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RUSSIAN ORTHODOX FUNDAMENTALISM AS AN ELEMENT OF HYBRID WARFARE

The article examines the methods of struggle of Russian Orthodox fundamentalism, as part of a hybrid war, which Russia uses to build the "Russian World". Russia stepped up its actions after 2014. Various methods of hybrid influence were used against Ukraine. In the first two phases, Russia used its own military forces to occupy Crimea. After that, Russia began to use separatist troops in the Donbass to seize the east of Ukraine. To completely destabilize Ukraine, Russia began to use Orthodox fundamentalists at all levels, from armed militants to Orthodox believers of the Moscow Patriarchate on the streets of Ukrainian cities.

The methods used by Orthodox fundamentalists are soft power and power hard. By soft power, we refer to the propaganda of the Russian Orthodox Church in social networks, on television, radio and printed materials, Russian Orthodox missions in various countries of the world and processions of the cross are also used to mobilize believers.

The hard power of Russian Orthodox fundamentalism should include the active military operations of the armed detachments of Orthodox militants who have actively operated and continue to operate in the east of Ukraine, the terror against religious leaders and believers of other churches in Christianity.

The main goal set by the leadership of Russia is the establishment in Ukraine, a monopoly of the Moscow Patriarchate. The establishment of a single Orthodox religion in Ukraine and Russia will allow Moscow to better control Ukraine and its believers.

Between 2014 and 2015, Russia has already carried out a religious cleansing in occupied Crimea and in some controlled parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In these places, only the Moscow Patriarchate operates. In our study, we have studied and described in detail the methods that are used by Russia to build its religious monopoly in Ukraine.

Keywords: Russian Orthodox fundamentalism, Russian world, Russian Orthodox Church, Russian orthodox army, propaganda.

Due to the fact that Orthodox fundamentalism and its use as one of the constituent elements in the modern hybrid war is a rather broad topic, in our work we will focus on the study of Russian Orthodox fundamentalism. The main geopolitical goal of modern Russia, which is not hidden at all, is to create a geopolitical project "Russian World".

Russian President Vladimir Putin at the World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad, held in Moscow on October 31, 2018, gave his definition of "Russian World". According to him, the Russian World is a union of people who feel a spiritual connection with Russia, regardless of their ethnic, national or religious affiliation.

During the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) Local Council in the Kremlin Palace in 2019, President Putin also noted that the ROC is a unifying factor for the people of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other Orthodox nations¹.

In turn, Patriarch Kirill in his sermons certainly notes that the ROC is one of the cornerstones of the project "Russian World", also emphasizing that in Ukraine the creation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate UOC-KP and Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) is a way to split the Russian people and to the separate Ukrainian people from the Russian World. In addition, in his sermons, Patriarch Kirill,

¹ РИА Новости (2019). Путин на встрече с предстоятелями православных церквей. *Youtube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cej55qqIbIM>> (2021, February, 28).

touching on the topic of relations with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate, Orthodox Church of Ukraine and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), often uses such formulations as "wrong way", "separation of people from the true church", "schismatic community", "path to the spiritual nowhere". Such statements clearly show that the activity of Patriarch Kirill is an open evidence that the ROC is involved as an active player in the hybrid war in the field of information and religious space of Ukraine and in Orthodoxy in general¹.

Speaking in the European Parliament in 2018, the head of the UOC-KP, Filaret accused Russia of using the Moscow Patriarchate as one of the tools to spread the Russian World, which speaks in a voice of enmity and calls for aggression against Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. Filaret also said that an independent church in Ukraine is one of the most important components of victory in the hybrid war against Russia. At the same time, the ROC is pressuring the Orthodox Churches of Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia not to recognize the independence of the OCU. Russian Orthodoxy is hostile to Orthodoxy throughout Europe, as Filaret summed up².

The head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Metropolitan Epiphanius, said in an interview with Ukrainian television that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate actively opposes the OCU, while using various methods of pressure: filing lawsuits, intimidating priests and communities, counteracting the development of the OCU, and the transition of clergy and church to the new Ukrainian church³.

Ukrainian scholar A.V. Fomenko in his dissertation "Fundamentalist turn in modern Russian Orthodoxy" points out that Orthodox fundamentalism is the central ideological construct of the Russian World. As mentioned earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia explicitly stated that Russian Orthodoxy is part of the Eurasian project of the Russian World. The researcher claims that after the collapse of the USSR, the Russians had an ideological crisis, in a vacuum of a great idea, and a lack of ideology. In the 1990s, Russia needed a new ideology for its existence and development, and the Russian World became such an ideology.

In the 1990s, scientific schools were formed in Russia in search of a new ideology. One such ideological concept was developed by Russian political technologists Peter Shchedrovsky, Sergei Gradyrovsky, and Yukhim Ostrovsky. According to them, the Russian World should be formed of various large and small communities united by the Russian language, religion and common idea, its task is to counter the further disintegration of Russia and its transformation into a new empire of the XXI century.

The leaders of post-Eltsin Russia took the idea of building a "Russian World" seriously. The new ideology was to be accepted by the majority of Russians, who have nostalgia for the former greatness of the USSR. It was to include elements of the conservative ideologies of the Russian Empire of the Romanov dynasty and the USSR, but, at the same time, it was to be flexible and in line with world realities and future trends. Metaphysical foundations, such as the Russian language, traditional values, and Orthodoxy, are very important to the Russian world.

The concept of "Russian World" was introduced into the central Orthodox discourse by Patriarch Kirill as the main dominant of Russia's spiritual struggle with the West, the essence of which is the construction of its own path of development different from the Western one⁴.

As can be seen from the above facts, Russia's main strategic goal is to build a geopolitical project "Russian World", the condition for which is the tactics of conducting a hybrid war. In turn, an element of the hybrid war was the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church with its radical wing – Orthodox fundamentalism.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the project of reviving Orthodoxy in Russia, as part of the Russian World project, was just developing. An important event that pushed Russia to accelerate the development

¹ Россия 24 (2018). Патриарх Кирилл назвал самозванцами новых украинских раскольников. *Youtube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0iFDw8F78o>> (2021, February, 02).

² НПО Общественная Правозащита (2018). Филарет в европарламенте обвинил уцц в пропаганде «русского мира». *Youtube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp47dkGPPkY>> (2021, February, 02).

³ Радіо Свобода (2020). ПЦУ протистоїт не тільки РПЦ, но и Російська Федерація – Епифаній. *Youtube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gX3DiZVfMn4>> (2021, February, 02).

⁴ Фоменко А. В. (2019) *Фундаменталістський поворот у сучасному російському православ'ї: дисертація на здобуття наукового ступеня кандидата філософських наук*. Київ: Національний педагогічний університет імені М. П. Драгоманова, 168-171.

of the concept of "Russian World" was the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004-2005. Russia saw this revolution as an offensive of Western cultural values in its area of interest. The next stage was the Euromaidan of 2013-2014, when Ukraine completely left the zone of influence of Russia. The third stage was the receipt by Ukraine of the Tomos of autocephaly and the creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which was seen as the formation of Ukraine's spiritual independence from Russia.

Methods of hybrid struggle of Orthodox fundamentalism can be divided into two types. The first method is soft power, the second method is the use of hard power. The soft power includes statements by Russian politicians and church figures, church diplomacy, public activities, social media activity, cyberspace propaganda, and information policy in the media – television, radio and print. The hard power methods of conducting a hybrid war by Orthodox fundamentalists include the forcible seizure and destruction of temples, the persecution and murder of clergy and parishioners. Aggressive activists and non-governmental armed units are used for this purpose.

As mentioned earlier, Russia is using the soft power of Orthodox fundamentalism in its hybrid war.

American political scientist Joseph Nye in his book "Soft Power the Means to Success in World Politics" gives the following definition of soft power: "Soft power is the imposition on another country of what you want, ... the ability of a state to join other players in international relations to its side to support its interests on the world stage by demonstrating cultural and moral principles, economic prosperity and political course"¹.

Russia uses the authority of leaders as soft power. In this propaganda construction, the first role is played by Russian President Vladimir Putin and ROC Patriarch Kirill, who voice the main idea of the Russian World, identify the enemy, assess the opponents of Russia's geopolitical project and announce an action plan.

For example, President Vladimir Putin took part in the celebrations on the occasion of the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia, which took place in 2018. A liturgy in honor of this was held on the Kremlin's Cathedral Square, after which the President and the Patriarch took part in a procession to the monument to Prince Volodymyr on Borovytska Square. In addition to President Vladimir Putin and Moscow Patriarch Kirill, Patriarch Feodor of Alexandria and All Africa, representatives of local churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Georgia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Albania, Poland, Poland and Poland took part in the procession. Vladimir Putin delivered a speech at the ceremony, outlining important narratives of Russia's ideology for the present and the future. In particular, he said: "*The baptism of Russia is a key, turning point in our history, an event of civilizational scale and transformative spiritual power. It determined the further centuries-old path of Russia, influenced the entire world development. ... As the thinker and philosopher Lev Gumilev noted, baptism gave our ancestors a higher freedom – the freedom to choose between good and evil, and the victory of Orthodoxy gave Russia a thousand-year history.*" The celebration on the occasion of the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia in 2018 marked the starting symbols of the construction of the "Russian World". First, this event was attended by representatives of the secular and spiritual authorities of Russia, as a symbol of the unity of the state and churches, and the body in the image of the state and its internal content in the form of spirit. Second, the main violin of Russia's ideological course in building the Russian Peace was defined as Russian Orthodoxy as a political regulator of internal and external geopolitical relations. Third, the invitation to take part in the celebrations of representatives of local churches of the ROC has become a symbol of the ties and growing influence of Russian Orthodoxy outside Russia. Fourth, the procession and the common prayer marked Russia's path to the common unity of peoples and religions of the state. Finally, fifthly, the monument to Vladimir the Great became a symbol of the emergence and existence of the Russian state not only within the current territory of the Russian Federation, but also the territories of Ukraine and Belarus, as the unity of Orthodoxy and the people of these countries².

Of particular note are the two symbols marked during the celebration of the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia: the procession and the monument to Prince Volodymyr, as elements of soft offensive power, on which we will dwell a little. The procession is used by Russia to unite the Orthodox people of Ukraine and Russia, to preserve the common identity and to prevent the formation of a separate Ukrainian on the basis of the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian language. Every

¹ Nye, J. S. (2005). *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics. PublicAffairs; Illustrated edition*, 191.

² Президент России (2018). *Торжества по случаю 1030-летия крещения Руси* <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58123>> (2021, February, 02).

year in Kyiv since 2014, this event is held by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, is political in nature and is a resource and tool of Russia to build an empire¹.

In addition, on May 19, 2015, a procession was held in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra in honor of the birthday of Russian Tsar Nicholas II.

An important element of the unity of the Russian World was the unveiling on November 4, 2016 of a monument to Vladimir the Great in Moscow, near which two years later the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia was celebrated.

The symbolism of this monument was the reconstruction of the model of perception of Christianity. The ideological construction is formed in the form of succession of events: from the Byzantine national and religious model to the state of Kievan Rus in 1030, then to the Russian Empire, the Russian Empire and the modern Russian Federation. Thus, the model is modeled – Moscow (Russia) is the Third Rome.

Orthodox fundamentalism also uses modern information technology for soft power. There are special Internet sites that promote Russian World and Russian Orthodoxy. These include the following sites: "Russian World"², "Russian Orthodox Church"³, "Union of Orthodox Journalists"⁴, "Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate"⁵, "Orthodoxy.ru"⁶, and others.

Missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church is carried out in exotic countries – in Papua New Guinea and Taiwan⁷.

The Russian Orthodox parish in Taiwan is working to translate the Scriptures into Chinese to attract more people to Russian Orthodoxy in that country⁸.

Work is underway to promote Russian Orthodoxy on Youtube, where many different channels have been created: "Holy Russia"⁹, Jesus-Portal¹⁰, tvsoyuz¹¹, TV channel SPAS¹², PravoslavieRu¹³, TV Company Glas¹⁴, Russianchurch¹⁵, "Father Online" and others¹⁶.

There are independent Orthodox TV channels called "Union", "Savior", "My Joy", "Voice", "Radonezh"¹⁷.

Russian Orthodoxy also broadcasts around the clock on the Radonezh channel in the FM broadcasting¹⁸.

Russian Orthodox Church publishes orthodox magazine Foma¹⁹.

As we noted above, Orthodox fundamentalism also uses brutal force in a hybrid war. The Cambridge Dictionary defines hard power as the use of a country's military power to achieve its interests without the use of cultural and economic influence²⁰.

¹ Громадське телебачення (2016). Чего ждать от Крестного хода на Киев? *Youtube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnmSMXG4JuE>> (2021, February, 02).

² Русский Мир (2021). *Главная страница* <<https://russkiymir.ru/>> (2021, February, 02).

³ Русская Православная церковь. Официальный сайт Русского Патриархата (2021). *Главная страница* <<http://www.patriarchia.ru/index.html>> (2021, February, 02).

⁴ Союз православных журналистов (2021). *Главная страница* <<https://spzh.news/ru>> (2021, February, 02).

⁵ Официальный сайт Московского Патриархата (2021). *Отдел внешних церковных связей (ОВЦС)* <<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/52719.html>> (2021, March, 01).

⁶ Православие-ру (2021). *Главная страница* <<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/>> (2021, March, 01).

⁷ Виноградов, С. (2020). Священник РПЦ: «Перспективы для миссии в Папуа – Новой Гвинее огромные». *Русский Мир* <https://russkiymir.ru/publications/277058/?sphrase_id=1120558> (2021, March, 01).

⁸ Виноградов, С. (2020). «Мы пытаемся создать своего рода церковно-китайский язык». *Русский Мир* <https://russkiymir.ru/publications/281465/?sphrase_id=1120558> (2021, March, 01).

⁹ Youtube (2021). *Святая Русь* <<https://www.youtube.com/user/RusSvjataja/videos>> (2021, March, 01).

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¹² Youtube (2021). *Телеканал СПАС* <<https://www.youtube.com/user/spastv2012>> (2021, March, 01).

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¹⁴ Youtube (2021). Телекомпания Глас <<https://www.youtube.com/user/glastv>> (2021, March, 01).

¹⁵ Youtube (2021). *Russianchurch* <<https://www.youtube.com/user/russianchurch>> (2021, March, 01).

¹⁶ Youtube (2021). *БАТЮШКА ОНЛАЙН* <<https://www.youtube.com/user/MsZn777>> (2021, March, 01).

¹⁷ Слава Богу за все. Православный кинозал (2021). *Православные ТВ каналы в прямом эфире онлайн* <<https://sb-v.ru/tv.html>> (2021, March, 01).

¹⁸ Радонеж (2021). *Главная страница* <<https://radonezh.ru/radio>> (2021, March, 01).

¹⁹ ФОМА. Интернет журнал (2021). *Главная страница* <<https://foma.ru/>> (2021, March, 01).

²⁰ Cambridge Dictionary (2021). *Hard power* <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/ru/словарь/английский/hard-power>> (2021, March, 01).

The Russian Federation has been using hard power since 2014 with purpose to establish the superiority of the Russian Orthodox Church, to eliminate or dominate any other type of Orthodoxy that Moscow considers hostile to the Russian World project. The liquidation of the UOC-KP was systematically carried out in the occupied Crimea and in part of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

After the annexation of Crimea by the Russian army, began the persecution of Christian denominations. The first demand of the Russian authorities was the re-registration of all religious organizations on the peninsula. Failure to do so would result in loss of legal personality. The Crimean eparchy of the UOC-KP did not obey the requirements of the new order and was deprived of its status, continuing its existence on the peninsula in conditions of illegality. Unlike the UOC-KP, the ROC successfully re-registered in December 2014.

Of the 40 communities of the UOC-KP in Crimea in early 2014, in 2015 there were only 9 priests of the Kyiv Patriarchate. Many parishes lost their premises due to the fact that the owners of the premises rented by the Kyiv Patriarchate left Crimea. Also, many commercial entities that leased their premises to the Kyiv Patriarchate refused to cooperate with Ukrainian religious organizations to avoid business problems under the new Russian government.

Archbishop Clement of Simferopol and Crimea stated in 2015 that persecution, torture and abuse of Ukrainians were being carried out on the territory of the occupied Crimean Peninsula, Ukrainian churches, Ukrainian education and Ukrainian culture were being destroyed. Also, in his statement, he cites examples of the seizure of the church in honor of the Holy Martyr Clement in the city of Sevastopol and the church in honor of Andrew the Apostle in the village of Perevalny. In the village of Mramorne, Simferopol district, the house of the head of the diocese was burned down.

In his statement, Metropolitan Clement noted cases such as the persecution of the Crimean people for their religious beliefs and the seizure of the premises of the Crimean Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate¹.

The report "Crimea without Rules", prepared by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU), notes the systematic destruction of the Kyiv Patriarchate in Crimea. For example, on June 1, 2014, Russian troops seized the Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul, St. Nicholas, Holy Bishop Mirlikivskiy, which was located on the territory of the Training Center of the Naval Forces of Ukraine on the street. Lazarevskaya, 1, building 27 in the city of Sevastopol. On the same day, at 8 o'clock in the morning, the Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which belonged to the UOC-KP, was seized. The church was located on the territory of the former military unit A0279 of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the village of Perevalny, Simferopol district, on the street Oktyabrskaya, 50.

On April 6, 2014, Russian Cossacks, blocked the Cathedral of the Holy Apostolic Princes Volodymyr and Olga near Simferopol, which was located in the premises of the former House of Officers (Simferopol, Sevastopolskaya St., 17-A), transferred to the UOC-KP in 1995. At the same time, the cathedral could not be captured immediately. In 2015-2017, lawsuits took place, which led to the forced eviction of the UOC-KP from the church. Representatives of the Kyiv Patriarchate themselves were not allowed to attend the trials. On August 31, 2017, bailiffs used physical force against Archbishop Clement of Simferopol and Crimea, stormed the church, dislocated his arm, and erected a barrier around the building².

Tougher measures of influence were used by supporters of the Russian Orthodox Church in Donbas. After the occupation of Crimea, the Russian Federation, with the help of pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, began a systematic occupation of eastern Ukraine. Russia used armed groups for religious purges.

Armed Orthodox fundamentalists in the Donbas consisted of Cossack battalions, which in their ideology used the canons of Orthodoxy, fought under religious flags, defending the interests of Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian World. Such Cossack groups had the support of the UOC-MP and the ROC.

¹ Архієпископ Сімферопольський і Кримський Української Православної Церкви Київського Патріархату Климент (2018). Публічне звернення. *Голос Криму*, 08 червня.

<<https://voicecrimea.com.ua/main/news/developments/publiche-zvernennya-arxiyepiskopa-simferopolskogo-i-krimskogo-ukrainської-pravoslavної-cerkvi-kiivskogo-patriarxatu-klimenta.html>> (2021, March, 01).

² Заец, С., Мартыновский, Р., Свиридова, Д. (2018) Крым без правил. Тематический обзор ситуации с правами человека в условиях оккупации. Специальный выпуск. Религиозная оккупация: притеснение Украинской Православной Церкви Киевского Патриархата в Крыму. RCHR. *Українська Гельсінська спілка з прав людини* <<https://helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/KBP-Relyhyoznaya-okkupatsyya.pdf>> (2021, March, 01).

A report prepared by the Center for Civil Liberties and the International Partnership for Human Rights within the framework of the International Civil Solidarity Platform with the support of Open Society grants states, that Russian Cossacks have always enjoyed the support of the Russian authorities and the ROC. They took an active part in the fighting in Transnistria, Serbia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia; The Cossacks took part in the October 1993 events on the side of the White House defenders in Moscow, were involved in the grenade attack of the US Embassy in Moscow in 1995 and 1999, and the explosion of the Moscow-Grozny train in 2005, according to the Center.

The two main armed groups of Orthodox fundamentalists involved in hostilities in the Donbas are the Don Republic and the Russian Orthodox Army.

The Don Republic, or the Cossack National Guard, professes the ideology of Orthodox fundamentalism and the Russian World. They use the Cossack flag as a battle flag: three stripes – blue, yellow and red – and the image of the Saint Mary. Flags with the image of the Edessa and St. George's ribbon are also often used. The motto is "God is with us!"¹.

The second armed group of Orthodox fundamentalists is the Russian Orthodox Army (ROA). Their motto is "Warriors of the faith, brothers of Great Russia, we will unite the entire South-East!" This armed group of Orthodox fundamentalists was created in February 2014 by Igor Girkin, known under the pseudonym Streltkov. The organization was accused of kidnapping, torture and murder. As its symbol, the ROA uses the image of the Orthodox cross on the background of a shield and a sword placed on the flag of the Russian Federation, with the image of George the Victorious in the upper left corner².

In 2014, during hostilities in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, UOC-MP clergy provided premises and assistance to separatists in Donbas. Many priests of the UOC-MP and priests of the ROC from Russia, who are very aggressive, adhere to the dogmatic and radical version of Russian Orthodoxy. They are also hostile to any Western values and adhere to the ideology of Russian Orthodox fundamentalism.

In the spring of 2014, Orthodox fundamentalist militants began terrorizing members of canonical Orthodoxy: the Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches, as well as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate. Protestant churches such as the Evangelical Church of the Transfiguration, the Church of Good Conscience, the Church of God, the Word of Life, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Bethany Christian Baptist Church, and the Church of Christ were also terrorized. Orthodox militants seized churches and premises belonging to religious organizations, tortured and killed priests, and expelled them from territories controlled by the DPR and LPR.

There were also cases when holy fathers from the Russian Orthodox Church blessed separatists and pro-Russian militants during artillery strikes on the Ukrainian armed forces, and read prayers³.

All these facts show that Orthodox fundamentalism plays an important role in a hybrid war with a collective measure for the formation of the Russian World, achieving its goal through various forms of soft and hard power. In addition, in the activities of Orthodox fundamentalism, behind which stands the Russian Orthodox Church, the goal of eliminating any non-canonical Christian religions is clearly stated.

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