

Russian Orthodox Church: religion or propaganda of ruscism?

The events of 2004 in Ukraine known as the Orange Revolution became a consolidating factor for the state and church in Russia around the idea of "Russian civilization" and the Russian way of development. The authorities in Russia could not fail to notice that in Ukraine the church Ukrainian Orthodox Church (**Moscow Patriarchate; UOC-MP**) **has shown itself to be an influential socio-political force supporting a pro-Russian position**. This contributed to the rethinking of the role of the church in Russia, as well as the use of the structures of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) among Russians and in the post-Soviet space to spread the ideology of the "Russian world". It not only protects the so-called canonical territories of the Russian Orthodox Church, which sprawls much further of politically established borders but also uses the Russian minority in neighboring countries as a significant factor of influence, the so-called **"fifth column"**.



The Security Service of Ukraine exposed a large number of metropolitans of the UOC MP working in the interests of Russia, who justified the aggression of the Russia and incited inter-confessional enmity among believers.

That is why the **religious factor is one of the most important pillars of politics**, as well as an **element of modern ruscism ideology** and propaganda, in particular in the war against Ukraine.



With the coming to power of Vladimir Putin **religious factors** (opposition to Catholics in the West and Muslims in the East, expansion of the geographical boundaries of Orthodox Christianity) **became the basis of the so-called unification of Russian lands**, annexation and occupation of the territories of other states, which were once conquered by the Russian Empire and were part of it. Along with this, there is a desire to dominate world Orthodoxy in general, as a part of Russia's foreign policy.

Exploring the origins of Russian imperialism, one can trace the **close connections between religion and Russian expansionism**. Researchers have repeatedly emphasized that in their minds, Russians identify themselves not so much with Slavs as with Orthodox Christians, and the formation of the Russian Empire on the basis of the Moscow State took place precisely in the name of Orthodoxy, which is considered a **key element of the "Russian" cultural code**.

Along with this, using the religious (Orthodoxy) and secular (language and culture) components, citizens of other states, primarily Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, are tied to the "Russian world." As a result, this weakens the ties of the citizens of these countries with their own states and primarily causes their loyalty to the ROC and Russia, which **poses a direct threat to the national security of the countries**.

Today, with the help of the Russian Orthodox Church, Russia has formed and implemented the so-called **"Putin doctrine"**, which is based on Russia's intervention in the internal affairs of post-Soviet countries for the "protection" of the "Russian world" (ethnic Russians, believers of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian-speaking population). This doctrine, the basis of which is not only the Orthodox civilization but also the imperial thinking and policy of Russia, is aimed at the **"collection of Russian lands"**.

The politicization of the Russian Orthodox Church has long gone beyond the limits of the possible. By interfering in secular affairs, the Russian Orthodox Church tries not to solve social problems, but to **increase its political weight**, supporting and legitimizing the government in every possible way.

Patriarch Kirill calls the "Russian world" a separate civilization, which includes Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians, as well as other non-Slavic peoples, if they acknowledge the spiritual and cultural foundations of the "Russian world". The Russian Orthodox Church equates the "Russian world" with its so-called canonical territory, which once coincided with the borders of the Russian Empire.



Temple of the Armed Forces of Russia

During the Revolution of Dignity (Maidan Revolution) and Russia's war against Ukraine (2014-now), the majority of denominations in Ukraine contributed to the formation of independent civil society and supported the connection with it. In the meanwhile, The UOC (MP) mainly supported the concept of "Russian world", which imposes the dominance of Russian (Moscow) Orthodoxy as the only blessed, canonical Orthodox Church.



In 2014, with the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the east of Ukraine the Security Service of Ukraine has been exposing numerous facts that **the Moscow Patriarchate**: called to betray Ukraine and go over to Russia's side; sanctified Russian weapons aimed at Ukraine; cooperated with the Armed Forces of Russia; blessed the leaders of terrorist organizations (Luhansk and Donetsk people's Republics); engaged in espionage for the benefit of these organizations and Russia; even refused to honor the fallen heroes of Ukraine; denied the existence of the

Ukrainian people; did not condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine, but presented it as a civil war in Ukraine (fratricidal) in favor of the interests of the Russian Federation.

The metropolitans did not say a single word about the bloody war of one Orthodox nation (Russians) against another (Ukrainians) and did not condemn Vladimir Putin's and Russian aggressive policy in general. The Church also ignored the numerous human victims, did not call for an end of violence. On the contrary, while Russia is officially recognized as an aggressor in Ukraine, metropolitans of the UOC(MP) received awards from the Moscow Patriarch (2014, 2019) and in 2022, they even prayed for the fallen Russian murderous soldiers.

One can cite many other examples of the disloyalty of the UOC(MP) hierarchs to Ukraine. One of these is the awarding of the Metropolitan Lazar of Simferopol and Crimea with a named watch from the President of Russia for "loyalty to the Motherland" (Russia). A significant number of UOC(MP) priests were spotted blessing Russian terrorists (such as Igor Girkin, a former Russian army veteran and the defense minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic), cooperating with the Russian occupying forces in Crimea, or hiding weapons in their cathedrals (the example of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and the Sviatohorsk Lavra). The leadership of the Crimean diocese of the UOC(MP) in Sevastopol periodically sanctified the flags of Russian warships, and celebrated "reunification with Russia". At the end of December 2017, the Crimean Metropolitan Lazar presented the order of the Russian Orthodox Church to Serhiy Aksyonov, a person who participated in the coup d'état in Crimea and betrayed Ukraine.

For years, the ROC tried to divide Ukrainian society and spread Russian narratives.

The emergence of the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine at the end of 2018 **appeared as a direct geopolitical threat to Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church**. The emergence of such a Church, as shown by the experience of a number of CEE countries, also reinforces to the formation of nation-states, which is an undesirable phenomenon for Russian geopolitics and the Church.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, the ROC demonstrated even greater political commitment and subordination to the Putin regime. It also became **one of the main elements of Russian propaganda, placing support for its country's criminal actions and the genocide of the Ukrainian people above universal human values**.

On May 3, 2022, Patriarch Kirill stated: "*Russia has never attacked anyone. It is strange when a large and powerful country did not attack anyone, it only protects its borders.*" Along with this, Patriarch Kirill called on Russian believers to "*spiritual mobilization*" to help the military mobilization in Russia.

Archpriest Vasiliev stated that the document issued by ROC "On the blessing of Orthodox Christians for the performance of military duty" (which actually provides for the execution of criminal inhuman acts on Ukrainian territory against the Ukrainian people) will not change the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church

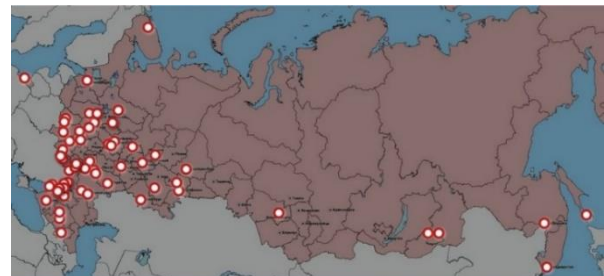


So, in essence, ministers of **the Russian Orthodox Church are actually soldiers of Russia's propaganda army**. At the behest of the Kremlin, propagandists in cassocks preach a criminal doctrine that does not correspond to Orthodox teaching and fundamental human values in general. Following the Russian official propaganda, the ministers of the Russian Orthodox Church justify the Russian aggression, the genocide of the Ukrainian people and call on their believers to join the ranks of the Russian occupation units.

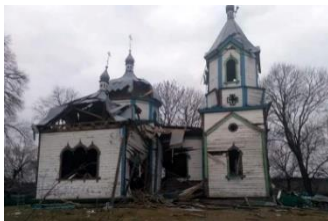
According to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, Russian military service officers received clear instructions to agitate parents and relatives of young Russians to encourage them to enter into a military service contract. Moscow Patriarch Kirill believes that the Russian military in Ukraine is guided by an inner moral feeling based on the Orthodox faith. In his opinion, they are "now protecting Russia on the battlefield." According to Kirill, the priests who "take care" of the Russian military tell him about numerous examples of courage and self-sacrifice among them. The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church believes that this is "not from a high salary", but from "a moral sense".

"The ideology of the "Russian world" is the same as the ideology of Nazism. It justifies violence, murder, war and genocide, and therefore must be rejected and condemned. The co-creators and leaders of this criminal ideology are the head of the Moscow Patriarchate and his accomplices. Together with his subordinates, he not only kindled this fire in every possible way, but also openly, in the name of God and the Church, blessed the executioners and murderers with their lying lips for their black work," noted the head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Metropolitan Epiphanius.

According to the data, the Ministry of Emergencies of Russia gives churchmen information about deported Ukrainians, and **centrally resettles them in churches and monasteries of the Russian Orthodox Church**. In the latest letter dated March 30, available to journalists, it is noted that **almost 490,000 people, including 100,000 children, arrived in Russia during the entire period of deportation**. The first letter from the mailbox was sent on February 21 - so, presumably, it was created specifically for the invasion of the Russian Federation. However, it is not known how people get there, since the Russian Orthodox Church does not publicly announce the possibility of accommodation in church institutions. Only reports completed settlements.



Institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church in which deported Ukrainians are resettled



Along with this, the higher hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church prepares its priests to **create parishes in the temporarily occupied territories** of Ukraine, which were annexed through pseudo-referendums. It also sends its priests to the war in Ukraine to raise the level of morale and psychological state of the Russian military. In addition, in violation of the norms of humanitarian law, the Russian occupying forces **place personnel and military equipment in the churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (MP)**, as well as **destroy Ukrainian churches** that are a "geopolitical threat" to the Russian Orthodox Church.

In total, according to data, **Russia has completely or partially destroyed more than 205 religious' buildings in Ukraine**, including Muslim and Jewish ones. It is worth noting that Russia is also purposefully destroying the churches of the Moscow Patriarchate, blaming Ukraine for this.

The influence of the Russian Orthodox Church is not limited to Ukraine. The Moscow Diocese is present in a number of other countries — Romania, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and others. In particular, the **Russian Orthodox Church began to buy real estate in Norway, near military bases**. Among them is a house of prayer overlooking the main base of the Royal Norwegian Navy, one of the most powerful in Northern Europe. Another purchased object is located near the NATO Joint Military Center, and the parishes in Kirkenes are a few kilometers from the Russian Federation and in Oslo.

Based on everything, it can be assumed that **all these churches can be used not only for religious purposes**. There is a wide range of activities that can be carried out from such bases, from signal jamming, eavesdropping, weapons storage to drone control and more.

Therefore, today the Russian Orthodox Church is one of the fundamental tools for spreading the idea of the "Russian world", which supports the criminal actions of the Russian regime, questioning its religious value. Its activities are aimed both at the propaganda of ruscism within the country and at countries that are of imperial interest to Russia. For Ukraine today, this is an important security issue. After all, as we can see, for years the Russian Orthodox Church tried to divide Ukrainian society and spread Russian narratives, and continues to do so today. But it cannot continue like this anymore....

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