

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_sbct-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php)

## Forced Miracles: The Russian Orthodox Church and Postsoviet International Relations

ANDREW EVANS

International relations as a discipline grew out of political science at a time when political questions demanded international answers. In this age of globalisation, nation-states must deal with the economic, political and ideological activities of multinational companies, NGOs and other non-state actors in the arena of international relations. Religion, as a belief system and in its institutional form, is a major component of this pattern. Samuel Huntington declares: 'In the modern world, religion is central, perhaps *the central*, force that motivates and mobilises people. ... What ultimately counts for people is not political ideology or economic interest. Faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for.'<sup>1</sup>

Huntington also maintains that the East-West axis of the world division during the Cold War has been replaced by a clash of civilisations, and claims that culture will be the main source of division among human beings today. He divides the globe into 'world civilisations', one of which he calls 'Slavic Orthodox Christianity'. Thus, he argues, the former Slavic Soviet space will still remain an influential collective, glued together by religious and cultural ideology rather than political. According to the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the relationship between Russian Orthodoxy and the state is theologically unique as 'the Church in Orthodoxy is the spiritual organ of the state and special protector of the *ethnos*'.<sup>2</sup> Writing at the end of the Stalinist era, he argued that the Soviet state and Orthodox theology would produce a political culture of fused church and state, and that in the postcommunist era the state would have a propensity to approach the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)<sup>3</sup> as a national standard for ethics and values. He also argued that the ROC would face a major crisis as it began to contend with the pluralism which western societies have dealt with throughout the twentieth century. Today it is clear that many of Bonhoeffer's predictions have come to pass.

Churches are usually figured into international relations as non-state actors. This would be a false assumption as far as Russia is concerned, for two reasons. First, the ambiguous state of democracy in Russia today complicates the business of defining what is part of the state and what is not. Second, Soviet infiltration of the ROC, the presoviet tradition of joint church-state leadership and the attitudes inherited from both eras make the ROC much more of a state actor than a non-state actor. The ROC has never truly been free or separate from the state in Russia. For this reason one

must ask whether or not it is fair to look at the ROC in terms of western democratic church-state relationships. Today, while the ROC enjoys religious freedom, its close partnership with the state justifies defining it as a semigovernmental organisation.

The Russian Orthodox Church is also a significant transnational actor, both as a religion and as an institution, for ethnic Russians living outside Russia and, to some extent, for Orthodox believers in other countries (the 'Near Abroad', France, Scandinavia and Japan, for instance). This transnational community of Russian Orthodoxy demands an international outlook from the Moscow Patriarchate. At the same time, the nation-based nature of Orthodoxy offers a different form of transnationalism. Religious ideas and church infrastructure produce cross-border influence based on concepts of national identity. We also need to bear in mind that it is economic, social or political conditions that regularly motivate individuals and institutions to use religious identities to achieve political ends.<sup>4</sup> According to this model, the transnational activities of churches have more to do with the marginalisation of groups in international relations rather than with religion in politics as such.

After the initial excitement of freedom of religion in Russia, the ROC began to fear marginalisation, both in Russia and in the world. While the greater Orthodox community acknowledges the pluralist nature of the new millennium, the ROC has taken a step away from pluralism. The past five years highlight certain trends: a unique church-state relationship in which each party assists the other with regard to the 'abroad'; an active lobbying force promoted by the ROC affecting an international agenda; and significant diplomatic and international political activity by the ROC itself. In this paper I look specifically at the international relations role of the ROC, referring to case studies in the 'Near Abroad' and in the traditional Soviet sphere of influence.

The current thinking and external outlook of the Russian Orthodox Church have three main roots.

First, and most important, is the traditional concept of Holy Russia. Surrounded by Catholicism and Islam, Orthodox Christian Russia has endured for a millennium in spite of invasion, oppression and occupation. Holy Russia is further defined by the concept of messianism – that Moscow is the 'Third Rome' and that Christianity finally finds its true expression in Russia after degeneration in Rome and Constantinople. The faith of the Slavs brings a deeper meaning to Christianity from which the rest of the world can profit. The idea that Russia is a sacred space protected by Orthodoxy supports both a superpower mentality and xenophobia: Russia is a special spiritual space where faith, nation and culture are linked, and Russia will endure aggression from both East and West.

The second root is the church-state tradition of Soviet Russia. Under a totalitarian regime in a country which was also an international superpower, the ROC assumed a unique role with regard to the abroad. Representing the Soviet Union in the peace movement allowed the ROC to be internationally active, but also fostered an alignment between 'peace' and the Soviet *status quo*. Today the ROC continues to operate as an international advocate for peace as Russia defines it, promoting Russia's international authority while acting as a diplomat for nonaggression. The Soviet legacy has also defined a geographical identity for the ROC, which still views the entire territory of the former Soviet Union as its own jurisdiction – as it technically was during the Soviet era – and aspires to remain the prominent player in many of these independent states.

The third root is Russia's new democratic identity. After the end of the Soviet

Union the ROC welcomed freedom of religion, along with the ideals of a democratic society in Russia. Thus we see the ROC embracing a democratic ideology and paying at least lip service to pluralism, internationalism, tolerance and diversity. However, liberalisation has been a mixed blessing: while the ROC rejoices in its restored freedom, it is now operating in a free society and in the midst of globalisation. Jane Ellis describes the situation well in her book subtitled *Triumphalism and Defensiveness*.<sup>5</sup> The ROC questions how the international democratic community, which once supported the freedom of the church, can now support competition against it, albeit in the name of 'democracy'.

The concepts of Holy Russia, Soviet Russia and Democratic Russia make up a difficult blend for the ROC, which has in consequence been unable to consolidate its outlook. The ROC struggles with several dualities: looking both outward and inward; abiding by its traditional international role while seeking to profit from greater freedom to establish a new role; and attempting to engage in beneficial international relations with states and churches while remaining protectionist. A conflictive identity also makes the ROC vulnerable to external political pressures. The church-state relationship works both ways. Various political parties use the ROC in order to exploit its solid base of symbolism and to tap into a potentially valuable constituency. In return the ROC, seeking to guard its links with the state in one form or another, finds support all along the political spectrum. Rather than endorse a particular set of values, the ROC itself wants to be *a value* in Russian society. President Putin has validated this aspiration, stating that religion, alongside patriotism and history, should be one of the basic values of Russia.<sup>6</sup>

Only recently has the ROC made moves to define publicly its role in international relations. The 'Social Concept' of the Russian Orthodox Church was officially announced in August 2000.<sup>7</sup> The document lists specific areas where the ROC can involve itself in the activities of the state, 'for the good of the people'. Listed first is the international relations role: '(1) Peacekeeping at international, interethnic and domestic levels, assisting mutual understanding and cooperation between peoples, nations, and governments'. Later comes the domestic role: '(6) Dialogue with the organs of government authority at any branch and level regarding questions relevant to church and society, including the drafting of appropriate laws, legal acts, decrees and decisions'.<sup>8</sup> The 'Social Concept' thus envisages the ROC continuing to play its former Soviet role of peacemaker and diplomat, as well as exercising a new political influence as an independent lobby through the values it promotes and through its institutional connections. There are official agreements between the ROC and many government ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Philosophically, the ROC approaches international relations with a blend of anti-capitalist internationalism and Russian nationalist isolationism: the world should come together in peace and cooperation; however, Russia is special and other countries should not interfere in its internal affairs. Globalisation is condemned as it justifies western and secular values.

The 1997 law 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations' is a well-documented product of direct proactive lobbying by the Moscow Patriarchate. It has institutionalised certain aspects of the ROC's external agenda in the light of democratisation. First, it tends to confirm the status of the ROC as Russia's church. While the ROC denounces the nationalisation of the churches in neighbouring countries it has achieved a similar status for itself in Russia. Second, in the face of globalisation, the law has established criteria for defining degrees of 'Russianness', or rather, a hierarchy of acceptability of external influences, with Orthodoxy at the

top and western, specifically American, influence at the bottom. Third, the entire process of production of the legislation has set a precedent for future church-state relations. The ROC has shown that it can be a highly influential lobby in areas which have international ramifications. During this process it has also become clear that the ROC finds extensive support from the communist-nationalist coalition, as well as from the ministries, while the presidency remains an ambivalent ally. Despite the accomplishments of the ROC, however, the 1997 law is an unfinished story. Church-state relations will doubtless develop in new directions under Putin.

### **The Near Abroad**

The ROC makes constant reference to the 25 million ethnic Russians residing outside Russia in the newly independent states. It takes an increasingly defensive stance in the face of the growing distaste for 'all things Russian' manifested by these states as they engage in nation-building. Thus the ROC must deal with the international context of its former territory as well as with the inter-national (multiethnic and transnational) context within each of these neighbouring countries. This has meant that the traditional jurisdiction of the ROC is often compromised by national assertions in these various polities.

The traditional jurisdiction of the ROC is compromised by national assertion in these various polities. Patriarch Aleksii has expressed the church's fear: 'When the Soviet Union collapsed, each sovereign state made attempts to create its own independent Church. But we took a firm stand: the Church cannot divide into 15 autocephalous Orthodox Churches only due to the fact that the state where it performed its mission, disintegrated.'<sup>9</sup> The ROC is a symbolic advocate of ethnic Russian minorities which have no political connection with Russia.<sup>10</sup> It has a cultural conception of the CIS model, aiming to create an Orthodox-influenced ideological space congruous with the former Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the ROC contends with competing authorities for control over Orthodox parishes within this space, notably with the Constantinople Patriarchate.

### *Estonia*

Orthodoxy has become a difficult issue in postsoviet Estonian self-determination, as it is an inherent part of both the Estonian and the Russian national identity. Estonia is the only Baltic state with an indigenously Orthodox persona. In 1995, distancing itself from Moscow, the Estonian government registered the formerly exiled Estonian church as the 'Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church'.<sup>12</sup> The move was strategic, as this had been the legal name of the single Soviet-era Orthodox Church in Estonia, which had belonged to the Moscow Patriarchate. Politically, the significance was that the exiled church had been officially recognised by the Estonian 'nation'. The technical implication, moreover, was that the exiled church now owned all Russian Orthodox church property in Estonia. Furthermore, the newly recognised national church of Estonia was tax-exempt, while, the Estonian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate was liable for high taxes. The move was an obvious retaliation on the part of the Estonian government against russification and the Soviet occupation. The archbishop of Tallinn and All Estonia, Kornili (subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate), immediately contacted all foreign ambassadors in Estonia asking them to bring the issue to the attention of their home countries. He also sent a formal letter to the OSCE high commissioner for national minorities stating that the recent move

was targeting the Russian minorities.<sup>13</sup> The head of the Department of External Church Relations, Metropolitan Kirill, requested the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to step in and stop the abuse of Russian parishioners' rights in Estonia. The Ministry responded with harsh official statements, accusing the Estonian court of general hostility towards Russia and of anti-Russian rhetoric and publicly questioning 'Estonia's commitment to democracy, human rights, and freedom of conscience'.<sup>14</sup> These statements were especially poignant at a time when Estonia was keen to prove the progressive state of its democracy to the West in order to gain legitimacy for international assistance and possible membership of western international organisations. The Estonian ambassador to Russia tried to soften the diplomatic reverberations, emphasising that the dispute between the two churches did not signify a simultaneous dispute between the two states.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the ambassador himself used the debate between the two churches to reemphasise Russia's lack of respect for Estonian sovereignty. Demonstrations against the division of the Estonian Church attracted many Russians, believers and non-believers, who joined in to protest about the broader issues of language and citizenship. The ROC was thus instrumental in challenging the anti-Russian rhetoric of the postsoviet era in the Near Abroad and in publicising the plight of Russian minorities.

In February 1996 the Constantinople Patriarchate announced its agreement to take the autonomous Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church under its jurisdiction, a move which meant that the Moscow Patriarchate could no longer justify its case on the basis of ecclesiastical rights.<sup>16</sup> While foreign minister Kozyrev sought to address the rights of ethnic Russians through diplomatic channels, the ROC kept up its rhetoric against the Estonian government. Patriarch Aleksii appealed to President Lennart Meri of Estonia and suspended relations with the Constantinople Patriarchate. Church lobbying moved the Duma to submit a formal request to President Yel'tsin for economic sanctions against Estonia. Yel'tsin eventually vetoed the motion, a move which once again expressed the ambivalence of the presidency towards the church's political action, while the ROC found significant support among the communists, who were keen on vengeance against the Baltic states, as well as among the nationalists, who were seeking ethnic Russian unity. Eventually Constantinople and Moscow reached a compromise, agreeing to recognise both churches, while Constantinople sought recognition from the Estonian government for the Moscow Patriarchate's parishes in Estonia. However, in 2000 Aleksi condemned the routine visit of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios to Estonia as a plot to divide the church further. At this point Bartholomaios withdrew from the compromise, recognising only the registered Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church. Moscow immediately threatened to turn to the state for help.<sup>17</sup> The dispute is still a major component of the cool relations between Estonia and Russia. The Moscow Patriarchate sees Estonia as part of a larger conspiracy theory, a 'rehearsal for a plan to divide the Russian Church and separate the Kiev Metropolis from the Moscow Patriarchate'.<sup>18</sup>

### *Ukraine*

In Ukraine, two major conflicts involve the ROC. Nation-building in Ukraine led to the nationalisation of the church and the establishment of a new 'Kiev Patriarchate' completely independent of Moscow. The ROC reacted by redesignating its Exarchate the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate, headquartered in Kharkiv<sup>19</sup> and later excommunicated Patriarch Filaret of the Kiev Patriarchate for dividing Kiev

from Moscow.<sup>20</sup> After the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church broke away in 1993, the three Orthodox churches began to reflect the population patterns in Ukraine: the russified industrial East, feeling greater affinity to Moscow; the more extreme Ukrainian nationalists who are small in number but loud in voice; and finally Kiev, seeking above all unity in moderation between the two extremes, and an identity pleasing to both Russians and Ukrainians. To some extent, cultural leaderships were being established, and the ROC was losing ground in Ukraine. Furthermore, some of the 'schismatic' Orthodox groups in Russia began to align themselves with the Kiev Patriarchate, aggravating the conflict.<sup>21</sup> As the dispute worsened, international Orthodox leaders put pressure on Moscow to resolve the situation.<sup>22</sup> The ROC looked to the Russian state for support. Russian law enforcement agents seized property belonging to the Kiev Patriarchate located in Russia. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kiev Patriarchate organised a massive picket of the Russian embassy in Kiev. Although the protest was born out of an ecclesiastical dispute, the crowds were expressing general resentment at Russia's patronising attitude towards Ukrainian independence. Within a day, the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs were barraging one another with complaints. Ukraine specifically took issue with the fact that an 'interreligious' question had become one of relations between Russia and Ukraine, especially in light of the treaty of 'friendship, cooperation and partnership' signed by Yel'tsin and Kuchma. In turn, Russia used the situation to focus on Ukraine's slow transition to democracy.

The second conflict in Ukraine is part of the much more widespread feud between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The significant Catholic population in western Ukraine has been the cause of increasing Russian antagonism towards Ukraine. The Moscow Patriarchate's main concern has been for control of church property in western Ukraine; but the greater implications of the dispute are in the realm of Russia-Vatican relations. Thus far, the ROC has succeeded in preventing the pope visiting Russia and in persuading the Presidency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote the position of the ROC in relation to the Vatican. The main interests of the ROC in Ukraine are territorial: to maintain its canonical dominance and physical presence, and to guard Russian cultural influence. Ideally, it would completely eliminate ecclesiastical competition in Ukraine.

#### *Church and State: Mutual Assistance*

In both Estonia and Ukraine, interchurch contention brought about less change than did state political intervention. The excommunication of Patriarch Filaret, for example, did little to prevent the consolidation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kiev Patriarchate in Ukraine, but the occupying of Kiev Patriarchate property in Russia by Russian government forces mobilised both sides. In Estonia, squabbles with the Constantinople Patriarchate did not resolve the conflict, but Russian state intervention and international visibility put the Estonian government on the defensive. The Russian government welcomed the ROC's action in both Estonia and Ukraine as it gave expression to prevalent attitudes within Russia at the time regarding the Near Abroad and also exerted an influence in these countries which would have been inappropriate at the official interstate level. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was able to use the situation of the ROC in Estonia as leverage in its long-term struggle to influence policy affecting ethnic Russians in Estonia. Russia profited by the church feud in its rivalry with Ukraine, publicly challenging Ukraine's path to democratisation. The true nature of the relationship between the

ROC and the Russian state in international relations is one of opportunistic mutual assistance: the two bodies can use one another to act outside their respective organisational constraints. The ROC uses the state to override interchurch impasses and the state uses the ROC to combat anti-Russian nationalism. The state also benefits from the ability of the ROC to voice Russian interests when normal diplomatic channels are ineffectual because of international political tensions.

The actions of the ROC in Estonia and Ukraine are based on a two-tiered ideology promoting first and foremost the model of a socio-cultural CIS, including the Baltic states, where former Soviet boundaries are congruent with the jurisdiction of the ROC. The attitudes of the ROC are totalitarian, in that all other groups are perceived as schismatic or invading: pluralism is a problem for the ROC not only within Russia, but also in the international context. The disappearance of communism as an ideology to unify these postsoviet states with Russia is problematic. The ROC wants to assume that ideological role, but fails to do so in the canonical context and therefore seeks the assistance of the state. When its policy of establishing a 'cultural CIS' meets severe opposition, the ROC pursues the secondary and less ambitious goal of unifying its own parishes, which are often congruous with the Russian diaspora. The territorial aspirations of the ROC in the Near Abroad thus transcend ethnic solidarity, but linking together the Russian diaspora is an important activity within the wider context.

## **Serbia**

During the recent conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo the religious and cultural links between Russia and Serbia became a prime justification for the alliance between them and for Russian reluctance to countenance any form of solution by force.<sup>23</sup> The stance of the ROC and its action in the Balkans tied Russia more closely into the situation, influenced relations with Milošević and helped to rouse anti-NATO and antiwestern sentiment in Russia. Patriarch Aleksii also played an important diplomatic role, acting as an emissary from the Russian state. A lack of consensus in Russia about what its position towards Yugoslavia should be in the light of Russia's relations with NATO and the West offered the ROC even more freedom to manoeuvre according to its own agenda. It fulfilled its traditional Soviet role as peacemaker, while also promoting Russia's international authority and redefining the former Soviet sphere of influence in religious terms.

The stance of the Russian state on the Yugoslavian situation reflected its concerns about the nationalities question within its own borders.<sup>24</sup> The same can be said for the stance of the ROC, which reflected the dilemmas faced by Orthodoxy in the midst of the Islamic nationalism of Chechnya and Dagestan. Orthodox-inspired ideology of the nation-state influenced the expression of Russian political solidarity with Yugoslavia. The Russian first deputy prime minister, Soskovets, reasoned that 'the Russians and the Serbs are brothers and we have a single confession and a single aim in this world'.<sup>25</sup>

Whereas in the Near Abroad the ROC applied pressure through the weight of the state, in Bosnia it profited more from ecclesiastical links. The visits by Patriarch Aleksii and Metropolitan Kirill to Yugoslavia were described as peacekeeping visits in both church and secular reports. Serbian Orthodox and Russian Orthodox leaders discussed their own peace plan. The Serbian patriarch, Pavle, visited the Danilov Monastery in Moscow to discuss Bosnia and Patriarch Aleksii promised a speedy and peaceful end to the conflict; the two signed a joint communiqué.<sup>26</sup> Both Orthodox

leaders were clear about the peace terms: the Bosnian Serbs would be prepared to sign a peace agreement if they were permitted to form a confederation with Serbia.<sup>27</sup> In this case, then, interchurch discussions initiated by the ROC were aimed at facilitating interstate bargaining. Later, the ROC was able to influence the Russian state to pull out of the agreed international embargo, allowing Russian sale of arms to Yugoslavia.<sup>28</sup>

Between the two conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, relations between Milošević and the Russian Orthodox Church continued to develop. On visits to Moscow and Belgrade Milošević found sympathy and support in the ROC, while the ROC was willing to play up the cultural connections between Serbia and Russia. In a climate of international apprehensiveness Patriarch Aleksii voiced support for Serbian control over Kosovo, as a 'holy place for Orthodoxy'.<sup>29</sup> When tensions in Kosovo once again began to flare, the ROC declared its intention of taking part in the settling of the conflict, with a plan for 'peace' between the Yugoslav administration and the 'separatists'.<sup>30</sup>

The conservative ROC could sympathise with the plight of Milošević under western scrutiny. When Belarusian president Lukashenko introduced the idea of a Slavic Union between Belarus', Yugoslavia and Russia, Patriarch Aleksii spoke at the Moscow Institute of Foreign Relations of the 'peacemaking' nature of the proposed Union and said that it symbolised 'the great miracle, the return of the people to the Mother Church ... the guarantee of our common spiritual triumph'.<sup>31</sup> This is but one example of the way in which the ROC legitimises Russian political aspirations while pursuing its own aim of ecclesiastical leadership.

Some aspects of the pursuit of peace in Yugoslavia by the ROC were what churches do naturally in times of war: prayer, humanitarian aid and service. However, in other respects the peacemaking efforts of the ROC followed patterns of behaviour in international relations which it learned in Soviet times. The peace it called for involved nonaggression, an acknowledgment of Russian authority in resolving the conflict and the preservation of the *status quo* in Serbia. Above all, the ROC was against any 'military meddling'.<sup>32</sup> It demanded 'peace' with such force that 'peace' began to sound like a threat.

Well before the Kosovo crisis Metropolitan Kirill had announced that NATO expansion was 'the coming of the Antichrist'.<sup>33</sup> The Russian church used the occasion of several international Orthodox conferences to denounce NATO and to discourage those national Orthodox churches whose countries were members of the EAPC and Partnership for Peace, of which some aspired to future NATO membership. In the forum of the European Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy held in Moscow in 1998 a leading ROC representative termed NATO action in the Balkans a 'crusade against the Christian Orthodox faith' and warned that 'some other Christian Orthodox country will be the next'.<sup>34</sup> The ROC was a major voice of opposition which contributed to the deterioration of Russia–NATO relations. Both the ROC and the secular media played heavily on the cultural connection between Russia and Serbia to denounce Russia's rapprochement with Europe and the USA. The image it defended of a holy, powerful and internationally respected Russia still guarding its Soviet sphere of influence echoed general frustration felt in Russia with the new international paradigm.

At a meeting with church officials at the Danilov Monastery the Russian foreign minister Ivanov openly condemned the one-dimensional world model, in which the USA is the only superpower. He also called for continued cooperation between church and state in the field of external affairs, as this was a 'major component of a

wide national consensus in Russia on its foreign policy': it 'ensured efficient diplomacy', boosting 'any country's role and authority in international relations'.<sup>35</sup> The ROC is keen to play this role and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognises the ROC as a means of enabling Russia to reach its proper international status once again and as a useful component of diplomacy. But while Russian state diplomacy has to work within the constraints of new international commitments, the ROC is free to work outside these limitations.

Since Kosovo, international relations bodies have begun to recognise more fully the role of the ROC in Eastern Europe and in Russian foreign policy decision-making. The EU has attempted to engage in relations with the ROC, with little success, although some communication takes place through the official mission of the Greek church to the EU.<sup>36</sup> More significantly, NATO is now seeking a permanent dialogue with the ROC. Nations engaging in relations with Russia and its allies must be prepared to deal with the ideas, values and positions of the ROC as an intrinsic factor in Russia's international activities and policies.

## Conclusion

The ROC prefers political action to ecclesiastical dialogue. New borders have awakened or aggravated old conflicts, bringing the Moscow Patriarchate into a 'Cold War' with both the Vatican and the Constantinople Patriarchate. In the Near Abroad, the ROC faces a difficult self-examination in dealing with issues of language, citizenship and nationality – issues which Soviet ideology had conveniently answered. Controversy in these areas places the ROC in an explicitly nationalistic context, pushing it towards an increasing reliance on the Russian state and away from any multicultural version of Orthodoxy. In Yugoslavia, while functioning in its traditional role as a promoter of peace, the ROC also pursued a foreign policy independent both of international consensus and of Russian state policy itself. In general, the ROC views itself as a valid international actor with a specific foreign policy agenda: to guard its own ecclesiastical interests and jurisdiction, to act as a peacemaker and to promote Russia's authority in the world.

The Russian phrase '*kto kogo*' springs to mind as appropriate. The ROC has emerged from its uncelebrated role as the 'whom' ('*kogo*') in the totalitarian state and is now a 'who' ('*kto*') wielding considerable influence. But rather than leaving us with any definite long-term conclusions, the recent role of the ROC in Russia's international relations only opens further questions. Can Orthodoxy replace communism as the ideological glue joining Russia, its former Soviet empire and Eastern Europe? Can the ROC continue to overcome the paradox of unity in the midst of pluralism, all the while seeking to secure a church-state hegemony? How will the ROC deal with its loss of territory and status in the Near Abroad? What is the future of Orthodox-Muslim relations? How will consolidation of democracy in Russia affect the international aspirations and actions of the ROC? Is the ROC's influence in international affairs likely to be permanent, or is it only a result of Russia's weak political state? Will Soviet traditions in international relations activities die out with this generation of church leadership? What is the future of the relationships between the ROC and Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs? How will international bodies such as NATO, the EU, the UN and the OSCE address the role of the ROC? Clearly the position of the ROC, both at home and abroad, is insecure and changing. While the international community must learn to understand the challenges faced by the ROC, the ROC must work to find a suitable role for itself in a pluralist and internationalist society.

**Notes and References**

- <sup>1</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1991), p. 26.
- <sup>2</sup> See Vigen Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994), p. 5.
- <sup>3</sup> By 'Russian Orthodox Church' I mean the official Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate as recognised today by the government of the Russian Federation. Numerous schismatic, exiled and foreign churches also call themselves Russian Orthodox. All references to the 'Russian Orthodox Church' or ROC indicate the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. I shall differentiate all other churches by their proper titles.
- <sup>4</sup> See Scott Thomas, 'Religion and international conflict', in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, 2000), p. 12.
- <sup>5</sup> Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, 1996).
- <sup>6</sup> ITAR-TASS, 22 December 1999.
- <sup>7</sup> *Osnovy sotsial'noi kontsepsii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi (Principles of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church)*, 14 August 2000. The document was first released at the meeting and was not produced for the public until some months later. The version referred to here is over 120 pages in length, acquired through Keston Institute, Oxford, UK. Copies of this document can be found at <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/2000r23.htm>.
- <sup>8</sup> English translation by author.
- <sup>9</sup> ITAR-TASS, 9 June 2000.
- <sup>10</sup> Aleksii has the official title 'Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia'. During events in Estonia and Ukraine the Russian press referred to him as 'Patriarch of Moscow and all Russians'.
- <sup>11</sup> 'The Russian Orthodox Church [is] the only undivided structure in the Commonwealth of Independent States.' Patriarch Aleksii, Interfax News Agency, 2 November 2000.
- <sup>12</sup> ITAR-TASS, 30 November 1995. FBIS, WNC
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid.* See also recommendations from Max Van der Stoep to the OSCE Permanent Council: <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/recommendations/estonia/index.htm>.
- <sup>14</sup> ITAR-TASS, 9 December 1995. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, World News Connection (FBIS, WNC).
- <sup>15</sup> Tallinn ETA (Estonian News Agency), 19 December 95. FBIS, WNC.
- <sup>16</sup> *Keston News Service (KNS)*, February 1996.
- <sup>17</sup> BBC Estonia, 'Russian Orthodox Church to seek state's help against Estonian clergy', FBIS, WNC, 1 November 2000.
- <sup>18</sup> *Interfax*, 2 November 2000.
- <sup>19</sup> See chapter 'Angels and pins: Ukrainian religion', in Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (Yale University Press, Newhaven, CT, 2000), p. 245.
- <sup>20</sup> *Interfax*, 20 February 1997.
- <sup>21</sup> For example, Fr Gleb Yakunin and the Free Russian Orthodox Church. See *Interfax*, 20 February 1997.
- <sup>22</sup> Patriarch Bartholomaios refused to take sides in the dispute between the Kiev and Moscow Patriarchates, recognising both churches. The Moscow Patriarchate disliked this stance and urged Constantinople for its support. As Moscow grew more antagonistic, Constantinople recognised and accepted both the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kiev Patriarchate under its jurisdiction. Ukraine remains the major issue of conflict between Moscow and Constantinople today. See Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate: <http://www.orthodox.org.ua>.
- <sup>23</sup> Like many Russian politicians, Zhirinovskiy focused above all on the religious connection: 'We side with the Serbs. Our position is clear. The Serbs must be saved. They are our Orthodox brethren.' Quote taken from *USA Today*, 15 December 1993. See p. 247 of S. Neil McFarlane, 'Russian conceptions of Europe', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 3,

1994, pp. 234–69.

- <sup>24</sup> See Paul Goble, 'Dangerous liaisons: Moscow, the Former Yugoslavia, and the West', in Richard Ullman (ed.), *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars* (Council on Foreign Relations, Washington DC, 1996), pp. 182–95.
- <sup>25</sup> *Interfax*, 10 October 1994. FBIS, WNC.
- <sup>26</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> 'Russia: role of Russian Orthodox Church in public life', *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief*, 4 September 1995.
- <sup>29</sup> ITAR-TASS, 16 June 1998.
- <sup>30</sup> ITAR-TASS, 8 March 1998.
- <sup>31</sup> *Interfax*, 14 April 1999.
- <sup>32</sup> *Interfax*, 4 October 1998.
- <sup>33</sup> *KNS*, July 1997.
- <sup>34</sup> SRNA (Bosnian Serb News Agency), 21 June 1999, 'NATO aggression – international condemnation', Belgrade: [http://www.suc.org/news/yds/b210699\\_e.html#N18](http://www.suc.org/news/yds/b210699_e.html#N18).
- <sup>35</sup> *Interfax*, 6 December 1999.
- <sup>36</sup> Author's phone interview with the head of the permanent Greek mission to the EU in Brussels, February 2001.