

THE GUARDIANS OF TRADITIONAL VALUES

RUSSIA AND THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE QUEST FOR STATUS

Alicja Curanović

Preface by Lucian Leustean

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PREFACE BY LUCIAN LEUSTEAN²

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PREFACE

LUCIAN LEUSTEAN

The armed conflict in eastern Ukraine that broke out in April 2014 followed months of political and military uncertainty in the region. From the start, the global mass media lamented the lack of public communication between Ukraine and Russia. When meetings took place between the countries' political leaders, photographs of awkward handshakes reinforced the impression that progress was strained. One particular meeting between Ukrainian Presidents Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin stood out. On October 17, 2014, the two leaders met in Milan under the auspices of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The discussions focused on concrete steps to reach a demarcation line between the belligerent forces and to alleviate the gas dispute between Ukraine and Russia. Although only limited progress was made in finding a solution to the conflict, the meeting was significant in demonstrating the thin line between religion and politics.

The day before, on October 16, Putin stopped in Belgrade, where he was welcomed by a military parade to mark the centenary of the start of World War I. Serbian Patriarch Irinaeus and Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić awarded him the highest honor, the Order of the Republic of Serbia, for promoting close relations between Russia and Serbia.

On October 17, the political negotiations in Milan were paralleled by comparable discussions in Rome. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, in charge of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church's Department for External Church Relations, attended one of the sessions of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Catholic Bishops. The Assembly was summoned by Pope Francis to assess the role of the family in contemporary society. At the end of the session, Hilarion gave an interview with Radio Vatican that

offered an insight into the theological discussions and the nature of the conflict in Ukraine. Hilarion began by stating that churches "should not interfere in a political confrontation." His remark was poignant since after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine witnessed the emergence of three competing Orthodox churches, the largest of which was the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. This church has at times been at odds with other Ukrainian churches, in particular the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which notably took a pro-European stance at the start of EuroMaidan protests. While Hilarion confirmed that churches "found themselves on different sides of the barricades," in his opinion, "the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate [...] does not wish to identify with a particular segment of the political spectrum but supports all [of the] people."

Most importantly, Hilarion denied that the conflict in eastern Ukraine could lead to the emergence of a national Ukrainian church, stating that "calls to establish an autocephalous Church are actually calls to tear away the Ukrainian Orthodox faithful from the united Russian Orthodox Church [...]" There is no other reason for the existence of a schism then to state that an independent state should have an independent Church [...] [Between Ukraine and Russia there is] a spiritual relationship which has existed for many centuries going back to our common Dniester baptismal font of Prince Vladimir."¹

The meetings in Milan and Rome were connected. As Alicja Curanović shows in her paper, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian church and the Russian political regime have worked

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine witnessed the emergence of three competing Orthodox churches.

¹ The Russian Orthodox Church, Department of External Church Relations, "Metropolitan Hilarion's Interview with Radio Vatican," October 17, 2014, <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/10/17/news109671/>.

Since 1991, Orthodoxy has gradually moved to the center of political power in Russia, from both an institutional and an ideological perspective.

together “in a quest for status” both at home and in international affairs. The Russian Orthodox Church, representing the largest number of Orthodox faithful, has built on this state support by promoting “traditional values” to foster relations with predominant Orthodox countries (hence, the close mutual relations between Russia and Serbia). Since 1991, Orthodoxy has gradually moved to the center of political power in Russia, from both an institutional (with the Church’s Department of External Church Relations working closely with state institutions) and an ideological perspective. In particular, an emphasis on the ideological difference between Russian Orthodoxy and the West has found echo in the political elite’s anti-Western rhetoric.²

Curanović’s paper, based on a presentation at the Transatlantic Academy’s October 29, 2014 workshop on “Orthodox Christianity and Foreign

Policy” held in Bucharest, Romania,³ provides an overview of the complexity of church-state relations and the far-reaching impact of Russia’s employment of Orthodoxy in foreign affairs. Future negotiations to solve the conflict in eastern Ukraine will have to take into account not only agreement on a demarcation military line and the gas dispute between Ukraine and Russia, but also the role of churches in national/transnational identity. Hilarion’s timely claim regarding the complex “spiritual relationship” between Ukraine and Russia may prove highly potent, whether in resolving or exacerbating the conflict.

² For an overview of Russian church-state relations in post-Cold War period, see Z. Knox and A. Mitrofanova, “The Russian Orthodox Church” in L. Leustean (Ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 38-66.

³ The Bucharest workshop was held in cooperation with the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. I would like to thank the other conference participants and particularly the other presenters, Iuliana Conovici, Daniela Kalkandjieva, Paschalis Kitromilides, and Natalia Shlikhta. <http://www.transatlanticacademy.org/events/2014-10-29/orthodox-christianity-and-foreign-policy>.

2 INTRODUCTION

On December 4, 2014, in his annual state-of-the-nation address to the Federal Assembly, Russian President Vladimir Putin pointed to traditional values as being one of the country's policy priorities. In the same speech, he praised Russia "for honorably defending truth and justice" in the face of the Ukrainian crisis. Finally, Putin said that while for many European states national pride was a long-forgotten notion, for Russia it was a cornerstone of its existence. Although traditional values, justice, and a sense of pride might seem unrelated, they form a new distinctive ideological framework for Russian politics.

The central notion is "traditional values," which, according to the leading figures of Russia's political elite, forms the basis for Russia's politics. The ongoing retraditionalization of the Russian public sphere manifests itself in a tendency to define Russia's activity in the international arena in terms of moral duty. This explains the significance of categories such as justice and truth. Finally, national pride or, more precisely, *wounded* national pride, is one of the reasons why this shift toward traditional values in the Russian Federation has been seen in the first place. As a consequence of the humiliation caused by the failed attempts in the 1990s to catch up with the West, Russia began to stress the need to follow its own path of modernization. Emphasizing its uniqueness became a means of obtaining the status of an equal to the West.

Traditional values are usually defined in contrast to modern or post-modern values. According to Ronald Inglehart and Wayne Baker, traditional values manifest themselves in the approach to three issues: religion, family, and gender.⁴ In societies committed to traditional values, religion plays a significant role. Members of these societies show a

low tolerance for abortion, suicide, homosexuality, or divorce and consider family life to be highly valuable (e.g. characterized by the common conviction that children must make parents proud and are obliged to love unconditionally). The public sphere is dominated by men and paternalism is strong. The prominence of traditional values in social life strengthens nationalistic attitudes. In traditional societies, respect for authority and hierarchy translates into deference to the authority of God, Family, and Homeland.

The shift some societies have made to traditional values in the post-modern era is usually interpreted as a reaction to the cultural pressure exercised by the West and/or a serious socio-economic crisis that undermined the foundations of social stability. As regards the Russian Federation, both factors appeared in the 1990s and paved the way for the traditionalist reorientation. This tendency did not escape the Kremlin's notice and so, since the end of the 1990s, the authorities carefully encouraged it and used retraditionalization as a source of legitimacy.

The political effects of retraditionalization cannot be correctly assessed without taking into consideration the role of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). The Church is the most important partner the Russian state has in promoting traditional values. The high and stable level of declared adherence to Orthodox Christianity (over 60 percent) and the high level of social confidence in the Church (approximately 66 percent) make the ROC a key social institution with a significant impact on the public sphere. The noticeable rapprochement of Church and state in post-Soviet Russia has solid foundations, and reviving traditional values is just one of the shared objectives of the ROC and the Kremlin. The effects of retraditionalization are noticeable not only in domestic affairs but can also be observed in Russia's foreign policy.

National pride or, more precisely, wounded national pride, is one of the reasons why this shift toward traditional values in the Russian Federation has been seen.

⁴ R. Inglehart and W.E. Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65:1 (2000), pp. 19-51.

This paper starts with the presentation of a general framework of the rapprochement of Church and state in Russia. This is followed by the characterization of the public narrative on traditional values and examples of the rhetoric of “traditional values” in Russia’s foreign policy. It concludes with a possible interpretation of Russia’s traditionalist shift and some thoughts on the issue of whether Russian society is likely to fully embrace the retraditionalization encouraged by the authorities.

3

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHURCH-STATE RAPPROCHEMENT IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

If one compares the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the beginning of the 1990s with its present status, it is plain how far the Church has come and what a significant change Church-state relations have undergone in Russia. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the ROC regained freedom but none of the privileges it had enjoyed before the October Revolution. Although people started to show more interest in religion, this initially did not result in substantial state support. Soon enough, the benefits of religious freedom and pluralism were assessed by the ROC to be a threat to its own position. It turned out that other religious communities (e.g. various Protestant churches) were often better adapted to the new circumstances and more efficient in fulfilling believers' expectations. In order to face the growing competition, the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church under Patriarch Aleksey II (1990-2008) decided to seek refuge under the state's wing. Meanwhile the political elites, who faced a serious legitimization crisis, were looking for a way to strengthen their mandate. The Kremlin recognized the potential in supporting the ROC, an institution perceived positively by the majority of Russians. These complementary interests provided the first incentives for a Church-state rapprochement.

The political crisis of 1993⁵ gave the ROC a chance to play the role of mediator between disputing parties. President Boris Yeltsin accepted Aleksey II's invitation to talks between the president's representatives and the rebel parliament members in the Danilov Monastery in Moscow. The Church's neutral stance in a time of domestic conflict allowed it to gain the confidence of society and the gratitude of politicians, including the president

himself. These two factors contributed to the changes introduced to the Religious Freedom Act in 1997. Despite protests from many religious communities and concerns expressed by U.S. President Bill Clinton and Pope John Paul II, Yeltsin signed the bill, which significantly limited the scope of activity of religious institutions. The amended act acknowledged a special role for the ROC and the existence of four "traditional" religions in the Russian Federation — Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. In practice, this list of "traditional" religions was narrowed to particular religious institutions, e.g. the Russian Orthodox Church representing Christianity and the Gelug School within Buddhism.

The introduction of the category of "traditional" religions undermined the constitutional principal of the equality of all religious institutions. However, during Putin's first two presidential terms (2000-08), rhetoric, symbols, and gestures of cordiality dominated over actual privileges granted to religious communities. The turning point was the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev (2008-12), in which most of the Russian Orthodox Church's demands were met by the state. In December 2009, military chaplains were introduced in the Russian army. A year later, the new law on the "Return of Property of a Religious Character Held by the State or the Municipalities to Religious Organizations" came into force. In 2011, religious faculties and seminars were granted state accreditation for granting academic titles and degrees. Finally, after several pilot projects in 2012, religion was introduced into school curriculums ("Basis of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics").⁶

During his third presidential term, Putin has continued the course toward closer cooperation

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⁵ Disputes around the shape of the new constitution resulted in a political stand-off between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and the Russian parliament. The crisis was resolved by the use of military force ordered by Yeltsin.

⁶ Primary school pupils in the fourth and fifth grades can choose among six modules: Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, World Religions, and Ethics.

In contrast to 1993, the ROC did not play the role of a politically neutral national reconciler in 2012 but discreetly sided with the Kremlin.

with “traditional” religions. This is possibly an expression of his gratitude for the support religious leaders lent to him in the face of mass protests in winter 2011-12. During the February 2012 demonstrations, Putin met with representatives of all “traditional” religions at the residence of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus. The president acknowledged that the state had a debt to pay to religious organizations. He therefore assured them he would personally support a faster restitution of real estate; additionally, 3.5 billion rubles were to be allocated to renovation projects and assurances were made that the voice of the Church will have a greater presence in the media. Putin thus presented the “traditional” religious institutions with the benefits they could expect if they stayed loyal. Eventually, in contrast to 1993, the ROC did not play the role of a politically neutral national reconciler in 2012 but discreetly sided with the Kremlin.

Church-state relations, which have been reshaped in the Russian Federation since 1991, carry three distinctive features. Two of them have already been mentioned. One is the constitutional principle of a secular state — which is however weakened by the second one, the category of “traditional” religions, which enjoy certain privileges inaccessible to other (non-traditional) religious institutions. However, these benefits come at the price of loyalty to the political authorities. “Traditional” religions are expected to support state policies and to strengthen the mandate of the ruling elites. The freedom to act that religious institutions wield therefore rather resembles a “license to preach” granted by the Kremlin under the condition of loyalty and usefulness. The “license” is a third feature of church-state relations in Russia.

For obvious reasons (number of adherents, size of infrastructure, historical role, etc.) the Russian Orthodox Church occupies a central place in the Kremlin’s policy. The ROC and the state cooperate

in selected areas of the public sphere — this cooperation has been called a “social partnership.” It encompasses the Church’s service in the army, detention and social care centers, schools, orphanages, and homes for the elderly. Within the framework of the social partnership, the ROC has developed a network of contacts with state organs and institutions (e.g. the Federal Migration Service, the Federal Treasury, the Federal Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Health, and the Customs Office), which are secured by bilateral contracts regulating the scope, goals, and principles of this cooperation.

In the sphere of foreign policy, the close cooperation that Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the country’s “traditional” religious institutions undertake beyond Russia’s borders constitutes “religious diplomacy.”⁷ An expert working group of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ROC has held regular sessions since 2003. This cooperation is encouraged by Sergei Lavrov, foreign minister since 2004, who has repeatedly declared his support for the renewal of historical ties (dating back to the Tsarist era) between the ministry and ROC. As a result, joint delegations and an exchange of information between diplomats of both organizations take place on a regular basis.⁸

The fact that the ROC and the ruling elites share many views is the driving force for Russia’s religious diplomacy. The Church, as with the

⁷ Religious diplomacy can be described as a state activity consisting of the use of a religious factor in foreign policy; that is, the whole set of mechanisms of the state’s cooperation with religious associations in the pragmatically defined national interest, use of the international activity of religious institutions, ideas, and religious symbols (appropriately interpreted for realization of current political aims).

⁸ The future diplomats of the MFA and the ROC have gone through the same professional training since 2013, when the Moscow Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) allowed the enrollment of priests for doctoral studies.

state, perceives the post-Soviet territory as a sphere of exclusive Russian influence. The ROC is therefore one of the main supporters of the Kremlin's integration concepts, including the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as initiatives aimed at strengthening the Russian diaspora, e.g. the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) Foundation. Both the Church and state describe Russia as a distinctive civilization and increasingly often define it in opposition to the West.⁹ Both parties voice concern about the unbalanced global dominance

⁹ The Eurasian Economic Union is presented as a means to transform the post-Soviet space from the global periphery to a sovereign civilizational pole. See Putin's 2013 Valdai Discussion Club Speech: Valdai Discussion Club, "Vladimir Putin Meets with Members the Valdai International Discussion Club. Transcript of the Speech and Beginning of the Meeting," September 20, 2013, <http://valdaiclub.com/politics/62880.html>.

of the United States and call for a multipolar world order. In this context, the Kremlin talks about strategic partnership with India and China, which is paralleled by the ROC's concept of a Russian alliance with "traditional" civilizations, i.e. China, India, and Iran.

Traditional values are another issue that brings together the Kremlin and the ROC. It provides the main ideological framework for church-state rapprochement in both domestic and international spheres.

4 THE MAIN FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL VALUES IN RUSSIAN DISCOURSE

This kind of differentiation between good, virtuous Europe (true to its tradition and original virtues) and the bad, debased, and materialistic West is deeply rooted in Russia's identity.

After the failure of the transformation of the 1990s, a large part of Russia's political elites, including the ruling party and the Putin-Medvedev "tandem," believe that Russia must not copy Western system solutions but instead adapt them in accordance with its own tradition, national character, mentality, etc. One of the well-known harbingers of this shift was the concept of "sovereign democracy" coined by political operative Vladislav Surkov and embraced by the Kremlin after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004-05.¹⁰ Although this notion later disappeared from the main government agenda, the basic logic behind this reasoning persisted, i.e. that Russia must stay true to its political tradition in order to succeed in its modernization efforts, which also meant that the Russian Federation must not be judged according to Western standards. Promoting the idea of Russia's own understanding of democracy also meant emphasizing its independence from the West. What is more, the Kremlin began marking the division line in terms of cultural and civilizational differences.

It was therefore no coincidence that "sovereign democracy" was followed by the concept of the "Russkiy Mir" (Russian World). According to the definition presented by the Russkiy Mir Foundation (established by President Putin in 2007), the phrase refers to a community of ethnic Russians and citizens of the Russian Federation of non-Russian ethnic origin, the Russian diaspora, Russian-speaking foreigners, and all the people who express concern about Russia's future. In Patriarch Kirill's words, "Russkiy Mir is a community based on the Orthodox faith and the Russian culture and language, as well as a common historical memory

and a model of socio-economical development."¹¹ In practice, *Russkiy Mir* coincides with Russia's sphere of cultural influence, whose borders correspond, by and large, to the post-Soviet territory.

A logical consequence of presenting Russia as a distinctive civilizational universe was to define Russia's own set of values as different from the Western ones. Constructing Russia's values in contrast to those of the West is one of two characteristic features of the Russian discourse on traditional values. However, it should be noted that in the Russian tradition, Western values are not always synonymous with European ones. In the public narrative, Russia is sometimes presented as the defender of the old (true) European values, which have almost been lost in Western societies. This kind of differentiation between good, virtuous Europe (true to its tradition and original virtues) and the bad, debased, and materialistic West is deeply rooted in Russia's identity.¹²

A good example of this tendency could be found in Putin's speech delivered to the participants of the Valdai Discussion Club Summit in September 2013. Putin juxtaposed Russia — a country faithful to traditional values — with Euroatlantic states that have ostensibly abandoned their true moral

¹⁰ The Orange Revolution refers to a series of protests against rigged presidential elections that, eventually, led to new elections and the victory of opposition parties in Ukraine.

¹¹ Russian Orthodox Church, "Russkii mir: puti ukrepleniya i razvitiya," November 3, 2009, <https://mospat.ru/church-and-time/4>.

¹² Sergei Karaganov, one of the leading Russian political scientists, remarked that Europe "is also worried by Moscow's readiness to defend the old European values such as Christianity, the family, the state, nationalism, and sovereignty, which are still supported by most Europeans, while their elites are rejecting them or trying to leave them behind. The overwhelming majority of other nations share these traditional values as well." S. Karaganov, "The Watershed Year: Interim Results," *Russia in Global Affairs*, December 18, 2014, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Watershed-Year-Interim-Results-17210>. See V. Morozov, *Russia and the Others: Identity and Boundaries of a Political Community* (in Russian), (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009).

roots. He went on to identify traditional values exclusively with religious values.¹³ And that is the second feature of the narrative on traditional values in Russia: it comes with a wide-spread conviction that, if one wants to learn about true Russian tradition, one should refer to Russian Orthodoxy. In short, the efficiency of Russian modernization is conditioned by the revival of tradition, which in turn is identified with religion.

This is, for instance, also the main thesis of so called “dynamic conservatism”¹⁴ (“social patriotism”) hailed *inter alia* by the Kremlin’s United Russia party and the World Russian People’s Council.¹⁵ Traditional (read: religious) values have found their place also in the agenda of the Russian parliament, the State Duma. The protection of traditional values and the preservation of Russia’s moral identity are the main goals of the Parliamentary Cross-Party Group for the Defense of Christian Values. This body was established in 2012 and its work is coordinated by Sergei Gavrilov (the Communist Party) and Sergei Popov (United Russia). Regular meetings bring together members of the group with representatives of the ROC.

The Moscow Patriarchate has so far been the most influential promoter of traditional values in Russia. Equally unsurprisingly, the Church considers religious faith the foundation of traditional values.

In this context, one of the initiatives of the ROC most fraught with consequences is a document entitled “The Basic Values: the Fundaments of National Unity” issued by the World Russian People’s Council on May 26, 2011.¹⁶ This document was prepared by the Synodal Department for Church-Society Cooperation, and, if we can believe the head of this department, Vsevolod Chaplin, the text was the result of discussion with political parties and different social groups. In order to specify traditional values, which previously had been used in general terms, the document provides a catalogue of 17 values: faith; justice (meaning “the rightful place of a nation in the international community,” i.e. status); peace; freedom (limited by moral obligations); unity (of different ethnic groups, social classes, political groups); morality; dignity; honesty; patriotism (defined as love for homeland, nation, culture, respect for history; readiness for self-sacrifice); solidarity; mercy; family; culture and national tradition (characterized as respect for one’s own culture and the tradition of others); prosperity (material and spiritual); diligence; self-limitation (resignation from consumption); and devotion (to the homeland and nation).

The combination of freedom, unity, patriotism, the family, and a sense of devotion fits well into the framework of traditional values created by Inglehart and Baker. Laws enacted in recent years in the Russian Federation banning propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors (2013) or the use of profanity in the arts and media (2014) are symptoms of the ongoing retraditionalization. Oleg Mikheev, member of parliament from the party Just Russia (*Spravedlivaya Rossiya*) even appealed to ban shoes with high heels and flat soles (popularly known as “ballet flats”). Such initiatives and laws

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¹³ Vladimir Putin stated that defending Christian values is the only right thing a state can do. He also argued that the unilateral global order, which was being forced on other countries by the West, was against the nature of a world variety given by God. Putin’s 2013 Valdai Discussion Club Speech.

¹⁴ The notion was promoted by the authors of the book “Russian Doctrine” (called also *sergievski projekt*).

¹⁵ The World Russian People’s Council was established in 1993 at the initiative of Patriarch Aleksy II. It is an international organization that seeks to gather people who are concerned over Russia’s faith. Council sessions are attended by governmental representatives, leaders of public associations, clergy, science and culture figures, and delegates of Russian communities from the near and far abroad.

¹⁶ Russian Orthodox Church, “Bazisnyye tsennosti — osnova obshchenatsional’noy identichnosti,” May 26, 2011, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1496038.html>.

illustrate the state's efforts to shape public morality in an increasingly rigid (and invasive) manner, patronizing and infantilizing citizens.

From the perspective of the ruling elites, Russians should show deference to the authority of Homeland, Family, and God, precisely in that order. The Russian top-to-bottom approach to strengthening traditional views and attitudes is foremost about authority, hierarchy, legitimization, and national identity. From the perspective of the Kremlin, religion is important as an integrative element of tradition and as a source of moral norms. The transcendent aspect of religion is

deliberately dismissed by the authorities.¹⁷ Too much religious fervor could cause tensions and potentially foster extremism in a multiethnic and multi-religious country. Therefore, despite the catalogue created by the ROC, "traditional values" remain a vague notion in Russian discourse, which serves the Kremlin's political goals better (i.e. strengthening the regime's mandate and integrating and mobilizing society).

¹⁷ V. Karpov, "The Social Dynamics of Russia's Desecularisation: a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective," *Religion, State and Society* 41:3 (2013), pp. 254-283.

5 THE MORAL FACTOR IN RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

An analysis of public statements made by Foreign Minister Lavrov shows that retraditionalization has appeared also in Russia's foreign policy discourse. In 2012, Lavrov said that foreign policy should be guided by religious (traditional) values.¹⁸ A year later, the foreign minister warned that attempts to undermine the system of traditional values presented a serious threat to the international order.¹⁹ In June 2014, during the Ukraine crisis, he claimed that the new tensions in relations with the West were caused by Russia's return to traditional values.²⁰ Keeping in mind the rapprochement of Church and state, it is important to note that similar opinions were expressed by representatives of the ROC. Vsevolod Chaplin,²¹ chairman of the Synodal Department for the Cooperation of Church and Society of the Moscow Patriarchate and known for making controversial statements, remarked that Russia was being attacked by the

West because it decided to defend the Truth.²² Patriarch Kirill named Russia "one of the few countries in the world which forms its foreign policy in accordance with moral values and international law."²³

These quotations show that retraditionalization in the sphere of foreign policy translates into taking a moral stand. Russia has ambitions to act as an independent normative power. In this context, it claims to have moral obligations that originate in Russia's commitment to traditional values. It is eager to assume the role of leader of the non-West in this sphere. In short, after years of declared pragmatism, the moral factor is back in the Kremlin's foreign policy.²⁴

The Middle East is an example of the usage of the moral framework by Russian diplomacy. Putin, other Russian politicians, and Russian diplomats have on many occasions voiced their concern about the persecution of Christians in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. They have emphasized that Russia, historically speaking, has been a protector of Christians and that it still has a moral obligation to protect these minorities. Significantly, the Kremlin juxtaposes this moral duty with the indifference of the West. This line is put forward by the Russian Orthodox Church, which remains very active in the Middle East. Metropolitan Hilarion, the head of the Synodal Department for External Contacts (a sort of Church Ministry for Foreign Affairs), said

After years of declared pragmatism, the moral factor is back in the Kremlin's foreign policy.

¹⁸ RIA Novosti, "Lavrov zhelayet kollegam ne rasteryat' obshchiye dlya vsekh religiy tsennosti," December 16, 2012, <http://ria.ru/society/20121216/915004621.html>.

¹⁹ Interfax, "Lavrov schitayet opasnym usileniye popytok peresmotra moral'nykh tsennostey," March 3, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=54643>.

²⁰ Interfax, "Zapad otdalyayetsya ot Rossii iz-za eye vozvrata k pravoslaviyu, schitayet Lavrov," June 5, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=55525>.

²¹ The archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin ranks among the most influential hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate. After nine years (from 1990) spent in the Department for External Church Relations (DECR), considered the main ideological kitchen of the ROC, Chaplin became the head of the Synodal Department for the Cooperation of Church and Society, which could be compared to the civil Ministry of Internal Affairs. Moreover, Chaplin used to or still does represent the ROC in many state institutions, e.g. the Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations under the Russian President, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, and the Expert Council under the Committee of the State Duma on affairs of public associations and religious organizations. Chaplin is also the deputy head of the World Russian People's Council. Last but not least, the archpriest runs his own radio broadcast in which he comments *inter alia* on the matters of ethic and public morality.

²² Interfax, "Dlya politikov Rossii prishlo vremya vybirat' mezhdru interesami strany i schetami za granitsey - protoiyerey Vsevolod Chaplin," March 18, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=54769>.

²³ Interfax, "Patriarkh Kirill postavil vneshnyuyu politiku Rossii v primer drugim gosudarstvam," March 18, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=54255>.

²⁴ Y. Pavlova and T. Romanova, "Ideological Rivalry or Trash Discourse? The Normative Power of Europe vs Russia as a Great Power," *Russia in Global Affairs*, September 23, 2014, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Ideological-Rivalry-or-Trash-Discourse-16996>.

Following
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that since the West cared only for Israel and oil, all Christians have already learnt the lesson that "the Russian Orthodox Church and President Vladimir Putin are their only hope."²⁵

The emergence of the motive of traditional values in Russia's foreign policy should be viewed within a more general framework that Russia's ruling elites use to interpret global dynamics. This is the civilizational "paradigm" usually associated with Samuel Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations.²⁶ Following Huntington's assumption, Russian state doctrines perceive civilizations as the main units competing for supremacy in the emerging global order. In the 21st century, civilizations are to replace the Cold War superpowers. A state's self-identification in terms of civilization is thus an attribute of its power status.

The acknowledgement of a geopolitical role for civilizations was reflected in Russia's official 2008 foreign policy doctrine, which read, "It is for the first time in the contemporary history that global competition is acquiring a civilizational dimension which suggests competition between different value systems (...) A religious factor in shaping the system of contemporary international relations is growing, *inter alia*, as regards its moral foundation. This problem cannot be resolved without a common denominator that has always existed in major world religions."²⁷

²⁵ Russian Orthodox Church, "Mitropolit Volokolamskiy Ilarion: Osnovnymi geograficheskimi napravleniyami vneshney deyatelnosti Russkoy Tserkvi v 2013 godu byli Blizhniy Vostok i Kitay," January 9, 2014, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3503307.html>.

²⁶ S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). Among Russian intellectuals who refer to the civilization "paradigm," one should mention Aleksandr Panarin, Vadim Tsymburski, Boris Miezhuiev, and Aleksandr Dugin.

²⁷ President of Russia, *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, August 12, 2008, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>.

The notion of the common denominator was elaborated in the 2013 doctrine, "A true consolidation of efforts of the international community requires a set of common values as a foundation for joint action, a common moral denominator, which major world religions have always shared, including such principles and concepts as pursuit of peace and justice, dignity, freedom and responsibility, honesty, compassion, and work ethic."²⁸ Following this reasoning, religion is the main, if not the only, source of values.

Interestingly, in this latest version of the Russian foreign policy doctrine, the unfolding clash of civilizations is seen as a result on the West's (implicit) attempts to impose its own system of values. The document reads, "The reverse side of the globalization processes is the increased emphasis on civilizational identity. Desire to go back to one's civilizational roots can be clearly seen in recent events in the Middle East and North Africa (...) In these circumstances, imposing one's own hierarchy of values can only provoke a rise in xenophobia, intolerance, and tensions in international relations leading eventually to chaos in world affairs." These excerpts show that the Russian authorities have identified values as an important field of contemporary global competition.

Russia's ruling elites emphasize that Russia is a unique civilization (called the Russian/Orthodox or Eurasian civilization) with its own distinct culture. As a consequence of this position, Russian diplomacy has repeatedly stressed its commitment to Russian traditional values, which are presented as an important part of its civilizational identity. Another result of Russia's civilizational uniqueness

²⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, February 12, 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.

is the conviction, consistently proclaimed by the highest representatives of power, that Russia must act as a guardian of traditional values and stem the tide of nihilistic liberalism promoted by the West.

Unsurprisingly, the recent conflict in Ukraine has also been portrayed in Russia as a result of the clash of civilizations (the West versus the *Russkiy Mir*). According to this narrative, Ukraine is faced with a civilizational choice. Forced by the West to give up its values and submit to a foreign model, Ukraine's only hope is Russia if it is to avoid becoming a satellite of the West. Lavrov has even gone so far as to state that Russia was helping Ukrainians "because Christian values say so."²⁹ The narrative about Ukraine as a victim of the clash of civilizations is also promoted by the Russian Orthodox Church. Chaplin echoed politicians by characterizing the Ukrainian crisis as "a result of the clash of values" and remarked that in certain circumstances, defending the Holy Truth requires armed resistance.³⁰ Similar and even more radical positions are prevalent among the clergy. For example, Metropolitan Hilarion linked the Ukrainian crisis with the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, arguing that both were part of the same strategy of the West to turn Russia's neighborhood into an unstable and hostile place.³¹

Another element of Russia's civilizational narrative is the conviction that it has a special role to play in a world threatened by the clash of civilizations. Russia is to bring balance, restore justice (which, in the context of traditional values, is interpreted

as a state of affairs in which nations take their rightful place in the international order) and to preserve traditional (read: genuine) values. Russian elites emphasize that Russia is exceptionally well equipped for this task due to its unique tradition of harmonizing different ethnic and religious groups. President Putin has often referred to this ability and repeatedly underlined that Russia, unlike Europe, has never experienced religious wars or crusades.³² Russia's historic record of interfaith concord makes it, according to the Kremlin's narrative, predestined to initiate and moderate inter-civilizational (interfaith) dialogue (which is essentially a matter of values and morality).³³

The analysis of Russian foreign policy doctrines shows how the role of interfaith dialogue has evolved. Significantly, in the 2000 doctrine, the dialogue was not even mentioned. They both appeared only in the document published in 2008, in which Russia declared its strong commitment to developing the inter-civilizational dialogue. Another important change in this narrative may be observed between the doctrines of 2008 and 2013. While in the former, the United Nations was considered the central platform for interfaith dialogue, in the latter, Russia claims to bear the main responsibility for this global task itself. Moreover, the stress on Russia's unique civilizational knowledge has become more prominent. In the 2013 doctrine, a phrase was added that describes Russia as "a multiethnic and multi-religious state, with historic experience of the harmonious coexistence of different nations, ethnic groups, and faiths, which is well equipped for dialogue and inter-civilizational partnership." Russia thus presents itself as a crucial element of

Another element of Russia's civilizational narrative is the conviction that it has a special role to play in a world threatened by the clash of civilizations.

²⁹ *Interfax*, "Pomoshch' Ukraine so storony Rossii prodiktovana khristianskoy istinoy — Lavrov," December 19, 2013, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=53862>.

³⁰ *Interfax*, "V Russkoy tserkvi schitayut, chto na Ukraine idet bor'ba za Bozh'yu pravdu," July 15, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=55920>.

³¹ Russian Orthodox Church, "Mitropolit Volokolamskiy Ilarion: Blizhniy Vostok i Ukraina — chasti odnoy strategii," August 5, 2014, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3700872.html>.

³² Putin's 2012 Valdai Discussion Club Speech. President of Russia, "Meeting with Valdai International Discussion Club participants," October 25, 2012, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4564>.

³³ Putin's 2012 and 2013 Valdai Speeches.

the post-Cold War global balance because only it can prevent a clash of civilizations.

Both the state and the ROC see interfaith dialogue as another sphere of global rivalry. Therefore, as Chaplin suggested, Russia should create its own institutions responsible for moderating interfaith dialogue, especially in the post-Soviet territory.³⁴ This approach resulted in the establishment of the Interfaith Council of the Commonwealth of

Independent States (CIS) in 2004.³⁵ The council gathers representatives of all “traditional” religions from the CIS countries and focuses *inter alia* on promoting traditional values in the region. Framing interfaith dialogue as part of the global rivalry of powers confirms Russia’s concern about its power status in the international community. Underlining its commitment to traditional values is part of a wider strategy of regaining parity with the West.

³⁴ *Interfax*, “V Russkoy tserkvi prizyvayut otstoyat’ nezavisimost’ mezhreligioznogo dialoga v SNG ot vneshnego vozdeystviya,” April 17, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=50857>.

³⁵ The Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) is a regional organization established in 1991 by former Soviet republics. There are nine full member states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan is unofficially associated.

6 RUSSIA'S DISTINCTIVENESS USED AS A STATUS STRATEGY

Russia has a long record of emphasizing its civilizational uniqueness. It is one of the components of Russia's quest for recognition and rightful status.³⁶

It is important to underline that Russia's uniqueness, historically speaking, was constructed in opposition to the West. One could call it "a course of the neighborhood"; as one of the oldest embodiments of the "other" for Westerners, Russia in its self-identification process became trapped between a longing for Europe and a lingering feeling of alienation (Russia as non-Europe). As Iver Neumann rightly notices, Russia has never been fully accepted by the Western countries as one of "their kind."³⁷ Even after defeating Napoleon, which made Russia one of the major European powers, in France, Great Britain, or the Habsburg Monarchy, Russia's "Europeanness" was not recognized, and convictions of differences in political tradition and of its general backwardness persisted. According to Neumann, Europeans had a tendency to treat Russia as a case of peripheral European identity.³⁸ For Russia, in turn, the questioning of its Europeanness was a source of frustration because Moscow had always been clear about its ambitions to be an equal partner with the powers forming the center of the world system of the time. Through

most of its history, Russia has competed with the West for recognition. This rivalry took place in the sphere of symbols, and the quest for status was one of the main factors of Russia's international activity. This is still the case today.

Thomas Volgy *et al* introduced the notion of "status inconsistency" in relation to states whose aspirations (and power potential) in regard to status (self-attribution) do not correspond to their actual status (i.e. the status ascribed to them by other participants — recognition).³⁹ In view of this distinction, there are states whose status is disproportionately high in relation to their actual potential (overachievers) and states whose status is lower than their potential would warrant (underachievers). In this context, Russia is an interesting case because it represents an example of a state whose policy is almost chronically burdened by status inconsistency. In the conviction of Russian elites, Russia is an underachiever, for it keeps being denied its deserved recognition in the international area by the West. Russia's foreign policy is still characterized by the drive to be recognized as an equal partner by its "significant other," i.e. the West.

The analysis of Russia's quest for status is better understood if complemented by the Social Identity Theory (SIT). Within the framework of SIT, three main strategies of aspiring states (with lower status) in relation to dominating states (with higher status) are distinguished. Firstly, aspiring states can accept the values of stronger states and copy their behavior (emulation). Secondly, states trying to increase their status can decide to question the order established by the dominating states (social competition). Finally, if the current order seems stable, states with a lower status can try to satisfy their ambitions by

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³⁶ Following the collaborative work of T.V. Paul *et al*, I define status as a collective opinion about the position of a certain nation in the ranking of excellence regarding a certain attribute (material wealth, culture, demography, diplomatic skill). Status is acknowledged by the community (it can therefore not be achieved solely through the state's own efforts and regardless of opinions of other states), is subjective (it depends on perception of other states and not exclusively on the material means of an aspiring state), and relative (it is always measured in relation to other participants of international relations). See T.V. Paul, D.W. Larson, W.C. Wohlforth (Eds.), *Status in World Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³⁷ See I. Neumann, *Uses of the Other. The East in European Identity Formation*, "Borderline Series," vol. 9, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 67.

³⁹ T.J. Volgy, R. Corbetta, J.P. Rhamey, Jr, R.G. Baird, and K.A. Grant, "Status Considerations in International Politics and the Rise of Regional Powers," in T.V. Paul, D.W. Larson, and W.C. Wohlforth (Eds.), *Status in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 59-67.

The Russian Orthodox Church is the most important (if not the only) institution that can give some content to the strategic notion of traditional values. The ROC thus has a crucial role to play in legitimizing the Kremlin's aspirations to the role of the "guardian of values."

finding a niche that has been overlooked by — or for some reason is inaccessible to — the dominating power (social creativity).

From this perspective, in 1991-93 Russia's activity in the international arena was an emulation of the activities of the West, with its elites counting on this bringing it the recognition of being an equal partner. Russia interpreted the events in the former Yugoslavia, i.e. the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and especially the bombardment of Serbia in 1999, as slights. The rapprochement between Russia and the United States after the 9/11 attacks was short-lived. Russia saw the "color" revolutions⁴⁰ as an attack of the West on a key attribute of its power-status: an exclusive sphere of influence. Russia's distinctiveness from the West had been stressed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Yevgeny Primakov⁴¹ as early as 1996-98, but without a civilizational (not to mention moral) dimension. In 2004-05 a shift in Russia's strategy became increasingly apparent — Russia gave up trying to emulate the West and focused its efforts on achieving the desired status by emphasizing its own unique and separate identity, promoting its own values and its own, original model of modernization (social creativity).⁴²

This "moral" shift creates a great prospect for developing cooperation between the Russian

state and the ROC. The Moscow Patriarchate is a self-proclaimed repository of traditional values. As mentioned above, the Church has defined these values and even created a catalogue in one document. If one recalls the dominating theme in Russian public discourse that traditional values equal religious values, then it becomes clear that the Russian Orthodox Church is the most important (if not the only) institution that can give some content to the strategic notion of traditional values. The ROC thus has a crucial role to play in legitimizing the Kremlin's aspirations to the role of the "guardian of values." The priority given to interfaith dialogue (and traditional values) makes the ROC an indispensable part of Russia's current foreign strategy. It is precisely in the field of symbolic rivalry where the Russian Orthodox Church plays a significant role in Russia's international activity. It is therefore hardly a coincidence that in regard to three distinctive issues of symbolic rivalry (so called "status markers"⁴³), in which Moscow has recently shown a growing interest, the ROC and Russian diplomats work hand-in-hand.

The issue most talked about recently is the idea of the *Russkiy Mir*. As mentioned earlier, the ROC is not merely one of the most active promoters of this idea, it is also very much involved in the work of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation. According to the Russian state and the Church's narrative, the *Russkiy Mir* must resist Western liberalism and preserve traditional values.

The second issue is the narrative on human rights. The ROC has shown ambition to question the monopoly of the West on defining human rights. In 2006, the ROC prepared a document that was subsequently issued by the World Russian People's

⁴⁰ This term refers to protests by anti-government movements that emerged in several post-Soviet republics. Demonstrators usually used non-violent forms of protest. In most cases, these revolutions led to the overthrow of ruling authorities.

⁴¹ Yevgeny Primakov was minister of foreign affairs (1996-98) and prime minister (1998-99) of the Russian Federation. Although the Primakov doctrine was never formalized in a conceptual document, it refers to three major priorities: integrating Russia with the world economy, multipolar world, and opposing U.S. dominance (U.S. unilateralism).

⁴² Considering the escalation of antagonism between the European Union, the United States, and Russia in the face of the Ukrainian conflict, one could even argue that Russia is already balancing between two strategies, i.e. social creativity and competition.

⁴³ Status markers refer to positions and protocol symbolizing respect and deference, e.g. permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council, a national space program, nuclear weapons, hosting international sport events, etc. See T.V. Paul *et al*, op. cit. p. 10.

Council. This document, entitled *Declaration of Human Rights and Dignity*, presents an interpretation of human rights in accordance with the Russian Orthodox tradition.⁴⁴ In 2011, the Russian Foreign Ministry published Russia's first report on the observance of human rights in other countries. This was an obvious attempt to manifest Russia's independent stand. A year later, while speaking to members of the Valdai Club, Putin stated that nobody should possess complete control over the definitions and interpretations of human rights. This issue, i.e. the Russian interpretation of human rights, was eventually brought to the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). On the initiative of Russian diplomats, and with strong support from the ROC, in 2012 the HRC adopted the resolution "Encouraging Human Rights and Main Human Freedoms through Deeper Understanding of Traditional Mankind Values: Best Practice." Upon its adoption, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement declaring: "The Russian Federation, together with its opinion allies, will continue promoting the idea of (the) inseparable connection of human rights and traditional moral values in the Human Rights Council."⁴⁵

Russia's activity in the Arctic provides a further example of the intensification of symbolic rivalry (although not connected to traditional values). Russia's efforts to mark its presence in the North Pole (e.g. by placing a Russian flag on the North

Pole seabed in 2007) are paralleled by the rise in the Moscow Patriarchate's activity in this region. The ROC marks symbolic frontiers foremost by erecting new churches, even in barely populated places like Wrangel Island. Bishop Iakov of Naryan-Mar and Mezensky not only blessed several Arctic expeditions but also ones to the North Pole itself and the Northern Sea Route.

Assuming the role of the self-proclaimed "guardian of traditional values" is one of Russia's strategies to fully regain its desired power status, i.e. that of a state with its own sphere of influence, which is approached respectfully as an equal by others, especially the West. Status consists of two components — a material and a moral/ideological one. In attributing status, countries take into consideration not only the material potential of an aspiring country but also its commitment to the values and principles shared by the dominating actors. Placing emphasis on its own values is an important element of Russia's efforts to build its own authority in moral terms in the international arena. It is interesting to note a difference in Russia's strategy. In the beginning of the 19th century, the Russian Empire legitimated its power claim almost exclusively with reference to its material potential. Two centuries later, Russia not only underlines the normative aspect of its power but also juxtaposes its values with the moral stand of the West.

All these tendencies are reflected in Putin's 2013 state-of-the-nation annual address to the Federal Assembly, which deserves to be quoted at length. He said, "Today, many nations are revising their moral values and ethical norms, eroding ethnic traditions and differences between peoples and cultures. Society is now required not only to recognize everyone's right to the freedom of consciousness, political views, and privacy, but also to accept without question the equality of good and evil, strange as it seems, concepts that are

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⁴⁴ Russian Orthodox Church, "Deklaratsiya o pravakh i dostoinstve cheloveka X Vsemirnogo Russkogo Narodnogo Sobora," April 6, 2006, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/103235.html>; See K. Stoeckel, *The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights*, (London-New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁴⁵ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press release: About the UN Human Rights Council Adopting Russian Resolution Draft 'Encouraging Human Rights and Main Human Freedoms through Deeper Understanding of Traditional Mankind Values: Best Practice,'" September 27, 2012, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/735D5EA855B1525944257A8A0028F441.

opposite in meaning. This destruction of traditional values from above not only leads to negative consequences for society, but is also essentially anti-democratic, since it is carried out on the basis of abstract, speculative ideas, contrary to the will of the majority, which does not accept the changes occurring or the proposed revision of values.”

Putin continued, stressing Russia’s new role as a leading normative power attracting other countries, by saying, “We know that there are more and more people in the world who support our position on defending traditional values that have made up

the spiritual and moral foundation of civilization in every nation for thousands of years: the values of traditional families, real human life, including religious life, not just material existence but also spirituality, the values of humanism, and global diversity.”

Considering the Kremlin’s “conservative” course, it is important to examine to what extent the retraditionalization promoted by the power elites can be embraced by Russian society.

7 RUSSIAN SOCIETY'S RECEPTION OF RETRADITIONALIZATION

The last decade of the 20th century was traumatic not only for Russians but for the majority of citizens of the former Soviet republics. The fall of the Soviet Union caused a rise in the commitment to traditional values among post-Soviet societies that had hitherto been considered essentially modern. Inglehart and Baker's research in the 1990s showed that due to the violent transformation and disintegration of the economy in the former Soviet republics, survival values (i.e. when economic and physical security are placed above all other goals) were more widespread than even in some low-income developing societies. Meanwhile, commitment to values of self-expression,⁴⁶ characteristic for modern Western societies, did not rise in former Soviet republics.

The prominent Russian sociologist and public opinion expert Boris Dubin remarked that the re-emergence of traditional conservatism was accompanied by a deliberalization of views among Russians and a de-Westernization of the Russian identity; both of these trends started in the 1990s.⁴⁷ Although Dubin did not deny that conservatism was initially a grassroots reaction to the socio-economical crisis, he argued that it would not have persisted had it not been fostered and cultivated by the authorities.⁴⁸ Tatiana Rassadina, meanwhile, tends to stress the spontaneous character of the change of Russians' values, including the shift to

conservatism.⁴⁹ Surveys that she conducted show that 1988-96 was the period of the highest value bifurcation among Russians. In the transition years from the USSR to the Russian Federation, most people placed most value on an interesting job, a clear conscience, and a family, and attached relatively low importance to material values. The following years of 1996-98 were marked, as Rassadina put it, by a "landslide" in the system of values because material well-being suddenly ranked higher than personal freedom, which had previously topped the hierarchy of values.⁵⁰ However, already in 1997-98, a new tendency could be observed, namely the return of traditional guidelines, which, according to Rassadina, served as "spiritual compensation for the lack of justice in life and the lack of material sufficiency."⁵¹ According to Rassadina's data, Russian society's approach to values in 2007 was far from homogeneous: 25-30 percent declared commitment to the individualistic (Western type) values, 35-40 percent identified themselves with the patriarchal-collectivist model, while 30-35 percent expressed a contradictory type of values.⁵² This data shows that the narrative of the central role of traditional values in Russian society promoted by the Kremlin does not fully correspond to the social reality.

This differentiation of Russian society in terms of values is also confirmed by the research conducted by Andrei Voz'mitel and Galina Osadchaia.⁵³ Their surveys revealed an evolution from the orientation characteristic for Soviet society — collectivist-oriented work — to a focus on the means of

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⁴⁶ Self-expression values refer to values that include life satisfaction, public expression, and an aspiration to liberty. These values indicate, for instance, that personal fulfillment is set above high income by an individual.

⁴⁷ B. Dubin, *Rossiia nulevykh. Politicheskaya kul'tura. Istoricheskaya pamyat'. Povsednevnyaya zhizn'* (Moscow: Rossiyskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2011), p. 107.

⁴⁸ In Boris Dubin's opinion, an indispensable part of fostering Russian conservatism is underlying Russia's uniqueness and distinctiveness from the West. B. Dubin, op. cit., pp. 79, 95.

⁴⁹ T.A. Rassadina, "Transformations of the Traditional Values of Russians in the Post-Perestroika Period," *Sociological Research* 46:6 (2007), pp. 59-74.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 65.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 70.

⁵² Ibid, p. 73.

⁵³ A.A. Voz'mitel, G.I. Osadchaia, "Way of Life in Russia," *Sociological Research* 50:2(2011), pp. 67-88.

Russian citizens might be traditionalist in their views on family and gender, but in terms of their attitude toward religion, they resemble their counterparts in Western countries.

achieving success and prosperity in life.⁵⁴ In 2008, most of the respondents stated that self-fulfillment was more important than money, which indicates that the effect of the economic collapse of 1997-98 had receded, while self-expression values started to gain importance. This tendency was recognized also by the authors of a report prepared in 2014 for the Valdai Club. For today's Russians, material well-being and consumption take first place among values — in 2006, 55 percent ranked it first, while in 1986, only 31 percent did so.⁵⁵ So the retraditionalization is not something the majority of Russian society feels unconditionally comfortable with. The changes brought about by the free market and democracy — albeit one hamstrung and largely limited to unfair elections — have had an impact on Russian society.

There is one more factor that should be considered when estimating the scope of the retraditionalization in contemporary Russia, namely the connection between tradition and religion. As mentioned earlier, in Russian public discourse, traditional values are identified almost exclusively with religious values. This tendency is supported by the Kremlin as well as, for obvious reasons, the ROC. This could seem like a suitable strategy if one takes into account the fact that religion serves in Russia above all as a criterion of self-identification (belonging to an ethnic group).⁵⁶ In 2013, 68 percent of Russians declared adherence to Orthodox Christianity, while 13 percent claimed to practice religion regularly (6 percent participate in a service every week, 12 percent pray

every day).⁵⁷ Half of respondents thought that the president of the Russian Federation should be Orthodox.⁵⁸ Over 50 percent approve of the ROC's influence on public morality, but crucially these same respondents disapprove of Church's involvement in state affairs.⁵⁹ What's more, the number of people presenting this view is growing yearly. This is evidence that not all Russians are prepared to support the ROC's growing presence in the public sphere. After all, as Inglehart and Baker noted, Russians' values were substantially shaped by the Communist legacy and secondly by Orthodox culture.⁶⁰

Russia (like all former communist societies) ranks high regarding the level of secularization. Russian citizens might be traditionalist in their views on family and gender, but in terms of their attitude toward religion, they resemble their counterparts in Western countries. As Dmitri Furman put it, in terms of the declared religious identity, Russia comes close to the countries of the Middle East, but when it comes to practicing religion, there is no difference between Russia and the most secular states of the West. Around half of Russians believe that the Church has very little actual influence on

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 73.

⁵⁵ *Valdai Discussion Club Report*, "National Identity and the Future of Russia," February 2014, http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Identity_eng.pdf, p. 16.

⁵⁶ This is true not only for Orthodox Christians but also for Russian Muslims or Buddhists.

⁵⁷ *Interfax*, "V Rossii rastet chislo pravoslavnykh, no lish' nemnogiye regul'yarno poseshchayut khram, prichashchayutsya i molyatsya — opros," July 4, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=55819>; *Interfax*, "Okolo pyatoy chasti pravoslavnykh i desyataya chast' musul'man v Rossii molyatsya kazhdyy den' — opros," April 25, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=55140>.

⁵⁸ *Interfax*, "Polovina rossiyan schitayet, chto prezident strany dolzhen byt' pravoslavnym," November 11, 2013, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=53384>.

⁵⁹ *Interfax*, "Rossiyane schitayut znachitel'nyy vliyaniye pravoslaviya na razvitiye strany — opros," November 12, 2013, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=53409>.

⁶⁰ R. Inglehart and W.E. Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65 (2000), p. 40.

public morality and people's everyday life.⁶¹ For the majority of respondents, religion is either not too important (43 percent) or plays no role in their life (19 percent).⁶² More than half, for example, do not mind unmarried young people living together.⁶³

This data reveals that Russians' traditionalism has a secular edge. The social ground in which the top-down retraditionalization is being sown is not as solid as it might seem from the vision of a homogeneous society promoted by the Kremlin. This strategy therefore has its limits even within the domestic policy framework in the long term. However, it should be admitted that in the short term, it helps to strengthen the regime's mandate.

⁶¹ Levada-Center, *Russian Public Opinion 2012-2013*, http://www.levada.ru/sites/default/files/2012_eng.pdf, p. 142.

⁶² Ibid, p. 144.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 152.

8 CONCLUSION

The Kremlin envisions Russia as a leader of the non-West. Moreover, the role of the guardian of traditional values aims at exploiting the dividing lines that run through Western societies between liberals and conservatives.

The rapprochement of the ROC and the Kremlin has consequences for Russia's domestic as well as foreign affairs. However, the course on retraditionalization is more than a result of the Church and state moving closer together. It is Russia's response to the pressure of global processes associated in Russia with Western domination. Struggling for its rightful status, Russia has once again set out to define its identity in opposition to the West. The drive for recognition provides fertile ground for the cooperation of the Church and state in the international arena. Within the framework of the narrative of Russia as "the guardian of traditional values," the interests of the Kremlin and the ROC are complementary and their efforts parallel. The changes in Russia's foreign policy doctrines indicate that Moscow has ambitions to act as a normative power capable of providing an alternative system of values to that of the West associated with liberalism and extreme individualism. The Kremlin is convinced that the minimum required to achieve this goal is for Russia's own civilizational sphere of influence as a crucial attribute of power status to be strengthened and defended. The Russian Federation's conception of its rightful status is an essential component of its identity.

The ruling elites are actively constructing Russia's identity as the guardian of values and foreign policy plays a major role in this process. The presence of the moral factor in Russia's interpretations of world politics has recently become stronger. Russia claims to have "moral obligations" in the Middle East, which was not at all the case a few years ago. Europe and the United States, presented as spaces with falling moral standards, are shown in Russian public discourse as the opposite pole to Russian civilization. Interestingly enough, the image of Russia as a country defending moral causes resonates with the one-third of Russian citizens who believe that they are much more spiritual than

the people of Western societies.⁶⁴ The narrative of traditional values creates the basis for alliances with China, India, Iran, and/or Turkey — all considered proponents of traditional values. The Kremlin is thus using moral positioning to draw new normative, civilizational, and geopolitical dividing lines simultaneously.

The recent Ukrainian crisis has significantly stoked the flames for retraditionalization in Russia, both in domestic and foreign affairs. However, it is important to keep in mind that the "moral" shift occurred in Russian foreign policy before EuroMaidan took place in Kyiv. Defining international processes in terms of values is likely not merely a temporary tendency but an element that will mark Russia's activity in the international arena for the years to come. Framing relations with the West in the context of opposing values does not augur well for Russia's potential rapprochement with the United States or the EU — even if an acceptable solution for the Ukrainian crisis is eventually found. The Kremlin envisions Russia as a leader of the non-West. Moreover, the role of the guardian of traditional values aims at exploiting the dividing lines that run through Western societies between liberals and conservatives. The West must find a way to adapt to this new dynamic in the Russian self-identification process with potentially important geopolitical implications.

⁶⁴ At the same time, 45 percent of Russians are convinced that their society is less spiritual now than during the Soviet era. *Interfax*, "Boleye treti rossiyan schitayut, chto uroven' dukhovnosti v obshchestve snizhayetsya," July 4, 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/orthodoxy/?act=news&div=55818>.



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