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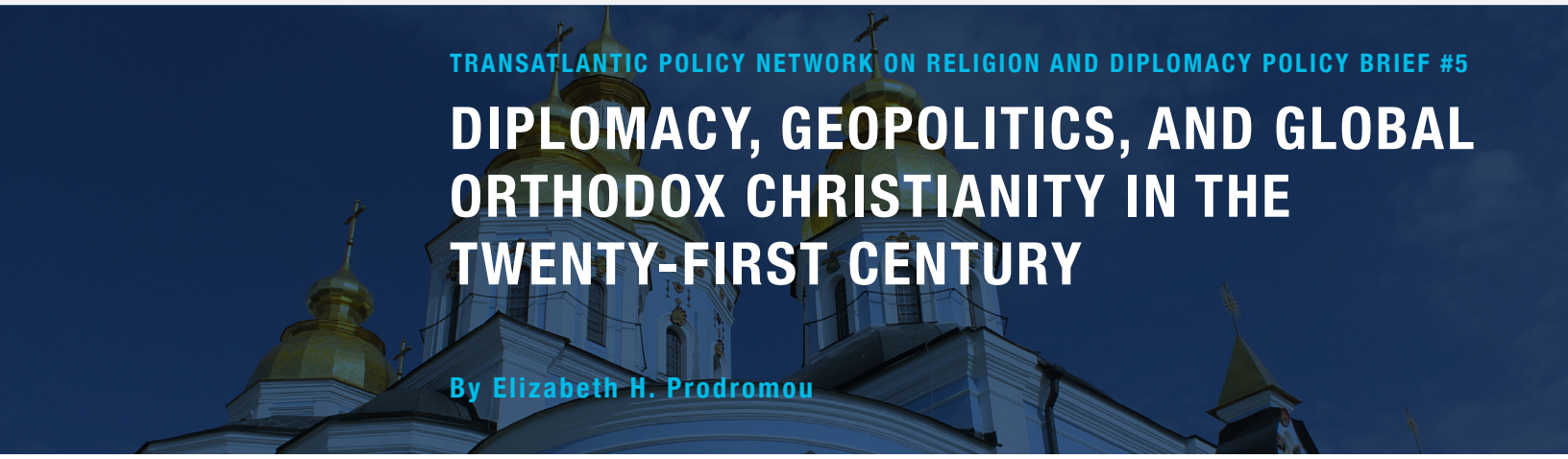

TRANSATLANTIC POLICY NETWORK ON RELIGION AND DIPLOMACY POLICY BRIEF #5

DIPLOMACY, GEOPOLITICS, AND GLOBAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The historical significance and current presence of Orthodox Churches in locations of key competition between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia, and in the great power rivalries of the twenty-first century, raises important questions about the role and impact of Orthodox Churches in contemporary geopolitics. Kremlin-supported challenges by the Moscow Patriarchate to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (EP), the global leader of a unified Orthodox Church that endorses universal human rights and rule of law, have provoked intense ecclesiastical conflicts within Orthodoxy over institutional, normative, and material resources.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The EP's decision establishing the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), concomitant with the Kremlin's ongoing war in Ukraine, positions Ukraine as an important Rorschach test for the Constantinople-versus-Moscow orientations of Orthodox Churches worldwide.
- Western diplomacy that holds Kyiv accountable on religious freedom decisions will give traction to Orthodox leaderships committed to human rights. Alternatively, transatlantic indifference to Kyiv's legislative and intelligence moves that target Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) churches will weaken democracy dynamics, social cohesion, and reconciliation in a post-war Ukraine.
- Generational transitions in the leadership of key Orthodox patriarchates and autocephalous Churches will impact their survival strategies vis-à-vis democratic, non-democratic, and hybrid regimes.

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORY, INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE, GLOBAL DIFFUSION

Any attempt to make sense of the complex intersections between geopolitics and the Orthodox Church in contemporary international relations requires a brief historical review and appreciation for nomenclatures that, likewise, help to clarify broader ecumenical relationships among the three major Christian traditions of Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. The Eastern Orthodox Church today has an estimated 300 million adherents dispersed across all of Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania.[1]

The historical experiences and territorial and cultural geographies of the Orthodox Christian world today are bound to the origins and global dissemination of Christianity. The distinction between the Eastern Orthodox and Western (Roman Catholic and Protestant) Christian traditions is rooted in the first major division within the ancient Christian world, which was organized according to a pentarchy whereby the Church in the Christian Roman Empire was governed by the five patriarchal sees of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome.[2] The institutional authority and individual prerogatives of the pentarchy derived from the apostolicity of the foundations of Christianity; from decisions of ecumenical councils that codified the prerogatives of primacy of these sees; and from the political, economic, social, cultural, and military significance of these five cities in the Roman Empire.[3]

Significantly, the institutional structure of the Eastern Orthodox Church that exists in the twenty-first century is rooted in the key inflection points of the first 11 centuries of ecclesiastical history, which, in turn, was integrally tied to geopolitical developments. The establishment of Constantinople as the "New Rome" and the shift in the center of religious and geopolitical gravity from Western Europe to European Constantinople and the Levantine East—along with the consolidation of Christian thought and practices to the imperial state under the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire—account for the first major division between East and West in Christian history, in the form of the Great Schism of 1054. This was formalized with the exchange of condemnations (anathemas, or excommunications) between Pope Leo IX of Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople.[4]

The religious and cultural geographies created by the Great Schism, which largely corresponded to the eastern and western halves (with a Greek linguistic and Latin linguistic overlay, respectively) of the Roman Empire, meant that the dissemination of Orthodox Christianity occurred from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and conformed to the territorial geography of the contemporary Middle East, southeastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Baltic states.

In the half-millennium since the Treaties of Augsburg and Westphalia configured the international system according to territorialized nation-states, the institutional structures of governance and global organization of the Orthodox Church have remained largely unchanged from the eleventh-century template. In this respect, the defining geopolitical realities of the Orthodox Church have been experiences of unfreedom: subjugation to the Islamic theocratic model of the Ottoman Empire,[5] pressures and privations under authoritarian regimes and/or hybrid regimes in the Middle East, and subordination to the anti-religious Bolshevism of the Soviet bloc and to hybrid regimes in post-communist states in Europe and Eurasia.

Within the aforementioned context, the Orthodox Church is organized in a communion of 14 Churches (or 15, since the Phanar's[6] partially-disputed January 2019 granting of the *tomos*[7] of autocephaly

to establish the OCU)[8]: the four ancient patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem; the five national patriarchates of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, and Serbia; the autocephalous (self-governing) Churches of Albania, Cyprus, the Czech Lands, Greece, Poland, and Slovakia. Missionary activity and migration are the key factors behind the globalization of the Orthodox Church over the past two centuries, with Orthodox Churches in the United States, Western Europe, South America, Australia, and Canada remaining jurisdictionally and operationally connected to their Mother Churches—that is, Old World patriarchates and autocephalous Churches.

In contrast to either the Roman Catholic (hierarchically centralized with top-down authority under the pope of Rome) or Protestant models (highly decentralized and particularized under local hierarchical and clerical authorities), the Orthodox Church functions according to a primacy of honor for the Ecumenical Patriarch. This primacy of honor, as opposed to a supremacy of power, conveys specific prerogatives to the Phanar, the most significant of which include the authority to convene councils of all Orthodox Churches among the 14 (now 15), to grant autocephalous status to other Orthodox Churches, and to mediate in dispute resolution between other Orthodox Churches if requested. The Churches function at every level (global, national, local) according to synods, or councils, with the principle of conciliarity informed by theological principles that create the conditions for synods to incorporate debate, differences, and diversity through mechanisms that aim to achieve consensus ratified by councils and legitimated through popular acceptance and practice.[9]

GEOPOLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC SIGNIFICANCE OF ORTHODOXY'S INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE, CONCEPTUAL RESOURCES, AND PRACTICAL TOOLBOX

First, regarding nomenclature, it bears mention that prior to the Great Schism between what became the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic branches of Christianity, a fifth-century split within Christianity had occurred over a centuries-long doctrinal controversy formalized at the Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 CE, giving rise to the two branches of Orthodox Christianity known today as Eastern (Chalcedonian) and Oriental (non-Chalcedonian) Orthodoxy. In modern times the doctrinal dispute is increasingly viewed by those in Orthodox-Oriental dialogues as a linguistic-translation dispute, rather than a substantive doctrinal difference, and these two branches of Orthodox Christianity share similar institutional organization, liturgical practices, and, most significantly for the focus of this brief, defining geopolitical experiences. The Oriental Orthodox Churches are comprised of the Armenian, Coptic, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Indian, and Syrian Churches, all of which have sizable diaspora communities in the Americas, Australia, Eurasia, and Europe.[10] Therefore, while this brief concentrates on the Eastern Orthodox Churches under the global leadership of the EP of Constantinople (contemporary Istanbul) and uses Orthodoxy to refer to those Churches, the primary geopolitical factors salient to the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches in contemporary international relations are overwhelmingly similar.

Second, the organizational structure and tools of Orthodox Churches—namely, the primacy of honor and prerogatives of the EP, the conciliar structures, and the consensus logic of councils—create a global institutional framework that, ideally, is adaptable and flexible in responding to local, regional, national, and transnational circumstances.

In this regard, the "unity in diversity" of the Orthodox Churches, a concept rooted in Orthodoxy's Trinitarian concept of God, positions Orthodox actors to function as stakeholders, partners, and creative difference makers engaged in complex geopolitical problem-solving with state and multilateral entities.

Third, the foundational theological resources of Orthodoxy offer a conceptual, discursive, and practical toolbox with strong affinities with democratic politics, economic equity and justice, rule of law, and universal human rights. Theological exposition is beyond the parameters of this article, but the following Orthodox teachings and practices are particularly significant for contemporary geopolitical crises related to the intersecting challenges of democratic backsliding and authoritarianism,[11] the proliferation of armed conflicts,[12] economic and identity disputes related to equity and inclusion, and threats to the sovereign international order:

- a Trinitarian theology and anthropology of personhood that emphasizes freedom and equality and the possibility of human agency and social change rooted in concepts of divine-human communion (*theosis*), all of which configure comfortably with universal human rights;
- the practice of *economia*, or discernment, which tempers dogmatism and instead aims to balance justice and mercy in human and social interactions;
- a theological understanding of peace that rejects both concepts of holy war and just war in favor of defensive war, as a concept and operational approach;[13]
- a theology of creation that is congenial to the comprehensive security approach developed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and endorsed by NATO.[14]

CONTOURS OF CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICS AND COMPETITION IN GLOBAL ORTHODOXY

The geographical epicenter of Orthodoxy at the interstices of Europe and Eurasia has put Orthodox Churches squarely within several of the most intense geoeconomic, political, military, and values-based conflicts and cleavage points of the twenty-first century. The most high-profile and high-stakes intersection involves Ukraine, both in terms of Russia's invasion and ongoing war—begun in February 2022—and in terms of the decision of the EP of Constantinople to grant autocephalous ecclesiastical status to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in January 2019. It would be a mistake to reduce the intersection of Orthodoxy and geopolitics to the Ukraine events. Equally significant are the geopolitical stakes created by the existential threats facing Orthodox Churches in the Middle East due to the hostility of authoritarian and hybrid regimes committed to homogenizing religio-nationalisms, which threaten the survival and sustainability of the EP; the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria; and their communities, which have a demonstrated commitment to rule of law, societal pluralism, and economic innovation and growth. Nonetheless, the Moscow-Constantinople polarization has permeated and complicated these other points of intersection between Orthodox Churches and geopolitics.

The footprint of Orthodox Christianity in Europe and Eurasia has been a significant factor in the geopolitical calculations of great power and peer competitor calculations and strategic moves in the current multipolar era. Indeed, the transregional and transcontinental linkages between Orthodoxy and geopolitics radiating out from Ukraine and the Middle East help to illustrate competing states' approaches to Orthodox Churches as potential partners or spoilers for accretions in hard (economic assets), soft (norms protagonism),[15] and sharp (digital influence-building) power,

and to underscore the significance of the global cleavage between advocates of a democratic versus autocratic world order.

Taken as a whole, it is the simultaneity of changes in the Orthodox world with changes in the international geopolitical order—namely, Bartholomew Arhondonis' election as Ecumenical Patriarch, post-Soviet Russia's aim of recovering its position as a great power in the new world order, and the salience and durability of religion in the post-modern world—that explains the macro- and micro-patterns of interaction between Orthodoxy and geopolitics over the past three decades.

Constantinople - Moscow Polarization: Connecting the Dots from Crete to Ukraine

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Moscow Patriarch and leader of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) Kirill Gundyaev have developed a Church-state partnership aimed at mutually reinforcing geopolitical hegemonies—hegemonies of territory and material interests, as well as hegemonies of identity, norms, and religio-culture. The Putin-Kirill tenures have relied on the twin concepts of the Third Rome (a late-fifteenth/early-sixteenth-century formulation by an obscure Russian monk,[16] this messianic concept formulates Moscow as the inheritor of the Christian mantles of Rome and Constantinople and as the contemporary Christian defender against Western secularism and Islamist expansionism) and *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World, a civilizational construct with ethnolinguistic premises and historical-philosophical arguments to support Russia's transnational objectives)[17] as a compatible set of religious and political instruments for achieving the Kremlin's spheres-of-influence foreign policy and the Moscow Patriarchate's aspirations to global Orthodox leadership.

The Kremlin-Moscow Patriarchate (MP) relationship and goals explain the linkages between geopolitics and Orthodoxy at play in Ukraine. Accordingly, just as the Kremlin sees the steady post-Cold War enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit "…welcoming Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership,"[18] and the Maidan Revolution as the moves of an aggressive West committed to the encirclement of Russia and the capture of Russian energy and other material assets, the MP views the Holy and Great Council (HGC) of Orthodoxy convened by the EP in Crete in 2016 and the Phanar's autocephaly decision for the OCU in 2019 as the aggressive moves of a Western-supported (that is, the U.S. State Department and the Vatican) EP subverted by its openness to ecumenical theology and handicapped by the Turkish state's chronic limitations on the freedoms of the Phanar and Greek Orthodox community.

In this regard, the Holy and Great Council of Crete was an important signal of the consolidation of the emergent Moscow-versus-Constantinople axis of competition in global Orthodoxy. The MP's eleventh-hour decision to boycott the HGC was a purposeful spoiler move, with the MP combining theological and ecclesiastical arguments with hard power material pressures in order to ensure that the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Patriarchates of Bulgaria and Georgia would band together to boycott the Crete event. The absence of the four Churches intimated the MP-Kremlin's combined religious and geopolitical influence stretching from Russia and Ukraine to the Balkans to the Caucasus.[19]

The MP's capacity to act as a disruptor and malign influence in global Orthodoxy has been more clearly evidenced in the systematic mediatization and digitization of a critical narrative about the Holy and Great Council of Crete, disseminated via multilingual platforms theologically hospitable to and/or financially supported by Moscow. The MP messaging is aimed at countering Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's goal of building a thriving, global Orthodox Church that is

committed to universal human rights, opposed to hyper-nationalism ("ethno-phyletism" in the language of the Orthodox Church) and war, and engaged in ecumenical cooperation and interreligious dialogue.

The MP characterized the HGC as a betrayal of authentic Orthodox doctrine and practices to Westernism, secularism, and modernity—all coded terms. Westernism is interpreted as the twenty-first-century expression of Roman Catholic and Protestant strategies for hegemony in Christianity, secularism is reduced to anti-religious social values and legal-institutional arrangements, and modernity in contemporary international relations is understood as transatlantic actors' efforts to instrumentalize Orthodoxy in the service of human rights as a form of neo-colonialism. This characterization configures with and amplifies Patriarch Kirill's narrative interpretation of the Phanar's decision to grant autocephaly to the OCU.

Patriarch Kirill's interpretation of the Phanar's decision on Ukrainian Orthodox autocephaly draws a direct line from the June 2016 HGC to the January 2019 *tomos* of autocephaly. He characterizes the EP's vision and actions as the outcome of a geopolitical strategy by Washington and Brussels to instrumentalize Orthodox Christianity towards the goal of weakening Russia's position in the twenty-first-century world order. His interpretation has been disseminated and recycled in the geographic spaces of Old World Orthodoxy on digital platforms such as *Romfea*, *Pemtousia*, and *Orthodox News Agency* and also targeted to New World Orthodox Churches through debates on digital platforms such as *Ancient Faith Ministries*, *Monomakhos*, or in the public statements of the MP's Department for External Relations.

The MP's systematic relationship and influence-building operations with clerics, hierarchs, private sector interests, and academics and public intellectuals in Orthodox Churches have exported and globalized the Third Rome vision and Crete-Ukraine narratives to Orthodox Churches of key geopolitical significance. Such targeted cases include the at-risk patriarchates in Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, where Orthodox Churches are endangered religious minorities in hybrid regimes; Orthodox Churches in European and North American democracies whose freedoms provide greater opportunities for competitive digital warfare and political-economic penetration—and also for disruption of NATO and EU cohesion (for example, France, Greece, and the United Kingdom); and post-Soviet European states whose regimes see religion as crucial to national identity (such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia).

Ukraine

In short, the internal tensions between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Phanar have been globalized and localized across Orthodox Churches worldwide. Most specifically, the MP's perception and narrative of internal Orthodox Church developments coheres directly with the Kremlin's view of NATO's enlargement as a strategy to encircle and weaken Russia in America's pursuit of global geopolitical hegemony in the twenty-first century. Patriarch Kirill's endorsement of the Kremlin's justifications for Russia's 2022 invasion and war in Ukraine has been unwavering and unqualified. Rather than elaborate on the arguments in the sizeable, if qualitatively mixed, literature on the MP's support for Russia's war in Ukraine, two points bear mention for the analytic focus of this policy brief.

First, the MP's declaration of the EP as schismatic, an ecclesiastical decision akin to the formal rupture in diplomatic relations between states, has generated zero-sum calculations and institutional brittleness within global Orthodoxy. Individual patriarchates and autocephalous Churches, many of which operate within the context of weak states and non-democratic regimes, have tended to try to navigate the priorities of ecclesiastical unity

measured against the MP's demonstrated willingness to deploy its formidable hard and soft power resources, oftentimes buttressed by support from the Putin regime, for purposes of influence-building and punitive action (see the section below on Africa).[20]

Although Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew continues to commemorate Moscow Patriarch Kirill during liturgical services,[21] an action that recognizes the canonical status of the latter's office, the ongoing fractures in global Orthodoxy have weakened the capacity for transnational collaboration among Orthodox Churches on crucial issues of peacebuilding, human rights, social justice, and climate change. The fallout is also materializing in ecumenical, interreligious, and multilateral policy contexts where Orthodox Churches are unwilling to participate in the same spaces. Emblematic in this regard is the June 2023 withdrawal of the Serbian Orthodox Church from the Council of European Churches (CEC)[22] after the governing board of the CEC accepted the membership application of the OCU. Furthermore, the Serbian Orthodox Church's withdrawal came on the eve of the EP's address to the General Assembly of the CEC. Overall, it suggested how the religion-geopolitics linkages in Ukraine have seeped into Orthodox participation in a European religious organization with over 100 members that is committed to state and civil society engagement in the crucial areas of peacebuilding, human rights, and social justice.

Second, the ongoing division of the Orthodox Christian ecosystem in Ukraine into the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has created a form of antagonistic denominationalism that is relatively alien to the Orthodox tradition, as well as the instrumentalization of the two Orthodox Churches for ethnonational purposes. Despite the immediate public condemnation of Russia's 2022 invasion by Metropolitan Onufriy,[23] leader of the UOC, and the somewhat belated May 2022 decision of the Synod of the UOC (the governing body of the UOC) to reiterate the denunciation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and to declare independence from the Moscow Patriachate,[24] there has been no formal ecclesiastical unification of the UOC with the OCU. Additionally, some UOC hierarchs and priests, including Metropolitan Pavel of the historic monastery of the Kyiv Pecherska Lavra, have publicly supported Russian Patriarch Kirill's sanctification of the Kremlin's invasion as a holy war. Consequently, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's government has enacted a series of legislative decisions designed to "guarantee the spiritual independence"[25] of Ukraine through a range of measures: personal sanctions on representatives of the UOC, transfer of property and cultural heritage from the UOC to the OCU, and arrests and extended detentions of UOC leaders—sanctions that leave no doubt about Kyiv's view of the UOC as a national security threat and of UOC communicants as fifth columnists whose patriotism as citizens of Ukraine is suspect.

Ukraine's religious diversity has been widely explored in academic and policy literatures. The country is notable in Europe for its religious pluralism, which cuts across and within the country's Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant communities, accompanied by the presence of Muslim and Jewish communities and a range of Buddhist, Baha'i, animist, and self-identified non-believer communities.[26] Indeed, successive governments in Kyiv have committed to the protection of freedom of conscience, belief, and religion, including constitutional provisions for the "separation of church and religious organizations from the state" and the stipulation that "[n]o religion shall be recognized by the state as mandatory."[27]

Yet, in the face of the Putin-Kirill instrumentalization of Orthodoxy to justify foreign policy revisionism and militarism, including widespread abuses of religious freedom and related human rights in the

territories occupied by Russian forces,[28] the Zelensky government has demonstrated a shift towards a reflexive response of identifying the OCU with ethno-national and patriotic authenticity.[29] Kyiv's increasing tendency to frame the OCU as signifier of Ukrainian nationalism and patriotism may be a politically opportunistic move designed to play on the fact that Ukraine remains "…an overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian nation…[wherein, as recently as 2019,…half of all Ukrainians {51%} reported that]… it is at least somewhat important for someone to be Orthodox to be truly Ukrainian."[30] Furthermore, as the war with Russia has continued, the Zelensky government has adopted an increasingly securitized approach to the country's two Orthodox denominations, raising concerns among democracy experts and human rights activists about the corrosive impacts of the war on Ukraine's democratizing dynamics and prospects.[31]

The complex policy choices and consequences related to the intersection of security, religion, democracy, and nationalism in Ukraine have centered on the fracture within the two Orthodox communities of the OCU and UOC. Instructive examples include the December 2022 presidential decree that subordinated the State Service for Ethnic Policies and Freedom of Conscience (SEPFP/DESS) to the Cabinet of Ministers, along with the mandate for the SEPFP/DESS to conduct a "religious expert examination" of links between the UOC's charter, clerics, and properties and the Patriarchate of Moscow.[32] The mid-2023 arrest of Metropolitan Pavel on religious incitement charges and the transfer of the Kyiv Pecherska Lavra from the UOC to the OCU have occurred within the framework of Kyiv's securitized approach to the UOC, generating unintended consequences of social unrest within Ukraine and giving traction to anti-West voices in global Orthodoxy.[33]

Taken as a whole, the above developments underscore the geopolitical significance and policy salience of developments within global Orthodox Christianity, particularly in terms of global trends in democracy, human rights, and religious pluralism.

Africa

The African continent has become a key space for the convergence of the divisive religious polarization between the Patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople, on the one hand, and great power competition for strategic predominance on the other. In the wake of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria's recognition in November 2019 of the autocephalous OCU, the Synod of the MP voted in December 2021 to establish a Russian Exarchate for Africa. The MP was brazen in its explanation of the decision as an act of ecclesiastical retribution against the Patriarchate of Alexandria for its recognition of the OCU and for standing with the EP; the decision is considered anti-canonical, or incompatible, in terms of Orthodox Christian organizational rules. The realpolitik dimensions of the move have been undeniable as well. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had characterized the EP as an instrument for the United States to "…interfere in the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Churches and its sisters in the Orthodox world,"[34] so there is ample evidence to indicate that the Russian Orthodox Exarchate in Africa figured into the Kremlin's political-economic penetration of the continent.

The MP's actions in Africa created within global Orthodoxy the religious equivalent of, and complement to, the twenty-first-century great power scramble for Africa. In the short term, Orthodox hierarchs and clerics, as well as academic experts, report that the MP has been made initial gains in using Africa as a theater of operations to wage religious war against the EP and other Orthodox Churches supportive of the new OCU. The MP's tools have been mainly material: direct financial incentives to priests; economic support for building and maintenance of churches and schools; the weaponization of pilgrimages as a source of

revenue generation/deprivation; and digital platforms and traditional media that message other Orthodox Churches, including in the United States, about the implicit threats of and putative successes of the move in Africa.

It is too early to assess the longitudinal effects on global Orthodoxy of the MP's actions in Africa, with reportedly more than 100 Patriarchate of Alexandria clerics having pledged a loyalty oath to the MP. However, the Patriarchate of Bulgaria's restriction on its clergy celebrating religious ceremonies with MP clerics in Africa is a potentially significant indicator of resistance to the Kirill-Putin religious geopolitics of pressure, even among those Orthodox Churches that boycotted the HGC and that have not recognized the OCU.[35]

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT BY THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

Key Initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: Synergies with Transatlantic Values and Interests

Since the start of his tenure as Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Bartholomew has been committed to a theology of global engagement, seeking to mobilize the Orthodox Church as a transnational actor with global presence. As noted earlier, Bartholomew's assumption of the Ecumenical Throne in 1991 came at a time when Orthodox Christians worldwide were presented with the reality of coming together as a global Church. Eighteen months prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Alexi II had been elected as Patriarch of Moscow, and in 2008 Kirill was elected to succeed him. The immediate post-Cold War decade marked a moment of opportunity for realization of a global Orthodox Church. Leadership, theological orientations, and geopolitics became critical variables in defining the divergent pathways that have evolved since that initial decade of possibility for a model of unity in diversity—specifically, a flexible model of religious action informed by theological concepts that are consistent with flexibility and adaptability, non-ideological pluralism, peacebuilding, and universal human rights.

As models of leadership, Bartholomew and Kirill have taken different approaches[36] to Orthodox Church contributions to defining issues of international order in a multipolar world. Their leadership differences are undoubtedly the product of a set of complex factors including their respective religious training and sociopolitical experiences in non-democratic systems (Bartholomew in Kemalist and Erdoganist Turkey, Kirill in the Bolshevik Soviet Union and Putinist Russia).[37] These factors have shaped their contrasting assessments of the possibilities for and methods of Orthodox engagement in a post-Cold War, multipolar world order. Bartholomew's prioritization of convening the HGC in Crete was rooted in the assumption that Orthodox unity is the *sine qua non* for the ability of the Orthodox Church to maximize its capacity and, significantly, its impact as a religious tradition working for the benefit of all humanity. In contrast, Kirill's perspective on (and ultimate boycott of) the HGC reflected his singular priority of the MP supplanting the EP as leader of a globalized Orthodox Church. It is worth noting that, despite the attempted spoiler role played by the four Orthodox Churches (the patriarchates of Antioch, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Moscow) that were no-shows at Crete, the Phanar under Bartholomew's 32-year tenure has been consistently focused on programmatic initiatives that aim to unite all Orthodox Churches in a theology of global engagement focused on key existential issues of planetary scope: the environment and climate change, human rights and religious freedom, social ethics, and combatting modern slavery.[38]

Ecumenical Patriarchate Action on Key Issues

The Environment and Climate Change. The EP has drawn on Orthodox theological resources such as a creation theology of integration to convene leading scholars, activists, and

practitioners from the domains of faith and science towards sharing expertise, building practical collaborations, and broadening discursive and conceptual approaches to engaging in ecumenical, interreligious, multilateral, and international fora on the threats and costs of climate change. Most recently, Patriarch Bartholomew signed a joint statement for world leaders at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), urging "…everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to […take action at this critical moment when] biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions…" and to recognize that the consequences of current ecological trends are "…profound injustice, [since] the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the last responsible for causing them."[39] The Phanar's recognition of the intersecting dynamics of social justice and poverty alleviation, sustainable economies, mixed migration, and environmental action informs Bartholomew's moniker as "the Green Patriarch." Other Orthodox Churches (the Patriarchate of Alexandria and the Church of Cyprus, in particular) have followed the lead of the EP in work on faith-based initiatives that can address climate change as a driver of poverty, forced migration, and violence.

Human Rights and Religious Freedom. The EP has been a public champion for freedom of thought, conscience, and belief worldwide—calling on the international community to take concrete action to support the vulnerable position of the EP and Greek Orthodox Christians in Turkey,[40] speaking out in support of the freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) of all citizens in Turkey, and actively engaging in multilateral and international fora with public education and advocacy efforts that clarify the linkages between religious freedom and the full range of human rights associated therewith, such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and protection of cultural heritage. The Phanar's public declarations endorsing human rights as universal rights rooted in Christian ideals of *imago dei*, opposition to the instrumentalization of religion for war (for instance, public stands against the MP's efforts to develop a theology of holy war or public opposition to Islamist and other forms of violence in the name of religion), and support for humanitarian relief efforts that also protect FoRB, have been operationalized in the active engagement of Orthodox Churches worldwide in faith-based activities dedicated to the protection of universal human rights and to humanitarian relief and programming, oftentimes delivered in cooperation with non-faith-based organizations.

Combatting Modern Slavery. More recently, the EP has broadened its education, training, and advocacy efforts related to the geopolitical issue of modern slavery. The Phanar's establishment of a Task Force on Modern Slavery, the product of ecumenical discussions with the Anglican Church and conversations with the Vatican, has aimed to develop the Orthodox Church's capacity to have a positive impact in countering the intersecting features of slavery in the twenty-first century. Consequently, conferences and training workshops have brought together academic experts, private sector leaders, think tank practitioners, law enforcement and social-psychological practitioners, and public health experts to build networks whereby Orthodox Christian leaders in those sectors and in faith-based ministries can work to raise awareness of the reality of modern slavery and, most significantly, to develop knowledge and build skills and capacity to combat the intersecting components of contemporary slavery. The task force actions have focused on capacity-building related to combatting human trafficking and human smuggling, online and in-person sexual exploitation of women and children, substance abuse and addiction remediation, and indentured servitude related to supply chains.

CONCLUSIONS

The evolving, multipolar world order involves territorial and identity spaces in which the convergence of geopolitics and Orthodox Christianity are crucial. For states belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in order to develop the capacity for synergistic engagement with positive outcomes in terms of security, democracy, and robust commitments to human rights and rule of law, the following points are key.

Policymakers engaged in dialogue and practical cooperation with Orthodox Churches need a significant, speedy increase in historical knowledge and religious literacy on the origins and organization of the global Orthodox Church. Successful diplomatic engagement around twenty-first-century geopolitical issues of existential importance depends, in particular, on nuanced understanding of the impact of historical traumas (the experiences of genocide under the Ottoman Empire and religious cleansing under Bolshevik regimes, as well as the privations of discrimination and persecution under authoritarian and hybrid regimes in the Middle East and failing states in Africa) on Orthodox leadership decision-making that, above all, is based on calculations of institutional survival and community sustainability. Transatlantic diplomacy that prioritizes democracy, rule of law, and socioeconomic inclusion will resonate with Orthodox Churches' support for democratic regimes as a matter of theological conviction and practical survival. The intersection of geopolitics and Orthodoxy in European and Eurasian Churches—in post-Soviet, post-Yugoslav, and post-Ottoman contexts—involves a trauma analytic in the decision-making calculus of Church leadership and communities. In that regard, a neo-Cold War approach to diplomatic engagement may reproduce, paradoxically, non-democratic styles and outcomes on key issues of economic development, social inclusion, and democratic politics.

The success of transatlantic diplomatic engagement with Orthodox Churches on climate, peace, and democracy will depend on diplomacy that takes seriously and seeks to address immediate threats of human and hard security posed to the local communities associated with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and to a lesser extent, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. Threats related to state policies and non-state actors hostile to (whether through active violence or systemic discrimination) Orthodox Churches, as well as ongoing pressures from the Moscow Patriarchate to achieve hegemonic leadership in global Orthodoxy, are primary constraints on the capacity of those Orthodox patriarchates to contribute to inclusive societies, transparent and innovative economies, and democratic politics.

Many Orthodox Churches worldwide are undergoing a generational transformation in leadership that involves a shift in approaches to and modes of engagement with geopolitics. The generational shifts in Old World patriarchates and Churches are a function of natural aging processes, exacerbated by losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a move towards voluntary retirements of aged hierarchs. Examples of all three included the recent installation of a new Patriarch of Serbia and Archbishop of Cyprus, as well as the current resignations of multiple metropolitans in the Church of Greece. Leadership changes will continue to produce a diversification in Orthodox Churches' engagement strategies and methods on issues related to climate change, migration and social inclusion, democracy, human rights, religious freedom, non-proliferation, and peacebuilding. Generational changes will likely intensify the evolving trend across Orthodox Churches worldwide to commit to leadership training and capacity-building that expands lay participation across professional sectors and involves greater gender and generational

inclusivity. Orthodox leaderships (hierarchs, clerics, laypersons) understand their Churches as stakeholders capable of adding value to problem-solving and action on a global and local scale, and, despite the competitive pluralism in global Orthodoxy, Church leaderships have evidenced—discursively and practically—a general recognition of the need for transnational Orthodox cooperation. Public diplomacy that engages productively with the aforementioned leadership trends, including with regard to social media influence-building and digital communications strategies, will have positive resonance at the intersection of global Orthodox Churches and geopolitics.[41]

Ukraine will continue to be the epicenter of the MP's competitive objectives vis-à-vis the EP, therefore making the need for some formula for reconciliation and unification of the two Orthodox Churches (OCU and UOC) a geopolitical priority. The most recent decision of the Kyivan courts to hold Metropolitan Pavlo of the UOC under arrest, charged by the Ukrainian Security Services (SBU) for inciting religious enmity and supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has further polarized the Orthodox communities affiliated with the OCU and UOC. It has also aggravated the fragmentations in global Orthodoxy, generating cleavages both within and across the pro-EP versus pro-MP dividing lines and giving traction to anti-Western voices that view the Metropolitan Pavlo case as an affront to international religious freedom. A timely resolution of the OCU-UOC divide under the prerogatives of the EP may create greater impact from a shared OCU-UOC opposition to the Kremlin war and may encourage voices within the MP to risk more public action in support of peace.

Efforts to resolve the OCU-UOC division, led by the offices of the EP, need not be subject to the timeline of a cessation in military hostilities. The resolution of the OCU-UOC division can generate momentum towards conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding that will necessarily involve post-conflict humanitarian reconstruction, as well as efforts to build a just peace that reconciles deep fractures in Ukraine's multireligious society. Accordingly, diplomatic initiatives, whether from state or religious sources, that can support the resolution of the OCU-UOC divide under the prerogatives of the Phanar could generate multiplier effects in the form of interreligious cooperation among Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and the many other faith communities in Ukraine towards shared goals of a durable, just peace that can foster democratic politics, including a robust commitment to religious freedom and other human rights. The resolution of the OCU-UOC division is also critically important for ensuring that Kyiv's decisions on religious freedom legislation, aimed at the UOC, avoid the slippery slope of establishing precedent for state interference in the internal affairs of the country's diverse religious communities—an outcome that will weaken post-conflict democratization efforts. Transatlantic diplomacy that avoids essentialization of Orthodox Churches will have a significant impact on the risk-taking strategies of competing Orthodox actors when it comes to peacebuilding in Ukraine.

The twin autocracies of Putin's Russia and Erdogan's Turkey continue to exert outsized, mutually reinforcing, negative impacts on global Orthodoxy Christianity. The Putin-Kirill partnership in Russia straightjackets liberalizing actors and dynamics in the Russian Orthodox Church writ large and is the foundation for the use of soft and hard power tools aimed to achieve the MP's Third Rome vision. Concomitantly, eight decades of Kemalist nationalism, followed by the successive terms of Erdogan's neo-Ottomanism *cum* hyper-nationalism, have placed the EP and the Greek Orthodox community in Turkey in an at-risk condition of existential scope. These realities limit the EP's capacity for free voice and action in a manner consistent with peace, democracy, and pluralism, given the Phanar's concerns about Ankara's century-long policy of

retribution against the country's Greek Orthodox Christian community. Taking into account the intersection of geopolitics and Orthodox Churches can result in transatlantic diplomatic engagement that ameliorates the impacts of Ankara's limitations on the religious freedom of the EP as well as moves beyond a reductionist, essentializing view of the Russian Orthodox Church that inevitably misses opportunities for cooperation with pro-democracy, anti-war actors.

Public diplomacy and leadership training programs informed by an appreciation of the strategic and grassroots intersections of religion and geopolitics can be made available to a broad cross-section of Orthodox leaders worldwide.[42] Such programs vis-à-vis Orthodox Churches need a reset of assumptions (beyond the stereotypes of Orthodox Churches as caesaropapist and quietistic), time horizons (calibration of geopolitical and religious metrics for success), and interlocutors (towards a leadership model that involves hierarchy, clergy, and laypersons; that is intergenerational and gender inclusive; and towards inclusion of experts beyond the limited space of theology to incorporate political scientists, economists, and natural scientists).

Notwithstanding the overt tensions within global Orthodoxy and the conjunctural partnership between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Kremlin, the post-Cold War period has seen a dramatic increase in pan-Orthodox cooperation and an associated increase in scope, capacity, and voice from Orthodox Churches that recognize their geopolitical value in regard to their location, theological-conceptual resources, hard power (economic assets and access to and historical relationships with states), soft power (cultural and religious heritage and human rights records), and sharp power (digital platforms). The positive impacts of these strengths of Orthodox Churches will depend on factors endogenous to Orthodoxy but likewise on the ability of states, international organizations, and multilateral entities to improve their knowledge of historical and contemporary Orthodoxy and to engage with the panoply of experts and strata working according to Orthodox commitments.

NOTES

1. Total estimates vary, depending on sources, given lack of accurate census data in some Orthodox majority countries and given differences in inclusion/exclusion of both Eastern (Chalcedonian) and Oriental (non-Chalcedonian) Orthodox. Nonetheless, most sources agree on numbers between 250 to 300 million Eastern Orthodox Christians worldwide. See "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century," *Pew Research Center*, November 8, 2017, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/08/orthodox-christianity-in-the-21st-century/; "Orthodox Churches," *World Data*, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.worlddata.info/religions/orthodoxes.php#:~:text=Orthodox%20Church,at%20about%20300%20million%20members.&text=The%20basis%20of%20the%20original,of%20Constantinople%2C%20written%20in%20381; Sintia Radu, "An Increasingly Unorthodox World," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 6, 2017, https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2017-12-06/orthodoxism-is-declining-in-the-overall-christian-population.
2. Pentarchy, a Greek term meaning five rulers, was the model of ecclesiastical governance for the Christian Roman Empire that was crystallized by the sixth century during the tenure of Byzantine Emperor Justinian.
3. Brilliant sources on the institutional structure of Christianity, and especially of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which clarify the importance of geopolitics to the historical experience and theologies of Orthodoxy are those by Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East and Latin West: Two Worlds of Christendom in Middle Ages and Renaissance* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966); John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996); Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West: A Study in the Christian Tradition* (Evia: Denise Harvey, 1995).
4. I draw here from my article "Christianity and Democracy: The Ambivalent Orthodoxy," in *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (April 2004), which also contains useful footnotes for additional reading on the points raised in both this text and that article.
5. Some scholars may contest the formulation of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic theocracy. Conventional historical and sociopolitical treatments of the Ottoman Empire tend to focus on the multicultural and religiously plural features of the Empire, as well as on the *millet* (religious community) system as a form of administration that afforded significant degrees of self-regulation to the Christian and Jewish communities of the empire. Accordingly, the Ottoman Empire is described as cosmopolitan and tolerant of diversity. However, policymakers' understanding of the geopolitical and institutional consequences of the Ottoman "model of tolerance" necessarily must take into account that the protected status of Christians and Jews as Abrahamic peoples derived directly from Islamic theology, whereby protection (*dhimmitude)* was wholly contingent on Christian and Jewish subjects' payment of a special poll tax (*jizya*), on Christians' acceptance of the practice of the child levy (*devshirme*), and on *dhimmis*' acceptance of a broad range of professional and societal restrictions that were not applied to Sunni Muslim subjects. Taken as a whole, Islamic teachings and practices organized the Ottoman Empire as a theocracy in which legal, social, and political structures positioned Christians and Jews as "inferior subjects…[who] were officially discriminated against or persecuted by the state"; although a combination of endogenous and exogenous pressures led to the gradual breakdown of many of those practices from the eighteenth century onward, the reality for the communities that lived as separate and unequal subjects in the Ottoman Empire has continuing salience for nuanced policy understandings of global Orthodox Christianity today. For the quote, see Moseh Ma'Oz, "Middle Eastern Minorities: Between Integration and Conflict," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Papers, no. 5 (1999): 4-5. For examples of the recent, expanding historical and social science literature that contests the longstanding, hegemonic representation of Ottoman imperial tolerance in favor of recognizing and interrogating the complexities of the Islamic theocratic template of the Ottoman system, see Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans from Constantinople to Communism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Ussama Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (California: University of California Press, 2021); and Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1894-1924).
6. Phanar is a term that is commonly used interchangeably in reference to the Ecumenical Patriarchate (similar to the way the Vatican is used interchangeably in reference to the Holy See of the Roman Catholic Church). Following the capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks and the termination of the Byzantine Empire, the Phanar quarter of the Fatih district in Istanbul was an historically Greek Orthodox neighborhood during the Ottoman Empire.
7. A *tomos* is an ecclesiastical decree that codifies an official decision of a synod, or council, of Orthodox hierarchs.
8. This text uses Churches (upper-case) to identify the 15 patriarchates and/or autocephalous Churches that comprise the Orthodox Church worldwide. In contrast, churches (lower-case) refers to local churches, parishes, or communities that are constituent parts of the aforementioned Churches.

9. An easily readable yet comprehensive explanation of the organizational structure and the leadership structure, including prerogatives of primacy, that exist in global Orthodoxy from the origins of Christianity to the present is found in Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity, 3rd edition* (London: Penguin Books, 2015). See especially Chapter 2, "Byzantium, 1: The Church of the Seven Councils."

10. See Antoine Arjakovsky, *What is Orthodoxy? A Genealogy of Christian Understanding* (New York: Angelico Press, 2018) and Ware, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity*.

11. Lily Sabol, "Defining Global Challenges to Democracy," *National Endowment for Democracy*, March 28, 2023, https://www.ned.org/defining-global-challenges-to-democracy/.

12. "Today's Armed Conflicts," Geneva Academy, accessed June 13, 2023, https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts.

13. See Alexandros K. Kyrou and Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "Debates on Just War, Holy War, and Peace: Orthodox Christian Thought and Byzantine Imperial Attitudes towards War," in Perry T. Hamalis and Valerie A. Karras, eds., *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).

14. Pasquale Annichino and Judd Birdsall explain that "Comprehensive security involves the integration rather than the balancing, of three inter-related dimensions of security: political-military, economic and environmental, and the human… [and, according to]…the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), 'security is understood as comprehensive, co-optive, equal, indivisible and grounded in human rights.'" See their "Introduction: Religion and Comprehensive Security," *The Review of Faith & international Affairs* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2022): 2.

15. Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner, *The Moralist International: Russia in the Global Culture Wars* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022).

16. An infrequently cited but meticulously researched and detailed account of the origins of the Third Rome concept is found in Dimitri Stremooukhoff, "Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine," *Speculum* 28, no. 1 (January 1953).

17. Although Russian World (*Russkiy Mir*) is distinct from *Rossiyskiy Mir*—with one term having greater geopolitical focus and the other having linguistic-cultural emphasis, the concept during the evolution of the Putin period in post-Soviet Russia has crystallized around Russia's foreign and security policy and geopolitical priorities. For a very useful synopsis of the evolution of *Russkiy Mir* and its gradual subsumption of *Rossiyskiy Mir*, see Valery Tishkov, "The Russian World—Changing Meanings and Strategies," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. 95 (August 2008).

18. "NATO Decisions on Open-Door Policy," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 3, 2008, https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2008/04-april/e0403h.html#:~:text=At%20the%20Bucharest%20Summit%2C%20NATO,reforms%20in%20Ukraine%20and%20Georgia.

19. For a detailed discussion of geopolitics (religious and secular) applied to the Holy and Great Council of Crete, see Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "Orthodox Geopolitics and Geopolitics of Orthodoxy at the Holy and Great Council: On Becoming a Global Church," Florovsky Keynote Lecture at the Annual Conference of the Orthodox Theological Society of America (unpublished, available on request, September 2016, Brookline, MA).

20. For comprehensive treatments of the MP's influence-building efforts, see the *Kremlin Playbook* series by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Especially useful is Heather A. Conley, Donatienne Ruy, et al., *The Kremlin Playbook 3: Keeping the Faith* (CSIS, 2022), https://www.csis.org/analysis/kremlin-playbook-3-keeping-faith; also useful are Heather A. Conley, Ruslan Stefanov, et al., *The Kremlin Playbook 2: The Enablers* (CSIS, 2019) https://www.csis.org/analysis/kremlin-playbook-2; and Heather A. Conley, James Minas, et al., *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe* (CSIS, 2016), https://www.csis.org/analysis/kremlin-playbook.

21. This author was present at the liturgical service at the Stavropegial Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ the Savior on the island of Proti of the Princes' Islands on August 6, 2023, at which Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, as presiding hierarch, included the Patriarch of Moscow in the liturgical commemoration.

22. "Serbian Orthodox Church Suspends Membership in European Conference of Churches After Ukrainian Schismatics Join," *Orthodox Christianity* (June 2023), https://orthochristian.com/154325.html.

23. For the complete statement, see "Address of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kyiv and All Ukraine to the Faithful and Citizens of Ukraine," *Ukrainian Orthodox Church: Synodal Information and Educational Department of the UOC*, February 24, 2022, https://news.church.ua/2022/02/24/zvernennya-blazhennishogo-mitropolita-kijivskogo-vsijeji-ukrajini-onufriya-virnix-ta-gromadyan-ukrajini/#2023-07-28. See also "Resolution of the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of May 27, 2022," *Ukrainian Orthodox Church: Synodal Information and Educational Department of the UOC,* May 27, 2022, https://news.church.ua/2022/05/28/resolutions-council-ukrainian-orthodox-church-may-27-2022/?lang=en#2023-09-15.

24. "Resolution of the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church dated May 27, 2022," *Ukrainian Orthodox Church: Synodal Information and Educational Department of the UOC*, May 27, 2022), https://news.church.ua/2022/05/27/postanova-soboru-

ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-vid-27-travnya-2022-roku/#2023-07-28.

25. "Zelensky Says More Measures Coming After Decree Banning Religious Organizations With Links to Russia," *Radio Free Europe: Radio Liberty*, December 2, 2022, https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-bans-religious-organizations-russia-links/32159203.html.

26. For recent data reflecting the diversity of Ukraine's religious ecosystem, see the "U.S. Department of State's 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ukraine," U.S. Department of State, https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ukraine/.

27. Ibid.

28. There is ample documentation by international organizations of Russia's abuses of freedom of conscience, belief, or religion, along with violations of related human rights within the timelines dating to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, and up to the war, begun with Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The Ukrainian Institute for Religious Freedom has been tracking the impacts of the war on religious freedom and related human rights: https://irf.in.ua/.

29. José Casanova has long explored the remarkable religious pluralism in Ukraine as an expression of the possibilities for synergies between modernity, democracy, and public religion. Most recently, he argues that the dynamics of "three competing national churches"—the UOC, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and the OCU—suggest the possibilities for a kind of religious denominationalism and pluralism that implies a Ukrainian religious ecosystem that is incompatible with religious nationalism. See José Casanova, "The Three Kyivan Churches of Ukraine and the Three Romes," in *EastWest: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*. 9, no. 1 (2022). His argument, however, stands at odds with the discourse, imagery, and legislative actions described above. The consequences for Ukrainian nationalism and democracy involved in Kyiv's treatment of the competing Orthodox denominations as either patriotic and loyal (OCU) or traitorous and fifth-columnist (UOC) are contingent upon a range of domestic and external factors that remain at play. Included among those factors will be the role of Orthodox leadership, in particular the capacity of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, for resolving the division between the UOC and the OCU.

30. David Masci, "Split Between Ukrainian, Russian churches shows political importance of Orthodox Christianity," *Pew Research Center*, January 14, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/14/split-between-ukrainian-russian-churches-shows-political-importance-of-orthodox-christianity/.

31. For a detailed review of the shift, see Dmytro Vovk, "Not My Church: Ukraine's New Draft Law Dealing with the Ukraine Orthodox Church of (not) the Moscow Patriarchate," *BYU Law: International Center for Law and Religion Studies*, February 24, 2023, https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2023/02/24/not-my-church-ukraines/.

32. Useful sources on the securitization framework applied by Kyiv to the OCU and UOC, along with implications for post-war democracy in Ukraine, are available in the "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom" and in Vovk, "Not My Church."

33. "Holy War: The Fight for Ukraine's Churches and Monasteries," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 4, 2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/89496.

34. The quote is drawn from Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "Influence Operations in Greece's Religious Ecosystem," in Heather A. Conley and Donatienne Ruy, eds., *The Kremlin Playbook 3: Keeping the Faith* (CSIS 2022), with the original quote found in John Chryssavgis, "Alfeyev & Lavrov: A Glimpse into Church-State Relations in Russia," *Commonweal*, June 25, 2021, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/alfeyev-lavrov.

35. "Bulgarian Clergy to Refrain from Serving with ROC's African Exarch," *Orthodox Christianity*, February 27, 2023, https://orthochristian.com/151216.html.

36. For contrast, see "For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church," *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America,* April 6, 2021, https://www.goarch.org/-/life-of-the-world-thurs, and "Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church," *Department For External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate*, September 15, 2023, http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx.

37. For granular analyses of the disruptive impacts within European and Transatlantic contexts of Turkey-Russia collaboration, see Jahja Muhasilovic, "Internet Turkophilia as a Tool for Spreading Russian Influence and Geopolitical Disorientation in the Western Balkans," *Georgetown University Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and United States Institute of Peace*, July 25, 2023, https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/internet-turkophilia-as-a-tool-for-spreading-russian-influence-and-geopolitical-disorientation-in-the-western-balkans; and, Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "Greece: Influence Operations in Greece's Religious Ecosystem," in Heather A. Conley and Donatienne Ruy, eds., *The Kremlin Playbook 3: Keeping the Faith*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 24, 2022, https://www.csis.org/analysis/kremlin-playbook-3-keeping-faith.

38. For details on these four areas of engagement, see the official website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: https://www.patriarchateofconstantinople.com/index.html.

39. Office of Public Affairs, "Joint Statement on Climate Change by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch," *The Episcopal Church*, September 7, 2021, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/publicaffairs/joint-statement-on-climate-change-by-the-archbishop-of-canterbury-pope-francis-and-ecumenical-patriarch/.

40. Especially regarding the reopening and unimpeded function of the Halki Seminary. The Halki Seminary (formally, Theological School of Halki) was established in 1844 on the island of Halki (Heybeliada) and is the main institution for theological training for clergy and hierarchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The seminary has been closed by order of the Turkish state since 1971, in violation of Turkey's obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne and in violation of religious freedom protections guaranteed by international human rights conventions to which Turkey is signatory: https://jusmundi.com/en/document/treaty/en-treaty-of-peace-treaty-of-lausanne-1923-treaty-of-peace-treaty-of-lausanne-tuesday-24th-july-1923.

41. It is worth pointing out that leadership developments in global Orthodoxy mirror similar debates and trends that have unfolded within the global Roman Catholic Church during the tenure of Pope Francis, a phenomenon signaling the shared commitment by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Francis to theologies of global engagement. The Bartholomew-Francis cooperation suggests multiplier effects for the two apostolic churches' cooperation on urgent geopolitical issues, building on existing infrastructures for supporting universal human rights, combatting climate change, ameliorating poverty, and opposing modern slavery.

42. For an example of a faith-based leadership program originated, designed, and directed by the author of this article, see "Ambassador Pyatt's Remarks at Reception in Honor of 'Faith-Based Leadership in a Turbulent World,'" *U.S. Embassy & Consulate in Greece*, May 4, 2022, https://gr.usembassy.gov/ambassador-pyatts-remarks-at-reception-in-honor-of-faith-based-leadership-in-a-turbulent-world/.

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