The Church-State Symphonia Resounding

Through Third Rome:

The Strive for Transnational Religious Identity and Unity

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<table>
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<th>Glossary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Autocephaly</td>
<td>Independent of external patriarchal authority.¹</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecclesiastical</td>
<td>Established church institution.²</td>
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<td>Ecumenical</td>
<td>Representant of a whole body of churches.³</td>
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<td>Clergy</td>
<td>People ordained to perform pastoral functions in Christian Church.⁴</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>The bishop of an ecclesiastical province.⁵</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patriarch</td>
<td>The head of an Eastern Orthodox Church.⁶</td>
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<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>The office of a Patriarch.⁷</td>
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<td>Parish</td>
<td>The ecclesiastical unit of area committed to one pastor.⁸</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schism</td>
<td>Formal separation from a Church.⁹</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symphonia</td>
<td>Diarchic rule between a regent and a Patriarch.¹⁰</td>
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¹ Merriam-Webster. Autocephalous
² Ibid., Ecclesiastical.
³ Ibid., Ecumenical.
⁴ Ibid., Clergy.
⁵ Ibid., Metropolitan.
⁶ Ibid., Patriarch.
⁷ Ibid., Patriarchate.
⁸ Ibid., Parish.
⁹ Ibid., Schism.
¹⁰ Knox, Z. (2004) Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism, pp.25
Abstract

The Soviet Union population was unified under the shared belief of being a part of a common goal for proletarianism, in disregard of religion. These sentiments were prevalent up until the union’s dissolution. Something which created an identity void, reinvigorating the need for spirituality. The idea of belonging to a Church was encouraged, in which Orthodoxy emerged as a solution for the lack of identity and provided a source of piety for the people. Amalgamating the scattered religious community, essentially providing a catalyst for creating an identity based on a cultural belonging to a historical past. This thesis presents the Russian Orthodox Church’s politicised role in Russia, that in turn has created an identity marker for Russians. From this, an understanding stems for the outcome of Russia’s and the ROCs attempt to exert cultural values through Soft power on Ukraine and Belarus. Fundamentally illustrating that the two states’ preconceived identities differs to the extent that they either welcome or reject these notions.

Key words: identity, religion, spirituality, Orthodoxy, Russian Orthodox Church, Russia, Soft power, Ukraine and Belarus.
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1. Introduction

For seventy years of the Communistic Soviet rule, religion was almost totally absent in both the political sphere and amongst the common people. After the Bolsheviks toppled the ruling Russian czar Nicholas Romanov II in 1917, a radical atheistic regime followed suit. Ordering the execution of approximately 80 000 priests, nuns and monks during the interwar period.\textsuperscript{11} The number of Orthodox Churches fell from 59 584 to under 500.\textsuperscript{12} Meaning that the population’s former spiritual focal point of the cross was forcefully replaced with the hammer and sickle. Religion returned at the fore when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, with Joseph Stalin reviving the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) with the intention of strengthening the soldiers’ sense of patriotism.\textsuperscript{13} Returning the amount of opened Russian Orthodox Churches to 22 000 by 1957. Although this was short-lived, as Nikita Khrushchev returned to the pre-war policies and ordered the execution of 50 000 clergy members, only to be replaced with a compliant clergy that followed the KGB’s command. By 1985 the number of remaining opened churches were only 7 000.\textsuperscript{14}

During these measures against the ROC, an increase in national feeling was seen in many Soviet republics. The need for a symbolic language for creating a national identity was spread, something which the ROC could provide. Celebrating the Millennium of Christianity in Russia, in 1988, strengthened the ROC even more, at the expense of the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{15} This was one of the instigating factors for the Soviet Union’s eventual collapse. Changing the population’s mindset and granting them the incitement to cling on to the idea of connecting

\textsuperscript{11} Knox, Russian Society, pp.45
\textsuperscript{12} Maseko, A. (2008) Church, Schism & Corruption, pp.154
\textsuperscript{13} Pospielovsky, D. (1998) The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia, pp.360
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp.360
\textsuperscript{15} Löfstedt, T. (2012) Religious Revival Among Orthodox and Pentecostals in Russia: Causes and Limitations, pp.93
religion with a sense of national pride; distancing and stigmatising relatable beliefs such as atheism and communism, what was previously seen as natural, and instead defining them as something negative.\(^\text{16}\) During these developments, political leaders understood the ROCs importance for the population and thus sought the blessing of Church representatives. Russian politicians such as Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev have proclaimed with vitality that Orthodoxy has been pivotal for them and eagerly sought the ROC’s blessing.\(^\text{17}\) Essentially making them religiously approved leader in the eyes of the Russian citizens.

The past decade has seen a strengthening of the political ties between Kremlin, with Vladimir Putin at the fore, and the ROC. Through various implementation of policy changes in favour of the ROC.\(^\text{18-19,20}\) Some of which granted the ROC added resilience in contemporary political issues and reinforced its position against other competing religious groups.

The ROC’s dominion also transcends over Russian borders into its Ukraine and Belarus. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) and Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) have both been associated with the ROC. The latter still falls under ROC protectorate and has a small amount of autonomy, while the Ukrainian Orthodox Church recently disconnected itself from the ROC, announcing themselves as autocephalic in 2018.\(^\text{21}\) In a recent interview Vladimir Putin rejected this and emphasized that Russians and Ukrainians are the same people, sharing a common religious belief and expressing “why did one need to destroy the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church?”\(^\text{22}\) A unity that is upheld through the ideology of Russkiy Mir and Holy Rus, promoted

\(^{16}\) Löfstedt. Religious Revival, pp.94
^{17}\) Ibid., pp.93
^{18}\) Solodovnik, S. (2014) Russia: The Official Church Chooses the State, pp.72
^{19}\) Köllner, T. (2016) Patriotism, Orthodox Religion and Education: Empirical Findings from Contemporary Russia, pp.370
^{20}\) Lamoreaux, J & Flake, L. (2018) The Russian Orthodox Church, the Kremlin, and Religious (il)liberalism in Russia, pp.2
^{21}\) Liik, K., Metodiev, M & Popescu, N. (2019) Defender of the Faith? How Ukraine’s Orthodox Split Threatens Russia, pp.2
^{22}\) TASS. (2020) 20 Questions with Vladimir Putin. Putin on Ukraine.
by the ROC as something that merges Orthodoxy within the historical borders of the medieval kingdom of Kievan Rus, that includes *inter alia* today’s territories of Belarus and Ukraine.\textsuperscript{23,24} In line with these perceptions of its domain Patriarch Kirill of Moscow commented the UOCs ecclesiastical independence from the ROC by expressing that: “Ukraine is not on the periphery of our church. We call Kiev ‘the mother of all Russian cities.’ For us Kiev is what Jerusalem is for many. Russian Orthodoxy began there, so under no circumstances can we abandon this historical and spiritual relationship. The whole unity of our Local Church is based on these spiritual ties”\textsuperscript{25}

### 1.1. Problem Formulation

Safeguarding the citizens’ spirituality under the umbrella of a common shared religious belief, seems to be at the core of the ROCs commitments. Religion can determine actors’ preferences, diplomacy and establish alliances. It can also project a general security dimension by acting as an international security framework that promotes geopolitical ambitions.\textsuperscript{26} When security seems to fail, religion rises as a source for groups self-image and encourages a dynamic discourse in global relations.\textsuperscript{27} Religion has become an integrating factor in Russian society, which can be connected to Orthodoxy’s development through history. The population’s turn to religion in post-Soviet states can be traced to the fact that Russian Orthodoxy is considered as the foundation of national culture and mentality. Similar trends can be seen in Ukraine and Belarus, as religion plays a substantial role in East Slavic people’s self-image. In addition to this, religiosity seems to be on the rise among the younger population in Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{23} Wawrzonek, M. (2014) *Ukraine in the ‘Gray Zone’: Between the ‘Russkiy Mir’ and Europe*, pp.761  
\textsuperscript{24} Naydenova, N. (2016) *Holy Rus: (Re)construction of Russia’s Civilizational Identity*, pp.38  
\textsuperscript{25} TASS. (2019) *Russian Patriarch Likens Kiev for Russian Orthodoxy to Jerusalem for Global Christianity*.  
\textsuperscript{26} Leustean, L. (2018) *Eastern Orthodoxy, Geopolitics and the 1066 ‘Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church’*, pp.203  
Scrutinizing the potential exploitation of a population’s religious belief for political gain is therefore essential for contextualising otherwise unattended geopolitics factors in Eastern Europe. Juxtaposing this to the western world, where a distancing from religiosity has taken place during the past decades, illustrates the significance spirituality has among people in Eastern Europe and how it could potentially be used as both a divider or unifier of people.

Deriving elements of national identity from history enables the tracing of symbolic phenomenon that constructs the self-perception of a people. Religious identity may provide means for emphasising ethnic pride. In the case of Orthodoxy, this can also be construed as the common denominator for creating a shared identity.29

Analysing this from the theoretical standpoint of Social constructivism (SC) could potentially give an insight in the way Russia wages its domestic policies, using the ROC as a politicised companion for it. Understanding the ROCs past is needed in order to recognise its important role as provider of identity for Russians. Furthermore, highlighting the ROC as a politicised institution could demonstrate how it can be used as an instrument for exerting Soft power (SP) by Russia on its culturally and geographically close neighbours. Conceptualizing SP for the aim of understanding how the ROC exerts its influence, could bring a nuanced contribution to the discussion of geopolitics.

The classification of “ROC” was coined in the 1920s, during the Soviet period. Prior to the October revolution in 1917, the Church was never defined as Russian. It was rather known as the Orthodox Church within the Russian Empire, or simply as the Moscow Patriarchate. This terminology has become a stumbling block for the Church’s self-image in contemporary times. On one hand, it is considered as Russian, on the other hand the ROC is viewed as an apparatus

for achieving unity. Throughout this thesis, the term ROC will therefore be used as it reflects the current situation.

1.2 Aim and Hypotheses

The purpose of this thesis is inter alia to get a deeper understanding of how the ROC has functioned in the past and in contemporary Russia. This will be done through the theoretical framework of SC, which will also serve for assessing whether the ROC behaves as a politicised institution. Essentially leading up to the evaluation of what implications this has had for shaping Russian identity. By focusing on this, the analysis will enable the illustration of Russia using the ROC as a possible instrument for geopolitical influence. The close Church-state relation between ROC and Russia has Christian transnational elements in the sense of the Church serving as a transnational ecclesiastical. This will be used as a backdrop for how the ROC may utilise instruments of SP on its neighbours Ukraine and Belarus. Scrutinising how the ROC uses its religious capacity on Ukraine and Belarus could explain how SP is exported from Russia to its proximal region. Whether Ukraine’s and Belarus’ preconceived identity may have influenced the outcome of Russia’s exertion of SP power will thereafter be investigated.

At first glance, reviewing the rhetoric from ROC representatives and Russian politicians, it is possible to distinguish a strong emphasis on historical symbolism; tracing much of the common Russian cultural heritage to the notion of uniting the believers under Russian Orthodoxy.

Both Ukraine and Belarus are rather novel sovereign and independent states which were previously under Moscow and Russian dominion; with the institution of ROC being constantly present during the past millennium. It is therefore necessary to explain the ROCs history in

30 Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.25
31 Naydenova. Holy Rus, pp.45
order to make one grasp the manifestations of actions by politicians and representatives of the Church.

In this respect the main purpose of this theses is expressed through the following hypotheses:

- The ROC has consolidated itself as a politicised institution and subsequently provided Orthodoxy as an identity marker for Russianness.
- Preconceived identities in Ukraine and Belarus has affected the outcome of Russia’s exertion of soft power.

1.3. Disposition

The overall structure of the thesis will be as following. Chapter 2 will involve a literature review on past studies about the ROCs position in Russia and in its neighbouring countries Ukraine and Belarus. Chapter 3 will be about conceptualizing the chosen theoretical frameworks of Social constructivism (SC) and Soft power (SP). Chapter 4 will demonstrate what methodology will be applied for conducting the research. Followed by a part about validity and reliability; a discussion about the possible limitations of the methods; discussing why the specific cases have been chosen and finally presenting the material chosen for conducting the analysis. Chapter 5 will present what the ROC is. Describing its historical background and its position in contemporary Russian society. This will be divided into four subchapters titled as symphonies in Russian language: the first describing the period 988-1584; the second will cover the timespan between 1585 to the 20th century, the third about the Soviet period and the last part will deal with the post-Soviet period. This will be followed by chapter 6 that will involve a discussion about the politicisation of the ROC and whether this has provided an identity marker for Russians, with a backdrop of the theory of SC in mind and the methods from chapter 4. Chapter 7 will analyse the ROCs position in in Ukraine and Belarus. In chapter 8 the discussion about Ukraine and Belarus will be done in relation to the methods
presented in chapter 4 and the theoretical framework shown in chapter 3. The 9th chapter will contain the final conclusion of the thesis.
2. Literature Review

Research about the Russian Orthodox Church’s (ROC) societal position and implications in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus can be found in several examples. Russian ideology has not confined itself by “national identity” but strives for an identity that transcends state borders.\(^ {33}\)

The close Church-state relation between ROC and Russia has elements of supranational nature of Christianity in the sense of the Church serving as a multinational ecclesiastical.\(^ {34} \)\(^ {35}\) Kääriäinen and Furman identify Orthodoxy as a possible “vehicle for the expression of Russianness and it can be linked to the one-thousand-year long history.”\(^ {36}\) Suggesting the justification of widening Russia’s cultural borders in the concept of *Russkiy Mir*\(^ {37}\) (Russian World). Creating the strategy of uniting the Russian speaking population that has over thousand years been scattered around Eastern Europe, under one hegemonic cultural umbrella. This has been concluded from past rhetoric about Russkiy Mir,\(^ {38}\) that heads of the ROC and the Russian state has used since the recent commemoration of the 1000\(^ {th}\) anniversary of the Baptist of the Holy Rus, Saint Prince Vladimir.\(^ {39} \)\(^ {40}\) Regarding the past 1000 years of Russian history as a sacristy.\(^ {41}\) Thus identifying the rebranding of the old imperial watchword “Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationhood” as something encompassing Russia’s history, associating it with faith.\(^ {42}\)

\(^ {33}\) Naydenova. *Holy Rus*, pp.45  
\(^ {34}\) Ibid., pp.45  
\(^ {35}\) Bremer. *How the Russian Orthodox Church*, pp.46-47  
\(^ {36}\) Kotiranta. *Religious Transition*, pp.68  
\(^ {37}\) Established by President Putin in 2007 with the objective to globally promote Russian culture and language, with the support of governmental financial means. (Russkiy Mir. (n.d.) *About Russkiy Mir Foundation*)  
\(^ {38}\) Bremer. *How the Russian Orthodox Church*, pp.48  
\(^ {39}\) Naydenova. *Holy Rus*, pp.41  
\(^ {40}\) Torbakov, I. (2014) *The Russian Orthodox Church and Contestations over History in Contemporary Russia*, pp.152  
\(^ {41}\) Ibid., pp.155  
\(^ {42}\) Naydenova. *Holy Rus*, p.45
Igor Torbakov argues that the ROC tries to distinguish themselves from Russia’s state-centred narrative about the country’s history.\textsuperscript{43} Notwithstanding that the ROCs hierarchy, with the Patriarchate at the fore, share Kremlin’s view on conservative elements as a way to uphold national traditions.\textsuperscript{44} However, Torbakov concludes that the give and take relationship between the state and Church fosters a patriotic feeling which in turn strengthens the position of both parts.\textsuperscript{45}

The Orthodox, as well as the ROCs, conception of civil society is identified by Oleg Kharkhordin as the “\textit{Orthodox version of civil society would strive to completely supplant the secular state and its use of means of violence by bringing church means of influence to regulate in all terrains of human life.}”\textsuperscript{46} Such a cooperation between the Church and state authorities its remembrance of the \textit{simfoniya} (the diarchic rule between the Tsar and Patriarch during the past millennium).\textsuperscript{47} Zoe Knows also identifies that the ROC is edging towards a symphonic model and that such a doctrine cannot be compatible with current religious pluralism and civil society in Russia.\textsuperscript{48} However, neither Kharkhordin nor Knox believes that outright \textit{simfoniya} is the ROCs final objective, but that it rather wishes to influence the state and encourage cooperation.\textsuperscript{49}

Mitrokhin and Nuritova claim that the ROC is not Kremlin’s obedient tool. However, the Moscow Patriarchate still follows the same line the state proposes for domestic and foreign policies. This is highlighted by pointing to the fact that a majority of clergymen of the ROC carry ideas of Russian-nationalism, in the sense of expanding Russia’s national borders and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{43} Torbakov. \textit{The Russian Orthodox Church}, pp.148
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pp.153.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., pp.170.
\textsuperscript{46} Kharkhordin, O. (1998) \textit{Civil Society and Orthodox Christianity}, pp.955.
\textsuperscript{47} Knox. \textit{Russian Society}, pp.25
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp.105
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., pp.130
\end{flushleft}
restoring the past Russian Empire.\textsuperscript{50} Furthermore, Mitrokhin and Nuritova argued in their article from 2009 that the ROCs position in contemporary Russia is not of the strongest order and that the, at the time, federal government has distanced itself from the religious seat. Which was predicted by Mitrokhin and Nuritova to continue soon, unless the government loses its mandate and a political shift is done.\textsuperscript{51} Five years later Svetlana Solodovnik argued that the ROCs relation to the state is of higher importance than the relationship with its worshippers. Something that Solodovnik illustrates by the close Church-state interconnection and strengthening of its ties, at the expense of declining numbers of the citizens’ trust in the ROC.\textsuperscript{52} Ksenia Kolkunova recognizes that today’s Russian government views Orthodoxy as not only rooted in the past imperial period, but also the ROCs culture role during Soviet. Considering the harsh methods against the ROC by the atheistic Soviet regime, the Church is viewed as a warden of tradition, culture and language and making it a “\textit{martyr of the Soviet atheistic society}”\textsuperscript{53} Therefore the legitimization of the ROC in the population’s perspective is established.

Emphasizing “culturogical” characteristics of Russian Orthodoxy in the form of patriotism instead of religion is something that contravenes the Russian state’s secularist commitments. Elements like these can be found in state schools where Orthodoxy is regarded as a “\textit{general value standard}”\textsuperscript{54} Thomas Kollner supports the idea that creation of new identities through the inherent qualities given by Russian Orthodoxy is made through the state-endorsed project for introducing education about religion in state schools.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{50} Mitrokhin, N & Nuritova, A. (2009) \textit{The Russian Orthodox Church in Contemporary Russia: Structural Problems and Contradictory Relations with the Government, 2000-2008}, pp.317-318
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., pp.320
\textsuperscript{52} Solodovnik. \textit{Russia: The Official Church}, pp.77
\textsuperscript{53} Kolkunova, K. (2015) \textit{Reinventing Religion in Russia}, pp.142
\textsuperscript{54} Köllner. \textit{Patriotism, Orthodox Religion}, pp.381
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., pp.367
In order to compete for domestic and foreign populations approval, Kremlin utilized the ROC as a soft power tool. Marcel H. Van Herpen described the ROC as the “Kremlin’s secret weapon”.

Essentially revitalising Orthodox religion as means for expanding Kremlin policies through the concept of Russkiy Mir. According to Andis Kudors, this is done under the pretext of Russkiy Mir and the state’s search for legitimacy for it in the ROC’s traditional cultural values as a substitute to the ideas of democracy that has become more widespread in the proximal region, which need protection. Kudors illustrates this with opinion polls from 2008 on Russian citizen’s standpoint on whether Russia should take measures to protect Russians living in the near abroad. The common opinion was that only 2% saw the use of military force as a proper measure for this, while 53% would call for the state to take political measures. Interestingly enough, this stands in stark contrast to how the Russian president-elect Vladimir Putin acted six years later in Ukraine. A conflict in which the ROC has been acknowledged as entangled in on several occasions.

Michal Wawrzonek identifies Russkiy Mir as a pretext for Russian economic, political and security policies towards Ukraine. Highlighting his thesis with the fact that the components of it consists of the defending the Russian-speaking people or “common views of social development”. Wawrzonek believes that these factors are used by Russia as means of forcible intervention in Ukraine, using the Crimean case as a confirmation for his theory. In addition to this, Volodomyr Hurzhy follows the same line of thought when he identifies the concept of Russkiy Mir as a doctrine for post-secular global religious-political projects. With many of the

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56 Leustean, Eastern Orthodoxy, Geopolitics, pp.204
59 Ibid., pp.5
61 Leustean. Eastern Orthodoxy, Geopolitics, pp.204
62 Wawrzonek. Ukraine in the ‘Gray Zone’, pp.776
past Soviet rituals absorbed into Russkiy Mir in present day Russia to something of a re-imagined form.63

Most adherents to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are by ethnic definition Ukrainians. However, Maksym Balaklytskyi argues that many of these are politically and culturally slanted towards Moscow and that the Church therefore should be regarded as “a part of the national security system”. Balaklytskyi continues by claiming that priests may influence congregations by politicising their sermon.64

Connecting spirituality, in other words religiosity, to security into something termed spiritual security is identified by Lucian Leustean as something prevalent Russia. Tracing this to factors found in the Russian Federation National Security Strategy of 2015, the word “spiritual” is used twelve times and “religion/religious” nine times. Similarly, the same pattern is recognised in Ukraine’s 2003 Law on National Security, where the same words are mentioned four times each.65

The Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) is claimed by Natalia Vasilevich to rely on the Belarusian state. Its traditional pro-authoritarian position makes them comfortable in such an unyielding hierarchical system as there is in Belarus. Vasilevich argues that this seems to constrain the BOCs further “development from becoming a catalyst of change and dooming it to the role of a mere passive object when things nonetheless do start to change.”66 This sort of reliance on the state from the BOCs behalf is as something attributed to a blend of its historical acquaintance of being in a hierarchical system.67

65 Leustean. Eastern Orthodoxy, Geopolitics, pp.205
67 Ibid., pp.24
3. Choice of Theory

In order to study the Russian Orthodox Church’s (ROC) position in historical and contemporary Russia, the need for Social constructivism (SC) arises. With such a framework one can assess how the ROC has evolved during history to what it is today. Furthermore, SC can provide tools for analysing how the ROC has evolved into a politicised institution and subsequently given a possible identity marker for Russians. Applying SC when assessing evidence and making sense of interpretations will enable the possibility to compare various alternative explanations and question whether the evidence can confirm the evaluated explanation.68

Through the application of Soft power (SP), it will be possible to understand how the ROC uses its cultural influence on Ukraine and Belarus and what outcomes it has had. SC will be used for analysing how the predetermined identities of Ukraine and Belarus has had an outcome on the exertion of SP. SC schools of thought within international relations studies often tend to find power in the form of institutional control. These elements of power are expressed through normative factors of interests such as defining actor identities and culture through the various displays of social processes.69 Moreover, ideas in international affairs are not universal by definition but rather created social facts reliant on communication and symbolism.70 Following this train of thought one could accept a SC approach when understanding SP in contemporary international relations.

The upcoming subchapters will serve as a form of illustration of the intended theoretical framework for researching this thesis.

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70 Ibid., pp.41
3.1. Social Constructivism

“National interests are intersubjective understandings about what it takes to advance power, influence and wealth […] given the distribution of power and knowledge in a society” – Emanuel Adler

SC can be described as drawing out the ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge and defining the methodological and epistemological implications of the reality. Intersubjectivity can be explained as the product of shared experiences, understandings and knowledge with others. When applying this to international relations, Adler defines it as social facts that depend on human agreements. SC encourages focusing on nonmaterial factors like culture, knowledge, ideas and norms, emphasizing the part played by intersubjective ideas that are communally held when understanding international relations. Furthermore, SC is described as being based on three assumptions: ideational factors that shapes human interaction; the most essential ideational factors are “intersubjective” principles defined as common collective understanding; and finally such beliefs shape the actors’ interests and identities. In the lines of this description, John Ruggie defines SC as a part of the human consciousness in international life.

SC may be viewed as somewhat sprawled but is often contextualized into three fundamental factors: First, the shared interest to examine how social life and objects are made by denaturalizing the social world and that identities are given rather than socially constructed by humans. Second, emphasizing the importance of mutual constitution between structures and

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71 Adler, E. (1997) Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics, pp.337
73 Oxford Reference. Intersubjectivity
74 Adler. Seizing, pp.323
75 Finnemore & Sikkink. Taking, pp.393
76 Ibid., pp.393
agents, accepting intersubjective reality as essential for grasping the social world. Third, emphasizing the need for a holist methodological approach.\(^78\)

When entering the discussion about anarchy, which is often deliberated in forums of Realism and Liberalism, Alexander Wendt brings the SC definition of anarchy to the table by conceptualising it as an “empty vessel and has no intrinsic logic; anarchies only acquire logics as a function of the structure of what we put inside them”\(^79\) Wendt continues to deliberate on this notion by claiming that three different cultures of anarchy exists in which the Self engages with the Other: Kantian (friend), Lockean (rival) and Hobbesian (enemy).\(^80\) A Kantian anarchy of friendship builds on Kant’s notion of Perpetual Peace and exists when the Self and Other uphold the rules of not engaging in war and joint-operation if one’s security is threatened by a third party.\(^81\) Lockean rivalry is expressed through the expectation of the Self and Other recognizing each other’s sovereignty as a right and thus not trying to control them.\(^82\) Hobbesian enmity is constituted by the circumstance that the Other does not recognize the Self’s right to exist autonomously, and will act accordingly to diminish the Self.\(^83\) Wendt maintains that the Hobbesian anarchy is prevalent in international politics, as history shows that few states rarely preserves friendship.\(^84\)

SC claims that states shape their identities according to their interests, behaviours and preferences. Ted Hopf argued that “identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in particular domains, and with respect to particular actors. The identity of a state implies its preferences and consequent actions.”\(^85\)

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\(^{78}\) Jung, The Evolution, pp.3

\(^{79}\) Wendt, A. (1999) Social Theory of International Politics, pp.256-257

\(^{80}\) Ibid., pp.247

\(^{81}\) Wendt. Social Theory, pp.297-299

\(^{82}\) Ibid., pp.279

\(^{83}\) Ibid., pp.260

\(^{84}\) Ibid., pp.298

Hopf illustrates this notion by connecting it to the fact that Eastern Europeans viewed the Soviet Union as Russia, disregarding the fact that it consisted of several republics and a multicultural population.\textsuperscript{86}

Wendt claimed that states’ identities are shaped by international factors.\textsuperscript{87} Connecting it to Joseph Nye’s concept of \textit{complex learning}, explained as states and their fortunes being heavily intertwined with each other which in turn shapes a state’s individual identity.\textsuperscript{88} While states are interdependent of one another in shaping their identity, they are still basing it on their own interests that may arise in various contexts. As Wendt explained it: “\textit{Actors do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations.}”\textsuperscript{89}

Peter Katzenstein also subscribed to developing the notion of states and their identities. However, he contradicts Wendt’s school of thought and claimed that states shape their identity based on domestic environments. In other words, defining identity as “\textit{varying constructions of statehood and varying national ideologies of collective distinctiveness and purpose.}”\textsuperscript{90}

Wendt elaborates further on states’ identities, as something rooted in their subjective self-understandings. It is dependent on whether the specific identity is recognized by other states, giving it an intersubjective value. This leads to the notion that identities are created by interactions of such internal and external ideas. Therefore, the number of possible identities is restricted and the idea as not something characteristic, because the development of identities is limited by the international system’s possible identities at any given historical moment.

Wendt argues that two kinds of identities are prevalent for international relations: role identities and type identities. \textit{Role identities} are produced by the twofold relationship between states.  

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{86} Hopf. \textit{The Promise}, pp.175
  \item \textsuperscript{87} Jung. \textit{The Evolution}, pp.6
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Wendt, A. (1992) \textit{Anarchy is what States Make of it}, pp.393
  \item \textsuperscript{89} Ibid., pp.399
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Jung. \textit{The Evolution}, pp.7
\end{itemize}
This relationship may be a friendly (Kantian), rivalry (Lockean) or enmity (Hobbesian). Role identities only exist in when a state is in some sort of a relationship with another. Type identities can be explained as the social categories of states sharing the same features, for example types of regimes. States may have several type identities, such as oligarchic, European, democratic or capitalist. The international structure may however perceive certain type identities as illegitimate. Monarchies can be deemed as rather illegitimate in today’s world and democratic states are for example confirmed as legitimate. Therefore, by understanding a state’s awareness of its identity can clarify how certain states act.⁹¹

Having SC in mind when assessing states’ identities, creates the notion of a collective psychological cognitive aspect and connects it to an emotional part of international relations. SC theory in cognitive psychology emphasizes that contextual and cultural differences in emotions conclude that emotions are not completely and mainly natural.⁹² Claire Armon-Jones argues that emotions are “socioculturally” constituted by the characterization of attitudes such as desires, judgements and beliefs. These are not natural or innate but learned and determined by systems of moral value and cultural belief. Moreover, emotions are created with the intention of serving sociocultural functions with the aim of limiting unwanted attitudes and actions, but also keeping and endorsing cultural values. Like the SC school of emotion, theories of nationalism underline that a nation’s social construction depends on nationalist feelings.⁹³

Wendt argues that groups’ beliefs often stem from its collective memory, traditions, narratives and myths that creates an identity of the group and how its relatable to others. Such narratives are inherently historical and continuous through time by socialization. The merits of these

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⁹¹ Finnemore & Sikkink. Taking, pp.399
⁹³ Ibid., pp.129
memories give groups identity and continuity through time. Collective memories like these could also be utilised as mobilisation for a collective action.  

A state shaping an emotional intersubjective view of its identity can be connected to the notion of communicative action. Thomas Risse analysed whether Habermas’ communicative action can change world views or minds. Risse claimed that “Agents are not simply the puppets of social structure, since they can actively challenge the validity claims inherent in any communicative action. [...] they are social agents that produce and reproduce intersubjective structures of meanings through their communicative practices.” Agents utilizes such practices through the means of rhetorical actions for reaching one’s aim and is considered as effective if others listen and are to being persuaded.

The concept of persuasion traces back to antiquity and Aristoteles’ claim that “the most important and effective of all means of persuasions [...] is to know all the forms of government and to distinguish the manners and customs, institutions, and interests of each.” Achieving this in modern times would be to understand the characteristics of governments and to adjust the persuasions according to the means possible for his. Which bridges to the following theoretical framework.

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94 Wendt. Social Theory, pp.163  
95 Finnemore & Sikkink. Taking, pp.402  
97 Ibid., pp.26  
98 Freese, J.H. (1926) Aristotle: The ‘Art’ of Rhetoric, pp.87
3.2. Conceptualizing Soft Power

“Attraction and persuasion are socially constructed. Soft power is a dance that requires partners”99 – Joseph Nye

Following the conclusion of the Cold War and the fall of the Iron Curtain meant that states embarked on a new path of Soft power (SP). Somewhat diverging from the previous elements of Hard power, such as arms race between the ideologically bipolar spheres. Granting states new rationale for conducting foreign policy through co-optive means of power such as persuasion and attraction, rather than intimidation and show of might. States striving for achieving power through immaterial sources was taking shape, as Hard power through the means of military might was practically dominated by the United States. Encouraging states new ways to define themselves on the dynamicity developed under post-Cold War by utilizing SP.

A new dimension of conquering opinions through co-optive methods was shaping, but one should not neglect that this idea of influencing other states was proposed during a time when expressing power through military might. The late international relations theorist E.H. Carr wrote in his book “The Twenty Years’ Crisis: 1919-1939”, published shortly after the outbreak of World War II, that: “Power over opinion is [...] not less essential for political purposes than military and economic power, and has always been closely associated with them. The art of persuasion has always been a necessary part of the equipment of a political leader. But the popular view that regards propaganda as a distinctively modern weapon is, nonetheless, substantially correct.”100 Thus creating a definition embryo of what was to eventually be termed “Soft power” by Joseph Nye in the early 1990s.

100 Carr, E.H. (2001) The Twenty Years’ Crisis 1919-1939, pp. 120-121
Joseph Nye, an American political scientist previously working under the administrations of former American presidents Jimmie Carter and Bill Clinton,\textsuperscript{101} coined the term “Soft power” as something defining new geopolitical methods waged by states. Nye theorized that SP relies on three fundamental resources: culture (in order to attract others), political values (living up to them domestically and abroad) and foreign policies (when they are legitimized and hence granting them moral authority). In the sense of SP, Nye defines culture as the outline for social behaviours conducted by great powers when transmitting knowledge and ideals.\textsuperscript{102} Developing further on the notion of culture being an important component of SP Nye writes: “the universality of a country’s culture and its ability establish a set of favourable rules and institutions that govern areas of international activity are critical sources of power.”\textsuperscript{103}

Projecting notions of culture as something knowledge-based and ideal for others is narrated by great powers in order to create SP for promoting their goals.\textsuperscript{104} However, Nye highlighted that the outcome of this depends on the domestic reality of the target, because something producing attraction for one subject may distaste another.\textsuperscript{105} Attaining the preferred outcomes through co-optive ways of agenda-setting, attraction and persuasion is a vital instrument of SP for states.\textsuperscript{106}

Barnett and Duvall highlight that power is something produced through social relations in order to affect the target to outline their ability to control their own fate.\textsuperscript{107} These social relations are expressed through the dimensions of “interactions” or “constitutions” which are identified as means of either structural or compulsory power.\textsuperscript{108} Interaction relations give the agent power over a subject and constitutive power is defined by how the agent-subject relation gives the

\textsuperscript{101} The Harvard Gazette. (2017) There were just so many things that I was curious about.
\textsuperscript{102} Nye. The Future, pp.84
\textsuperscript{103} Nye, J. (2016) Limits of American Power, pp277
\textsuperscript{104} Nye. The Future, pp.88
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., pp.90
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., pp.25
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., pp.45
agent power to act in a certain way.\footnote{Barnett & Duvall, Power, pp.46} Placing the notion of SP into this would be to view the consequence of an agent’s attempt to control its institutional power as something that creates cultural values as a method of SP.\footnote{Craig, The Rhetoric, pp.30} Using these resources as means of attraction in order to create behavioural outcomes has a focal starting point in SP and is described as a vital mechanism. Craig describes attraction as a possible reflection of already existing shared values between agent and subject.\footnote{Ibid., pp.39} The use of attraction as a method for encouraging notions of common identification through symbolically established cultures, ideas and values could also be shared through the means of SP.\footnote{Ibid., pp.33}

Craig argues that SP encourages reflections of theoretical nature: like on the necessities of persuasion, the audience-message relationship and the consequences of communicative means as a behavioural pattern for foreign policy.\footnote{Ibid., pp.32} Soft power grants the possibility to perceive how actors own, promote and deploy possessions like political ideals or cultural products to accomplish policy goals.\footnote{Ibid., pp.33}

Bially-Mattern writes about how SP has strong implications on states’ self-identification. She describes it as a “representational force” used by one country on another with the aim of creating their own presumptuous political reality. Making the subject torn between competing worldviews that could possibly challenge their own sense of ontological security.\footnote{Bially-Mattern, J. (2005) Why ‘Soft Power’ Isn’t So Soft, pp.586} Using SP like this is rather coercive and threatens the subject’s sense of identity. Furthermore, Bially-Mattern highlights how SP is a “communicative procedure that shapes the perceived reality of subjects.”\footnote{Craig, The Rhetoric, pp.43} Situating SP as a relationship based on communication could in turn frame it as a

\begin{thebibliography}{9}

\item \cite{Barnett & Duvall, Power, pp.46} Barnett & Duvall, Power, pp.46
\item \cite{Craig, The Rhetoric, pp.30} Craig, The Rhetoric, pp.30
\item \cite{Ibid., pp.39} Ibid., pp.39
\item \cite{Ibid., pp.33} Ibid., pp.33
\item \cite{Ibid., pp.32} Ibid., pp.32
\item \cite{Ibid., pp.33} Ibid., pp.33
\item \cite{Craig, The Rhetoric, pp.43} Craig, The Rhetoric, pp.43
\end{thebibliography}
method to be perceived from a perspective of qualitative content analysis. Craig explains it as “when soft power is considered as communication-centric, we can observe qualities and contexts of actors, relationships, messages […] which then provides a crucial focus to our understanding of attraction through behaviours and resources.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Craig. The Rhetoric, pp.44
4. Methodology

Research of comparative nature most often have the need for operationalisation of variables that are easily traceable. Essentially for the researcher to explain the train of thought in a comprehensive manner, but also for the reader to capture the researcher’s core idea. Conducting such a research on the outset that two similar countries that share several common nominators, except for one crucial point, brings forth the application of the 19th century English philosopher John Stuart Mill’s Method of Difference (MoD). Mill proposed through this method that by eliminating certain factors, one could deductively observe vital elements that highlight the necessary component for proving one’s theory.118

In order to understand the entirety of what is read, a qualitative content analysis from a hermeneutical sense is necessary.119 Continuing this notion into framing the method into a qualitative content analysis may enable the processing of latent content and contextual information.120 Therefore, a qualitative content analysis will be used for this research because it is productive for scrutinising and conceptualising the summarised content found in texts.121

4.1. Method of Difference

The essence of MoD is explained such as when investigating two or more cases that are as similar as possible and introducing a dissimilar factor that highlights the difference between the cases. By this method the researcher produces a crucial point which is examined in the analysis.122

121 Ibid., pp.4
122 Mill. A System, pp.485
In contemporary academia this method has been revised and renamed as *Most Similar System Design* (MSSD). The similarities between the countries are defined as control (or constant) variables and the difference between them is known as the independent variable.\(^{123}\) The former is done by choosing countries for analysis that are often culturally and geographically close to each other.\(^{124}\) Thus, making it possible to isolate the control variables at an early stage. In the cases of Ukraine and Belarus, not only the geographical border, but also the cultural and historical heritage are closely intertwined with Russia.

In this study, the independent variable will be the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), which will be scrutinised whether it is a politicised institution and its effect on creation of identity for the Russian people. After focusing on the independent variable’s position, that differs in Ukraine and Belarus, the next step will be to discuss whether the exertion of Soft power (SP) in respective countries are affected by their preconceived perception of identity. By doing so the inferred causality is analysed whether it is possible to distinguish identical markers in Ukraine’s, respectively Belarus’ and its effects for the ROCs output for exerting SP.

Achieving this with a comparative lens in mind will enable the identification of similarities and differences between the two states. This information is vital for understanding, explaining and interpreting what the ROC has had on the institutional contexture of each state.\(^{125}\) Connecting this to Mill’s theory of *chemical causation*, which can be explained as a phenomenon, or change, occurring when the appropriate conditions emerge. By focusing on the ROC as a holistic institutional phenomenon in Ukraine and Belarus, that has gone through a significant change, will make it possible to theorise about the specific outcomes.\(^{126}\)

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124 Ibid., pp.393
125 Ragin, C. (1985) *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, pp.6
126 Ibid., pp.25
In order to highlight the divergent factors between Ukraine and Belarus a table will be presented in the analysis for illustrating this. This will serve as an operationalisation for streamlining the analysis into a comprehensive manner.

4.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

When conducting a qualitative content analysis, one may describe complex phenomena and compare group differences in contrast to each other. Qualitative content analysis is considered as being rather non-interpretative and permits the collection of data to remain in the same form as it is collected. By questioning the meaning of the content one can identify categories that both highlights important content and summarizes it. This method is productive when comparing Ukraine’s and Belarus’ preconceived identities, with the support of the above-mentioned Method of Difference.

Further, this analysis serves as an explanatory testing of hypotheses with the aim of examining the usefulness and value of detailed analytical theories. By doing this one can assure the flexibility for how a text can be interpreted and apply it to the material. This hermeneutical way of conducting interpretations will enable the systematisation of the content in texts. Something which is needed when scrutinising the plethora of texts for achieving a proper analysis. The emergence of differences in interpretations are inevitable, but regardless, the intention is to clarify actors’ thought structures. Which will be essential for analysing the ROC in contrast to Ukraine and Belarus and vice versa. In other words, to clarify the research assignment for the purpose of highlighting and making the important content understandable.

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127 Drisko & Maschi. *Content Analysis*, pp.5–7
128 Ibid., pp.9
129 Esaiasson. *Metodpraktikan*, pp.223
130 Drisko & Maschi. *Content Analysis*, pp.10
131 Ibid., pp.11
4.3. **Validity and Reliability**

The method of qualitative content analysis emphasizes validity and reliability, reflecting a constructivist epistemology. Construing this from intersubjectivity and intrasubject variability may provide essential tools for conducting the analysis. Intersubjectivity needs to be warranted for enabling the possibility for others to come to the same conclusion if the same empirical research is conducted. This will be ensured by using peer reviewed research and other sources that are available for an academical research of this nature. Intrasubject variability is reached by being consistent in achieving the desired results from the analysis gathered from various material at different periods of time. This is essential when conducting comparative studies.

Internal source criticism will also be processed by assessing whether credibility is upheld; keeping in mind aspects if the author had an interest in exaggerating his or hers point in order to convince the reader of the preconceived actuality. Considering the fact that Ukraine and Russia are entangled in an conflict for the moment, the ROCs position is sensitive in the sense of authors possibly carrying a politicised sentiment when researching on the topic. Such aspects need scrutinisation in order to attain a proper intrasubject variability. These peer reviewed articles serve as excellent sources for gathering information about the ROCs role in the situation. When ignoring eventual bias, very factual illustrations emerge about the developments in the region.

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132 Drisko & Maschi. *Content Analysis*, pp.5
134 Ibid., pp.41
135 Ibid., pp.41
4.4. Limitations

Upon deciding on a method for conducting a research it is always of the essence to objectively view potential shortcomings that may arise. One of the limitations of MoD is highlighted by Stanley Lieberson who argued it does not handle probable assumptions and possible measurement errors.\footnote{Lieberson, S. (1991) Small N’s and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases, pp.312-315} In response to this Charles Ragin reasoned that the probability is accounted for when assessing sufficiency and necessity of a phenomenon and examining whether it is possible or not.\footnote{Ragin. The Comparative Method, pp.15} Furthermore, Lieberson claimed that MoD cannot provide possible considerations for the interaction effects between variables.\footnote{Lieberson. Small N’s, pp.318} Jukka Savolainen answered this critique by noting that MoD has no possibility of considering interaction effects because it is no method of discovery. It should rather be utilised as a supplement for the researcher’s own hypotheses about whether interaction terms are involved or not.\footnote{Savolainen, J. (1985) The Rationality of Drawing Big Conclusions Based on Small Samples: In Defense of Mill’s Methods, pp.1221}

Overcoming the problem of causal complexity is also complicated when conducting a comparative study. Still, MoD can bring some advantages in this area, as the researcher can eliminate opposing causal variable interactions from the analysis by pairing corresponding cases in line with the principles of MoD. By instead focusing on essential variables once can evaluate the validity of a hypothetical statement. Furthermore, some researchers argue that the small number of cases included in a study using MoD may also create complications. However, because it is counter-productive for the research to manipulate the number of countries that share essential background variables, one can instead concentrate on the isolated independent variable.\footnote{Anckar. On the Applicability, pp.399}
When using a qualitative content analysis for contextualized and latent communication variances in the interpretation may occur. This necessitates meaningful and useful interpretations of contextualized and latent data. Consequently, leading to the emergence of possible subjective scrutinization of data. However, achieving universal applicability in qualitative content analyses is not essential, instead the search for meaningful context is needed.

4.5. Choice of Cases

Institutionally the ROC is predominantly situated in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Estonia. With several parishes and a substantial amount of property in these countries, the ROC serves as a focal point for both Russians on Russian territory, but also for the Russian minority in the above-mentioned states. However, a majority of the Belarusians, Ukrainians and Moldovans adhere to the patriarchy of Moscow. Up until recently, the UOC received autocephalic status by the Patriarchate of Constantinople which led to the schism between the ROC and the UOC. Contrastingly, the only Church proselytizing Orthodox belief in Belarus is the ROC. On the other hand in Estonia, as of 2002, there are two Orthodox churches: the Orthodox Church of Estonia and the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Believers of Orthodoxy are free to choose which Church they adhere to. Roughly 25% identify themselves as Russians in Estonia, making them a substantially large minority. In Moldova the main Church is the Moldovan Orthodox Church of the ROC. Enjoying autonomy from the ROC, it holds up to 90% of the parishes in Moldova.

141 Drisko & Maschi. Content Analysis, pp.10
142 Ibid., pp.10
143 Knox. Russian Society, p.81-82
144 Liik, Metodiev & Popescu. Defender, pp.14-15
145 Vasilevich. The Belarusian Orthodox Church, pp.7
146 Liik, Metodiev & Popescu. Defender, pp.20
148 Liik, Metodiev & Popescu. Defender, pp.21
Considering these cases, one can distinguish the fact that the ROC is spread across the proximal region around the western Russian border. However, the cases of Ukraine and Belarus differentiate themselves from Moldova and Estonia. First and foremost, Orthodoxy plays a vital role in the respective countries’ societies. In Russia 71% of the population identify as Orthodox believers, in Ukraine 78% and in Belarus 73%. Furthermore, the ROC regards the religious devotees in Ukraine and Belarus as having a focal part of Russian Orthodoxy’s spiritual domain and consequently identify them as people of the concept Russkiy Mir.

Selecting the cases on the basis of these facts can offer a deepened and widened theoretical determination on the topic. Utilising valuable information from the cases for the clarification of contextual impacts.

Today’s territories of Ukraine and Belarus were a part of the medieval federation of Kievan Rus. This federation is considered as the place of origin for Russian Orthodoxy and holds significant value for the ROC and Russian people. Additionally, during imperial times, Russia was defined as Velikorossiya (Big Russia), while Ukraine was termed as Malorossiya (Little Russia) and Belarus as Belorossiya (White Russia – “white” representing the historical colour orientation pattern of “west”). The notion of this is today based on the Russian term sobornost, also known as the unity of the Russian people. The ROC considers this as entitled to them through the territorial canonical claims of everything within the former Soviet Union borders: “the unacceptability of the existence of various jurisdictions on one and the same

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150 Patriarcha.ru. (2014) His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: The Russian World is a Special Civilization that must be preserved.
151 Drisko & Maschi. Content Analysis, pp.16
territory”, essentially viewing Ukraine and Belarus as inseparable part of the ROCs canonical territory.\textsuperscript{156}

4.6. Choice of Material

In order to conduct a valid analysis of the ROC as a politicised institution in historical and contemporary time, a plethora of material is needed. The same is applied for analysing how identity markers are construed in Ukraine and Belarus and how the outcomes of SP have manifested itself.

When illustrating the historical aspect of the ROC a variety of sources are needed. This will mostly rely on descriptions of the Church’s position in historical Russia. With the backdrop originating from numerous sources that critically analyse the ROC in medieval-, USSR- and current time. Various peer reviewed articles and an additional complement of books will be used for widening the scope of the collected information. The material will range from a selection of authors that may provide analytical tools about how identity markers could originate from a politicised ROC.

Because this thesis will mainly build upon the method qualitative content analysis, much of the information for presenting the current political situation around the ROC will be composed of news journals. Enabling the information to be gathered instantly from the primary source. These articles will solely be used for quotes and not be given space for inducing the possible politicised opinions that news agencies may have. This is needed in order to prevent the possibility of shaping the analysis into a biased context. Considering that not all, but many of these sources will be Russian news agencies, it is therefore necessary to narrow the scope in such a manner.

\textsuperscript{156} Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.24
The same approach will be applied when analysing the cases of Ukraine and Belarus. The collected empirical information will mainly focus on achieving an unbiased approach as possible. Through the collecting of quotes, information and politically non-afflicted sources this will be made possible. However, for example when explaining what the concept of Russkiy Mir is and connecting it to the theory of SP, the source will be the Russkiy Mir foundations homepage. This is needed in order to solidify the concept’s goal and the way it is conducted. Therefore, gathering only non-affiliated information is not completely possible.
5. Framing the Russian Orthodox Church

“Russian history exhibits a completely exclusive characteristic, namely the complete nationalization of the Christian church, which determines itself as the ecumenical church.”

– Nikolay Berdyaev

As one of the main institutions that has withstood the test of time and several setbacks inflicted upon them, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) maintains its position as an established and highly valued mainstay of contemporary Russian society. Understanding how it has come to this position, an analysis of its historical past is of the essence. Vladimir Putin believes that the Ukrainians and Russians are essentially one people when viewing it with a historical lens and that the division of the ROC and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) is something covertly done and disadvantageous for both the Ukrainians and Russians. Such statements are to be treaded cautiously, considering the ardent relationship between these two people. However, when extracting such a claim for what it is, one potentially finds indispensable factors in such rhetoric from the Russian Federation’s president; the unital components granted by the ROC provides latent legitimacy for uniting separated peoples.

The author Vladimir Videman defines the principle of simfoniya, or symphony, as a unique imperial theology and that the Church is “the only institution of the public law going back directly to the pre-revolutionary legal system.” Essentially the Church possesses the sole power to legitimize rulers. The Russian national consciousness revolves around the notion of Russian supranational ethnos of 20th century. Based on characteristics of universalism, supranationalism and a Christian spirit, as described by the Russian philosopher Vladimir

157 Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.16
158 TASS. (2020) 20 Questions with Vladimir Putin. Putin on Ukraine.
159 Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.266
This will therefore be illustrated in the following subchapters about the ROCs place in historical Russia and its positional zenith in contemporary Russia.

### 5.1. Pervaya Simfoniya

At the turn of the first millennium in Eastern Europe, Vladimir Svyatoslavich, of the Rurikid dynasty, was grand prince of the pagan kingdom Kievan Rus. Solidifying his position from the capital in Kiev, he reigned over a vast territory stretching from today’s Ukraine, to the outskirts of Belarus and western Russia. Essentially placing several Slavic tribes under his rule. Following pagan rites in contemporary Europe was not so productive for consolidating an authoritarian rule, as compared to ruling under a Christian umbrella. Upon realizing this, Vladimir chose to invite Eastern Orthodox missionaries from the Eastern Roman Empire and eventually converted to Christianity in 988. Vladimir the Great, as his named lived on in history, was compared by Russian historians to the Hebrew king Solomon from biblical times. Connecting his achievements as way to legitimize the former pagan ruler as a Christian spiritual leader of the Rus.

In the same year of his baptising, Prince Vladimir ordered the building of the first Christian stone Church on Starokyiv’ska hill in Kiev, replacing the three-metre-long idol of the pagan God Perun. Essentially laying the foundation for the ROC and placing it as a metropolitanate subordinated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Thus, was the first note played in the state-church symphonia that would echo in Eastern Europe throughout the new millennium. The concept of symphonia is found in the sixth century edict *Novella IV* of Byzantine emperor

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160 Kotiranta. *Religious Transition*, pp.15
162 Ibid., p.23
163 Ibid., p.27
164 Ibid., p.28
166 Hanak. *Nature and the Image*, p. 87
Justinian; which states the need for equal partnership between state and Church in order to benefit mankind. The edict titled the emperor as basileus: the sole protector of the Church as something God-given to him. Novella IV was translated into Slavic language after the conversion of the Kievan Rus population, making the edict comprehensible for future rulers.\textsuperscript{167}

In 1453 the Ottoman Empire broke the walls of Constantinople, meaning that what have been perceived as the eternal city had finally fallen. Without its central seat, insecurity arose about the future existence of the ROC.\textsuperscript{168} Following these times of spiritual self-doubt, Ivan the Great ascended the throne of the Grand Prince of Moscow in 1462 as Ivan III. Marrying the Byzantine heiress Sophia Palaiologos ten years later. This prompted the newlywed ruler to title himself as the tsar (from the Roman Caesar) and igniting symbolical value by adopting the Byzantine two-headed eagle as his royal insignia. In this sense the notion of symphonia had moved to Moscow, as the fall of Byzantine meant that Russia became the first among Orthodox nations.\textsuperscript{169} Subsequently laying the seed of perceiving Moscow as the successor of the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire, through the concept of Third Rome. The ROC legitimized these rights through Zosimus, Metropolitan of Moscow’s charter from 1492: “Constantine the Great founded the New Rome, Saint Vladimir baptized Russia, and now Ivan III is the new Emperor Constantine of the new Constantinople-Moscow.”\textsuperscript{170} This concept of Russia inheriting the title of Third Rome was explained by the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev as: “The mission of Russia was to be the vehicle of […] Orthodoxy, and the shrine in which it was treasured”\textsuperscript{171}

Having inherited all the possible symbolism that was left of the past Byzantine empire, the most vital missing piece was left to place on the mosaic: the tsar’s rule needed to ascend from

\textsuperscript{167} Hanak. Nature and the Image, p. 86–87
\textsuperscript{168} Strémooukhoff, D. (1953) Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine, p.88
\textsuperscript{169} Papkova, I. (2011) The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics, p.72
\textsuperscript{170} Strémooukhoff. Moscow, p.91
\textsuperscript{171} Berdyaev, N. (1948) The Russian Idea, pp.8–9
a Grand Duchy to be the emperor of and protector of the Church. This was solely the ROCs right to hand out. Hence in 1547 Ivan IV, the grandson of Ivan the Great, was recognized by the ROC as basileus and the establishment of the Tsardom of Russia was a fact. Later to be known as Ivan the Terrible, he ruled until his death in 1584. Upon which the ROC, five years after his death, gained political legitimacy from the councilman Boris Godunov to establish itself as a Patriarchate and appointed Job of Moscow as the first Russian Patriarch. Essentially distancing themselves from their past subordination to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Thus concluding the first Church-state symphonia.

5.2. Vtoraya Simfoniya

In 1598, the grandson of Ivan the Terrible, Feodor I passed away, the last tsar of Rurikid heritage, ending Vladimir the Great’s line of successors. Prompting Boris Godunov, the former councilman at the court of Ivan the Terrible, to preserve himself the right to take the throne. However, Godunov lacked the proper legitimacy to rule, which was otherwise entitled to descendants of Rurikid heritage. In order to amass this much needed legitimacy, he called upon the help of the ROC and its newly appointed Patriarch Job. By doing this Godunov solidified his right for ascension to the throne by receiving praise from Patriarch Job as “the most capable man for coping with the difficulties that Russia was dealing with.” With the intention of manifesting this close Church-state relationship Godunov was adorned with the two Christian symbols of authority: the cross orb and sceptre. Becoming the first Russian ruler to be pictured with such ornaments.

Such symbolism was not enough to appease the Russian elite’s need for a legitimate ruler after Feodor I’s death. Because Ivan the Terrible, as his post-mortem title demonstrates, committed

172 Denissoff, Moscow, pp.99
173 Ibid., pp.100
175 Moscow Kremlin Museums. (n.d.) Boris Godunov.
horrific acts against the Russian population and elite. Subsequently leaving an autocratic void which needed mending.\textsuperscript{176} These circumstances of uncertainty were followed by the \textit{Smutnoe vremya} (Time of Troubles), a fifteen-year-long civil war and violent succession crisis with several claimants for the Russian throne.\textsuperscript{177} During which \textit{inter alia} Poland took control over Moscow in 1610 and several Russian elites threatened Patriarch Hermogenes to sign a decree allowing the Polish king Sigismund III Vasa to take control over Russia. The Patriarch refused to allow a Catholic sovereign rule over Russia and was subsequently forced into exile\textsuperscript{178}, in which he starved to death two years later.\textsuperscript{179}

Upon the exile of Patriarch Hermogenes, a usurper called False Dimitry II appointed a new Patriarch named Filaret. The new Patriarch, originally called Feodor Romanovich, was a former diplomat and soldier in the war against Sweden. This background was fundamental in him understanding the dimensions of politics. He used this knowledge combined with the holy legitimacy, when ordaining his own son, Michael Romanov, as the new tsar; marking the end of the Time of Troubles and beginning the 300-year long Romanov dynasty’s rule over Russia.\textsuperscript{180} Both the Patriarch and the tsar ruled Russia as co-regents until Filaret’s death.\textsuperscript{181}

The period after the Time of Trouble was very flourishing for the Russian state, when it came to territorial expansion. This subsequently meant that the ROC also enjoyed the same equivalent. Which led to the Patriarchate of Constantinople transferring its control over Kiev Metropolis to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686. Bringing millions of religious believers from Ukrainian territory to the administrative care of the Moscow Patriarchate.\textsuperscript{182} In the meantime Peter the Great introduced new Church reforms that meant heavy secularisation by transferring

\textsuperscript{176} Sebag Montefiore, S. (2016) \textit{Romanov: Den Sista Tsardynastin}, pp.65
\textsuperscript{177} Martin, R. (2008) \textit{A Short History of Russia’s First Civil War (review)}, pp.245
\textsuperscript{179} Mouravieff, A. (2004) \textit{A History of the Church of Russia}, pp.166
\textsuperscript{180} Sebag Montefiore. \textit{Romanov}, pp.61
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., pp.70–75
\textsuperscript{182} Liik, Metodiev & Popescu. \textit{Defender}, pp.15
the Patriarch’s governance to a committee known as the Most Holy Governing Synod, consisting of ecclesiastical members. Peter the Great was heavily influenced by the Western European systems of secularization and strived to achieve a Church structure that resembled that of Germany and Sweden. Ultimately bringing the ROCs finances under government control and ordering that priests alert the state of oppositional opinions among its worshippers. Followed by Catherine the Great reaffirming this stance against the ROC by closing 60% of the monasteries in the Russian empire and nationalising all of the monastic lands. Furthermore, none of the Orthodox clergy was allowed in Catherine the Great’s legislative commission. During these times, the imperial legislation decreed that Russians were supposed to be Orthodox. The upcoming third Church-state symphonia was played under worse circumstances and will hold a crucial position in the ROC’s history and creation of identity as an institution in both Russian folklore and politics.

5.3. Tret’ya Simfoniya

In the early 20th century, several Russian intellectuals raised their voices for separating the Church from state control. Many of these questioned the ROCs leadership and termed it as a mouthpiece of the imperial government. At that time Orthodoxy was under state control, which eventually ended in 1905 when Nicholas II ordered reforms for granting the ROC greater independence from the state. This was welcomed by many Russians because it meant that their self-identity, which was predominantly based on Orthodoxy, was released from the government’s clutches. However, during this period, atheistic sentiments were rising throughout the empire, with many of the Russian intelligentsia defining themselves as

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183 Knox. Russian Society, pp.43  
187 Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.28  
188 Knox. Russian Society, pp.44
The ROC experienced a somewhat short-lived freedom, as the October 1917 Revolution initiated radical policy changes by the Bolsheviks against Orthodoxy. Through the abolishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow and prosecution of clergymen, the ROC’s potential to challenge the communist government was significantly halted. At first the ROC banished the Bolshevik communists but realised soon enough that the only way to persevere their institution was to accept communist governance. Emphasizing the ROCs position, Metropolitan Sergei stated that “Whilst remaining Orthodox, we remember our duty to be citizens of the Soviet Union”.

Bolsheviks made atheism a prerequisite for upholding their rule corresponding to the premises of religion having a corrupting influence and no place in a socialist order. This was ratified through the adoption the first religious legislation named “the Decree on Separation of the Church from the State and the Church from the School”. Essentially giving the state full control over Church property and completely limiting religious activity. In parallel to this the Bolsheviks supported the founding of a new Renovationist Church that was loyal to Orthodox beliefs but also staunch supporters of the Soviet regime. This was not long-lasting as the Renovationist Church was not welcomed by the masses because of its many attempts to reform fundamental parts of Orthodoxy itself. Upon realising that the anti-religious campaign failed, the Soviet regime adopted the legislation On Religious Associations in 1929. Decreeing provisions that religious societies and believers were obligated to register. It also banned religious associations from inter alia charitable work. The legislation added further opportunities for the Bolsheviks to intervene in the ROCs affairs. For example, old and deprived buildings were deemed unsafe for use, this in connection with the Soviet regime’s

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189 Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.28
190 Knox. Russian Society, pp.44-45
191 Ibid., pp.45
neglection of churches enabled the authorities to announce many places unfit for religious gatherings and refusing them to practise their beliefs elsewhere.\textsuperscript{192}

Following the adoption of legislative means, the Bolsheviks also initiated a more aggressive approach by persecuting and murdering over 80 000 Orthodox priests, monks and nuns. Effectively closing the Patriarchate of Moscow. Furthermore, prior to Bolshevik rule 80 000 churches were functioning, in 1939 merely 200 were at the disposal for believers of Orthodoxy in the USSR. Only to be reopened by the thousands during World War II by Joseph Stalin to exploit Orthodoxy as an attempt to lift the people’s patriotic spirit in the fight against Nazi Germany. Additionally, this meant the reinstatement of the Patriarchate of Moscow.\textsuperscript{193} After Stalin’s death followed Nikita Khrushchev’s aggressive anti-religious campaigns between 1953-1964 that furthermore impeded the ROC by halving the amount of churches in USSR.\textsuperscript{194}

The Soviet regime had three major objectives for dealing with religion. The first objective was to diminish religion by implementing severe legal restrictions on activity of religious kind. This was mainly done by prohibiting religious propaganda and education. The second objective was to manage religious life through police and state control. Police control was made possible through the KGB, the main security agency in the Soviet Union, which was supervising and controlling the ROC by infiltrating and spying on it. Through KGBs coercive methods and blackmail many believers reported their own family members and close friends.\textsuperscript{195} Furthermore, many clergymen and laity closely collaborated with the KGB.\textsuperscript{196} State control was upheld by significant anti-religious propaganda through education, as it was something that was regarded as the most imperative way of agitating anti-religious beliefs. It is believed that approximately 6 million educators of atheistic propaganda were employed by the Soviet

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{192} Knox. \textit{Russian Society}, pp.47
\item \textsuperscript{193} Ibid., pp.46-48
\item \textsuperscript{194} Pospielovsky. \textit{The Orthodox Church}, pp.360
\item \textsuperscript{195} Knox. \textit{Russian Society}, pp.48-50
\item \textsuperscript{196} Ibid., pp.92
\end{itemize}
regime. The third objective was to safeguard collaborating religious leaders. Through a regime-organized scheme, the most important Orthodox persons were appointed by the state and anyone who opposed the regime was removed.197 “From 1922 to 1991, the year of its ‘official abolition’ and its rebirth from its ashes in the Kremlin, the KGB traversed the decades as the Siamese twin of the Patriarchate of Moscow. No appointment, not even an assistant, was decided without the blessing of the Soviet secret services.”198

Key Orthodox figures did not let the state’s involvement in the Church affairs go unnoticed. Many of the clergy confronted the Patriarchate for its subjugation to the Soviet regime and heavily challenged the state’s meddling in religious questions. Growing dissent ideas spread quickly and was manifested through covert worship and instructing children about religion, organised by dissenting clergy members. Leading to the creation a significant obstacle for the regime in their institutionalised battle against religion.199

Hidden worshipping was the reality for Orthodox believers that perceived the Patriarchate as the regime’s tool. Up until Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the Communist Party, introduced policy changes between 1987 and 1991, that would inflict serious impacts on religion and on the Soviet Union as a whole. This was known as glasnost (openness), the motto for several of Gorbachev’s implemented reforms. Orthodoxy had a central position in glasnost as it served as a rejuvenation of a shared Russian identity for encouraging spiritual tradition amongst the people.200 In the midst of these policy changes Christian believers celebrated the 1000th anniversary of the baptising of Vladimir the Great in 988. Upon this occasion, Gorbachev decided to meet with members of the ROC hierarchy, the first time a Soviet leader organised such a meeting since 1943 when Stalin called for the Church’s support in the war.201

197 Knox. Russian Society, pp.51
198 Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.130-131
200 Ibid., pp.57
201 Knox. Russian Society, pp.58-59
During the event Gorbachev said “[this] has not only a religious but also a socio-political significance, since it is an important milestone on the centuries-long path of development of our country’s history, its culture and Russian statehood”\textsuperscript{202}

The ROCs leaders also took hold of the opportunity granted by the millennial anniversary, with Archbishop Kirill (the 2009 appointed Patriarch) stating that: “It has been acknowledged that religious beliefs promote personal and social morality; help improve international relations [and] combat drunkenness and crime.”\textsuperscript{203} Something that was further fuelled by Metropolitan Aleksei who declared that every Soviet citizen carries the moral duty to aid the politicians in their strive for reforming the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{204} Such supportive rhetoric did not go unheard by politicians, as was showed in the election of five Orthodox clerics to the Congress of People’s deputies (the main state authority in the Soviet Union), including the at the time Patriarch Pimen. Moreover, several new institutions were created for ROC to control and thus expanding the Orthodox hierarchy into a dominant voice in politics.\textsuperscript{205}

Many of the young liberal academia that held high positions in the Communist Party were turning to Orthodoxy since the 1960s, especially in Moscow and St Petersburg. Gorbachev understood this and declared in April 1988: “Believers are Soviet People, working people and patriots, and they have the full right to express their opinions with dignity.”\textsuperscript{206} Polls from the same year showed that only one Muscovite in ten professed a belief in God. However, such numbers should be observed from a viewpoint of Muscovites answering questions about individual spirituality while living in a strict atheistic state.\textsuperscript{207} The societal development in the Soviet Union had negatively deteriorated through widespread crime, alcoholism and drug use.

\textsuperscript{202} Trepanier, L. (2007) Political Symbols in Russian History, pp.150
\textsuperscript{203} Knox. Russian Society, pp.109
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., pp.62
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., pp.63
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., pp.69
\textsuperscript{207} Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.30
To overcome these obstacles a close-knitted cooperation between the state and Church was created. Gorbachev believed that the high morals Christians carry could be used for mending these societal problems.208

In 1986 the Chernobyl disaster occurred and took its toll on both nature and humans, but also on the political structure of the Soviet Union. Many Orthodox believers and even atheists drew connections to the Bible and pointed to the presumption that the disaster was predicted in Revelation 8:11, where it says: “And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”209 Wormwood, in this sense refers to the water’s bitterness, and translates into “chernobyl” in Ukrainian, from whence the city was named after in the 12th century.210 Many connected such apocalyptic ideas to the fact that hydrogen peroxide has a bitter taste, something which connects the idea of a hydrogen-based nuclear energy with bitter water.211 Such were the conditions under which the Soviet Union concluded its era and the third Church-state symphonia that initially begun on a bad note, but was directing itself into playing in a harmonious tact during the 1990’s and onwards.

5.4. Chetvertaya Simfoniya

The Russian Federation entered the new decade as a decimated state, crumbled into several newly independent states and disconnected itself from its past strictly atheistic government rule. Considering these events, a new constitution was adopted, which stated under Article 14.1 “The Russian Federation shall be a secular state. No religion may be established as the state religion or as obligatory” and under Article 14.2 “Religious associations shall be separate

208 Knox. Russian Society, pp.69-70
209 King James Bible Online. (n.d.) Rev. 8:11 (Authorized King James Version)
211 Ibid., pp.248
from the state and shall be equal before law”. Such secular separation of Church and state may be formalized on paper. This subchapter will demonstrate how the ROC has, aside from this constitutional secularisation, established itself as a vital part of Russian civil society.

On 19 July 1991, after a coup against Gorbachev, President Yeltsin became the first democratically elected Russian president in history. Patriarch Aleksei blessed the newly elected president at the ceremony, according to his wishes. This act raised dissenting voices about the eventual rebirth of a state-controlled Church, similar to the one in Soviet times. Elements of criticism rose from the extremist right-wing monarchist migrated church, called the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). Which believed that the ROC was able to sustain harsh atheistic rule by the means of close-knitted collaboration with the Communist regime. In order to unite the two churches, ROCOR demanded that the ROC “condemned Metropolitan Sergei’s 1927 Declaration of Loyalty to the Soviet State and its subsequent subordination of the church to the atheistic communist government” and that the ROC answered for their cooperation with the KGB. Patriarch Alexei chose to answer these accusations on the anniversary of the Bolshevik October Revolution in 1990, being the ROCs first political statement since the Metropolitan Sergei’s in 1927. Declaring that the he personally took full responsibility for the ROCs statements, during the past Soviet rule. As to Sergei’s declaration, Patriarch Aleksei claimed that it was necessary for the ROC to retain its existence during harsh times of religious persecution. Moreover, he asked for “forgiveness, understanding and prayers – not only before God, but before those people, too”, referring to the people that suffered because of the ROCs cooperation with the KGB.

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214 Ibid., pp.46
215 Ibid., pp.46
216 Knox. Russian Society, pp.93
During the 1990s the ROC significantly expanded. The numbers of parishes, monasteries and educational institutes rose two, or up to five times more than under previous Communist rule. Religiosity also rose in popularity during the first years of the Russian Federation, as can be seen in public opinion polls, showing that the number citizens defining themselves as “Christians” grew to 52% in 1992, from the 22% in 1990. In the same time span, 64% trusted the ROC. However, only 15% of the population declared themselves as Orthodox.

In October 1990 the government adopted a new liberal law On Freedom of Belief. This law stood in stark contrast to Stalin’s decree of 1929 On Religious Associations. It included provisions that prohibited discrimination based on religious practice. Furthermore, it reiterated that religious associations and the state were separated and were not allowed to meddle in state elections or political affairs. Most importantly the law guaranteed the freedom of worship for native and foreign religious associations. This encouraged a substantial influx of foreign missionaries that arose suspicion among ROC representatives. Deriving this to the consequence of potential Western influence on the Russian population, Patriarch Aleksei expressed that “we want to preserve our personality and countenance, the spiritual and cultural heritage which was laid down over the course of the thousand-year history of Russia.” Patriarch Aleksei additionally stated that “The work of the Russian Church for the rebirth of society is threatened by the expansion of foreign missions in Russia. Hundreds and thousands of very different preachers have invaded Russia. [...] The Patriarchate wants to prevent this and to help our society to be stable.” This stance was substantiated by several regions in Russia that opposed the federal legislation. They believed that cultural heritage should influence legislation, instead

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217 Knox. Russian Society, pp.78-79
218 Dawisha & Starr. The Politics of Religion, pp.45-46
219 Knox. Russian Society, pp.76-77
220 Ibid., pp.116
221 Ellis, J. (2016) The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness, pp.174
of synthetic constructions from the West.\textsuperscript{222} Between 1994 and 1996, over a third of the regions passed laws to limit foreign religious activity.\textsuperscript{223} Paradoxically enough, surveys from that time suggests that Orthodox people did not view missionaries of other religions as a problem.\textsuperscript{224}

In 1994 it was revealed that the ROC imported tobacco duty free into the Russian Federation. As granted by the government’s Humanitarian Aid Commission, the ROC had the right to import significant amounts of tobacco under the label “humanitarian aid”. Meaning that such imports were tax exempted. The ROC imports comprised 10% of Russia’s total tobacco intake, essentially boosting the Patriarchate’s finances with over US$40 million in evaded taxes.\textsuperscript{225} Comparatively, other religious organisations, such as the Salvation Army that imported sincere humanitarian aid was blocked.\textsuperscript{226} Namely, The Moscow Justice Department decreed it as “an paramilitary organisation” in 1999.\textsuperscript{227}

Through significant pressure from the ROC, President Yeltsin eventually passed a revised law On Freedom of Belief in 1997, called the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, that basically meant restrictive religious legislation. The law’s preamble detailed “the special contribution of Orthodoxy [the ROC] to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia’s spirituality and culture.”\textsuperscript{228} In essence creating distinctions between religious groups and organisations, and restricting religious missionaries work.\textsuperscript{229} In addition to this, identifying as a Russian was synonymous with being Orthodox and not Protestant or Catholic.\textsuperscript{230} Alexander Rutskoy, Yeltsin’s vice president reminded the

\textsuperscript{222} Knox. Russian Society, pp.116  
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., pp.78  
\textsuperscript{224} Kotiranta. Religious Transition, pp.238  
\textsuperscript{225} Knox. Russian Society, pp.122  
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., pp.123  
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., pp.87  
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., pp.239  
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., pp.115-119  
\textsuperscript{230} Filatov, S. & Lunkin, R. (2010) My Father’s House has Many Mansions: Ethnic Minorities in the Russian Orthodox Church, pp.363
Russian population about this notion by publishing an article titled “Without Orthodoxy We Don’t Revive the Fatherland”.

ON December 17, 1997, President Yeltsin signed a decree that approved the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation. Containing several aspects on how to maintain the security of the nation and its citizens. Vladimir Putin, as the secretary to the National Security Council, considerably influenced the development of the strategy. It encompasses attempts to securitize spirituality, by mentioning “spiritual” 13 times in the strategy. Some of who call for the “spiritual renewal of Russia”, the regret of “the dwindling spiritual and moral potential of society” and “the fall of the spiritual, moral and creative potential of the population”, that “the state should encourage the […] spiritual and moral development of society.” Three revised strategies after, the National Security Concept still contain 15 mentions of “spiritual” in it.

With the 21st century coming to a close, Patriarch Aleksei expressed that “The weak state and the weak Church of today’s Russia must be replaced, in the manner of symphony thesis, by the strong state and strong Church, otherwise we will never overcome the identity crisis and build up a great power.” Following these lines, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was rebuilt in 1999. A cathedral from imperial times that was decreed by Aleksandar I to be built in Moscow for commemoration of the Russian victory over Napoleon in 1812. The Bolshevik regime, with its dictator Stalin, ordered the building to be demolished in 1931. In October 2000, on the eve of the 850th anniversary of Moscow, it finally had its grand reopening. Decorated with national

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231 Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.132
232 Ibid., pp.136
233 Ibid., pp.136
234 National Security Concept of the Russian Federation. (1997), II
235 Ibid., III
236 Ibid., IV
symbolism from imperial times, it was the stepping stone in Russia’s new era of spirituality.\textsuperscript{239} With Moscow’s mayor suggesting that it “will help to regenerate Orthodoxy and spirituality in Russia.”\textsuperscript{240} Costing an estimated US$500 million, funds that were much needed in other public sector infrastructure. Additionally, Kremlin gave the ROC financial support to purchase a collection of icons for the cathedral worth US$11.8 million.\textsuperscript{241} To mark this special occasion, the ROC included an article about the cathedral in its Church calendar of 1999 with the text: “the reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour is the most powerful step […] It is confirmation of the spirit of Orthodox life in Russian people, and that the attempt to convert Moscow to a featureless multi-national city will not succeed.”\textsuperscript{242}

In 1999, polls were conducted in Russia about religious professions. Showing that 75\% of the Russian population defined themselves Orthodox believers. Peculiarly enough, 42\% of the declared atheists regarded themselves as Orthodox. Further achievements of the ROC were reflected in the fact that 94\% of Russians had a positive attitude towards Orthodoxy, while 88\% of atheists shared that opinion.\textsuperscript{243} The population’s confidence in the ROC as an institution was three times higher than their trust in the government.\textsuperscript{244} In conjunction to these numbers, 94\% of the political elite had a positive opinion about the ROC.\textsuperscript{245}

Marking the new millennium, Vladimir Putin became the Russian Federation’s newly appointed president. In August 2001 he stated that “Russia is the guardian of Christianity” and that Russia was historically recognised as Holy Russia. Furthermore, while adding that Russia needs Orthodoxy in order to become a practical state, he emphasised the importance of

\textsuperscript{239} Knox. \textit{Russian Society}, pp.119–121  
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., pp.120  
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid., pp.119–121  
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., pp.121  
\textsuperscript{243} Kotiranta. \textit{Religious Transition}, pp.53–56  
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., pp.50  
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., pp.92
returning to this source.\textsuperscript{246} Almost half a year later, instantly after the presidential inauguration, Patriarch Aleksei personally blessed Putin at the Kremlin cathedral.\textsuperscript{247} Furthermore, Putin’s first term as president was highlighted by the search for a shared ideological denominator that could be used as tools for integrating society. Such tools were believed to be granted by the ROCs cultural and traditional values, as a substitute for liberal democracy.\textsuperscript{248}

In November, 2007, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov commented during a press conference that “Orthodox values formed the basis of Russian culture and statehood [and that his ministry and the Church were] working hand in hand.”\textsuperscript{249} By the end of 2008 the new Patriarch Kirill was elected, as the former Patriarch Aleksei had passed away. Upon which Putin took the opportunity to express, similar to his colleague Lavrov, that “the Church has always been a source of Russian statehood.”\textsuperscript{250} Only two years prior to this, the then Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, expressed in a radio interview how he was a committed supporter to the idea of a Church-state symphony: “Kingly and priestly power [are] two divine gifts of equal value, […] the principles of symphonic connection between Church and state are very important. Dimitry Medvedev, Russia’s president at the time, bolstered such notions through his for the idea of granting military chaplains to partake in the armed forces. In 2010 Medvedev also signed the law On the Transfer to Religious Organisations of Property of Religious Designation, essentially indicating the potential possibility of the ROC becoming the largest property owner in Russia.\textsuperscript{251}

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\textsuperscript{246} Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.133
\textsuperscript{247} Knox. Russian Society, pp.129–130
\textsuperscript{248} Kudors. ‘Russian World’, pp.3
\textsuperscript{250} Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.138
\textsuperscript{251} Solodovnik. Russia: The Official Church, pp.72
\end{flushleft}
Patriarch Kirill stands in stark contrast to his predecessors, he encourages ROC representatives to express their political opinions in public and even participate in the drafting of laws. By acting this way, the Church can become a powerful social force according to him.\textsuperscript{252} Such politicised statements can \textit{inter alia} be seen in his belief that the Chernobyl disaster was a punishment for state atheism;\textsuperscript{253} the antidemocratic opinion that certain human rights are denounced as “heresy” and that the ROC will make it their goal to fight them;\textsuperscript{254} Patriarch Kirill’s antidemocratic posture when he supported Putin and criticised the antiregime movement during the 2012 presidential elections;\textsuperscript{255} the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is deemed by the Patriarch as initiated by political forces that are adversary to Russia;\textsuperscript{256} a claim that was supported by Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov;\textsuperscript{257} in the Patriarch’s address to the Upper House of the Russian Parliament he claimed that “if a person is unfaithful to his family, he may be unfaithful to his homeland and he cannot cultivate patriotism in his children.”\textsuperscript{258} Additionally, the Patriarch condemned the Euromaidan protests as something organised and manipulated by the West.\textsuperscript{259}

In contradiction of upholding a secular state, the ROC lobbied heavily after 1997 for having obligatory classes in school about Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture (FOC).\textsuperscript{260} The ROC draw inspiration for this from the tsarist time’s curriculum included subject Zakon Bozhii (God’s Law).\textsuperscript{261} Supporting this proposal, they argued that “\textit{a person would act morally if they had received a kind spirit from God, but that an individual who did not have this gift would behave...}”

\begin{footnotes}
\item[252] Solodovnik. \textit{Russia: The Official Church}, pp.73
\item[253] BBC. (2011) \textit{Patriarch Kirill: Chernobyl – Punishment for Human Sins.}
\item[254] The Moscow Times. (2016) \textit{Russia’s Patriarch Kirill: Some Human Rights are ‘Heresy’.}
\item[255] Burgess, J. (2014) \textit{Retrieving the Martyrs in Order to Rethink the Political Order: The Russian Orthodox Case.} pp.180.
\item[256] TASS. (2019) \textit{Russian Patriarch Blames Outside Forces for Current Rift in Orthodoxy.}
\item[257] TASS. (2019) \textit{Western Meddling in Ukraine’s Church Affairs Threatens Global Stability – Lavrov.}
\item[258] TASS. (2014) \textit{Head of Russian Orthodox Church Calls for Protection of Traditional Family.}
\item[259] Van Herpen. \textit{Putin’s Propaganda}, pp.166
\item[260] Richters, K. (2012) \textit{The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: Politics, Culture and Greater Russia.} pp.45
\item[261] Ibid., pp.47
\end{footnotes}
badly.” Vladimir Fillipov, the Minister of Education at the time, encouraged this plan in and proposed that the subject will be taught for a total of 544 hours from the first to final grade. Essentially meaning that the subject would be more prevalent than chemistry or physics.

Eventually Putin supported the idea and by 2008 the number of regions offering the subject were 46 out of 49. This subject seemed to make Orthodoxy transcend over other religions, as seen in the example of pupils in Tula region having the assignment to write a letter to the Mother of God, regardless of their faith. The Patriarch claimed that “including FOC in the school curricula […] will be an effective means of dispelling nationalist, extremist prejudices that corrode the mind, the prejudices that thrive on society’s religious ignorance.” In 2009 Dimitri Medvedev, the then President, signed a directive presenting a multi-confessional subject called Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics. This was a non-evangelical subject offering six modules to provide for the pupil’s individual worldview (Orthodox Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, World Religious Cultures or Secular Ethics).

On 25th July 2002 President Putin signed a presidential decree on the legislation On Combating Extremist Activity. This gave the state lawful means for banning or dissolving religious organisations that could encourage extremist ideas which endangers civil society. The aim was to cull the rise of extremism amongst Islamic terrorist that organised themselves into groups.

Up until 2016, an amendment to this law was signed. Known as the Yarovaya Law it significantly limited preaching and restricted religious gatherings from taking place in any other place than recognised religious constructions. Neither were prayer meetings in someone’s

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262 Richters. The Post-Soviet Russian, pp.48
263 Ibid., pp.46
264 Ibid., pp.46
266 Richters. The Post-Soviet Russian, pp.48–49
267 Ibid., pp.148–149
268 Ibid., pp.156-159
apartment allowed. This basically meant the prevention of so called “Low Churches” (Mormon Church and Jehovah’s Witnesses) to continue their practices.\textsuperscript{269}

Upon Putin’s visit on Mount Athos\textsuperscript{270} he called on Russian Orthodox people to reinforce their spiritual strength in order to consolidate Russia and uphold the ROC’s unity.\textsuperscript{271} In November 2016 on Patriarch Kirill’s 70\textsuperscript{th} birthday, Putin described how “our moral values rest on Christian values, so in this sense Orthodoxy is a major part of Russia’s soul.”\textsuperscript{272} In the same month Vladimir Putin mentioned his namesake, the feudal Prince Vladimir Svjatoslavich of Kievan Rus, during a speech by proclaiming that “his era saw many achievements but the most important of them and certainly a key one was the Christianization of Russia”\textsuperscript{273}

Putin has since the beginning of his first presidency emphasised the importance of the ROC but also displayed himself as a true Orthodox devotee. In his biography he expressed that he came out as a religious person in 1993, upon a visit to Israel when his baptismal cross was blessed in the Lord’s Tomb. Something which he has not taken off since.\textsuperscript{274} Two years after the coup against Gorbachev, Putin stated that “As soon as the coup began, I immediately decided which side I was on.” A difficult choice, considering that most of his life he was inside the KGB organisation.\textsuperscript{275} Connecting this to Niccolò Machiavelli’s medieval handbook for leaders, The Prince, it is necessitated for a leader to appear merciful, humane, faithful and religious. While displaying such qualities, it is still necessary for the ruler to “have a mind ready to turn itself accordingly as the winds and variations of fortune force it.”\textsuperscript{276} Recently, the winds of fortune are blowing in the ROCs favour, as discussions are ongoing in Kremlin

\textsuperscript{269} Lamoreaux & Flake. The Russian Orthodox Church, pp.2
\textsuperscript{271} TASS. (2016) Putin says Orthodox Christians Need to Enhance Spiritual Strength.
\textsuperscript{272} TASS. (2016) Orthodoxy and Russia Inseparable – Putin.
\textsuperscript{273} TASS. (2016) Putin Calls to Counter Challenges, Rely on Spiritual Precepts of Forefathers.
\textsuperscript{276} Machiavelli, N. (1992) The Prince, pp.80–81
about the possibility of adding a reference to God in the constitution. A decision which, according to the Patriarch, would reflect the Russian people’s religiosity.277

277 TASS. (2020) Kremlin: Adding Reference to God in Russia’s Constitution to be Discussed.
6. Positioning the Russian Orthodox Church

This discussion will be based on the application of Social constructivism (SC) to the ROC consolidating itself as a politicised institution and that it has consequently provided Orthodoxy as an identity marker for Russianness. As SC makes it possible to distinguish factors that has led to the ROC establishing itself as a politicised institution. Through a holistic approach for the analysis, the mutual constitution between agents and structures, regarding intersubjectivity, can enable the analysis of potential politicisation of an institution throughout history and in contemporary times.

The discussion will illustrate how the ROC is politicised and connecting this notion with the creation of Russianness as an identity concept.

6.1. The Politicisation of the ROC as a Step Towards Russianness

The first steppingstone for interconnecting Church and state in Russia was laid at the dawn of the past millennium. The baptising of the Kievan Rus ruler meant that that the ROC metropolitanate was subordinated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Inducing the ruler with incentive to mutually constitute the harmony between the structure (state) and the agent (Church). Essentially accepting the intersubjective reality as monumental for understanding the social world. Considering that the lack of authoritarian rule under pagan religion, Orthodoxy exported from Constantinople served as an effective tool for legitimizing and consolidating the rule. Together with a new religion came the decree of *symphonia* that titled the ruler as the God-given protector of the Church and realm.

The consequence of the Byzantine empire falling in 1453, created a void in Eastern Orthodox authority. Prompting Russia to be titled as the inheritor and first among Orthodox nations, essentially laying the seed for perceiving Moscow as the Third Rome. Holistically this may be
something socially constructed by emperor Ivan the Great, since he married one of the few heiresses of the fallen Byzantine Empire. However, considering other factors such as Russia being the sole independent nation following Orthodox rites, it may have been unsurprisingly concluded that the right to continue Orthodox legacy was in some sense given to them. In order to preserve the religious sacrament and centralising its rule around a heavily institutionalised Church. As argued by SC, identities are rather given than socially constructed. By denaturalizing the social world, identity creation in social life are consequences of actions and events. Essentially reflecting the words of the Russian philosopher, Nikolai Berdyaev when he described the inherited title of Third Rome as: “The mission of Russia was to be the vehicle of […] Orthodoxy, and the shrine in which it was treasured.”

Through the ROCs recognition of the Russian duchy into becoming an empire invigorated the identity shaping of Russia as the Third Rome and thus the commitment of safeguarding Orthodoxy. This Church-state collective understanding of intersubjective principles mirrors the politicized symphonic way the ROC played out its role as sole grantor of the divine right to Russia ideationally becoming an empire. Essentially inducing the ruler and its state with the belief of shaping an identity according to its interests of continuing Orthodoxy through the concept of Third Rome. The Time of Troubles in the 17th century reflected the state’s interests during defining situations, creating identity shaping because of the domestic environment, which was manifested as an autocracy was lacking after Ivan the Terrible’s death. Missing a legitimate ruler, Patriarch Filaret ordained his own son Michael Romanov as the new emperor, ending the Time of Troubles and beginning the 300-year long Romanov dynasty. During Michael’s reign the Church-state relation became very close, as both the Patriarch and emperor ruled in diarchy, practically legitimizing one another through divine rightfulness and authoritarian rule in the eyes of the population. This continued throughout the years, laying the foundation upon which Russia shaped their identity on the choices and actions of rulers.
Essentially implying the state’s preferences and consequent actions on the premises of symphonic relations between the Church and state.

As the last of the Romanov dynasty was killed by Bolsheviks, the mythical merits of the collective memory and tradition of the times before USSR has served as an identity marker for Russians. Divinely ordained rulers for over 300 years ended abruptly with the commencement of an atheist regime. During which the ROC and Orthodox rites became severely limited under the clutches of the regime and its extended KGB arm. Following harsh prosecution of representatives of the ROC, Metropolitan Sergei accepted communist governance. Some even proposed that the ROC became the regime’s hostage, as reflected in Patriarch Aleksei’s argument in 1995 that it was necessary for the ROC to act this way in order to retain its existence. Essentially uniting Orthodox believers against the memory of the oppressive atheistic regime and thus mobilising the collective action of distancing the identity marker from Soviet times.

Following the fall of USSR, only 15% of Russians declared themselves as Orthodox. A number that rose to 75% in contemporary Russia. Whereas 94% of the population view Orthodoxy in a positive light and trust the ROC three times more than the government. Furthermore, almost half of Russian atheists declare themselves as Orthodox. All of this illustrates that Orthodoxy, together with the ROC, has a focal position in the Russian identity. Placing these cursors in opposition to USSR dictatorship, the ROC ultimately serves as a binder of Orthodoxy together with Russianness for the Russian people. This subjective self-understanding of the past creates the basis of their identity.

During the defining moments of USSR collapsing the past KGB agent Vladimir Putin quickly decided on which side to stand on. Choosing the non-atheistic side, it seemed to induce President Putin with spirituality, distancing himself from his past as a KGB agent and come
forward as a religious person in 1993. Hidden worshipping was a reality of the past and glasnost (openness) was becoming prevalent during this time, positioning Orthodoxy as focal for the rebirth of Russian identity through the ROCs encouragement of spiritual tradition for Russians. Considering how Gorbachev proclaimed that the ROC was pivotal for creating statehood. Reviving cultural consciousness of such kind became incessantly important for the people. This was strengthened by the 1000\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the introduction of Orthodoxy in Kievan Rus. As shown in polls about the Russian population’s religious belief, this furthered the ROC and winds were blowing in its favour in the upcoming years.

In the lines of Machiavelli’s words that a ruler needs to accord himself to the changing winds, this may be identity creation during the populations defining moments, as the politicians’ interests in the process altered significantly. Prompting them to edge closer to the ROC, that served as a provider of identical markers through spirituality and religion. Which can be seen in Putin exemplification of religion as a common denominator for Russians. This was most notably seen when Putin congratulated Patriarch Kirill on his 70\textsuperscript{th} birthday by expressing that Orthodoxy is a major part of Russia’s soul. Furthermore, when Putin proclaimed, upon Kirill becoming Patriarch in 2008, that the ROC has always been a source of Russian statehood. The same institution that Gorbachev saw as a source for Soviet statehood, repainted by Putin from the past Soviet red colour to the Russian tricolour. Essentially positioning the ROC next to the state as dependent of one another.

The attempt to securitize spirituality, as proposed in the published National Security Strategies, reflects Russia’s need to isolate possible elements that may prevent the spiritual renewal of the state. Attempting to signify the emotional intersubjective meaning of spirituality to its population. The placement of spirituality as a matter of national security gives the state right to approve what factors constitute the proper religiosity. The endorsement of spirituality as a cultural value is upheld when President Putin expresses that Russia is the guardian of
Christianity and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov defined Orthodoxy as the basis of Russian culture and statehood. Political elite expressing such statements tighten the space around which religion actually is significant for present and future Russia. Isolating Russianness as an identity carrying nationalist elements. Understanding such identity awareness can clarify why Russia acts in a certain way.

Further securitization of religious profession with the aim of upholding cultural values through the limitation of unwanted attitudes may be reflected in the Yarovaya Law from 2016. This legislation caused harsh limitation on religious groups such as Mormons and Jehovah’s witnesses. Essentially causing a complexity of sociocultural emotions that are characterized by the contextual cultural difference between these religious groups and the ROC. Even though Mormons and Jehovah’s witnesses share the same traditional social values as Orthodox believers, their possibility to practise their religion is restrained by this law. Eventually leading to the suppression of these believers and possibly pushing them into professing adherence to the ROC.

According to SC, a nation’s social construction depends on its nationalist feelings through the promotion and endorsement of cultural values. As previously discussed, Orthodoxy is synonymous with Russianness, something inter alia which was vibrantly reflected in the 1993 vice president’s publishing of an article titled “Without Orthodoxy We Don’t Revive the Fatherland”. Political elite expressing such opinions would suggest that Russian politics view the ROC as having a crucial role in Russian civil society. Considering that the 1997 revision of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations detailed in its preamble that Orthodoxy and the ROC has contributed to Russia’s history and developed its culture and spirituality. Basically, endorsing the ROC as the main religious institution in opposition to other religious groups or organisations. Juxtaposing this to what the Russian constitution states under Art.14.1 that the state needs to be secularized, highlights contradiction in Russian
legislation. This consequently illuminates Patriarch Kirill’s statement from 2006, that the symphonic connection between Church and state are very important. Developing a reciprocal relation between the ROC and Russia with the aim of creating an identity marker for the population in order to collectively mobilise patriotic feelings based on Russian Orthodoxy.
7. Religion in Ukraine and Belarus

Shortly after the conflict in Ukraine had flared up, Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) declared to believers of Russian Orthodoxy that “If we talk about civilization, then Russia belongs to a civilization broader than the Russian Federation. We call this civilization the Russian world […] - from the Kiev font of baptism. The Russian world - this is a special civilization to which people belong who today call themselves by different names - both Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians.”

The concept of the “Russian World” is also known as Russkiy Mir. Established by President Putin in 2007 with the objective to globally promote Russian culture and language, with the support of governmental financial means. The foundation commissions the upholding of ties to Russian diaspora and creating a positive public belief about Russia. Kremlin upholds that the foundation builds on multifaith, multiethnicity, ideological and social multiculturalism. Robert Blitt, on the other hand, argues that “the government has in essence created and sanctioned a proxy body that represents nothing less than a fusion of Orthodox and state institutions.”

Further contrasting perceptions of Russkiy Mir define it as a creation that strictly preserves Russian national character, based on a theory of “pan-Slavic” identity, with the aim of restoring the past USSR borders in a Russian state. Something which is supported by Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) that views the concept as an invention, based on the premises of spiritual unification, for unifying territories under a Russian

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278 Patriarcha.ru. (2014) His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: The Russian World is a Special Civilization that must be preserved.
279 Russkiy Mir. (n.d.) About Russkiy Mir Foundation.
280 Ibid.
282 Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.173
flag.\textsuperscript{283} In line with the concept, Russian national television broadcasted in 2013 a film produced by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk. It contained parts where the Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were compared with the Holy Trinity, essentially providing Moscow a spiritual claim for territorial ambitions on the other states’ expense.\textsuperscript{284} Amidst the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine Patriarch Kirill emphasized the importance of upholding the sanctity of the spiritual unity of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. As it was created by prince Vladimir of Kievan Rus, and that “\textit{no one should sell the unity for a mess of pottage.}”\textsuperscript{285} Contrasting this to what Patriarch Filaret asserted two years later that “\textit{in order to establish the Ukrainian state we need two things: a strong army and a united autocephalous Orthodox Church.}”\textsuperscript{286}

In 2016 believers of Russian Orthodoxy in Moscow saw the unveiling of a monument in the honour of the highly celebrated prince Vladimir, that brought Eastern Orthodox Christianity to the Rus people. A ceremony which was attended by both Patriarch Kirill and Russia’s president Vladimir Putin. The latter chose to highlight this occasion by proclaiming that it “\textit{was the common spiritual origin for the peoples of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. [Prince Vladimir] laid the foundations of morals and values that still define our life. The solid moral foundation, cohesion helped our ancestor to overcome difficulties, live and gain victory to the glory of the motherland. Today our duty is to jointly counter modern challenges and threats, relying spiritual precepts and priceless traditions of unity and harmony, to move forward ensuring continuity of our millennial history.}”\textsuperscript{287}

\textsuperscript{283} Van Herpen. \textit{Putin’s Propaganda}, pp.149
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid., pp.173
\textsuperscript{285} TASS. (2020) \textit{Patriarch Kirill Calls for Preserving Unity of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.}
\textsuperscript{287} TASS. (2020) \textit{Putin Calls to Counter Challenges, Rely on Spiritual Precepts of Forefathers.}
7.1. Religion in Ukraine

Like many other democratic states, Ukraine defines itself as secular. The end of the USSR meant a chance of a new starting point for a better future.288 According to its constitution under chapter 2, Art. 35 it states that “The Church and religious organisations in Ukraine are separated from the State, and the school – from the Church. No religion shall be recognised by the State as mandatory.”289 However, such formal regulations does not affect the public’s view that the UOC is a guardian of the historical, cultural and moral tradition.290

The overall Ukrainian population and politicians often emphasise the UOC’s position in society as a cornerstone in the struggle for independence and formation of Ukrainian statehood. Something which has been manifested in how welcomed the clergy’s approach was during Euromaidan. By the engagement of Church representatives with the responsible authorities; called for the attention of the world; appealing to their adherents to participate in peaceful protests.291 The Church’s role also developed into becoming a place of shelter when the Euromaidan entered its most severe phase.292 This response does not seem to have been something surprising for the public, because polls shows that 78% of Ukrainians consider themselves as Orthodox293 Essentially placing the Ukrainian population amongst the highest percentage of believers in Europe. According to other surveys, 66% of the population puts great trust in the ROC.294 The above-mentioned facts illustrate that the Church has not been disconnected from society and that it is not specified in the constitution at any point that the state is to separate itself from the Church.295

290 Lozinsky, K. (2018) Orthodox Church in the Legal Field of Modern Ukraine, pp.69
291 Ibid., pp.69
295 Lozinsky. Orthodox Church, pp.63
In order to construe how the structure of churches in Ukraine is manifested, one needs to have in mind that three separate Ukrainian Orthodox Churches exists: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, under Moscow Patriarchate (UOC) is the largest one with over 11 000 parishes, half of the amount the ROC possesses in total; the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, under Kiev Patriarchate (UOC-KP) has approximately 4 000 parishes; and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) is the smallest one with around 1 000 parishes.\(^{296}\) This division between the churches has led to a perception amongst Ukrainians that if one adheres to UOC, and not UOC-KP, the person subsequently identifies themselves as a part of Russian culture.\(^{297}\) Following Euromaidan in 2014, neither the ROC or UOC spoke out against the Russian aggression in Ukraine.\(^{298}\) Eventually leading to the invigoration of divisive sentiments and elements of enmity. Anything connected to the word “Russian” became heavily rejected, and even regarded as the opposite, in a negative sense, to “Ukrainian.”\(^{299}\)

Division of the churches essentially undermines the ROCs jurisdiction over Ukrainian dominion and could potentially make Kiev the symbolical inheritor of the Kievan Rus, instead of Moscow.\(^{300}\) Something which Ukrainians claim as their inherited right.\(^{301}\) In order to deal with such possible consequences, the ROC initiated something similar to how Pope John Paul II supported the Solidarity movement in Poland, that was one of the factors that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.\(^{302}\) Patriarch Kirill visited Ukraine in July 27, 2009 and remained for a week with the objective to “\textit{suppress the pro-independence mood among the local clergy and to assert Russian religious and cultural dominance.}”\(^{303}\) This project was

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\(^{296}\) Yelensky, V. (2010) \textit{Religiosity in Ukraine According to Sociological Surveys}. pp.217. The numbers of parishes are as of 2010

\(^{297}\) Ibid., pp.217


\(^{299}\) HB. (2014) \textit{Russia Died as a Brand}.

\(^{300}\) Knox. \textit{Russian Society}, pp.83


\(^{302}\) Van Herpen. \textit{Putin’s Propaganda}, pp.130

\(^{303}\) The Jamestown Foundation. (2009) \textit{Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill Visits Ukraine}. 62
supported by Patriarch Kirill’s chief ideologist, Andrey Kuraev, expressing that a civil war may ensue in Ukraine if the UOC became independent from the ROC.\textsuperscript{304}

The concept of Russkiy Mir is heavily debated in Ukraine, especially because the capital Kiev is the birthplace of Russian Orthodoxy. The ROCs Metropolitan Agafangel of Odessa in Ukraine is a staunch supporter of Russkiy Mir. He essentially identifies himself with Russia’s historical mission to unify all Eastern Slavic people into the great civilization known as the Third Rome. Agafangel has additionally expressed that “a world in which almost eternally Orthodox Ukraine separates itself from brotherly Russia and the capital city of Kiev […] will cease to be a city of the Russian state [and be a] great loss and misfortune”.\textsuperscript{305} This is inconsistent with the ROC proposing a nationalist Church in Russia, but in the same time encourage a universal Church in Ukraine.\textsuperscript{306} In line with Agafangel’s sentiment, the ROC Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin expressed, only days prior to the annexation of Crimea,\textsuperscript{307} that “the Russian people – a nation divided within its historical territories, has the right to unite itself in one state.”\textsuperscript{308}

Scepticism against religion is very rarely expressed by prominent politicians or public figures in Ukraine.\textsuperscript{309} Such sentiments are in line with what the Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko expressed two years after the Orange Revolution\textsuperscript{310} “I hardly perceive how it is possible to discuss spiritual independence of a nation lacking the local church”\textsuperscript{311} and

\textsuperscript{304} The Jamestown Foundation. (2009) Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill Visits Ukraine.
\textsuperscript{305} Wawzonek. Ukraine in the ‘Gray Zone’, pp.766
\textsuperscript{306} Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.173
\textsuperscript{307} Russia’s annexation of Crimea took place in the aftermath of Euromaidan. (President of Russia. (2014) Direct Line with Vladimir Putin.)
\textsuperscript{308} Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.167
\textsuperscript{309} Yelensky. Religiosity in Ukraine, pp.219
\textsuperscript{311} Druzenko. Religion and the Secular State, pp.729–730
describing the UOC and the state as “the two wings of the Ukrainian nation.”

Supporting an independent UOC from the ROC gradually became synonymous with supporting Ukrainian statehood. Supporting ideas of Church independence have been deemed as schismatic and rejected by the ROC. Fuelling such ideas of having an autocephalic Church in Ukraine, two years later Yushchenko personally invited Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, to participate in commemorating the 1020th anniversary the baptising of Kievan Rus.

Following the Euromaidan protests, the new Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko was very clear that he had the intention of following in Yushchenko’s footsteps for the UOC achieving independence from the ROC. Poroshenko claimed that other states use the church for achieving their geo-political goals, and thus would an autocephalous UOC be a key element and “a matter of national security which would strengthen Ukrainian statehood.” Followed by Poroshenko blocking Patriarch Kirill’s scheduled visit to Ukraine for the annual celebration of the Baptism of Kievan Rus. In 2018 he expressed that autocephality “concerns finalizing our independence from Moscow. This is not just religion, this is geopolitics”, which was followed by him personally sending a letter to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, asking for the status of autocephaly for the UOC. An elected politician officially involving himself in church affairs of such nature was otherwise something very unusual and eventually prompted the Patriarchate of Constantinople to grant the UOC independence from ROC.

In an interview from 2019, the Patriarch Bartholomew stated that “The Ukrainian church asked

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312 Shestopalets. Church and State, pp.161
313 Knox. Russian Society, pp.82
314 Druzenko. Religion and the Secular State, pp.730
315 Shestopalets. Church and State, pp.156
316 Ibid., pp.157
317 Ibid., pp.154
318 Ibid., pp.158
319 Liik, Metodiev & Popescu. Defender, pp.11
for autocephaly seven times, and we did not answer their petitions before. But this time we also received petitions from the Ukrainian president and parliament. One could see a united Ukrainian desire for autocephaly.\footnote{Liik, Metodiev & Popescu. Defender, pp.12}

This decision is viewed by Patriarch Kirill as initiated by adverse political forces, outside the Church, as a response to the predetermined perception of the ROC being a “soft force”.\footnote{TASS. (2019) Russian Patriarch Blames Outside Forces for Current Rift in Orthodoxy.} Aligning himself with these thoughts, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov expressed that the West’s meddling in affairs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is a threat to global stability.\footnote{TASS. (2020) Western Meddling in Ukraine’s Church Affairs Threatens Global Stability – Lavrov.} In addition Lavrov called the new autocephalic Ukrainian Church a historical travesty and only a mean for “sowing discord between Russia and Ukraine [and] preventing our peoples from being friends are essentially a crime by the current Ukrainian regime against their citizens.”\footnote{TASS. (2019) Lavrov Slams New Ukrainian Church as “Travesty of History” Aimed at Dividing Both Nations.} Adding to such sentiments, Vladimir Putin stated that this decision is dangerous and irresponsible politicking.\footnote{TASS. (2019) ‘Orthodox Church of Ukraine’ Project is Purely Political – Putin.} Eventually this situation led to the 2018 Moscow-Constantinople schism, or also known as the Orthodox schism.\footnote{Independent. (2018) Moscow Weighs up the Consequences of Orthodox Church Schism.} A conflict which 31% of the Ukrainian population regard as purely political. 28% view it as a dispute over real estate, while 25% consider it as a situation based on various Church hierarch’s desire for power.\footnote{Razumkov Centre. (2018) The Society’s Expectations of Church and Interchurch Relations (public opinion survey).}

7.2. Religion in Belarus

Belarus is, according to the Charter of the ROC, regarded as the ROC’s acknowledged territory and its authority encompasses all Orthodox believers who preside there. The Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) is subordinated to the ROC.\footnote{Patriarcha.ru. (2017) Chapter I. General Provisions.} Following the dissolution of the Soviet
Union, the new Belarusian state formulated in its constitution under Article 16 that “Relations between the state and religions shall be regulated by the law.”\textsuperscript{329} Which was eventually amended in 1996 by also adding “with regard to their influence on the formation of the spiritual, cultural, and state traditions of the Belarusian people.”\textsuperscript{330} Six years later the Belarusian government adopted a revised version of the past Soviet law On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, similar to the one in Russia. Essentially prohibiting the registration of autonomous Orthodox communities, without the BOCs recognition.\textsuperscript{331} The revised law’s preamble formulates that the Orthodox Church (it does not define whether it is the BOC or ROC) has played “the decisive role […] in the historical establishment and development of the spiritual, cultural and state traditions of the Belarusian nation.” The law also grants the state the right to build relations with religious associations by concluding agreements in relation to the state’s civil legislation.\textsuperscript{332} Granting such privileges to the BOC may seem inclined by President Aleksander Lukashenko when he expressed that “we have never separated ourselves from the Church, as the state and the Church are engaged in the same task […] We have in fact chosen it as the chief ideologist of Belarusian statehood.”\textsuperscript{333}

In 1999, on the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of BOCs autonomy, Metropolitan Filaret of Belarus delivered a statement that emphasised that “the creation of the Belarusian Exarchate did not become a sign of the promotion of national exclusivity and local self-realisation as the idea of division, especially along national lines, contradicts the Church’s teachings and canonical practice.”\textsuperscript{334} Subordinating the BOC to the ROC and distancing itself from the notion of representing a autocephalic Belarusian church. Filaret has additionally suggested that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{329} Vaskevich, A. (2003) The Relationship of Church and State in Belarus: Legal Regulation and Practice. pp.686
\item \textsuperscript{330} Ibid., pp.698
\item \textsuperscript{331} Vasilevich. The Belarusian Orthodox Church, pp.10
\item \textsuperscript{332} Ibid., pp.13
\item \textsuperscript{333} Ibid., pp.16
\item \textsuperscript{334} Richters. The Post-Soviet Russian, pp.131
\end{itemize}
the past borders of USSR are still relevant when he expressed that “our homeland stretches from Brest to Vladivostok.” At an official meeting with the Belarusian president Aleksander Lukashenko in 2002 Filaret stated that “we are deeply concerned about the unending attempts to provoke a church schism at all costs. Those […] are still trying to weaken the spiritual and canonical unity of the Orthodox Church in Russia, Ukraine [and here].” In order to strengthen the Belarusian people’s religiosity, Filaret urged the BOC to collaborate with the ROC for guaranteeing spiritual security. Such stances have not gone unnoticed by Lukashenko, which Filaret the country’s highest award, Hero of Belarus, for his “long-standing personal contribution to the spiritual rebirth of the Belarusian people” In 2008, on the occasion of the 1020th anniversary of the baptism of Prince Vladimir, Filaret stated that the “the genetic memory of the Eastern Slavs re-emerged in 1988 with the new era of the Christian entity of Holy Rus”.

Roughly 73% of the Belarusian population define themselves as Orthodox Christians, which consequently made the 1025th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity in Belarus a highly celebrated event. Patriarch Kirill celebrated this occasion by praising the religious revival in Belarus over the past 25 years as something that can transform the Belarusian state’s life. Adding that “the foundation was common for all peoples who are the successors of the choice of Prince Vladimir.” Alexander Lukashenko was not shy to express praising words as well, calling the anniversary as “one of the most significant events in the country’s public life.” He also added that the Orthodox Church serves as source of love and wisdom for preserving stability in Belarus and that it unites the people into being faithful to God and the

335 Richters. The Post-Soviet Russian, pp.131
336 Ibid., pp.143
337 Ibid., pp.132
338 Ibid., pp.132
Motherland.\textsuperscript{341} Such expressions may seem somewhat contradictory, considering the fact that Lukashenko defines himself as an “Orthodox atheist”.\textsuperscript{342} Nevertheless, Lukashenko has vowed that Belarus will do its utmost to uphold the unity of Orthodox Christianity: “We will do the best we can do to ensure, that we, our state and our people consolidate Orthodox Christian faith.”\textsuperscript{343} As a response to the Orthodox schism of 2018, Lukashenko stated that “our church was often a hostage of international relations.”\textsuperscript{344}

The signed agreement of the Day of Unity of the Belarusians and Russians is highlighted by officials annually on the April 2. On the 20\textsuperscript{th} anniversary in 2016, Lukashenko expressed with confidence that the two state’s shared efforts give incentives for deepened cooperation. “May peace, accord, and happiness always reign in our common Belarusian-Russian home”, was written by Lukashenko in an official letter to his neighbouring counterparts.\textsuperscript{345} Putin shares this belief by stating the belief that the two countries can through cooperative means “solve even the most difficult issues of the Union State.”\textsuperscript{346} Such political communion is inter alia indorsed by the symbolical importance of Lukashenko, together with Putin, attending a monastic choir concerts in the Valaam Monastery, while on a state visit in Russia in 2018.\textsuperscript{347}

Belarus does not own a glorious heroic past as a cultural marker for its people’s nationality. Thus, their identity is based on a romanticised past that is mostly glorified through folk traditions.\textsuperscript{348} The Soviet Union’s collapse seems to not have imbued the Belarusian population with a need for redefining its identity building and national heritage.\textsuperscript{349} Instead the population

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{TASS} TASS. (2013) Alexander Lukashenko: Orthodox Church Fills Life with Wisdom and Love.
\bibitem{Van Herpen} Van Herpen. Putin’s Propaganda, pp.167
\bibitem{TASS} TASS. (2018) Belarus to do its Utmost to Preserve Orthodox Christianity’s Unity, Says President.
\bibitem{TASS} TASS. (2018) Belarusian President Opposes Split in Orthodox Christianity.
\bibitem{TASS} TASS. (2016) Lukashenko Greets Russian Leaders on Day of Unity of Belarusian, Russian Peoples.
\bibitem{TASS} TASS. (2020) Putin: Moscow and Minsk can Find Solution to all Issues.
\bibitem{TASS} TASS. (2019) Russian, Belarusian Presidents Visit Cathedral, Monastic Communities on Valaam.
\bibitem{Marples} Marples, D. (1999) Belarus: A Denationalized Nation, pp.53-54
\end{thebibliography}
has been heavily influenced by its Soviet heritage, accordingly, the state follows a political strategy that constructs loyalty to Soviet legacy for integrating it with Belarusian sovereignty.\textsuperscript{350} Disregarding the fact that an identity based on Soviet legacy may find its source in atheism, the Belarusians still identify Orthodoxy as representative of their national mentality.\textsuperscript{351} As a matter of fact, identifying Orthodoxy with Russianness is deeply integrated in the populations mindset.\textsuperscript{352} Encouraged by this the BOC closely cooperates with the Belarusian National Television and Radio Company, through the broadcasting of weekly programs where Metropolitan Filaret addresses the Belarusian population.\textsuperscript{353}

\textsuperscript{351} Rees & Miazhevich. Socio-Cultural Change, pp.55
\textsuperscript{352} Ioffe. Understanding Belarus, pp.1249
\textsuperscript{353} Vasilevich. The Belarusian Orthodox Church, pp.15
### 7.3. Comparative Table Between Ukraine and Belarus

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<th><strong>Identity marker</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ukraine</strong></th>
<th><strong>Belarus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians claim that they are the historical inheritor of Kievan Rus. Distancing from the imperial label “Little Russia”. Shaped their identity under defining volatile moments.</td>
<td>Lacks a strong tie to its historical past. Connects with its most recent Soviet heritage. Embracing the labelling “White Russia” from imperial times. Puts emphasis on Orthodoxy as a shared cultural marker with Russians.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The ROCs and Russian politician’s perception of the country</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ukraine</strong></th>
<th><strong>Belarus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representatives from the ROC and the Russian political elite have expressed their disappointment with Ukraine “politicizing” their strive for Church-division. Infringes on Ukraine’s right to exist harmoniously within their territory.</td>
<td>Putin views Belarus as a key collaborating partner. The ROC considers the BOC and Belarus as an important ally. Recognizes Belarus sovereignty by not controlling parts of their territory through military means, but still controlling canonical territory through the ROC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Church-state relation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ukraine</strong></th>
<th><strong>Belarus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autocephality is a key element for Ukrainian national security and statehood, according to President Poroshenko.</td>
<td>President Alexander Lukashenko views the Church as an integrated institution in state affairs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Percentage of Orthodox citizens</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ukraine</strong></th>
<th><strong>Belarus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78%</td>
<td>73%</td>
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</table>
8. Identity Markers and Soft Power in Ukraine and Belarus

The previous discussion has reflected the ROC as a politicised institution, consequently making it a possible tool for exertion of Soft power (SP) by Russia. This will be used as a complement to this chapter, representing the theoretical framework of Social constructivism (SC) and SP for explaining how Ukraine’s and Belarus’ preconceived perceptions about their identity has affected the outcome of exerting SP through religion.

SC is properly defined as intersubjective social facts that depend on human agreements; encouraged by nonmaterial factors such as culture that are communally held as understandable. Furthermore, SC can be considered as a part of the human consciousness in international life. Applying this theoretical framework may develop an understanding of Ukraine’s and Belarus’s awareness of their identity and clarify how they choose to act. SP is conceptualised as relying on the resources of culture, political values and foreign policy. States transfer culture onto other states through co-optive ways of agenda setting, persuasion and attraction for the transmission of knowledge and ideals. The creation of behavioural outcomes of these means is described as a vital mechanism of SP. Applying these concepts in the discussion would distinguish the SP exerted by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) on Ukraine and Belarus and their respective response.

This discussion will be divided in two parts, opening with explaining the two cases’ preconceived identities and ending with what outcome the exertion of soft power has had.

8.1. Ukraine’s and Belarus’ Preconceived Identities

Commonly held intersubjective ideas are manifested differently in the cases of Ukraine and Belarus. The socially accepted human agreements in Ukraine distinguish themselves in comparison to their Belarusian counterpart. Even though their culture, language and historical
background have been closely intertwined since their conception, they differ substantially in their collective contemplation for creating a distinct identity. Individual human consciousness in international life through nonmaterial factors like culture, ideas and norms are communally held among populations in an intersubjective way. Examining how these factors are expressed significantly distinguishes Ukraine from Belarus. States find their roots for identity in their subjective self-understanding and intersubjective values based on recognition from other states. Internal and external ideas encourage such identity shaping, not making it permanently distinctive, but rather variational, depending on the circumstances. Both Ukraine and Belarus base their understanding of these concepts from different perspectives.

Belarus does not have a proper cultural marker for defining its nationality. The collapse of the USSR did not have the same effect on Belarus as on Ukraine. Instead the Belarusian population clung to their inherited Soviet tradition and based its identity on internal ideas. Not aligning their privilege for shaping identities as dependent on arising circumstances, but instead allocating the identity to an inherited and permanently distinctive template. This inherited notion reflects in Lukashenko identifying himself as an “Orthodox atheist”. Considering the circumstances, they construct an identity based on distinctive domestic environments that are ideologically permitted. This can be shown in the Belarusian government’s interest in inheriting an identity marker from Orthodoxy, as echoed in Lukashenko’s words that the Russian and Belarusian people’s “foundation was common for all peoples who are the successors of the choice of Prince Vladimir”. Linking this to the Belarusian notion that Orthodoxy is synonymous with being Russian, effectively reflects the interests and preferences to the implication of choosing an identity marker based on Orthodoxy, in association with Russianness. Essentially following the former adherence to Moscow, through the Soviet Union.

Lukashenko has promised to uphold the unity of Orthodoxy and viewed the schism of 2018 as the product of the Orthodox Church being a hostage of international relations.
Connecting this to the fact that the establishment of autonomous Orthodox Churches is disallowed in Belarus, one can distinguish their strive for isolating itself from external ideas and focusing on internal and domestic ideas instead for identity shaping.

Ukraine determines its identity based on *inter alia* the fundamentally firm acknowledgement of their historical connection to the cultural cradle of Kievan Rus. Distinguishing itself from the “union” constraints of former USSR, upon attaining independence in 1991 and defining its identity in accordance to external ideas with other states in the international system. Linking themselves with other states and allowing their identity to be shaped by international factors during defining situations such as: USSR collapsing, the Orange revolution in 2004, Euromaidan in 2014 and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s (UOC) independence from the ROC. These events may be reflected when Patriarch Filaret of UOC expressed that Ukraine needs two things: an army and an autocephalous Church. Essentially shaping Ukraine’s identity in contrast to Russia through the reflection of their interests or preferences.

The events of the past decades are admittedly socially constructed. However, carrying in mind the SC approach of identities as something given, not socially constructed, one can see Ukraine basing their identity on other states’ presumption of them as not being persuaded by the idea of aligning with Russia and the ROC. Something which is seen to this day with the Church-schism, conflict in Donbass and the Russian annexation of Crimea. Wendt conceptualized anarchy as an empty vessel with no integral logic that and that anarchy only acquire logics depending of what structure we insert in it. Introducing Ukraine (self), in opposition to Russia (other), in this anarchy. Their engagement with one another is defined by the other not recognizing the self’s sovereignty, neither in terms of religious or territorial sovereignty. Somewhat connected to the pejorative imperial times labelling of Ukraine as “Little Russia” and Patriarch Kirill’s intention during his visit to Ukraine in 2009 was about asserting “Russian religious and cultural dominance”, under the premises of unity. Even to the lengths that the
other diminishes the self by aggressively infringing on their territory. This Hobbesian anarchy between Russia and Ukraine can be substantiated by the ROCs Archpriest Vselovod expressing, two days prior to the annexation of Crimea, that the Russian nation and people “has the right to unite itself in one state.” Such instigative stances by the ROC has consequently led to the institution’s diminish in Ukraine. These were presumably some of the significant factors that sanctioned President Poroshenko’s into stating that autocephaly would be the final steppingstone in achieving independence from Moscow, as it is “not just religion, but also a geopolitical matter”. Such antagonism between Ukraine (self) and Russia (other) had a considerable effect on Ukraine’s creation of identity. This Hobbesian anarchy has taken its toll on the relationship between the two states. Consequently, making these defining moments to decisively affect the self-perception of the Ukrainian people as something contrasted to the concept of Russianness.

Both Ukraine and Belarus construct their identity differently in relation to the two kind of identities that are, according to SC, prevalent in international relations. When Ukrainian politicians reason that an autocephalous UOC should be attained, they in some sense distance themselves from the ROCs antidemocratic elements. By doing so they subscribe to the type identity role, shared with several democratic and western-oriented states. Thus, isolating the possibility of being perceived as an illegitimate state by other states, that they are principally edging towards. This can be seen in the freedom movement of Euromaidan and achieving the status of autocephaly for its Church, argued by the current President Poroshenko as a matter of security that would strengthen Ukrainian statehood. Essentially echoing Gorbachev’s carefully chosen words for building Soviet statehood during the glasnost era.

In comparison, Belarus seems more inclined to bring themselves nearer to the ROCs ideals when it comes to matter of security, i.e. spiritual security, and proposals of shared religious unity between the Belarusian and Russian people; covering their common homeland
stretching from Brest to Vladivostok, as Metropolitan Filaret expressed it. Such subordination to the ROC and President Lukashenko highlighting the common historical denominator between the two people in the baptism of Prince Vladimir, categorizes Belarus as realizing a role identity. As it is produced by a twofold relationship between states, based on a Kantian friendship. Emotions deriving from this relationship can be socioculturally characterized by Belarus’s desire that the cultural belief and moral value is shared with Russia. Through the limitation of unwanted schismatic attitudes by focusing on the legitimation of solely the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) as the Belarusian centre for Orthodox rites. Thus, maintaining the already existing cultural value that the BOC provides and socially constructing a nationalist feeling around that notion.

8.2. The Outcome of Exerting Soft Power in Ukraine and Belarus

Attracting and persuading the target are focal for achieving successful outcomes of SP. The concept of it relies on cultural resources and foreign policies. Exporting culture resources are done with the aim of seeming attractive to the target. When it comes to Ukraine and Belarus, many of the cultural aspects are already shared with Russia through language, traditions and religion. However, as the outcome of sharing these aspects transnationally depends on the domestic realities of the target country’s feelings of attraction or distaste.

As in the example of Ukraine, the cultural aspect has diverged itself from their Russian counterpart. Through the schism of 2018 and having two additional established Orthodox churches generates the logical differentiation in religious aspects. This was from the outset not supported by neither the ROC nor Russia, as it proposes division, rather than being in line with the concept of spreading notions of unity. Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine in 2009 was an attempt to address this issue with the aim to outline a preferred outcome for Russia. This kind of social relation was manifested through the ROCs interaction with Ukraine, by using its power over UOC (or religion) for constitutively controlling the shared cultural values.
In contrast, Belarus has predetermined their endorsement to the notions provided by the ROC of a unital religion under the concept of glasnost, by subscribing to the shared cultural ideals. Essentially allowing the ROC to use attraction, the most vital mechanism of SP, without any obstacles. By only having a single Orthodox Church in the state, the means for attracting already shared values between the two states has a very effective outcome.

Employing foreign policies as a tool of SP is possible when they are legitimized and, in that sense, granting them moral authority in the target’s perception. The prospect of Ukraine achieving autocephality for the UOC was not in line with neither Russia’s nor the ROCs foreign policy. With Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov calling it a historical travesty and a crime committed by the Ukraine’s government and Patriarch Kirill viewing it as a decision initiated by adverse political forces. Such sentiments are obviously not intended to be glorified as a useful foreign policy towards Ukraine. Labelling a matter of Ukrainian national security in such a way, has subsequently illegitimated the proposed moral authority of the ROC in the Ukrainian population’s perception. Reflected in the fact that 84% of Ukrainians consider it a politicized conflict.

Placing this in contrast to how Belarus conceive Russia’s and the ROCs foreign policy. Through the sense of President Lukashenko highlighting how the two states share a common “Belarusian-Russian home” and a homeland which Metropolitan Filaret views as “stretching from Brest to Vladivostok.” Essentially legitimizing the moral authority for both Russia and the ROC to conduct their foreign policies and simplify the means for achieving their preferred outcomes through co-optive ways of agenda-setting. This basically means that the BOCs ideals correlates with Russia’s and the ROCs foreign policy, supporting their moral authority. Giving them the role as the ROCs extended arm for projecting notions of culture with the intention of creating knowledge-based ideals through SP exertion.
Through SP, the ROC has used the method of attracting both Ukraine and Belarus through deployment of existing shared values. These shared values were intended for creating and supporting a common identification through the already shared religious belief, with the aim of creating a presumptuous political reality. In the case of Ukraine, the country has been torn between their predetermined sense of reality about their identity and the coercive SP method exerted on them. Which threatened their own sense of identity and incited them to act accordingly. By connecting Russianness with something negative, following Euromaidan, they basically delegitimized both Russia and the ROC. Consequently, isolating themselves from coercive methods of attraction deployed by the ROC and striving for an independent UOC that would serve as a representation of its people. This has interfered in the interactive social relation between the ROC and Ukraine, obstructing the ROC from using its institutional power for sharing cultural values in Ukraine. Essentially giving Ukraine the possibility to maintain its ontological security in relation to Russia.

Comparing this to how the Belarus government and the BOC has subscribed to the reassurance of maintaining shared cultural values. On which the ontological security for the Belarusians depends on. Producing a fruitful interactive social relation and thus amplifying the ROCs means of attracting the encouraging notions of common identification through an already established culture. A vital mechanism as such serves as a central starting point in the exertion of SP in Belarus for accomplishing the proposed policy goal of uniting both under the same cultural umbrella.
9. Conclusion

The Soviet Union population was unified under the shared belief of being a part of a common goal for proletarianism, in disregard of religion. These sentiments were prevalent up until the union’s dissolution. Something that created an identity void, which reinvigorated the need for spirituality. Encouraging the idea of belonging to a Church, in which Orthodoxy emerged as a solution for the lack of identity and provided a source of piety for the people. Amalgamating the scattered religious community, essentially providing a catalyst for creating an identity based on a cultural belonging to a historical past. The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has endeavoured themselves to revitalize these notions, with varying outcomes depending on the target. Reflected in the fact that that the presidents of the analysed states place a substantial value in the Church serving as a starting point for creating domestic statehood.

Ever since the beginning of the past millennium, these notions were first realised by the rulers in Russia. Since the baptism of the Kievan Rus leader, the consolidation of authority was streamlined with the help of religion through the ROC. This two-sided relationship thrived under what was called the Church-state symphonia. Essentially creating a politicised ROC and enabling the utilization of the God-given right to rule over the dominion and waging foreign policies under the title of Third Rome. Becoming the Russian state’s insignia for years to come both domestically and abroad, upheld with help of the ROC through the divine legitimation of the rulers.

This relationship became patchy during the atheistic-Soviet regime but nevertheless, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the ROC mobilized the population by binding Orthodoxy together with Russianness. Something which was also supported by the political elite. Designing a circle where the political elite were dependent on the ROC for their political success: Through either symbolic acts, such as blessings and praise, not legitimizing their governing as in imperial
times, but still enhancing the politician’s piousness in the population’s eyes. Followed by the ROC conversely benefiting from favourable legislation, support expressed by politicians and the securitization of spirituality. Inciting the ROC to politicise their actions for the consequent population’s validation. Subsequently leading to the conclusion that the ROC, as a politicised institution and the extensively used terminology of uniting Orthodoxy with Russianness, has merged into an interestingly designed identity marker for the Russian people.

Providing an identity marker based on Orthodoxy for Belarus and Ukraine has had varied outcomes. Belarus traces their identity inheritance to the Soviet Union and most importantly Orthodoxy, essentially highlighting the shared spirituality with Russians. Reflected in the government’s and Belarusian Orthodox Church’s stance on the unital segments of a shared cultural and the Orthodox heritage, that the ROC provides. Intertwining their future commitments with both Russia and the ROC. Essentially providing a hotbed for exerting Soft power through the infusion of ideas of shared cultural belonging.

Ukraine is not inclined to align with the spiritual proposals provided by the ROC. The general Ukrainian opinion seems to be that such commonality is a Russian attempt to politicise religion. Ukraine’s stance vis a vis Russia has been reflected in the tumultuous events of the past decades. Such antagonistic relations between the two states has reinforced a Ukrainian identity marker, as something shaped in opposition to the concept of Russianness. Because Orthodoxy is the common denominator between Ukrainians and Russians, the consequent independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church marked a standfast differentiation between the two states. Essentially highlighting the outcome of Soft power exerted from Russia through the ROC.

Applying Social constructivism when scrutinizing state’s identity markers has provided a substantial space for analysis. Scoping the Church-state relationship in Russia illustrates elements of a still existing symphonia. This has in turn effected Russia’s connection with both
Ukraine and Belarus, depending on their preconceived identities in relation to Russia. As Orthodoxy has a focal place in all these states, the politicisation of this element through the ROC seems evident. Analysing this from the theoretical framework provided by Soft power has enabled the unearthing of manifestations of either dissatisfaction or approval from the target states. Examining how states identities are expressed could serve as a reflective foundation of how they may characteristically act in a geopolitical sphere.
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