified "yes." On the one hand, the terminology has episodically appeared in Putin's rhetoric in formulaic fashion without reference to religion.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, one day after the seminal 2013 address to the Federal Assembly, Putin took advantage of a highly public forum to clearly identify "traditional values" as Biblical in their origin, if not explicitly Orthodox Christian.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, during a July 2014 meeting with members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and representatives of other Orthodox Churches, he spoke of Russian "traditional values" in language that suggests he sees them as "Orthodox," even though he

28. E. A. Lukasheva, *Human Being, Law, Civilization: Legal and Valuable Dimensions* (Moscow, 2009).

29. V. A. Kartashkin, "Human rights and traditional values of humankind," *Vestnik Rossiyskogo Universiteta Druzhby Narodov, Seriya: Yuridicheskie Nauki*, no. 3 (2012).

30. "Proekt rabochey gruppy 'Predprinimatelstvo i Prvoslavie,'" *Opora-Sozidanie*, December 7, 2016, <http://opora-sozidanie.ru/?p=9861>.

31. Proekt Partii Edinaya Rossiya—Krepkaya sem'ya, <http://ks-er.ru>.

32. "Kommunisty i traditsionnye tsennosti. Obsuzhdaem doklad G.A. Zyuganova k Plenumu TsK KPRF," Communist Party of the Russian Federation, [https://kprf.ru/party\\_live/111639.html](https://kprf.ru/party_live/111639.html).

33. "Putin: Rossiya budet protivostoyat" razmyvaniyu traditsionnykh tsennostey," *Vzglyad*, October 31, 2016, <https://www.vz.ru/news/2016/10/31/841142.html>; "Putin: Traditsionnye tsennosti—predposylka k druzhbe narodov," *Krasnaya Vesna*, December 23, 2016, <http://rossaprimavera.ru/news/tradicionnye-tsennosti-predposylka-k-druzhbe-narodov>.

34. "Press Konferentsiya Vladimira Putina," The Russian President's official website, December 13, 2013, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19859>.



might avoid admitting so to secular/non-Orthodox interlocutors.<sup>35</sup> In doing so Putin echoed terminology long used by the members of the Synod themselves in various venues, for example during meetings of World Russian People's Council (*Vsemirnyi Russkii Narodnyi Sobor*), a public forum operating under the auspices of the ROC since 1993.

More importantly, as Alexander Verkhovsky's contribution to this volume makes clear, the adjective "traditional" is most familiar to Russian citizens from its association, since the early 2000s, with the country's four major religious confessions: Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. The linguistic construction "traditional Russian confessions" has been so ubiquitous in Russian political and societal discourse that the layering of this religious sense on the relatively newly invented "traditional values" is unavoidable. The more so since the latter term is often used interchangeably with the phrase "(traditional) spiritual-moral values," which are especially well known to the Russian public from "The Fundamentals of Spiritual-Moral Culture of the Peoples of Russia,"<sup>36</sup> the educational vehicle through which religion (of the four major confessions) was first legally introduced as a subject into the public school system.

Furthermore, at least within the ROC itself and among prominent representatives of Islam, there is a consensus that "traditional values" are in fact religious values. Significant here is an oft-cited speech to that effect by patriarch Kirill in January 2013, at the annual Christmas Readings in Moscow—whose theme that year was in fact "Traditional Values and the Contemporary World"—in which he advocated for a spiritual understanding of the term, prioritizing "moral values, whose source is God, not man."<sup>37</sup> Similar interpretations abound within the Russian Muslim community, with the life of the prophet Mohammad often referenced as the embodiment of "traditional values," themselves revealed by Allah.<sup>38</sup> At the same time at least on the level of official rhetoric, religious leaders have been careful to emphasize that fundamentally the Islamic and Orthodox faiths share the same values; characteristic here is a speech given by metropolitan Nikon of Ufa in 2016, to a primarily Muslim audience, in which he noted that "traditional values are religious values. And this unites us."<sup>39</sup>

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35. "Vstrecha s chlenami Svyashchennogo sinoda i predstaviteliyami pomestnykh pravoslavnykh tserkvey," The Russian President's official website, July 18, 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46247>.

36. "Prikaz Ministerstva obrazovaniya i nauki Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 17 dekabrya 2010 g. N 1897 'Ob utverzhdenii federal'nogo gosudarstvennogo obrazovatel'nogo standarta osnovnogo obshchego obrazovaniya,'" *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, December 19, 2010, <https://rg.ru/2010/12/19/obrstandart-site-dok.html>.

37. "Doklad Svyateyshego Patriarkha Kirilla na otkrytii XXI Mezhdunarodnykh Rozhdestvenskikh chteniy," Official Website of the Patriarch of Moscow, January 23, 2013, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2746897.html>. For other examples pertaining to the Orthodox understanding of traditional values being primarily of religious nature, see "V Rossii utverzhden spisok dukhovno nraivstvennykh tsennostei," *Pravmir*, June 9, 2015, <http://www.pravmir.ru/v-rossii-utverzhden-spisok-duhovno-nraivstvennykh-tsennostey/>; and "Traditsionnye tsennosti i sovremennyy mir," *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya*, February 8, 2013, [http://ruskline.ru/monitoring\\_smi/2013/02/9/tradicionnye\\_cennosti\\_i\\_sovremennyy\\_mir/](http://ruskline.ru/monitoring_smi/2013/02/9/tradicionnye_cennosti_i_sovremennyy_mir/).

38. Shamil Shovkhalov, "Traditsionnye dukhovnye tsennosti i sovremennaya obrazovatel'naya praktika v krasnoyarskom krae," *Islam v Sibiri*, December 13, 2012, <http://www.islamsib.ru/islam/verouchenie/591-traditsionnye-dukhovnye-tsennosti-i-sovremennaya-obrazovatel'naya-praktika-v-krasnoyarskom-krae>.

39. "Mitropolit Nikon vystupil na IX MNPK 'Idealy i tsennosti islama v obrazovatel'nom prostranstve XXI veka,'" Ufa Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, November 2016, <http://eparхия-уфа.рф/news/mitr-nikon-vystupil-na-ix-mnpk-idealy-i-cennosti-islama-v-obrazovatel'nom-prostranstve-xxi-veka>.

Finally, in May 2017 an interparty group of Duma deputies—including members of the CPRF—was formed for the “defense of Christian values” in Russia. “Christian” in this context clearly meant “Orthodox,” as the group’s first formal meeting heard from several representatives of the ROC, with no apparent input from the other Christian confessions present in Russia. While the word “traditional” was missing from the official discourse on this occasion, the themes raised by participants in the meeting were familiar: concerns over the weakening of moral constraints (*nравstvennye orientiry*), the need to safeguard national spiritual treasures, and fears regarding pernicious foreign influences on the family, among others.<sup>40</sup> Whether or not this signals a move by the regime to jettison any effort at making the case that “traditional values” are anything other than values understood to be embodied by the Orthodox Church, as such indicating a shift away from the prevailing official model of Russia as a multi-confessional society, is an open question—to date, this is the only government initiative of any significance that would seem to suggest this scenario.

To summarize, then, there is a broad consensus within/between Russian government and society that there is such a thing as “traditional values,” and that they are under (Western) assault and in need of defense. Despite the term’s admitted fluidity, certain elements stand out: “traditional values” are imbued with (often explicit) religious connotation,<sup>41</sup> and their primary meaning appears to revolve around principles associated with morality and the family. In practice, this means most obviously heterosexual marriage, but also extends to all moral and family values generally sanctioned by the “traditional confessions.” The Strategy for the Developing the Moral Education of Youth makes the link explicit, calling for the “renaissance of family and moral values, taking into consideration the role of religion and the traditional culture of local communities”;<sup>42</sup> the other documents examined above lend themselves to similar interpretation.

Ultimately, the concept of “traditional values” as described above lends itself to the construction of enemies based on a binary opposition. In the religious sphere, this manifests itself as the struggle between “traditional” and “nontraditional” religions. From a gender perspective, it becomes a battle between family values (equated with the heterosexual matrix) and homosexual relationships. Finally, in the sphere of morality, there is an implied contradiction between the “universal” (aggressively implemented by the West) and the “national” (which supports the traditions of the Russian people and traditional religion). Thus, in order to protect “traditional values” Russians are called upon to fight against foreign (Western) values, both religious and moral, with the line between religious and moral categories being often completely elided as the two are unquestioningly

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40. “Mezhfraktsionnaya deputatskaya gruppa Gosdumy po zashchite khristianskikh tsennostey ob’edinyayet parlamentariyev, reshaet zadachi vo blago Rossii,” Communist Party of the Russian Federation, May 18, 2017, <https://kprf.ru/dep/gosduma/activities/165393.html>.

41. The question arises whether or not this is also true for Russian social/political actors on the left of the political spectrum, particularly the CPRF, which has historically been associated with an explicitly atheist worldview. In the case of the CPRF, at least, the party had by the mid-1990s disassociated itself from a Soviet-era commitment to atheism and/or full secularization of Russian society, meaning that there is nothing currently preventing the party members from interpreting “traditional values” from a religious standpoint.

42. *Strategiia razvitiia vospitaniia v Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2025 goda*, <http://council.gov.ru/media/files/41d536d68ee9fec15756.pdf>.

assumed to be the same, at least within a particular community of Orthodox activists (as shall be seen below).

Therefore, in terms of potential links to violence, of interest to us are, first of all, violent actions undertaken in defense of the traditional family and religiously inspired moral values. In addition, given the evident close semantic relationship between “traditional values” and “traditional religions” in the Russian context—as well as the well-known post-Soviet tendency to frame the spread of “nontraditional” religions as a threat to the Russian Federation—we pay attention to the ways in which “anti-sectarian” violence plays into the overall dynamic we are exploring.

## TRADITIONAL VALUES, VIOLENCE, AND THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

On January 14, 2003, Moscow’s Sakharov Center museum and cultural center hosted *Caution, Religion! (Ostorozhno, Religiya!)*, an exhibition of artworks problematizing the relationship between church, state, and society in post-Soviet Russia. Four days later, the exhibit was torn apart by Orthodox activists affiliated with the parish of St. Nicholas in Pyzhy; the perpetrators justified their actions in terms of “offended religious feelings.” Famously, they were acquitted of wrongdoing, while the exhibit’s curator and several of the artists involved were charged with inciting national and religious hatred, found guilty, and fined. The episode achieved international resonance, and has since stood out as the “first” in a continuing series of often violent confrontations between Orthodox believers and secular Russian society.

In the intervening decade and a half, news reports of “Orthodox society” (*pravoslavnaya obshchestvennost*) protesting against “blasphemous” cultural production, violently attacking members of so-called sects, and disrupting gay pride parades have become so common as to seem part of the ordinary fabric of Russian life. More recently, the vocal support of prominent clergy for military action in Syria and the visible support of segments within the Church for the separatist forces in Eastern Ukraine has further contributed to the image of a religious institution with a permissive attitude toward violence in general. Finally, the abovementioned vociferous debate around legislation governing nonaggravated assault caused the Moscow Patriarchate considerable embarrassment: in 2016, the patriarchate’s standing commission on questions of family, the protection of motherhood, and childhood expressed its opposition to the use of “domestic violence” as legal terminology; although it appears the commission was most concerned about possible criminalization of corporal punishment of children, the statement was broadly interpreted by outside analysts as also lending support to domestic battery against women.<sup>43</sup>

By default, any violent action or support thereof by Orthodox Christians has tended to be interpreted within the framework of the Church’s supposed penchant for ultranationalism; and indeed, ultranationalist ideology is commonly believed to include Orthodoxy as a core component. Yet, upon closer examination this framework does not easily hold up. First, the Russian far right is not

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43. “V RPTs nazvali bit’e detey ‘bogodannym’ pravom roditeley,” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, July 4, 2016, <http://www.mk.ru/social/2016/07/04/v-rpc-nazvali-bite-detey-bogodannym-pravom-roditeley.html>.

at all uniformly Orthodox; second, the majority of violent nationalist actions on Russian territory since the early 1990s have been carried out by members of organizations either uninterested in religion entirely or neo-pagan in orientation.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, as will be discussed in more detail below, it turns out that some of the most significant cases of Orthodox-tinged violence over the post-Soviet period have been driven more by faith-related reasons than by a nationalist political agenda. At the same time, there *is* a demonstrable degree of overlap between ultranationalism and what has been identified as the specifically “fundamentalist” wing of the Orthodox Church, some of whose adherents have been unabashedly involved in violent activism.<sup>45</sup>

One other possibility is that violence in the name of Orthodoxy has occurred as a reaction against violence directed against the church itself. Since 1990, at least 42 priests have been murdered and numerous clergy have been physically assaulted; meanwhile vandalism against ecclesiastical property has become a commonplace occurrence.<sup>46</sup> However, of the instances of violence with an Orthodox motivation exhaustively examined for this paper, none seem to have been specifically motivated by revenge for this type of assault on the ROC.

How, then, to explain the very real phenomenon of violence in the name of Orthodoxy in Russia? The argument here is that it may be usefully understood through the lens of the emergence of “traditional values” as a component of the contemporary Russian popular imagination. Below, we expand on this proposition through an examination of selected organizations involved in violent incidents with an Orthodox “tinge,” chosen by virtue of the public resonance associated with them—all of the examples mentioned here have been relatively widely covered by the Russian, and sometimes Western, media, marking them as particularly relevant in forming social opinion about the ROC and its relationship to violent action.

### Caution, Religion!, the Committee for the Moral Renaissance of the Fatherland, and “Traditional Values”

For a number of reasons that will become clear below, it makes sense to begin the discussion with the Orthodox activists who attacked the Sakharov Center exhibit. Although little remarked upon at the time, in retrospect the theme of “traditional values in need of defense” can be discerned quite clearly at the core of this incident. As already mentioned, the offenders attended St. Nicholas in Pyzhi parish in Moscow. In an article published by *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya* shortly after the affair, the parish’s rector, father Alexander Shargunov, outlined a worldview in which “a new barbarism” threatens to overwhelm the world, with only “traditional values” standing in its way: “If these traditional values stay in the past, we will not see either the present or the future.” The traditional

44. Nikolay Mitrokhin, “Mezhdu pravom i pravom na bezopasnost,” *Neislamskiy ekstremizm v sovremennoy Rossii*, “*Neprikosnovennyi Zapas* 1 (February 2006): 64–79.

45. On the relationship between ultranationalism and the “fundamentalist” wing of the Russian Orthodox Church, see Irina Papkova, *The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

46. “Ubiistva i na padeniya na svyashchennikov v 1990–2009 gg.,” *Pravmir*, last updated 2016, <http://www.pravmir.ru/ubiistva-i-napadeniya-na-svyashchennikov-v-rossii-v-1990-2009-gg-spravka/>; one striking example of vandalism of Orthodox property was the so-called Krestopoval, or destruction of crosses across the country in the wake of the Pussy Riot incident: “Otvetsvennost’ za ‘krestopoval’ vzyala na sebya ‘Narodnaya Volya,’” *RBK*, August 28, 2012, <http://www.rbc.ru/society/28/08/2012/5703fc029a7947ac81a6b2a2>.

values here are clearly infused with moral content: "Let the defeat of Serbia and Russia bring after them our moral cleansing and return to true values (*istinnym tsennostiam*)."<sup>47</sup> In this context it is not so surprising that, nationwide, supporters of Shargunov's parishioners interpreted their act of vandalism as a case of the defense of traditional values against (secular Western) aggression.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, the very way in which "traditional values" and the defense thereof are framed in the present time may, we argue, be traced to the activities of Father Shargunov and his followers. Since the early 1990s, St. Nicholas in Pyzhy has been the headquarters of the Social Committee for the Moral Renaissance of the Fatherland (*Obshchestvennyi Komitet za Nравstvennoye Vozrozhdeniye Otechestva*); the perpetrators of the Sakharov Center disruption were in fact members of the organization. The ideology and activism of this group has been exhaustively examined elsewhere;<sup>49</sup> for our purposes, several circumstances are of fundamental importance.

First, conditioned by the chaotic Russian environment of the 1990s, and particularly by president Boris Yeltsin's violent confrontation with the parliament in 1993, members of the committee have espoused an apocalyptic worldview, in which the Antichrist is nigh; Russia, from their vantage point, is under attack by Satan, in the guise of Western values. Crucially, while any action aimed at drawing Russians away from Orthodoxy is understood here as part of this pernicious onslaught, the group's ideology blurs the line between sexually amoral behavior and satanism to such an extent that Satan's advance on Russia is seen as occurring primarily through the sexual corruption of the Russian people via Western-sponsored pornography and the like. Consequently, the battle involves three identifiable fronts: (1) preventing the Russian population's sexual degradation, (2) standing up to foreign sects apparently inundating the country and drawing its citizens away from their Orthodox roots, and (3) combating blasphemy against Orthodoxy in the artistic sphere (blasphemy here being understood both in terms of the sexual nature of some artwork and works that could be considered critical of Orthodox dogma).<sup>50</sup>

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the committee's tactics involved both licit and illicit means, including staging public protests against Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, suing popular magazines for purported pornographic content, and tearing down sexually explicit billboards under cover of night.<sup>51</sup> The three major vectors along which the defense of traditional values by Orthodox activists would be played out up to the present time can be seen clearly here: supporting (hetero)sexual morality, combating "nontraditional" religious groups, and protesting against allegedly anti-Orthodox cultural production. Also obvious is the prototype of the methods employed: peaceful protests, legal challenges, and nonconventional, at times violent, tactics.

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47. Protoierey Aleksandr Shargunov, "Itogi Novoy Yugoslavskoy Tragedii," *Russkaya Liniya*, April 4, 2004, [http://ruskline.ru/monitoring\\_smi/2004/04/14/itogi\\_novoj\\_yugoslavskoj\\_tragedii/](http://ruskline.ru/monitoring_smi/2004/04/14/itogi_novoj_yugoslavskoj_tragedii/).

48. Muftiy Farid Salman, "Otkrytoe zayavlenie po situatsii vokrug vystavki 'Ostorozhno, religiya!,'" August 18, 2003, [http://www.moral.ru/Sakh\\_musulman.htm](http://www.moral.ru/Sakh_musulman.htm); "Soyuz pravoslavnykh grazhdan prizyvaet k pokayaniyu ustroiteley vystavki 'Ostorozhno, Religiya!'" *Interfax-Religiya*, March 28, 2005, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/cis.php?act=news&div=2285>.

49. Irina Papkova, *The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Chapter 4.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*



It is also of note that the *Caution, Religion!* incident did not just mark the moment when violence in defense of Orthodox religious principles became a legally acceptable proposition in the Russian Federation.<sup>52</sup> It also served as a watershed for the emergence of “traditional values” from the margins of Orthodox discourse into the Church’s mainstream: prior to 2003, Shargunov and his followers were colorful but peripheral activists; after the Sakharov Center trial their concerns became widely accepted as those of self-respecting believers across the ROC. More than that, it was around this time that “traditional values” began to seep into the language of the political class, brought there by Duma members with strong Orthodox sympathies.<sup>53</sup>

## The Orthodox Standard-Bearers

The second group we looked at is the Union of Orthodox Standard-Bearers (*Soyuz Pravoslavnykh Khorugvenostsev*), active since 1992 and probably the most colorful and recognizable of the fundamentalist Orthodox groups on the Russian nationalist scene. In 2003, SPKh joined other Orthodox nationalist organizations in calling for the creation of an “all-Russian militia—whose goal is to free the Fatherland from all enemies and adversaries.”<sup>54</sup> Beyond rhetoric, examples of their less-than-peaceful activities include, but are not limited to, the disruption of gay pride parades in Moscow in 2006 and 2011; driving a wooden stake through portraits of the artist Madonna; and the burning of books by J. K. Rowling, the postmodernist writer Vladimir Sorokin, the historian Eduard Radzinsky, and others seen as contrary to Orthodox religious teachings.<sup>55</sup> And while the burning of books might seem relatively harmless, the group’s leadership has been clear about the fact that they would gladly harm undesirable authors and other artists personally: “for now, we can’t, unfortunately, openly burn heretics, but we will burn books and tapes [in their stead].”<sup>56</sup>

It is true that in the period post-2012 SPKh has been relatively inactive and nonviolent. But its name recognition remains high and indeed the organization may be considered the “ur”-prototype of fundamentalist Orthodox groups active on the ultranationalist scene; for example, SPKh was the source of the popular logo “Orthodoxy or Death” (banned by the Russian courts as extremist but still encountered among members of the Orthodox far right).<sup>57</sup> Moreover, to this day no ultranationalist gathering in Moscow passes without the participation of SPKh, whose activists have for years led the annual “Russian March” parade. As such their appropriation of the “traditional values”

52. Yakov Krotov, “Pravoslavie i nasilie,” *Radio Svoboda*, August 1, 2015, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/27163441.html>.

53. “Spisok deputatov, voshedshykh v MDO,” Sova Center, January 22, 2003, <http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/authorities/legal-regulation/2003/01/d94/>.

54. “V Nizhnem Novgorode prazdnik Kazanskoy ikony Bogoroditsy otmetili pravoslavno-patrioticheskimi krestnym khodom,” Portal Credo, November 11, 2003, <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=news&id=14937>.

55. “Stolkoveniya militsii s seksmen’shinstvami i ikh protivnikami zamenili Moskve gei-parad,” *Lenta*, May 27, 2006, <https://lenta.ru/news/2006/05/27/parad3/>; “Pravoslavnye otpravili Garri Pottera na koster inkvizitsii,” *Kommersant*, October 10, 2007, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/813242>.

56. “Leonid Simonovich: Eretikov szhigat’ ne mozhem, a knigi budem,” *Blagovest Info*, July 20, 2006, <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=7751>.

57. “Pravoslavnyy khudozhnik-patriot: ‘Vremya amorfnykh simvolov zakanchivaetsya—im na smenu prikhodyat boevye znamena!’” *Baltija*, June 10, 2014, <http://www.baltija.eu/news/read/38592>.



terminology takes on importance beyond its specific relationship to their own violent actions and is worth noting here.

As it happens, “traditional values” began cropping up in news surrounding SPKh’s activities at least six years before the term achieved widespread national recognition. Among other things, the disruption of the Moscow gay pride parade of 2006 was framed approvingly by other nationalist organizations in terms of the defense of “traditional values,” even if SPKh’s leadership didn’t explicitly reference this.<sup>58</sup> By 2009 the organization was praising patriarch Kirill as a “fundamentalist defending the traditional values of Orthodoxy and the Russian people.”<sup>59</sup> In 2010, SPKh participated in the organization of a public prayer meeting (*molitvennoye stoyanie*) in Moscow “in defense of traditional spiritual-moral values.”<sup>60</sup> Generally speaking, their activities fall within the template exemplified by the Committee for the Moral Renaissance of the Fatherland—a focus on moral issues (homosexuality in this case) and “blasphemous” cultural production, and a preference for unconventional methods of protests, including violent action.

## BORN/Russian Image

While SPKh’s violent activities may be thought of as rather vegetarian in nature—destruction of books, scuffles during gay pride parades—the Militant Organization of Russian Nationalists (BORN, *Boevaya Organizatsiya Russkikh Natsionalistov*, also known as *Russkii Obraz* [Russian Image] after the eponymous journal headed by one of the group’s founders) distinguished itself between the years 2006 and 2009 with a series of gruesome murders of liberal activists and ethnic minorities, undertaken with the apparent intention of sparking a Russian nationalist revolution. In the view of some analysts, Orthodox Christianity was central to the group’s ideology.<sup>61</sup> Initial research that we undertook questioned the validity of this interpretation, as the two facts usually brought as evidence of its “Orthodox” nature are on the face of it circumstantial—BORN’s founders Ilya Goryachev and Nikita Tikhonov spent some time in Serbia in the company of Orthodox monarchists, while Goryachev worked for a while for the Orthodox television channel Spas.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, nowhere in their public statements did the group’s members ever claim specifically “Orthodox” theological motivation.

At the same time, closer examination of BORN’s explanations of their own behavior reveals that the defense of “traditional values”—here as elsewhere primarily understood in terms of

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58. It’s possible that SPKh members were already speaking in these terms in 2006—we were unable to find direct quotes. But they certainly reposted on their website (approvingly) the reportage of others concerning the event that did use the language of “traditional values.” “O nas pishut,” SPKh, 2006, [http://www.pyckie.org/onaspishut\\_2006/onaspishut-2006-27-05\\_2.shtml](http://www.pyckie.org/onaspishut_2006/onaspishut-2006-27-05_2.shtml).

59. “V preddverii Pomestnogo Sobora Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi,” SPKh, January 21, 2009, <http://www.pyckie.org/novosti/2009/novosti-210109.shtml>.

60. “V Moskve proshlo molitvennoe stoyanie v sashchitu traditsionnykh dukhovno-nravstvennykh tsennostey,” SPKh, November 28, 2010, <http://www.pyckie.org/novosti/2010/novosti-281110.shtml>.

61. Robert Horvath, “Russkii Obraz and the politics of ‘managed nationalism,’” *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 3 (2014).

62. “‘Lenta. Ru’ izuchila istoriyu odnoy iz samykh agressivnykh ul’ttrapravnykh gruppirovok Rossii,” *Lenta*, February 17, 2014, <https://lenta.ru/articles/2014/02/17/born/>; “Otets Nikity Tikhonova zayavil, chto nachil syna obnaruzhyvat’ slezhku,” RIA Novosti, March 3, 2011, <https://ria.ru/incidents/20110331/3596666668.html>.

heterosexual morality—contributes to framing the group’s self-understanding.<sup>63</sup> For example, BORN member Mikhail Volkov admitted to fatally attacking antifascist activist Feodor Filatov in 2008, on the basis that the victim was a gang leader whose “group consisted of punks, skin-heads . . . and attacked . . . activists defending traditional values,” framing his own actions as justified by the defense of such values.<sup>64</sup> Evgenia Khasis, convicted along with Tikhonov of killing human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova, explicitly sees the long-term goal of nationalism as “moving the vector of our state away from the abyss, ‘rightward,’ toward traditional values and the maintaining of Russia and her people for future generations.” This, in explicit opposition to (Western-led) globalization and “alternative marriages.”<sup>65</sup> Finally, Right Hook (*Khuk Sprava*), a rock band associated with BORN, also trades on the discourse of “traditional values,” here too understood apparently in heterosexual terms, and under attack by a (globalist) “System.”<sup>66</sup>

Equally significant, further research reveals that BORN’s members very likely did understand “traditional values” from an Orthodox vantage point that goes beyond the usual rhetorically ritualistic appeal of Russian nationalists to Orthodoxy as a source of their inspiration. For instance, far from being marginally connected to the Church, Goryachev was connected enough with the ROC elite to appear as an author on the popular website *Pravoslavie.ru*, founded by then-archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov, abbot of Sretensky monastery in Moscow and purportedly the spiritual adviser of Vladimir Putin.<sup>67</sup> In the same jailhouse interview cited above, Khasis positions herself as a fervent Orthodox believer; her lover Tikhonov as well couches his interpretation of nationalist ideology in language that indicates possession of at least a rudimentary understanding of Orthodox theology.<sup>68</sup>

## Enteo and “God’s Will”

For all that the idea that Orthodox “traditional values” must be defended did play a role in BORN’s activities, it must be reiterated that the primary driver of violence in their case was secular ultranationalist ideology mixed in with racism, and that they saw/see their role in primarily political, not religious terms. Not so for the group known as “God’s Will” (*Bozhiya Volya*), which undertook a number of mass media-worthy violent actions from 2012 to 2016. Led by Dmitri Tsorionov, alias Enteo, the Moscow-based group was formed explicitly as a reaction against the Pussy Riot incident and consisted mostly of well-educated young men who attacked LGBT gatherings, disrupted

63. Dmitriy Okrest, “Identifikatsiya BORN,” *Batenka*, January 25, 2017, <https://batenka.ru/protection/born/>.

64. “Ya v oruzhii ne razbirayus,” Kasparov, December 23, 2014, [http://www.kasparov.ru/material.php?id=54983FA0E0F98&section\\_id=49BFBA87308D1](http://www.kasparov.ru/material.php?id=54983FA0E0F98&section_id=49BFBA87308D1).

65. Evgeny Levkovich, “Evgenii Khasis—Interv’yu zhurnalu *Rolling Stone*,” *Russkiy verdikt*, January 15, 2013, <http://rusverdict.com/rollingstone/>.

66. “Khuk Sprava: “My nauchim vas pravil’no stavit” udar,” text from 2008, <http://hooksprava.org/news/76>. Accessed July 15, 2017.

67. Il’ya Goryachev, “V chem obvinyayut generala Mladicha,” *Pravoslavie*, June 6, 2011, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/46908.html>.

68. “Nikita Tikhonov pro islamskie tendentsii v Russkom dvizhenii,” *LiveJournal*, September 8, 2011, <http://e-hasis.livejournal.com/6219.html>.

the religious ceremonies of “nontraditional sects,” raided “anti-Orthodox” art exhibits, and closed down “blasphemous” theatrical performances, among other activities with a violent edge.<sup>69</sup> Among their most famous exploits was the partial destruction of a retrospective of the avant-garde Soviet sculptor Vadim Sidur, at Moscow’s Manezh exhibition hall.<sup>70</sup>

“God’s Will” framed its mission in essentially religious terms, purposefully eschewing nationalist rhetoric. Enteo himself was a parishioner of Father Daniil Sysoev, a young priest known for combining ultra-Orthodox missionary zeal with an explicit rejection of nationalism; Sysoev was ultimately gunned down in his own church, apparently by a militant Islamist. Despite denunciations by some prominent clergy within the ROC—who maintained that God’s Will’s ideology actually contained a great deal of vague New Age, semi-pagan influences—the group, and especially Enteo himself, successfully established a media image as militant defenders of a beleaguered Orthodox faith, spending four years as poster children for Orthodox activism before disbanding in 2016.<sup>71</sup> That year, most active members broke with Tsorionov, apparently over the question of tactics, and formed their own organization, “Orthodox Defense” (*Pravoslavnaya Oborona*), the very name of which suggested a continued focus on defending the faith; characteristically, their media presence so far indicates an unflagging concern with “traditional” moral values.<sup>72</sup>

Unsurprisingly, scratching the surface of Enteo’s rhetoric reveals “traditional values under attack” as an abiding concern. In this sense, it is worth quoting here his statement in an interview given to Pravda.ru, in response to the question “what sparked your . . . social activism?”:

My social activism began in the spring of this year [2012] after a series on unrelenting attacks on the Russian Orthodox Church [*in context, clearly referring to Pussy Riot*]. In general, many Christians, seeing what kinds of attacks are being carried out against the things we hold holy, ceased to be lukewarm; they understood that our spiritual values are being substantially undermined, and began to take more cohesive action.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, provocative as they were, Enteo’s activities taken in defense of said “traditional values” should be read as a continuation of the path trodden by the Committee for the Moral Renaissance of the Fatherland more than a decade earlier. We see here the same general objects of ire:

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69. “Na gey-parade v Moskve zaderzhali Enteo s Alekseevym,” Telekanal Rossiya, May 30, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K\\_ebXLKTTYo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_ebXLKTTYo); “V Moskve zaderzhali posledovatelye Letayushchego makaronnogo monstra,” *Lenta*, August 17, 2013, <https://lenta.ru/news/2013/08/17/pasta/>; “Pravoslavnyy aktivist izbezhal ugovnogo dela za sorvannyu futbolku,” *Lenta*, September 24, 2012, <https://lenta.ru/news/2012/09/24/enteo/>; “Pravoslavnye aktivisty napali na sotrudnika muzeya GULAGa iz-za interv’yu,” *Lenta*, February 21, 2014, <https://lenta.ru/news/2014/02/21/davydov/>.

70. “V Moskve na vystavke sovetskogo avangarda proizoshel pogrom,” RBK, August 14, 2015 <http://www.rbc.ru/politics/14/08/2015/55ce15bb9a79474f19c056c8>.

71. “Krakh Enteo: O psevdokhristianskoy sekte “Bozh’ya Volya,”” YouTube, May 4, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNtf2-ZoUWg>.

72. “Dvizhenie ‘Pravoslavnaya Oborona,’” VKontakte, <https://vk.com/pravoborona>.

73. “Dmitriy Tsorionov: my vpolnyaem sotszakaz,” *Pravda*, September 25, 2012, <https://www.pravda.ru/faith/faithculture/25-09-2012/1129252-tzorionov-0/>.

immorality broadly speaking, blasphemy, and “sects”; the tactics differ in that, unlike the committee, Enteo and his followers did not spend time looking to address their concerns through legal channels, instead ramping up the unconventional and violent approach previously immortalized by the *Caution, Religion!* incident.

## Sorok Sorokov

Bringing together around 200 Orthodox activists in Moscow and counting on the support of approximately 10,000 believers in the nearby regions, the Sorok Sorokov movement also emerged in the wake of the Pussy Riot scandal in 2012. Since then, Sorok Sorokov has garnered the reputation of an aggressively violent organization with fascist tendencies. The group’s notoriety has been reinforced by the fact that it provides security for patriarch Kirill, despite the known presence among its members of activists with ties to skinheads and other far-right associations. But Sorok Sorokov’s greatest visibility in the media has come about because of its willingness to use force against local residents opposed to the building of new churches in their neighborhoods through the “200 Churches” program jointly launched by the Moscow city government and the Russian Orthodox Church in 2009.<sup>74</sup> The most famous example here is the scandal surrounding Moscow’s Trofyanka park, in which Sorok Sorokov activists physically assaulted and otherwise intimidated local inhabitants protesting against plans to build a church that would take up a significant amount of the territory’s current green space.<sup>75</sup>

Whether or not Sorok Sorokov may be thought of in terms of Russian nationalism with fascist overtones is a question for other researchers;<sup>76</sup> for our purposes, the question of the movement’s integration of “traditional values” into its *raison d’être* is important in terms of supporting the chapter’s overall argument. And indeed, Sorok Sorokov counts as central among its goals “the defense of traditional values.”<sup>77</sup> To quote the movement’s leader, Andrei Kormukhin, “We decided to defend Orthodox values, and will strive to keep Russia as it was left to us by our Orthodox ancestors, with its thousand-year history and culture.”<sup>78</sup> Unsurprisingly, this includes the defense of Russia from “gay propaganda and blasphemy,” as well as from the aggressive intrusion of “foreign sects.”<sup>79</sup> At the same time, the violent defense of the “200 Churches” program is also justified in

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74. Nadezhda Guzheva, “Zashchitnik Torfyanki: Eti fashisty gotovy nas ubit’!” *Sobesednik*, December 2, 2016, <https://sobesednik.ru/obshchestvo/20161202-zashchitnik-torfyanki-eti-fashisty-gotovy-nas-ubit>; “V parke ‘Torfyanka’ pravoslavnye aktivisty izbili devushku,” *Bol’shoy Gorod*, June 30, 2015, <http://bg.ru/city/news/4188/>.

75. Il’ya Kizirov, “40 Sorokov i 10 arestov,” *Radio Svoboda*, November 14, 2016, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/28116375.html>.

76. Nikolay Mitrokhin, “Rokovye ‘Sorok Sorokov,’” *Grani*, October 12, 2015, <http://graniru.org/opinion/mitrokhin/m.244957.html>.

77. Roman Lunkin, “Dvizhenie ‘Sorok sorokov’: pravoslavnyy fundamentalism vo vrazhdebnoy okruzhennosti,” Keston Institute, [http://www.keston.org.uk/\\_russianreview/edition71/01-Lunkin-40x40-71.html](http://www.keston.org.uk/_russianreview/edition71/01-Lunkin-40x40-71.html); “Andrey Kormukhin: ‘Yadernoe oruzhie russkogo naroda—eto ego dukhovnost,’” *Pravoslavnyy vzglyad*, November 13, 2014, <http://orthoview.ru/andrey-kormuxin-yadernoe-oruzhie-russkogo-naroda-eto-ego-duxovnost/>.

78. “Andrey Kormukhin: Spasat’sya nuzhno bandoy,” *Pravoslavie*, June 17, 2015, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/80033.html>.

79. “Pravoslavnye prosyat zapretit’ deyatel’nost’ astrologov, uzhestochit’ otvetstvennost’ za gey-propagandu i koshchunstvo,” *Interfax-religiya*, August 14, 2015, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=59796>.

part through an appeal to the values trope. For instance, according to Kormukhin, “every church [built] protects the boundaries of our moral values”; the defense of values is thus inextricably linked to the fight against those seeking to prevent the building of new churches.<sup>80</sup>

### “Matilda,” “The Orthodox State,” and Molotov Cocktails

Finally, in this section, a few words need to be said about the most recent widely publicized incident involving violence in defense of Orthodox traditions in Russia. The episode was still evolving as of the writing of this chapter, and as such we can do no more than describe it here while offering a few preliminary thoughts about its significance for the larger argument.

In May 2016, one Igor Smykov, head of an organization calling itself “Orthodox Mission for the Revival of the Spiritual Values of the Russian People” (*Pravoslavnaya Missiya po Vozrozhdeniyu Dukhovnykh Tsennostei Russkogo Naroda*), filed a complaint with the General Procuracy of the Russian Federation, asking it to investigate the then-unfinished film *Matilda*—a semi-fictionalized account of the romance between Nicholas II and the ballerina Matilda Kshesinskaya. Smykov accused the film’s creators of “inciting religious hatred” and “offending the feelings of religious believers,” as it allegedly portrayed the canonized Tsar in ways that cast doubt as to his saintliness.<sup>81</sup> Smykov’s complaint concerned the film’s trailer, as the full-length feature had not then been completed. By the summer of 2017, the controversy around *Matilda* had grown from one isolated complaint to a full-blown storm, in which heated rhetoric by anti-*Matilda* Orthodox activists was compounded by violent arson attacks on movie theaters across Russia that had agreed to screen the film, as well as the firebombing of a car belonging to the attorney of *Matilda* director Aleksei Uchitel.<sup>82</sup>

Several aspects of the *Matilda* episode should be highlighted here. First, the campaign against the film began, it appears, at the instigation of ultra-monarchist nationalist circles professing a theological understanding of Nicholas II’s martyrdom that equates his death with Christ’s salvific sacrifice, an interpretation rejected wholesale by the Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>83</sup> Whereas these Orthodox activists had remained on the margins of the ROC throughout the post-Soviet period, *Matilda* brought them to the forefront of Russian society as the image of Orthodoxy du jour.

Second, *Matilda* brought widespread media coverage to vigilante groups previously below the radar, among them the so-called Orthodox State (*Pravoslavnoye Gosudarstvo*), which sent open letters to theater owners across the country with veiled threats of arson in case of the film’s

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80. “Andrey Kormukhin: ‘Yadernoe oruzhie russkogo naroda—eto ego dukhovnost,’” *Pravoslavnyy vzglyad*, November 13, 2014, <http://orthoview.ru/andrey-kormuxin-yadernoe-oruzhie-russkogo-naroda-eto-ego-duxovnost/>.

81. “Glava ‘Pravoslavnoy missii po vozrozhdeniyu dukhovnykh tsennostey russkogo naroda’ pozhalovalsya v prokuraturu na treyler neokonchennogo fil’ma o Matil’de Kshesinskoy,” *Portal Credo*, May 11, 2016, <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=news&id=120276>.

82. “Lider ‘Khristianskogo gosudarstva’ zaderzhan po delu o podzhoge iz-za ‘Matil’dy,’” *Interfax*, September 20, 2017, <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/579803>.

83. Aleksandr Soldatov, “Vosstanie ‘sekt tsarebozhnikov,’ otets Sergiy (v miru Nikolay Romanov) i Poklonskaya: Pochemu oni tak vliyatel’ny, khot’ i razdrzhayut RPTs,” *Novaya Gazeta*, August 15, 2017, <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2017/08/15/73480-tsarebozhniki-i-konets-sveta>.



screening.<sup>84</sup> Their appearance on the scene would suggest the need to further investigate the quickly changing landscape of Orthodox vigilantism, as at least some actors seem poised to ramp up levels of violence in defense of its ideological positions.

Third, and most important in the context of this chapter's overall argument, the anti-*Matilda* crusade has been couched in the terminology of "the defense of traditional values" almost from its inception. Of central importance here seem to be the tropes of family (as Nicholas II's successful marriage to Alexandra of Hesse-Darmstadt is held up by the ROC as an example worthy of emulation by the faithful) and the inviolability of Russia's sacred spiritual heritage ("Nicholas II is a saint, therefore any criticism/demonstration of him in a less-than-saintly light is an attack against said heritage"), both integral elements of the "traditional values" concept as we have described it.<sup>85</sup> At this stage our impression is that couching the campaign in "traditional values" terms has made the violence associated with it more palatable to some segments of the Russian public; given the still-evolving nature of this controversy we can only suggest the need for further research on this issue in the future.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### "Traditional Values" as a Useful Lens for Understanding "Orthodox" Violence

Certainly, the examples discussed above do not provide exhaustive coverage of how "traditional values" sit on the nexus of faith and violence within the Russian Orthodox community.<sup>86</sup> Still, even this brief overview indicates that, at a minimum, the theme of "traditional values" is an important one for understanding violence carried out in Russia by self-identified Orthodox Christians. Whether the perpetrators are primarily motivated by nationalist ideology or religious feelings (or other factors), "traditional values" almost invariably appear in the background of such events. Thus, the approach provides a lens useful for interpreting such seemingly disparate episodes as priests calling for violent pogroms of "sects" and Cossacks physically assaulting members of Pussy Riot during the Sochi Olympics.<sup>87</sup>

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84. Yulia Sapronova, Anna Kim, and Filipp Aleksenko, "Delo 'Matil'dy': kak fil'm Uchitelya stal samym skandal'nym v Rossii," RBK, September 15, 2017.

85. Among numerous examples, see "Glava 'Pravoslavnoi missii po vozrozhdeniu dukhovnykh tsennostei russkogo naroda' pozhalovalsia v prokuraturu na treiler neokonchennogo fil'ma o Matilde Kseshinskoi"; Nikolay Chumakov, "V MVD nazvali molitvennoe stoyanie protiv 'Matil'dy' v Omske aktsiei 'za traditsionnye tsennosti,'" *TJ*, September 17, 2017, <https://tjournal.ru/59545-v-mvd-nazvali-molitvennoe-stoyanie-protiv-matildy-v-omske-akciey-za-tradicionnye-tsennosti>; "V Moskve sostoyalos' molitvennoe stoyanie protiv fil'ma 'Matil'da,'" NTV, August 1, 2017, <http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/1881818/>; "Uchitel, 'Matil'da,' i IGI," *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya*, August 18, 2017, [http://ruskline.ru/news\\_rl/2017/08/18/uchitel\\_matilda\\_i\\_igil/](http://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2017/08/18/uchitel_matilda_i_igil/).

86. A comprehensive overview would have to account for such actors as *Russkiy Narodnyy Sobor*, the *RNE*, *Soyuz Pravoslavnykh Grazhdan*, and *Soyuz Pravoslavnoy Molodezhy*, among others; the constraints of this paper do not permit such exhaustive treatment.

87. "Protoierei Smirnov: Gromite poganye sekty!" *YouTube*, July 14, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ewcFzQiL90> (Accessed August 20, 2017); "Uchastnits Pussy Riot v Sochi izbili kazaki s nagaykami," *YouTube*, February 19, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bi2dRyUHxco>.



Furthermore, it should be evident from the above discussion that, when the government adopted the language of “traditional values” and their defense in 2012, it did so on the basis of a preexisting discourse that had been brewing within the Russian Orthodox Church since the 1990s. This discourse first appeared in rather marginal circles, emerging with the *Ostorozhno, Religia!* episode of 2003 into the Orthodox mainstream; from there it easily moved into wider society in 2012 once the regime gave the signal from the top. One might here draw an analogy with the idea of the “Russian World” (*Russkiy Mir*) developed by Patriarch Kirill in an effort to solidify the ROC’s hold on its Ukrainian parishes, an idea that was famously appropriated by the Kremlin during the annexation of Crimea. In any case, it is striking the degree to which the regime’s priorities in terms of “traditional values” have revolved around sexual morality and the “sectarian” threat, both themes central to the Orthodox discourse on the subject as far back as the early days of the Committee for the Moral Renaissance of the Fatherland; the only thing so far missing is a state-directed attack on blasphemous cultural production.

To be sure, domestically the regime’s defense of “traditional values” has taken the form of nonviolent legal measures. Internationally, however, it is hard not to notice the presence of the “traditional values” undertone in the confrontation with Ukraine, as opposition to that country’s Western choice has included concerns over the importation of “nontraditional” moral norms; in this context the rhetoric of “Gay-Ropa” takes on more than incidental significance. This chapter has concentrated on violence/Orthodoxy within Russia’s borders; future research should, in our view, explore how “traditional values” plays into justifying the Putin regime’s intrusion into the conflict in Donbas. The rather active involvement of Sorok Sorokov activists, as well as other nationalist organizations such as the Russian Imperial Movement (*Russkoye Imperskoye Dvizheniye*) and *Narodnyi Sobor*, in setting up the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk republics would be a good starting point for such an exploration.<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, we must emphasize here that the symbolic attack against the artist—from the Pussy Riot incident to the destruction of Sidur’s sculptures—is an important part of the general “war of values,” given that perpetrators’ defensive rhetorical appeal to self-defense or the defense of religious feelings. Common to all Orthodox violent vigilantes is the idea of reasonable self-protection against blasphemy, which is rendered acceptable precisely because it is a gesture of self-protection. Thus, symbolic violence emerges as an important part of the general issue of violence in defense of “traditional values,” a potentially fruitful avenue for further research in other religious and cultural contexts.

Finally, it should be recalled from the second section of this paper that the discourse of “traditional values” is not exclusive to the Russian Orthodox community: it has found significant support among the country’s other three “traditional religions” (Islam, Judaism, Buddhism). Anecdotal evidence that we came across during our research suggests that violence at least in defense of “Islamic traditions” is a real problem across Russia, particularly though not exclusively in areas with

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88. “Pravoslavnye voyuyut i molyatsya za Igorya Strelkova i Novorossiyyu,” *Russkaya Vesna*, September 14, 2014, <http://rusvesna.su/news/1410708412>; see also, as a starting point, Alexander Verhovsky, “Dinamika prestuplenii ne-navisti i deyatel’nosti ul’trapravykh grupp i dvizhenii v Rossii v 2010-e gody,” *Put’ k Miru i Bezopasnosti* 52, no. 1 (2017): 116–124.

a highly concentrated Muslim population. In our view, the topic deserves to be developed in further research; among other things, one might ask whether, and if so to what extent, the government's emphasis on the defense of "traditional values" has contributed to the rise of violence within non-Orthodox religious communities.

### Mobilizing "Traditional Values": The State, Uncivil Society, and "Religious" Violence

Tackling the issue of "traditional values" and violence from the point of view of civil society—once upon a time understood as central to the construction of a functioning democracy in the post-Soviet space—we may consider that the case we have presented turns the question on its head. At least here, it is evident that not all "social activist" organizations may be considered "civil," and the issues they defend may end up supporting authoritarian tendencies. Indeed, contemporary Russia has witnessed a mushrooming of ultranationalist or religious fundamentalist vigilante organizations claiming to protect "traditional values" against enemies and seeking to restore a "traditional order" in the country. The short overview above (and it should be noted that the examples of such organizations can be extended) highlights a core issue: political mobilization in an authoritarian country like Russia has a price. The new public accord of Putin's government post-2012 is based on the "besieged camp" metaphor, and the politics of mobilization have required the activation of uncivil society's members. Here, we expand somewhat on how this dynamic functions.

First, these vigilantes of uncivil society—sometimes but not always directly connected with the Russian Orthodox Church—are uncontrolled and, despite the opinions of some Russian liberals, usually do not have ties to the regime. Sporadic contacts of the leaders of such groups with representatives of state authority is not proof that the Kremlin has inspired such activity. And while it is true that, on occasion, vigilante actions may elicit the sympathy and even support of local authorities, this does not seem to be a generalized pattern: if the illegality of a particular action is established, law enforcement has overall worked in favor of punishing the vigilantes. At the same time, the nationalistic shift in official narratives has clearly mobilized nationalists generally, and violent nationalists in particular. (An analogy here would be the positive reaction among the alt-right in the United States to the unexpected victory of Donald J. Trump in the 2016 presidential elections.) Most relevant to the topic of this paper, the idea of the protection of "traditional values" from various threats has, since 2012, been actively discussed at the government level, and disseminated through education, research, and mass media. This has had the effect of reinforcing the dynamics already present within uncivil society itself, as the proliferation of the "traditional values" trope inspires already active members of uncivil society to organize themselves in the protection of these values against enemies.

Second, particularly in 2012–2013, actively homophobic propaganda of state-controlled TV described LGBT people as morally or physically perverted people—also affiliated with the "West." "Traditional values" as a term has become ubiquitous in mass media calls for the protection of children from pedophilia and the traditional family from destruction. In the meantime, the Constitutional Court has declared that the so-called LGBT propaganda law does not violate the values and principles of the Russian Constitution, notably stating that the slogan "To be gay and love gays is normal, beating gays and killing gays is a crime" contained propaganda of a "nontraditional" sexual relationship. In this context it is not surprising that violence against LGBT people

based on the need to protect “traditional values” has found increasing legitimization in Russian society.

Additional state legitimization of violence by uncivil society against religious minorities could potentially be found in the regime’s policy against “nontraditional religious groups” in the framework of the recently adopted law on missionary activity. It is not a coincidence that the adoption of this law was followed by the designation of the Jehovah’s Witnesses as an extremist organization and continued everyday pressure against the Church of Scientology. It is true, however, that there has been no serious rise in incidence of violence against religious minorities in response to the adoption of the anti-missionary law; the question of why this is the case is worthy of further exploration.

Finally, we believe that the phenomenon discussed here—of uncivil society activists taking their cue from the state’s nationalistic turn and ramping up violence in defense of “traditional values”—cannot be fully understood without considering rhetorical signals from the Russian Orthodox Church itself, which in turn may intensify the problem. It should be emphasized that direct provocations to violence from clergy and bishops of the ROC are rare, and that when they do occur other clergy have been known to publicly denounce them.<sup>89</sup> Still, top officials of the ROC have occasionally expressed a kind of empathy to those who “cannot overcome their natural anger and beat up perverted people,” contributing to the perception that such behavior is socially acceptable; on at least one widely resonant occasion, a prominent clergyman led a physical attack against a secular concert on the grounds that it was disrupting Vespers at the nearby church.<sup>90</sup> Overall, the total atmosphere of hysteria and the charged discourse of the “besieged camp” make the real prevention of (Orthodox) violence in defense of “traditional values” in contemporary Russia highly problematic.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Russian government:

First of all, serious corrections are needed in the sphere of official policy—all violent action, regardless of its goals, should be declared illegal as well as immoral. The “struggle of values” should not be converted into either physical violence or symbolic violation of artistic freedom. The vigilantes should be allowed no access to state support, and all groups involved in any kind of violence ought to be excluded from projects somehow supported by the Russian state.

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89. See, for example, the inter-Orthodox clergy debate around the occasionally violent rhetoric of Father Vsevolod Chaplin, and the more recent denunciations of Father Andre Tkachev’s public defense of domestic violence, on the Pravoslavie i Mir web portal.

90. One of the authors obtained documents in a criminal case in 2007–2008, when an unidentified Orthodox priest seemed to be actively ministering to a group of Nazi skinheads involved in a number of racist attacks. The name of the priest remains unknown, because of the lack of interest from the investigative officer (D. Dubrovskiy, private archive, circa 2007). See also “Protoierey Dmitriy Smirnov v roli doktora Khausa: ‘Vse Vrut,’” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, July 6, 2015, <http://www.mk.ru/social/2015/07/06/protoierey-dmitriy-smirnov-v-rol-doktora-khausa-vse-vrut.html>.

To prevent hate and to reach more harmonious social relations, the following steps should be undertaken:

#### Law:

- Avoid the use of the term “traditional” in relation to religious organizations in official discourse, as it creates the discriminatory opposing category “nontraditional,” and cease discriminatory policies against the representatives of minority groups, especially Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Church of Scientology, and all independent Muslim groups; provide special protection for members of these communities.
- Reconsider the idea of the particular traditional values that are preventing the Russian Federation from applying the principles and values of universal human rights, especially in constitutional law.
- Ensure that counterterrorism police units prioritize all hate crime based on religious hatred.
- Repeal the Ministry of Justice’s list of extremist literature, which contains a significant proportion of religious texts, many of which have no relation whatsoever to politics, extremist or otherwise.
- Increase the transparency for the registration and re-registration process for all religious groups. The current process of registration for new religious groups is difficult and non-transparent.

#### Mass media:

Using existing legal tools, prevent the hysteria and false news about religious groups, which are currently inspiring violent vigilantes to physical and symbolic violent action. Give special attention to balanced information about the activity, basic values, and everyday life of Russia’s small religious communities. In general, organize public dialogue on the concept of “traditional values” and its content for the mass population.

#### Education, research, and science:

The scientific and academic community should use the standards of the OSCE, to which Russia nominally subscribes, in religious education—in particular the Toledo principles of religious education<sup>91</sup>—especially when it comes to training experts in religious affairs. Reserve funds for research and education in the field of religious minorities. Include courses devoted to the current debates in traditional values in the curriculum of the social sciences and humanities, especially gender studies and human rights.

#### For Russian NGOs:

Organize projects to include different religious minorities in Russia’s everyday social and cultural life, to overcome the current stigmatization and marginalization. Special attention should be paid

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91. “Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools,” ODIHR, 2007, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/29154?download=true>.

to the public representation of such communal activity, to increase the visibility and transparency of the religious minorities.

For the Russian Orthodox Church:

Representatives of the ROC should stop communicating and collaborating with vigilante groups, and clearly express the Church's negative attitude toward any kind of violence, even that meant to protect "traditional values." The Church should elaborate and propose a peaceful way to promote the ideology of "traditional values" without creating enemies and blaming the Western world for the alleged destruction of Russian "traditional values."