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ZOBRAZENIE „ORTODOXIE“ V POST-SOVIETSKOM PRIESTORE: AKO VLADIMÍR PUTIN VYUŽÍVA CIRKEV V JEHO PROTIZÁPADNEJ KAMPANI

THE DEPICTION OF “ORTHODOXY” IN POST-SOVIET SPACE: HOW VLADIMIR PUTIN USES THE CHURCH IN HIS ANTI- WESTERN CAMPAIGN

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Článok sa snaží preskúmať nedávny záujem Ruska o pozdvihnutie postavenia pravoslávnej cirkvi v štáte a vo svete. Najdôležitejšie je, že pozícia pravoslávnej cirkvi počas Putinovej vlády rýchlo vzrástla ako prostriedok na vyplnenie medzery vzniknutej po páde Sovietskeho zväzu. Doktrína zo 16. storočia, ktorú Filofei nazval „Tretím Rímom“ vykresľovala Moskvu ako poslednú svätyňu východného kresťanstva a nacionalistická mantra „pravoslávia, národnosti a autokracie“ z 19. storočia boli za Putina „omladené“ ako nová ideologická cesta k potlačaniu západného vplyvu. Je zjavným faktorom najmä to, že ideologické hnutie, ktoré dôrazne popiera hobotovanie Ruska s liberálnym Západom, sa po krymskej kríze v roku 2014 dost' zintenzívnilo. Za tejto situácie je Putinovo použitie pravoslávia a ruského duchovného odkazu priamy politický nástroj vyjadrujúci jedinečnosť Ruska v medzinárodných vzťahoch. Článok kriticky skúma historickú trajektóriu pravoslávnej cirkvi v Rusku ako indikátor jej osobitosti. Kľúčové slová: pravoslávna cirkev, Rusko, Západ, liberalizmus, Vladimir Putin, medzinárodné vzťahy

This Article seeks to examine the Russia's recent interest in uplifting the status of Orthodox church as a pivotal factor in the state and beyond that. Most importantly the position of Orthodox church has grown rapidly during Putin's administration as a solacing factor to fill the gap emerged from the fall of Soviet Union. The 16th century doctrine propounded by Filofei called “Third Rome”, which profoundly portrayed Moscow as the last sanctuary of Eastern Christianity and the 19th century nationalist mantra of “Orthodoxy, Nationality and Autocracy” have been rejuvenated under Putin as new ideological path to move away from the Western influence. Especially, it has been an evident factor that ideological movement that rigidly denies Russia's

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hobnobbing with the Liberal West has been rather intensified after Crimean crisis in 2014. Under this situation Putin's usage of Orthodoxy and Russia's spiritual legacy stand as a direct political tool expressing Russia's uniqueness of the global affairs. This article will critically examine the historical trajectory of Orthodox church in Russia as an indicator of its distinctiveness.

Keywords: orthodox church, Russia, West, liberalism, Vladimir Putin, foreign affairs

JEL: Z00, N40, Z12

1 INTRODUCTION

The ideological emptiness faced by Russia in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR was a heavy one that kept the country's spirit in the doll drums for a decade. The revered attitude that Russians were accustomed for Communism as an ideology was a unique one prevailed among them through state-imposed conditions and it was not an easy task for such a society to cling the winds of change. The economic stagnation followed by the Chechenia war and the internal turmoil in Russian society under Yeltsin's period devastated the Russian consciousness creating major social crisis such as the rapid increase of suicide rate in the late '90s (Shleifer and Tresnamn 2005). The vacuum emerged from the demise of the Soviet Union and its severe repercussions continued to torment Russian society till Vladimir Putin stepped into Kremlin.

The revival of state affinity with the Orthodox church became a salient factor under president Putin in Russia's quest in search of a new ideology. In examining Russia's romance with seeking an ideology, it was Orthodoxy that had dominated the Russian space in the pre-revolutionary era. The ideology pervaded in Russian empire before 1917 was confined to three essential pillars such as Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationalism (*Pravoslavie, Samoderzhavie, Narondaost*) was a creation of Sergei Uvarov, the Russian minister of Education in Tsarist Russia in 1833. Russia's intellectual transformation in the 19th century took a crucial direction in search of an identity as the Russian avant-garde intellectuals sought the discontent of the Western modernity imposed upon Russia by Peter the Great (Bohlen 1966). The twisted identity of Russia's historical mission remained ambiguous even at the height of its imperial expansion under Empress Catherine and they were aware of their incompatibility with Europe, at the same time they knew that it would not be Russia's destiny to tryst with the Orient. While expressing his sentimental views on Russia's destiny in the global realm, poet Fyodor Tiutchev made his famous exclamation "Rationally Russia cannot be understood, one has to believe in it" which symbolized the general attitude of the 19th-century intellectuals to distinguish Russia as a unique civilization from Latin Europe (Laqueur 2014).

This age-long dogma of considering Russia's uniqueness from both West and Orient came back to life when the country suffered devoid of inspiration. In particular, Vladimir Putin's interest in reviving the longingness for Russia's imperial legacy is

a notable factor since his second term as the president. For instance, his empathy on “spiritual development” of the Russian society was rather visible before his ascendancy to premier post under Yeltsin in the troubled period of the late '90s, especially when Putin was heading the National Security Council, he included the importance of spiritual development of the nation along with national security interests of the country (Van Herpen 2014). The new concept of imbuing spirituality with defense in post-Soviet Russia was ironic as country's Communist past had abhorred the religious identity, but Putin's proposed national security concept was approved by president Yeltsin as one of his last decrees before he abdicated his position in December in 1999.

In this article, I will examine the renewal of Orthodoxy as a part of President Putin's strategy in inculcating Russia's new ideology in post-Soviet space. This article will further identify the significance of Third Rome Doctrine as a historical narrative pervaded in Russian psyche that empowered the nation to seek their mission in global civilization and how it has been a geopolitical usage in modern Russia clamming its sanctified mission as the preserver of the true faith. While examining the specific position of Orthodox Church and its theological uniqueness in modern Russia, I will discuss the way it has been used by Vladimir Putin for a national awakening to consolidate his authority while emphasizing on the relevance of Russia's uniqueness as a civilization which is neither Western nor Oriental. The conclusion emerges from this article will unpack the nationalist rhetoric resurged by Putin as major instruments in bolstering his political project. Arguing that the affinity between the Putinism and Orthodox revival as a paramount factor in 21st century Russia which is antithetical to Western values and globalism, this article will unveil the philosophical roots that aspired modern Russian consciousness to reembrace their traditional values.

2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIRD ROME DOCTRINE AS A GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATION

Prior to any reflection on the importance of the Third Rome doctrine, it is vitally important to understand the antecedents of Russian history before the famous Third Rome doctrine emerged in the 16th century. According to the general belief in Russian history Christianity was introduced to Russia in 988A.D and it has been largely neglected to consider that blooming ground of Christianity was not Moscow, but Kyiv a lofty fortress where grand duke Vladimir secured the throne and his acceptance of Eastern Christianity was an act propelled by Vladimir's fascination toward the gaudiness of Byzantine Christian legacy (Riasanovsky 1960). It is said that the religious restrictions of other faiths intensified Vladimir's decision to choose Eastern Christianity as the faith of his kingdom and besides, his emissaries were dazzled by Constantinople and its famous Church Hagia Sophia. They reported, “We no longer knew whether we were in heaven or on earth” (Charques 1956, p. 91).

The Kyiv legacy was faded into the oblivion when the city was sacked by the Mongols in 1223 and as the state disintegrated, Russian leadership passed by increments to Moscow. Christianity in Moscow was prevailed amid the chaos of Mongol invasion and continued to flourish while keeping Constantinople as its spiritual aggrandizement, but then by the 15th beginning of the fifteenth century, its position of dependence as a metropolitan district of the patriarch of Constantinople had become vulnerable since the Constantinople itself was at bay under Ottoman threat. On the other hand, Russians were bemused by Constantinople's decision to unite with the Roman Church in 1439 at the Council of Florence, which they found to be an anathema for their staunch loyalty to the Orthodoxy (Charques 1956, p. 112).

Prior to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Emperor of Byzantium was considered the "Basileus of Romans" which was akin to a fatherly figure who baptized all the Christians in Eastern Roman Empire. But the fall of Constantinople severely changed Russia's veneration of Byzantium patronage that paved the path for new changes in Muscovy Duchy. Alexander Schmemmann states:

"Byzantium was 'the measure of Orthodoxy', Russians could securely ...develop their own state, it was effectively guaranteed by universal Byzantine Orthodoxy, its undeniable authority. But now with this measure gone, the authority collapsed." (Toumanoff 1955)

Given the situation filled with spiritual anarchy in post 1453 context Russia stumbled upon the necessity of new self-determination in the international environment. Indeed, this is the background which paved the path for the creation of "Third Rome Doctrine" by an obscure monk named Filofei in the 16th century. Filofei's speculation of enthroning Moscow as the new custodian of the true faith was derived from the works of his predecessors such as Metropolitan Zosima who described Moscow as "New Jerusalem" and Simon Chizh (Siskin) likened Moscow to Rome. The epistles written by Filofei were sent to the Pskov representative of the Moscow grand prince Vassili III (1479–1533), to Vassili himself and to Ivan IV the Terrible (1530–1584). Monk Filofei's claim on Moscow's destiny as the "Third Rome" was essentially an analysis he aptly portrayed while tracing Russia's Orthodox tradition derived from Byzantium heritage (Klemenko and Yurtaev 2018). Therefore, it is pivotal to admit the fact that Russia embraced Orthodox Christianity and the national culture and all its riches inherited by Russia is linked its genesis to the Byzantium. The most crucial passage of Filofei's epistle states:

"I would like to say a few words about the existing Orthodox empire of our most illustrious, exalted ruler. He is the only emperor on all the earth over the Christians, the governor of the holy, divine throne of the holy, ecumenical, apostolic

church which in place of the churches of Rome and Constantinople is in the city of Moscow, protected by God, in the holy and glorious Uspenskij Church of the purest Mother of God. It alone shines over all the earth more radiantly than the sun. For now, well, those who love Christ and those who love God, that all Christian empires will perish and give way to the one kingdom of our ruler, in accord with the books of the prophet, which is the Russian empire. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and there will never be a fourth". (Brecken 1999, p. 89)

Reaching beyond the task of defending Orthodox Christianity, Fillofei justified the temporal mission of Moscow grand prince and he made an enormous emphasis on evangelical virtues like holiness. (Schmemmann 1966) Even though Third Rome Doctrine made no significance as the state doctrine in Russian history, its influences echoed in the Muscovy tradition convincing Russia's obligation to protect Eastern Christians. It's aspiration to safeguard Eastern Christians from Ottomans and other forces persisted from the time Moscow embraced the Third Rome concept as a moral duty and it continued even Russia entered the epoch of modernity under the reforms of Peter the Great. As an example, Peter's effort of expanding Russian maritime activities in the Black Sea by converting it to Russian Sea was akin to his strategy of protecting Balkan Slaves from the oppression of the Ottomans. It is worth to note that after Peter's demise the same interest on the Eastern Question was prevailed in Katherine's foreign policy followed by Russia's military engagement with Ottoman Empire which resulted in a humiliating defeat to Turks in Battle of Kozludza in 1774 (Bohlen 1966). Furthermore, the Treaty of Kayanarka signed between victorious Russians and Ottomans guaranteed Russia's right to protect Orthodox Christians denoting Russia's symbolic tutelage of being the custodian to lead the universal orthodoxy and the true faith in Christianity. Klemenko and Yurtaev state:

"The belief, being in tune with the mood of Russian society, had an impact on both the inner political structure of the state (including its Soviet period) and its foreign policy. This allows us to suggest that the Moscow as the Third Rome concept may be seen as Russia's informal geopolitical doctrine." (Klemenko& Yurtaev 2018, p.45)

The thoughts dominated the Russian intellectual space in the 19th century was linked to the inspirational gravity of the Third Rome doctrine as it enabled Russian state apparatus and the intelligentsia to justify the uniqueness in Russia as a different geopolitical space and a civilization with intrinsic roots different from both Europe and the East. The vision propounded by the 19th century Russian diplomat F. I. Tyutchev was an offshoot of Fiofie's Third Rome doctrine and it Tyutchev presented vision on Russian as continental project where Russia would triumph over the Europe as the

preserver of the Christianity (Lane 1976). In fact, his claim was bold and utterly idealistic which was contained three pillars of fulfilling Russian hegemony. The first stage envisaged Russia's consolidation within its current borders. The second provided for the pan-Slavic project implementation (also called "Eastern Empire") with Eastern Europe and the Balkans integration (Hammond 1953, p. 611). The third stage entailed a complete European re-organization under the aegis of Russia: absorption of Austria, Germany, Italy, reunification of the Churches with Orthodoxy established in Rome and, consequently, papal subjection. Ideally Russia would embrace "with the exception of China, the entire Eurasian continent, in particular the Mediterranean with a core Europe" (Guins 1950).

Tyutchev's utopian project of forming a grand Russia and whole 19th century Russian intellectual fascination of portraying Russia as a sanctuary for Slavs and Orthodox Christianity had derived from Filofie and it pervaded the Russian consciousness throughout the 19th century as an indispensable factor in deciding their participation in geopolitical issues. In his "Writers Diary" Russian author Dostoyevsky writes:

"Russia is a natural magnet which irresistibly attracts the Slavs, thus keeping alive their integrity and unity." (Morson 1999, p. 481)

The geopolitical significance of "Third Rome" doctrine in the Russia's foreign policy, in particular in the "Eastern Question" was a notable factor even in a situation where Russia was coping with its internal chaos in the late 19th century. For an example, when most of European states stood along with Ottomans by considering Russia the major threat in the aftermath of Crimean war, Russia still clung to their traditional position of protecting Eastern Orthodox Christians. In 1867 Russian foreign minister A.M. Gorchakov wrote a letter to Tsar Alexander II to convince him the necessity Russia to intervene the "Eastern Question". He writes:

"We need to continue our mission as patron of the Eastern Christian nations, ensuring them that Russia is their only sincere, constant and unmercenary friend... It is only through Russia that the liberation of the Christian East can be achieved efficiently and durably. Only... Russia can become a link between these very different nations... Without Russia they may fall into confusion and anarchy." (Poe 2001, p. 120)

However, the socio-political upheaval faced by Russia after the October revolution in 1917 reversed Russia's geopolitical mission of protecting Slavs and preserving the Orthodoxy by replacing it with the Communism which adopted atheism as a state ideology leaving behind its history and withdrawing from the traditions embedded in Russian society. As Russia was engulfed by the new ideological and

political transformation since the formation of the USSR in 1922 the “Third Rome doctrine” became a diminished, but its influence was not completely faded away. Especially several Russian philosophers notably Vladimir Solov'ev and Nikolai Berdiaev argued that the notion of Bolshevism was rooted in Russian Messianism which had derived from the belief in “Third Rome Doctrine”. In Peter Duncan’s “Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After” Duncan has aptly elucidated the messianism as 'the proposition or belief that a given group is in some way chosen for a purpose (Duncan 2000). Closely linked to this is the view that the great suffering endured by the group will lead somehow to the redemption of the group itself and possibly of all humanity. In particular, Filofei conception was used following the grater needs of the Soviet Union in their struggle against Nazi invasion. The unique adaptation of the life story of Ivan the Terrible to a play by Alexy Tolstoy in 1942 saw a systematic change of Soviet attitude toward Third Rome doctrine as a factor to boost the nationalist morale. In the opening scene of Ivan, the Terrible, the tsar' explains his mission to unify the Russian lands, destroy internal opposition, and defend the realm against the imperialist Germans. Ivan concludes his speech with a few boastful words from Filofei:

“Two Romes have fallen, Moscow is the third, there will be no fourth, for I am absolute master of this third Rome, the Muscovite state.” (Maguire 2013, pp.256)

The resurgence of Russian intellectual thoughts regarding the civilizational mission of Russia in the post-Soviet era saw a rapid increase and the ideological vacuum created by the collapse of Soviet Union bolstered the revival of Russia’s civilizational nostalgia. A concept of “state civilization” proposed by I.V Artemov in the mid 90’s had referred to the nation’s destiny as an interwoven part of its Orthodox legacy suggesting the need of restore its importance in the state affairs. Artemov states:

“Russian civilization is, no doubt, the Orthodox civilisation. Russian ethnos as a spiritual and cultural phenomenon took shape through the consolidation of disparate Slavic tribes with the adoption of Christianity. Russians managed to rise to the level of a nation capable of architecting a great world power through implementing, in the period of Muscovy, the Third Rome concept of the state as the guardian of eternal Christian truths. After the Byzantine Empire (the Second Rome) fell in 1453 under the crushing blows of the Ottoman Turks, Russian Muscovy remained the only world centre of Orthodoxy, assuming both the spiritual power of Byzantium and the state mission of the Roman Empire (the First Rome) [...] – and emphasised –, this very notion shaped Russians into a nation fulfilling its historic mission till the end of days, protecting the Truth from the infidels and carry its Light to neighboring countries. This notion is what helped create a world Empire, since the Third Rome concept embraces

the idea of nations gathering as its core, spiritually consistent principle." (Larys 2011, p. 143)

Depiction of Moscow as the "Third Rome" has undergone some revolutionary interpretations facing many ups and downs at the turn out of the century. The two gospels that Russia reverently embraced in the 20th century were Christianity and Communism. Both had used this doctrine for geopolitical motives following their ideological significances and its current portrayal of today's Russia under Vladimir Putin seems to be an important cause of ascertaining where Russia is heading under the new guise of Orthodoxy. Also, it is important to note how Russian Federation has aligned its foreign policy in Eurasia, primarily advocating the Neo Eurasianism and upholding Moscow's supremacy in the interstate affairs.

3 ORTHODOXY IN THE ERA OF PUTIN

As I stated above the longingness of Russia for its past and civilizational values were rooted in the chaotic period faced by Russia as in the post-Soviet space in the 90's and the projection of Russian orthodoxy was duly by Vladimir Putin at outset. When the setback that persisted in Soviet period for functioning Russian Orthodox church began to vanish after 1991 that resulted in the rapid increase of Orthodox followers with the rise of 73.6% in 2006 (Wave 2014). The growth of religiosity among Russians in the post-Soviet space compared to other Eastern European states was an interesting factor from two sides. From one side the renewal of the Orthodox faith brought the church influence back to the political realm of Moscow reminding of how Orthodox Church meddled in the state affairs in Russia's imperial past. Putin's predilection on Russian history was compatible with the Orthodox church revival and it is not an exaggeration to note that his references to Orthodox Christianity as the core of Russian value system regardless of 1993 Russian constitution's guarantee on the secular status of Russian Federation has been one of interesting indicators that vividly shows his alacrity on bringing the religious tradition to Russian social-political space, where religion remained a dead factor during the Soviet time. The blatant use of Orthodoxy in state apparatus enormously helped president Putin prior to 2014 when Russia's economy was much stronger with the high oil price in the world market and in his annual address to Federal Assembly in 2014 Putin declared "*Christianity was a powerful spiritual unifying force, in the creation of Russian nation and Russian state (Anderson 2007). It was thanks to this spiritual unity that our forefathers for the first time and forevermore themselves saw themselves as a united nation*".

Secondly, the newly bloomed interest on Orthodox Christianity in Russia became a paramount factor in awakening Russian ethnic nationalism in the post-Soviet space. In fact, Putin seemed to have used it aptly in his political project by convincing Russians on their uniqueness in global history. As we aware the jubilation erupted in

the West after the disintegration of the USSR focused on the triumph of liberalism and free-market order which championed the USA as the omnipotent world order who would ensure the individual liberty. A plethora of liberal slogans existed in the Western society in the 90's such as the rise of LGBT rights activism and multiculturalism appeared to be many attractive movements illustrating the liberalism of the West wherein Putin realized the necessity of revving Orthodox Christianity as a dominant value in the preserving Russian social-cultural space. In this context the nostalgia for 19th century Romanov slogans "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationhood" became Kremlin's shield in its new mission to reform Russian society in the new millennium. Marcel van Herpen states in his work "The Slow Rise of the Radical Rights Regime in Russia":

"In the present situation Church is not a valuable ally to Kremlin, but it also provides compensation for the ideological void of Putin's system by instilling ideas in the population about Russia's unique vocation, the Russian Soul and Russian Spirituality -that are contrasted with the Western superficiality, Western Materialism and Western consumerism. These ideas are completely consistent with the ultra-nationalist goals of the Kremlin." (Herpen 2013, p. 123)

Putin's hobnobbing with the Moscow patriarch and other Orthodox leaders in the Russian Federation was not a notable factor in his campaign to consolidate power and uplifting own personality in Russian federation. In his campaign for the second term, Putin built all his propaganda on a contrast with the troubled '90s in Russia where people were impoverished and Russian stability was in tatters as the war in Chechnya threatened to tear Russia apart. In harbouring Putin's campaign, the Patriarch Krill in Moscow Russian Orthodox church openly praised Putin's era claiming his ascendance to power as a miracle of God to save Russia from a calamitous situation. Once Patriarch Krill stated: *"What were the 2000's then? Through a miracle of God, with the active participation of country's leadership we managed to exit this horrible systematic crisis."* (Herpen 2013)

Nevertheless, there were several instances which demonstrated the resistance of liberal public order in Russia criticizing the affinity between the Orthodox church and Kremlin. In 2012 a group of women called themselves as "Pussy Riots" barged into Cathedral of the Christ the Savior in Moscow to denounce the Orthodox Church and Vladimir Putin's politics, which finally followed by the brutal arrest of the "Pussy Riots" group and the performers of the group were sentenced two years in jail for their mockery which they beseech Virgin Mary to rid of Russia from Putin. The strategic alliance between the Orthodox church and Putin cannot be entirely regarded as an act sprang out political motives of Putin to fortify his power among the people (Galeotti 2017). It has been significantly rooted in a deeper cause beyond the political power and

the doctrine of “Third Rome” which I discussed in this paper becomes more relevant in ascertaining the modern-day renewal of Orthodox influence in the state apparatus of Russia. In examining Putin’s keenness on Russian history as an imbued factor which continues to affect upon his political projection, one has to understand how methodically he has been using Russian history as a “policy tool” while having a conviction that his personal destiny is intertwined with Russia’s common fate (Hill and Gaddy 2012). In the state sponsored mechanism that Russia has embraced under Putin is a sheer aggrandizement of its imperial past and traditional values mainly focusing on “Russian Spirituality” and the role that Russia is destined to play in the global realm. It is indeed an interesting factor that the way Putin treats Russia’s tryst with Orthodoxy as he believes it as country’s strength in grappling with global challenges mainly stemming from the West in post-Soviet context. His claims on Russia’s moral superiority over American individualism in his public speeches have frequently referred to country’s revered legacy of Orthodox Christianity. In 2011 when Libya and Syrian were bombed by the US and its allies Putin made a statement referring to Russia’s moral duty by saying:

“We do not aspire to be some kind of a super power understanding that as a claim to world or regional hegemony. We know there are ever more people in the world who support our position in defense of the traditional values that for centuries have formed the moral foundation of the civilization”. (Anishchuk & Gutterman 2013)

Putin’s infatuation with traditional values and Russia’s spiritual heritage based on Orthodox church were not only confined to rhetorical statements used in political rallies for the electoral victories. On the contrary, he has carried out his vision of boosting Russian morale from different perspectives and the inclusion of a reference to God and the nature of marriage as a heterosexual union for Russian constitutional reforms in 2020 seems to be an audacious step taken by him which would pave the path to alter the current constitutional structure adopted in 1993. Vladimir Putin emphasized the need to broaden the powers of the parliament to secure democracy in Russia in his annual state of the nation speech in January 2020 and within three months after his address to the parliament the amendments he proposed to the parliament included the reference to “God” in the constitution (Amarasinghe and Rajhans 2020). The preamble to the current constitution in Russia, which was adopted in 1993 remains completely secular preserving the multiethnic diversity in Russian Federation and it has excluded any references to spirituality by upholding the secular status of Russia under Article 14 to the constitution. But, the growing influence of Russian Orthodox church as an ally to the politics of Kremlin has continued to uproot the secularity from the constitutional structure of Russia under church’s antagonism of depicting Russia as another secular European state. The inclusion of God in the basic law by this proposed

amendment embodies Putin's eagerness of clinging to Russia's 1,032 years of Orthodox history and on the other hand it very much akin to epitomizing the moral values insisted by Filofei in Moscow's destiny as the "protector of the true faith". In the proposed amendment to the Russian constitution, the unique privilege to Orthodox Christianity would be described in Article 67.2 in Chapter 3. It will state:

"The Russian Federation, united by a thousand-year history, preserving the memory of its ancestors, who gave us ideals and faith in God, as well as continuity in the development of the Russian state, recognizes the historical unity of the state."

This proposed article to the constitution will echo the 19th century Tsarist fascination on religion which was properly articulated by Sergey Uvarov in 1833 as "Orthodoxy, Nationhood and Autocracy" (Engelstein 2001).

Alongside the reference to God in the basic law, Putin's proposed constitutional amendment has defined marriage as a union between man and woman. This amendment should be fathomed in contrast to his denial of western liberal values as constant threats to traditional values which are intrinsic and unique to Russian space under its Orthodox legacy. From a vantage point, these changes can be regarded as Putin's constitutional strategy to cope with the liberal challenges that have infiltrated into Russian space in post-Soviet era. For instance, Russia's entry into European Court of Human Rights in 1998 under Yeltsin's administration was heavily supported by the Western leaders as they considered it to be a step taken by Russian federation to embrace Liberal democratic values (Sundstrom 2014). Yet in reality the internal instability of Russia had reached its zenith with the decline of economy followed by a rapid increase of crimes in Russia which finally shattered Moscow's euphoria to be a part of the club of West and rapprochement with Western powers were replaced by a disillusionment. Moreover, Russia's standing with ECtHR provided LGBT activists in Russian federation to seek justice, whereas the gay or lesbian marriages were not accepted under Russian legal system. *Zhdanov and others Vs Russia* was a case heard before ECtHR in 2019 where the Strasbourg Court decided that Russia's refusal to register three LGBT rights organizations were unjustified and it had breached the Article 11 and 14 of European Convention on Human Rights (Woods 2016).

Taking into the consideration that Russia's traditional approaches on marriage and sexuality are at stake, the amendment proposed by Vladimir Putin to include the status of marriage as a union between man and woman in the Constitution appears to be a protective mechanism propelled by the influence of Orthodox church. It is rather a salient factor that the Russian Orthodox church has always been hostile towards the homosexuality and its influence played a profound role in shaping Russian legal system in 1999 to describe homosexuality as a mental illness. The head of Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Krill has been a vehement critique of homosexuality with

his staunch conviction on protecting traditional values and in one occasion the leader of Russian Orthodox church compared the laws detached from morality legalizing gay marriages and homosexual acts as laws enacted by the Nazi regime in Germany (Soloman 2017). Putin's alacrity to safeguard the traditional values by the basic law of the country has not risen out of the blue, given the fact that trajectories around illustrating marriage as a heterosexual union in the constitution were heavily supported by the Orthodox Church in Russia.

In identifying Putin's ideology or Putinism and its discontent with the West Pat Buchanan has aptly remarked Putin's mockery of the liberal values of the West and his ardor to promote the family values in Russia in a conservative way. Buchannan states:

“Nor is (Putin) without an argument when we reflect on America's embrace of abortion, on demand, homosexual marriage, pornography and the whole panoply of Hollywood values. Moreover, Putin asserts the new immorality has been imposed undemocratically. The "destruction of traditional values" in these countries, he said, comes "from the top" and is "inherently undemocratic because it is based on abstract ideas and runs counter to the will of the majority of the people.” (Buchanan 2013)

As Pat Buchanan pointed out that Putin's interest in Orthodoxy and preserving the traditional family values in Russia indicate how he has been persistent in maintaining Russia's isolation from the Western liberal values.

4 FACES BEHIND AN IDEOLOGY

While writing his analysis on Putin and Putinism as a serious issue to be discussed in the Western political order, Mark Galloti has denied the notion that Vladimir Putin was not influenced by a specific school of thought none other than his own political opportunisms according to the situation (Galeotti 2017). But there is ample evidence to construct a contention that Putin's high interest on reviving Orthodoxy and maintaining an affinity with the Orthodox Church was propelled by the characters he adored in modern Russian school of thoughts.

I have analyzed in the first half of this paper that how an obscure monk from the periphery presented a fervid doctrine on treating Moscow as “Third Rome” which would ultimately be the last resort for the true faith of Orthodox church. The Russian longingness for rejuvenating its place as the sanctuary for Orthodoxy was intensified by the new ideological discourses in the post-Soviet space. In particular, the ideas of Alexander Dugin cannot be ignored as his famous “Neo Eurasianism” has made a tremendous impact in Moscow's political space. Dugin dwells in the idea of promoting his main thesis “Neo Eurasianism” as a global phenomenon which he anticipates to be a counter movement against Atlantic power of the USA embodied by

the maritime power and free markets. Dugin's attitude toward Moscow as an idea was entirely attributed to the historical significance derived from the "Third Rome Doctrine" and his text "Fourth Political Theory" where he insists the geopolitical mission bestowed upon Moscow while signifying its religious purity. He states:

"The world of Sea, beginning with Carthage and ending with the modern US, embodies the pole of the merchant regime, the "market civilization." This is the path of the West, the path of technological development, of individualism and liberalism. It is dominated by dynamism and mobility, which bodes well for modernization and progress in the material sphere. The civilization of Sea has over the past few centuries acquired the name of "Atlanticism", seeing as how bit by bit its main stronghold has moved in the direction of the Atlantic Ocean, up to and including the ascension of the US. The modern North-Atlantic Alliance is a strategic expression of this civilizational model.

It is opposed by the world of Land, the world of Tradition. This is the "heroic civilization", the reality of loyalty to ancient ways. Here, progress is not so much material as it is spiritual; the moral dominates the physical, honour dominates benefit. From Ancient Rome through Byzantium, the geopolitical history of Land inches towards the Eastern Bloc, which opposed the west during the "Cold War." At the center of this Eurasian space is Russia, which the greatest British theoretician of geopolitics and one of the founding fathers of the discipline, termed Heartland. And once again, the centre of Russia is Moscow, as an encapsulation of all terrestrial spaces, as a synonym of the civilization of Land.." (Dugin 2012)

Dugin's policy of viewing Moscow's spiritual significance as the paragon of Orthodoxy and his views which are antithetical to the values imbued in the West have become new boosting factors in post-Soviet Russia filled with nationalist rhetorics, in particular in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea in 2014. His echoing voice played a predominant role during Russia's military involvement in Ukrainian separatist movement by proclaiming the inevitability of the war between Russia and Ukraine, which he regarded as the path for "Novorossiya" or New Russia and this word derived from Russian imperial past was used twice by Putin prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Tolstoy 2015).

However, Lev Gumilev's celebrated concept of "Eurasianism" which continued to flourish Russian hardliners and intelligentsia seems to have bolstered Putin's civilizational narrative of portraying Russia's orthodox legacy at a significant level. Gumilev's empathy highlighting the *sui generis* harmony of the communities and tribes of the Steppes in Eurasia for centuries had invoked the yearning for Eurasianism by indicating how "Heartlands" in Central Asia is perpetually fated to encounter Atlantic oceanic powers, an empire that was first Venetian and Genoese,

Portuguese, British and now American empire. The gravity of this idea has become rather an appealing one in Post-Soviet Russia and Putin's frequent references to Gumilev as a nurturing figure of unique Russian ideology denotes the importance his influence in Russian state apparatus. The sudden usage of Gumilev's term "*passionarnost*" by Putin at a public gathering was akin to bring the dead poet's legacy back to the power politics in Kremlin. While giving a clue on the awaited future political uncertainties in Russia, Putin emphasized "I would like all of us to understand that coming years will be decisive. Who will take the lead and who will remain on the periphery and inevitably lose their independence will depend not only on economic potentials, but primarily on the will of each nation, on its inner energy which Lev Gumilev termed "*passionarnost*": the ability to move forward and embrace changes" (Akhmatova 2016).

The overarching influence laid down by the above mentioned two thinkers have made obvious impacts in Putin's jubilation for Orthodox values and Russia's unique identity in the global affairs. As I elaborated as a salient fact regarding Putin's abhorrence of the Western liberal order and the way he reiterates the spiritual values imbued with Slavs or Russian civilization has been mainly culled by the philosophic discourses which I discussed in this section.

5 CONCLUSION

In examining the course of history of Russia since its imperial past to the fall of Romanovs one can comprehend the portrayal of Orthodoxy as an impetus of most of the historical trajectories in *Ruskimir*. Starting from Filofi's letters that described Moscow as the Third Rome or the sanctuary of the true creed to the idea propounded by Count Sergy Uvaraov in 1832 during the reign of Nicolas 1 on "Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationalism" the affinity between the state and Orthodox church has fundamentally been a crucial one. Russian poet Tyutchev once stated:

"Russia is above all a Christian empire. The Russian people is Christian not only because of the Orthodoxy of its beliefs, but also because of something even more intimate than belief. It is Christian, because of the capacity for renunciation and sacrifices which serves as the foundation of its moral nature." (Riasnonovsky 1961)

The concept of locating Orthodoxy and Russian nationalism attached to each other was bolstered by the development of philology crating Russian race as the natural champion of the other Slav races. Given the impoverished conditions and other miseries of the Slavic nations Russia always felt that it was the chosen destination of the nation to lead Slavs and preserve Eastern Christianity (Guins 1950).

The rapid growth of state patronage towards the Church and the persistent endeavors of shown by Putin in recent years has galvanized the position of Orthodox

church in Russian political space and its aura has been extended to Russia's foreign affairs. However, it has been an evident factor that Russian state embodiment of protector's status of Orthodox Christianity has not always been reciprocated in Orthodox world and the split of Ukrainian church from the yoke of Moscow patriarch last year was a blow on Russia's orthodox supremacy. The formation of the new church in Ukraine in 2018 December was a decisive moment in the post-Soviet period, which significantly reduced Russian soft power influence in Ukraine (Mykhaleyko 2020). Yet, Putin's ardour on keeping a rapport with the Orthodox church and emphasizing the Orthodox values as an intrinsic feature of Russian civilization continues as a predominant part of his stances against the West and its liberal order. As a matter of fact, the concept of "Orthodoxy" under Putin provides a fascinating picture of the revival of imperial mantra existed in pre-revolutionary period and its efforts to trample Russia's connectivity with the Latin Christendom. Today Russia and its foreign policy have been heavily viewed by the West as hostile towards them, mainly Russia's relations with EU began to shrink after Crimean crisis in 2014. In that context Putin's predilection of Orthodoxy is likely to become a new trend of cultural shift which would further drift Russia away from European space.

In writing his famous thesis on "Clash of the Civilizations" in 1993, Huntington saw how Russia was vacillating between a European and Eurasian orientation and strongly insisted Russia should look for the West against blazing Islam and booming China. He further mentioned that in return to Russia's alliance with the West, the Western world should accept Russia's leadership as the leader of the Orthodox world rather than persuading to interfere with Russian influence space in Eurasia (Huntington 1993). However, the trajectories since the new millennium have shown growing skepticism between the West and Russia rapidly paving path for a new form of a clash of civilization. In such a situation, Putin seems to have been using Russia's purest and spiritual legacy, as an aggrandizement of Russia in his confrontation with the West and its values.

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