Desecularization of the state as a resistance to the globalization: a case study of the criminalization of blasphemy in Russia.

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Desecularization of the state as a resistance to the globalization: a case study of the criminalization of blasphemy in Russia.

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Master’s Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of International Affairs at the City College of New York

COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

A cultural aspect of westernization remains in the shadow of widely discussed economic and political ones. While many states are conforming to the Western rules of the global market game, the cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and thus less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones.

The dissolution of the U.S.S.R. has left behind a void in the Russian identity. After unsuccessful attempts to assume a Western liberal identity during the first half of the 90s, Russia has opted for tried and tested Orthodox Christianity to fill that void and to form a new post-Soviet Russian identity. In the uncertain socio-economic conditions of post-Soviet Russia, many Russians looked to the Orthodox Church for guidance. The Church was frequently invoked in discussions on national identity and in deliberations over the country’s future.

The separation of the state and the church of the Western Europe has become one of the democratic staples of domestic and international policies. The westernization of traditional societies (e.g. India, Russia) introduces liberal principles along with a complete secularization of the society and political life. This incites an opposing reaction of the Church and state coming together in Russia to secure Russian national identity.

To re-affirm and secure its national identity Russia began pushing itself away from Western secular identity. The criminalization of blasphemy in 2013 has become a step to secure and to re-affirm Russian national identity.
Introduction

1. The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be instituted as state-sponsored or mandatory. 2. Religious associations are separated from the State, and are equal before the law.


There is no alternative to Christian Orthodoxy right now. No political party is capable to maintain order in the country on its own: ROC's and state interaction is necessary if we want Russia to be strong.

Father Sergii, Father Superior of the Moscow Cathedral of Descent of the Holy Spirit (Рыбко, 2012) (2)

The global trend of de-secularization could be a reaction to the forces of Westernization spreading liberal culture and ideas, secularism among them. In recent years Russia has been undergoing de-secularization, with the merger between the state and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the criminalization of blasphemy as a result. I maintain that two factors have promoted and continue to promote the amalgamation of church and state in Russia: the specific structure of Russian national identity with Orthodox Christianity and "the otherness" as its essential parts and also the threat to a secure national identity created by the forces of Westernization.

In the past 30 years the world has been experiencing a dramatic religious resurgence with various degrees of fundamentalism. Contrary to the predictions of many philosophers and sociologists, from Karl Marx to Peter Berger, modernization did not eliminate "the opium of masses".

What it is behind the rise of religiosity in the age of science and information? In some cases the religious revival so aptly dubbed "the revenge of God" (3) literally appears to be a revenge to "infidels". In others it is an attempt to restore a pre-communist identity. In the case of Europe, the cause is purely demographic: the growing influx of
refugees from Middle East. By contrast, my research focuses on globalization, specifically Westernization, as a principal cause for religious revival. Globalization has resulted in increasing inequality, disruption to local communities, and a shift in the focus from traditional values to materialism (4). Since globalization has influenced every aspect of modern societies, I maintain that it is in part responsible for the religious revival within many states. As Robertson & Chirico (5) noted, "the virtually worldwide eruption of religious and quasi-religious concerns and themes cannot be exhaustively comprehended in terms of focusing on what has been happening sociologically within societies."

After Francis Fukuyama's declaration of the “end of history” in 1992 (6), Western liberal political thought seemed to have taken a prescient turn. The Berlin Wall fell, followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Empire and the Warsaw Pact. In fact, Fukuyama had merely articulated a deep-rooted conviction of the West in the universality of its cultural and economic model. Liberal ideas had swiftly swept away what for 70 years was perceived as an indestructible barrier for various freedoms and human rights. The euphoria, however, did not last long. The contradictions between the proverbial "East" and "West," which had shaped the world for centuries, re-surfaced as quickly as the mighty Soviet bloc collapsed. The most prominent realization of this came from Samuel Huntington in his Foreign Affairs article (and later a book based on it) on the "Clash of Civilizations" (7). Huntington drew a thick line through the European map between the areas characterized by Western Christianity and those influenced by the Eastern Christian heritage. Not only did he envision the return of the centuries old confrontation between Western and Orthodox Christianity, he noted that that Orthodox Christian societies seemed “much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems.” Huntington's
article was published in 1993, when enthusiasm for democratic reforms in Russia was still high. His idea was met with harsh criticism. However, it pointed to an emerging trend that had not received attention amidst the “end of history” triumphalism. That drift was in Huntington's shift toward research focused on culture and ethnology and away from the ideologically oriented theories of Fukuyama. Just like his Russian colleagues Vernadsky, Gumilev, Berdyaev and many others, Huntington takes religious teachings as the last frontier that divides the civilizations and an insurmountable barrier to a global consensus on governing human affairs. Civilization, for Huntington, is "cultural affinity": language, history, customs and religion. Huntington preempts possible criticism of such broad generalizations by insisting that every individual ultimately identifies with a particular civilization.

In my thesis I intend to answer two broad questions. First, how does globalization affect national identities? Second, why is resisting globalization inevitable in civilizations with a cultural code different from a cultural code of the source of globalization? In addressing these questions I will consider the emerging Russian religious nationalism, focusing on the significance of anti-blasphemy law. I maintain that this particular change to the Russian Criminal Code, imperfect from the start, with the vague terminology of "insulting religious feelings", is the most extreme expression of the current merger between the Russian state and the ROC. While it is almost impossible to determine the exact meaning of "religious feelings" for judicial purposes, the law is being abused (by the ROC mostly) in order to declare religion's significance for the national identity and to show the Russian state’s willingness to re-define itself as "traditional" and different from the increasingly secular Western culture.
Why have these questions arisen with such force today? Compared to the economic, political, and cultural impact of globalization, its influence on religion and culture has received insufficient attention. The interaction between religion and globalization yields various outcomes. Under the influence of the multiple forces of globalization, each religion offers its own particular way of either more or less peaceful co-existence. At the core of Westernization is a liberal model which suggests a universal one-size-fits-all system of values with the "individual" at the base of it. This contradicts a staple dogma of many old religious teachings: the priority of communal interest.

Globalization has "a disembedding effect" (8, 9). It has "move(d) from a concrete, tangible, local context to an abstract or virtual state." Thus the concept of humans belonging to, and anchored by, a local tradition is replaced by a global one. A struggle between universal identity and local ones leads to revival of reactionary religion, fundamentalism, and even religiously driven terrorism around the globe.

Why are these questions important? Vyacheslav Karpov (10) rightfully points out that the proliferation of theories on the spread of secularization makes for a sharp contrast with the scant amount of research on resistance to secularization. The main reason for this is the relatively recent emergence of resistance.

The goal of my thesis is to demonstrate that the source of globalizing forces, the Western world, is perceived in Russia as predominantly secular and therefore alien to Russia’s historically-rooted conceptions of community and individual identity, which rests on the individual’s being embedded in a social and religious context that is particularistic, not universal. Partly as a result of the dichotomy between Russia and the West, the Russian state has fallen further back on Orthodox Christianity to cement
national identity. This is an example of what Catherine Kinvall calls "to securitize subjectivity", or in other words, to re-affirm a threatened self-identity (11). The voluntary or unintended imposition of universal values of one culture leads to an opposing reaction. This can take the form of asserting religious, cultural and traditionalist values that are specific to the society or the civilization it springs from. Religion and "ethnocentrism" (12) act as powerful responses to the insecurity and disruptions created by globalizing forces emanating from the West.

**Methodology:** To determine religion-based resistance to the westernization in the Russian context, I use the example of Russia's criminalization of blasphemy in Article 148 of the Criminal Code of Russian Federation in 2012. With its adoption Russia has joined approximately a quarter of the world's states that outlaw blasphemy, which includes India, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. That law was enacted shortly after the infamous "Pussy Riot" case, when three members of the feminist protest group staged a performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. The three members were convicted of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred", and each was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The criminalization of religious insults in Russia is a mirror image of the reverse processes in Western European countries: England and Scotland (in 2008), Netherlands (in 2012), Norway (in 2015) and Iceland (in 2015) in turn have gone in the opposite direction of repealing of blasphemy laws thus "securitizing their subjectivity" with the growing influx of the migrants from the Middle East.

I address my research questions using descriptive and interpretive methods. Admittedly it would be hard to pinpoint the precise moment when the acceleration of church and state integration in Russia began. Nevertheless, I contend that a useful starting
point is when blasphemy was criminalized by an officially secular state. This represented a milestone on the path to what became a sustained campaign of resistance to secular westernization.

I address the research questions in the following sequence. In Chapter I, I briefly explain what aspect of globalization has had the most effect in Russia. In Chapter II, I review post- and pre-Soviet Russian identity, especially the role of religion. In the Chapter III, I explore the criminalization of blasphemy as not just a legislative act that "securitizes subjectivity", but as a cultural counterattack against globalization, especially its secular element. (Kinvall, 2006).)
Chapter 1. Globalization

A volume of scientific and popular literature on globalization can be overwhelming. For the purposes of this thesis, I use a particular definition of "globalization." The many works on the globalization, by such scholars as Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens agree that it is complex and non-linear. The essential, basic features of globalization are the "world's compression and a rapid increase in consciousness of the whole world." (1) Globalization has been underway throughout, but in the 20th century "it has involved some real changes in terms of scale, speed and cognition... - there is an increased perception of the globe as a smaller place – that events elsewhere have consequences for our everyday political, social and economic lives affecting individuals." (2)

Globalizational process is commonly described as communicational, political, economic, environmental or cultural. First, I consider it necessary to define that in my research I deal with a last aspect of globalizational process only - a cultural/religious one. Too often the cultural aspect of globalization takes a backseat to economic and political ones, reducing it to a rather a side effect of the more important economic aspects. Marxist thought exemplifies this tendency by referring to the economy being as the "base" to social processes, customs, laws and beliefs as “superstructure.” This paradigm continues to shape the minds of many scholars who see globalization quite one-sidedly, as a largely economic and technological phenomenon. However, as the so-called "cartoon crisis" of 2005 in Denmark and the "Charlie Hebdo" shootings of 2015 in Paris have made clear, "religion and culture are active forces in their own right." (3)
Second, I realize that globalization is not one sided, meaning it has different spatial directions: from West to East and opposite. Migrations from the east and the, and south to the West changed the latter’s demography and, as a consequence, its traditional cultural practices. Still, there is a consensus that the Western culture drives and shapes globalization more than any other culture. William Stahl, for instance, calls globalization "the most recent stage of modernization, in which the processes that have transformed western civilization over the past 400 years have spread to the entire planet." (4) Thus in my thesis globalization is viewed as the dissemination of Western culture in its many aspects.

For the scholars who view globalization as westernization, or even Americanization, it is customary to quote a speech Harry Truman gave at Baylor University in Texas on March 6, 1947 (5,6): "The whole world should adopt the American system. The American system can survive in America only if it becomes a world system." Indeed globalization is not only westernization, but just as Stephen Walt’s theory on balance of threats stresses in explaining alliance formation, the key is how globalization is perceived in cultures-recipients: China, India, and, in the case of this thesis, Russia. In these countries, Western expansion is treated as economic, political and cultural imperialism that causes fundamental confrontations around the world. In the view of many contemporary Russian scholars such as Gadjiev, Dugin, and Leksin—and regardless of whether they are conservatives or liberals —globalization is perceived as an attempt of predominantly American political and intellectual elites to turn a "rather limited complex of liberal ideas and principles" (7), that is closely tied to human rights, democracy, and the market economy and presents itself as a universal, one-size-fits-all
model. Due to the imposition of that model on other cultures, the dichotomous ultimatum - "you are either with us or against us" - is being invoked in Western political, economic, military, and cultural discourse. In this Manichean thinking the Western standard agenda of liberalism is pitted against "the rest of the world." Thus this discourse posits an "East," even though neither West nor East is homogenous.

Consider a following quote from Sergei Filatov, a prominent researcher of religion well known for his critique of the ROC's current policies since the time he was a head of President Yeltsin's administration: "With some generalization that papers over complexity and the contradictory elements of reality, one could state that globalization is indeed Americanization. The American system of values is more universal, - our patriots, mainly Christian Orthodox critics of globalization claim that it brings along secularization and materialism; it destroys religiosity." (8)

Professor Nikolai Pokrovski echoes these statements: "Russia's weak social structure gives way to the worst and most extreme tendencies in globalization. Globalization takes the form of Americanization in Russia…Americanization is a globalization." (9)

An opposition to the dispersion of American values has yet another explanation. During the final years of the U.S.S.R., and up to the mid-1990s when Russia was going through a profound transformation of its planned economy into one based on market one a complete changeover of a Soviet national identity, Russia has gone through what is now commonly recognized as the hardest times since the end of the Great Patriotic War in 1945. According to the polls of Levada Center, a leading organization of sociological research in Russia, in 2014 59% of Russian population evaluated the reforms of the
1990s negatively. (10) Therefore, the globalization, which commenced in the USSR much later than most other places and therefore swept in at a higher speed, is irrevocably connected to the times of what, in many Russians’ eyes, could be called Emile Durkheim called “anomie.” By that he meant "a total dispersion of system of values in politics, economy and culture." (11)

The expansion of American values consequently eliminates space for national cultures and threatens to erase their uniqueness. Reflect on the following data for 2014 from European Audiovisual Observatory: Up to 80% of the films in Russian cinema are produced in the U.S., 10% are a combined share of "the rest of the world", leaving for the Russian cinema market meager 10%. (12) In the minds of sociologists the sad state of affairs of the Russian film industry resembles defeat in a war. Although it is an informational one, the stakes are even higher for Russia than NATO’s expansion to Russia’s western and southern borders. "In reality, Hollywood's output is not an entertainment but rather a weapon of a mass destruction of human consciousness masked as an amusing product. This product leads to a paralysis of intellect, mind, societal spiritual values; it is therefore more efficient than any actual military assault. Hollywood deforms the psychological condition of the vast human masses and promotes constant social degeneration." (13) That statement comes from the president of the Russian Sociological Association, Vladimir Dobrenkov; but he merely articulates an opinion held by many sociologists and political scientists in Russia.

There are two general theories on globalization's impact on cultures. The homogenization thesis views globalization as Americanization/westernization and claims that it destroys local identities as part of an effort to spread a universal, liberal culture
around the world (Beck (14), Ritzer (15), Jan Nederveen Pieterse (16), Bauman (17)). By contrast, those who see the emergence of a complex global culture comprised of diverse elements from different parts of the world adhere to "hybridization thesis" ((Tomlinson (18), Hannerz (19), Appadurai, (20)). And finally scholars like Huntington, Barber, Berger (21), Holton (22), Gadjiev (23) stick to "polarization thesis". They claim that dispersion of global values that are rooted in American liberal values creates anti-globalization movements of a far more radical character than those that we can observe when there are G7 summits. In my research I shall demonstrate how the case of Russia could be viewed as an instance of "polarization thesis" of Huntington's theory, for whom interdependence on a global scale does not involve cultural conformity. I contend that desecularization tendencies in Russia in the last 20 plus years, what Vyacheslav Karpov calls "a counter-secularization," (24) amounts to a protest against the "godless" secularizing West. Since the focus of religion is the spiritual quest and eternal question of the meaning of life, it will inevitably resist projects that reduce human affairs to the pursuit of, and competition over, material success. Religion is being challenged by a globalization that diffuses the western values around the world—and religion, at least in Russia, resists.

Globalization has arrived in Russia relatively late: at the end of the 1980s. At that time USSR was essentially atheistic society. But Western influence (especially the ideas of democracy, political freedom, human rights) has contributed to a religious renaissance. Paradoxically, globalization instigated a process that was a completely different to what was happening in the de-secularized West.

As Patriarch of Moscow and of all Rus' (Russia) Kirill duly noted that during
Soviet era signing of many of international agreements (apparently Helsinki accords is implied first and foremost) was a hypocrisy: while adhering to world standards of human rights on paper, they never followed on their agreements through (25). Kirill has rightfully identified the causes of this hypocrisy: it was Soviet government's attempt to refute West's accusations in totalitarianism and a desire to accuse West of similar wrongdoings. However, in Kirill's critique towards Soviet officials, their hypocrisy was not the main point, but rather it is the very fact of signage to those agreements, that since then has turned into a inseparable part of internal laws of OCSE countries. Striving to fix that "misstep" of Soviet foreign policy, authors of "Bases of ROC's Social Concept" (26) has included a following provision at the very end of the document: "ROC cannot perceive positively a common worldview in which a sinful human individuality is placed in the center of everything" Further on ROC declares its intention "to strive for acceptance of legitimacy of a religious worldview as the base for socially significant activities (including those of the state) and for making the religious perspective an essential factor of international law and international organization's policies" (Bases, 2000, bold in original).

"Bases" reflects the anti-democratic stand of the majority of ROC's clergy and its aversion to political freedoms and human rights. This resistance to democratic development in Russia, and hence to globalization in the eyes of many Russian scholars (Filatov, Malashenko, Dugin, Sitnikov and others), is deeply rooted in the history of Russia and the national identity of its people. In the next chapter I shall investigate what religion means for the Russian national identity and why it could it be a cause for opposition to westernization and to the criminalization of blasphemy as a result.
"It is necessary to educate all Russians that personal identity is secondary and consequential of national identity. Russians have to realize that firstly they are Christian Orthodox, secondly they are Russians, and thirdly humans."

Alexander Dugin, Bases of Geopolitics (1)

In this chapter I will establish how the structure of national identity in Russia is producing a resistance to the West’s cultural influence. The first part of the chapter's focus is on Orthodox Christianity as an essential element of Russian national identity. The second part discusses the "negative construction" of national identity in Russia and how it is built on the idea of "the otherness".

Since fewer Christians practice daily than are non-practicing in Russia, how could religious identity be so vital for Russia in Huntington's theory? The answer is that the U.S.S.R. for more than 70 years was an atheistic land with many churches functioning as storage spaces for vegetables or serving as antireligious museums. (Examples of this include the Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood and Saint Isaac's Cathedral in Saint Petersburg.)

One could rightfully suppose that the importance of the religious element in national identity would differ culture to culture. Compare, for instance, states with a long story of secularism and a liberal tradition, such as the Netherlands, to ones in the far less democratic and self-avowedly more traditional Christian Orthodox countries. The evidence shows that the percentage of respondents that consider religion as very important for national identity ranges from 3% Netherlands to 46% in Bulgaria (2).
So why, regardless of the actual numbers of the Orthodox faith practitioners in Russia, is religion an essential element of the Russian national identity? The answer is can be found in the history of the relationship between the state and the ROC.

The Prince Vladimir's historical choice of the Byzantine Christianity in 988 AD was made when the Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital in Constantinople, was flourishing and the Western Roman Empire was in decline. In 1054 AD, shortly after Russia's baptism, the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other. The schism between Western and Eastern Orthodoxy still remains. For seven centuries the ROC enjoyed relative independence. However, ever since Russia opted for Byzantine Christianity, a Tsar (Caesar) has dominated both the secular and religious realms.

Peter I’s reforms of the Church in the early 18th century made the ROC just one of several departments of a new bureaucratic state. In 1764 Catherine the Great concluded Peter's reforms by de-privatization of the ROC's lands. That decision eliminated any remnant of the church's independence and power. From that moment on the ROC’s role came to be the preaching of official state ideology and the glorification of the Romanov's dynasty. Attacks on the Church were judged not by a Church court but by a civil court because the clergy were regarded as state employees (3). According to John Madeley, the "tradition of the Eastern churches” submission to the will of the sovereign, or ceasar-papism, corresponded to the development within Orthodoxy of a spiritual tradition that turned more towards union with God than to sustaining society. That, in turn, encouraged the passive acceptance of fate and/or providence” (4).
Cut off from administrative and economic resources, the ROC has wielded a
different kind of power, one that Joseph Nye has dubbed "soft power." For Russia had
"no classical antiquity to provide alternative models of cultural identity: no ancient ruins
littering the landscape; no classical education bringing direct access to ancient Greek and
Latin literature or philosophy" (5). This circumstance signified a principal difference
between European and Russian culture. While the former was based in universities, the
latter's cultural centers were situated in monasteries (6). Thus the Church has become a
facilitator of Russian identity and the cultural agency of the state (7) -- until 1917 when a
new sort of state emerged in Russia.

In 1834, in his report to Nicholas I, the Minister of Education, Count Sergey
Uvarov revealed the now famous triad of 'Orthodoxy - Autocracy - Peoplehood.'
According to Uvarov's theory, Russian people are deeply religious and loyal to the Tsar,
Orthodox faith, and Tsarist autocracy, which created the essential conditions for Russia's
existence. The state-church concept of 'Peoplehood' ('Narodnost') was interpreted as a
necessity, as a means to preserve Russia's own traditions and to reject foreign influences,
all in order to oppose Western ideas, such as freedom of thought, individualism and
rationalism. As Sergei Filatov noted, "the necessary unity of all of the three elements
provided a symbol of Russian statehood until 1917" (8).

The Uvarov's model has proved to be so enduring that even after almost 70 years
of systematic repressions by the state, the church is not able to perceive itself separately
from the state, let alone to emerge as a force that opposes state policies. The Byzantine
formula of "church-state symphony" with the Tsar being a head of both church and state
is still an ideal one for ROC. In return, the Church in Russia expects protection and
financing, and the state readily obliged. As the Professor of Saint Petersburg Theological Academy Georgi Mitrofanov argues, "Strictly speaking without the Church there would be no Russia, neither good nor bad Russia - just none" (9). It is worth noting that Russia’s Byzantine legacy is also revealed in the tradition of viewing the Tsar as "an anointed one". On that account, citizen's rights are limited to whatever is being granted by the supreme power.

Russia's position on the map in between European and Asian parts of the continent also plays an important role in its national identity structure. The cultural linkages between Russia and Europe are undeniable, but "geopolitics, climate and geography pull [Russia] closer to the East" (10). Due to its Asian influences, Russia gravitates towards "collective identity" rather than the individual one of the West. According to Berdyaev the highly differentiated society of the East Russian Orthodoxy is characterized by "'sobornost', a symphonic unity among individual, family, and society, in which all elements contributed to the development of each other" (11). Additionally, according to Orthodox eschatological philosophy, our world keeps distancing itself further away from God and love, and drifting towards an accumulation of evil and sins. That kind of society is "in a dire need of healing" (12). That is why interaction with the world is understood in Christian Orthodoxy as work, public service that is realized through God given talents.

The shift away from the state atheism of the USSR and the first steps towards Russia’s new model of interaction between state and religious organizations is rightfully attributed to Gorbachev and the Communist Party’s then chief ideologist, Alexander Yakovlev. The turning point was April 1988, a month and a half before official
celebrations of the Millennial Anniversary of Russia's Christianization Patriarch of Mosco. ROC's Synod members were invited to the Kremlin for a historic statement by Gorbachev, who announced that "believers are in fact Soviet people, working people, patriots and they are fully entitled to express their faith in dignity...We have a lot of things in common for a fruitful dialogue between us, as we have common history, common Fatherland, and common future" (13). Two years after that statement there was a newly adopted Russian law, "On the Freedom of Conscience," (14) which declared "every citizen's right to freely choose, practice and spread any religion or to not to belong to any confession" (article 3). According to the law, "none of the faiths or religious organizations could be advantaged or disadvantaged against the other." The state was declared "neutral in confessional freedoms, meaning it does not take the side of any religion or ideology" (Article 10). According to that law, registration of any religious organization was complete with a simple request to the local executive branch. Unlike before, no governmental consent was necessary. This clause has enabled an influx of various foreign religious and quasi-religious entities into Russia. Vyacheslav Polosin, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Committee on Religious Freedom, claimed in a 1993 Pravda article that "some 200,000 preachers from the United States had invaded Russia to form new religious societies." Unfortunately, many of those new societies were deemed sects or religious cults in their states of origin. Aum Shinrikyo, which organized the sarin gas attack in Tokyo subway in 1995, being one of them. After a few years, this new wave of foreign religious influence began to be viewed by the state and the ROC as alien to Russian culture and national identity, and accordingly as extremely dangerous. For instance, a former deputy Chairman of the Russian government's Council on
Religious Affairs, G.A. Mikhailov, wrote in 1997, "Mass religious shows that gather thousands of Russian citizens are so out of the context of Russian realities... [T]hey aim to disrupt and destroy local traditional values." (15) Already in 1997, Mikhailov had noted the importance of avoiding the temptation to repress sectarian movements without a proper basis in the law as it leads to "sectophobic" tendencies amongst nationalist and conservative organizations in Russia.

For the last 25 years religiosity in Russia has gone up but not as drastically is it thought to have. According to the polls on religiosity that reveal numbers of participation in liturgy, every day praying, faith in the main Christian dogma, resurrection of Christ, afterlife and so on - Russia is one of the most non-religious countries in the world. In the words of Professors Furman and Kaariaynen: The ROC is a "colossus with the feet of clay". According to the polls of their research in 2002, 80% of Russians consider themselves Christian Orthodox, 52% stated that have a very positive outlook on Orthodox Christianity, and only 1% had viewed Orthodox Christianity in negative light. Yet these are impressive numbers to back up a religious resurgence in a country that just 10 years prior to that research was officially atheistic. However according to the same poll only 7% of the poll participants attend church at least once per month. Nineteen percent of the respondents went to church a few times a year, 31% did once per year, and 42% did not attend church at all. According to the Ministry of Interior Affairs only 3 million Russians have attended Christmas liturgy on the January 8 2004 - that is less than 2% of population of a supposedly Christian Orthodox state. Moreover, in Moscow less than 1% of the city's 10.5 million people have attended church on Christmas. Compare these numbers to those of Russia's neighbors, for example Poland, where 96% of the
population actively exercise their faith through daily prayers, regular church attendance, and participation in rituals. (16)

Considering the low numbers of the people actually practicing Orthodox Christianity I contend that the Christian Orthodox identity of Russians bears features of cultural identity. "I am Orthodox" appears to be broader than the religious identity "I am Orthodox Christian". That according to Patriarch Alexii explains away the discrepancy between staggering numbers of people that consider themselves Christian Orthodox in Russia and people that actually practice Christianity actively: "One considers himself Orthodox not because of belief in God but rather because of baptizing, because of living in a country with Orthodox traditions." (17) Words of the Patriarch find confirmation in sociological research: the Christian Orthodoxy represents "a substitute or a functional replacement of ethnicity, as a phenomenon of reduction of complex identity structures to more simple and archaic ones" - states Natalia Zorkaya. She bases her conclusion on Levada Center polls according to which 69% of respondents perceive themselves as "Christian Orthodox." (18) The polls conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (ВЦИОМ) yield almost coinciding results: 75% of respondents think of themselves as Christian Orthodox, citing "the desire to be a part of the national tradition" as the main motive for doing so. (19)

Robert Kunovich comes to a similar conclusion with his 2006 exploration of salience of religion for the national identity in European countries. He states that "religion may provide a basis for national identity because religion is an identity that can overlap with national identity, reinforces other objective and subjective characteristics that provide a basis for national identity, and facilitates group mobilization." (20) This
close to total acceptance of Orthodox Christianity as an element of national identity paradoxically co-exists with the low numbers of the people that actually practice Orthodox Christianity. The sociologists argue that Christian Orthodox confession spread their influence on non-believers as well: religious self-identification is founded not on actual practice of faith but rather on the base of regarding oneself with the certain culture and national tradition. (21)

The second element of Russian identity that contributes to the country’s resistance to external influences also has its roots in the historical choice of Russia to inherit Byzantine Christianity. Along with keeping the nation secure military, economically or politically there is an 'identity securitizing' (22, 23) where the state acquires the notion of its own culture through setting itself in opposition to a radically different and threatening 'other'. Religion plays an important part in articulating the national identity and situating a certain state as a part of 'in-group' or 'out-group'. "Those who are different from us, 'the other', are often stereotyped and perceived as more dangerous and threatening than those who are more similar." (21)

The famed historian of Russian culture Yuri Lotman maintained that "polarity, or duality of structure is the principal feature of Russian culture." (25) That would suggest a never-ending standoff between Orthodox Christianity and paganism, and then Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism. And now, in our time, there is a standoff between Russia and the West. For the Russian state, the Church the West has long been perceived as a source of constant threat. It has been seen as a traditional foe and potential colonizer of Russia. It has been feared as a source of moral corruption and westernization. And it has been suspected of seeking to turn Russia into “a raw material appendage”. According to
the 1996 polls of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (ВЦИОМ), 59% of respondents thought that the West was always attempting to colonize Russia and 55% were convinced of the West’s intention to impoverish Russia and lead it to complete disintegration. (26)

Focusing on the West as a main component of national identification was always full of inherent ambiguity and contradiction. While being an ideal model for material welfare, prosperity, technological progress, the West at the same time was also perceived as a threat to Russia's "initial self" ('samost') and the source of inevitable destruction of Russia's traditional isolationism. Spreading of Western 'other' or 'modern' ideas meant not only "the danger for patriarchal social order's decline, but was also cursed as dreadful invasion of the foreign spirit of merciless mercantilism, rational positivism and lifeless formalism of law." (27)

The "otherness" of Russian national identity also finds its expression in Eurasianism with its distinctiveness from the West and Berdiaev's Russian Idea. The Russian Idea is comprised of the three main elements: the ROC, the peasant commune, and a powerful state. The Russian Idea presupposes "the prevalence of statehood ('gosudarstvennost'), spirituality ('duhovnost') and strong patriotism." It also provides an intellectual foundation for the rejection of the West’s culture, political systems and models of modernization. For advocates of the Russian Idea, Russia can only be saved by following its own unique historical path and, by extension, rejecting the globalizing forces that will distort Russia's development." (28)

Public statements of ROC's officials, including Patriarch Kirill, Archbishop Hilarion, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, reveal their unending suspicion of the West with
its "aggressive liberalism and secularism" and "principal aim to expel religion, in general, and the Orthodox Church, in particular from society and to diminish the influence of religion on people's behavior and life." (29)

The salience of Orthodox Christianity for the Russian identity is so undisputed these days that it makes possible processes that would seem absurd just a quarter of a century ago. For instance, the ROC and the Communist party have found common ground. Aside from the current warm relations of the leader of Russian communists Gennady Zyuganov and Patriarch Kirill, there is also the old narrative that "Jesus was the first communist." The Communist Party’s official site contains 295 articles mentioning Jesus Christ, including "Jesus was with the reds not the bourgeoisie" among them (30). When the Orthodox Passover celebration has fallen on the main Communist holiday of the May 1, Patriarch Kirill addressed his congregation saying that "to cancel the traditional World Proletariat Day demonstration because of Passover would be inconsiderate because it is such an important holiday for many people." (31)

My brief analysis reveals that both religion and the sense of 'the otherness' are essential elements of the Russian national identity. In the next chapter I will exemplify how both of these elements create Russia's resistance to the Western cultural influence.
Chapter 3.
Russia Opposing the West: The Criminalization of Blasphemy

Much to the surprise of scholars who predicted modernization’s impending eradication of religion, the world's development appears to be a non-linear process. For instance, Auguste Comte argued that religion's place would be taken by science as a result of the pragmatism prevalent in the modern society. Weber, in turn, augured the "world's disenchantment" (1). While both of Comte and Weber did not live to see a paradigm shift towards secularization, Peter Berger, who claimed similar ideas back in the 1970s, did witness the reversal of the global secularization trend, and subsequently changed his position (2). In contrast, English philosopher John Gray contends that "the religious instinct is irrepressible in humans ....and the result of repressing religious needs has been a rash of secular cults." (3) In that sense, Gray actually echoes Emile Durkheim who considered religion as a specific human phenomena that will live on forever in different molds and shapes.

The reason for religious revival in Russia seems obvious at first glance: Orthodox faith had simply filled the void left by the disappearance of Soviet identity. However, since Russia is not the only state experiencing return to its religious roots, there must be more to it than that. Scholars like Peter Berger (1999) (4), Alexander Vatoropin (2001) (5), and Catherine Kinvall (2006) (6) mark the advent of times of post- or counter-modernization. According to their theories, the dogma of the post secular world is society’s reaction to modernism, in which everything is doubted. It is a reaction of religious people to a faith that is reduced to "private opinion."

The radicalism and absolutism of modernism has created conditions for post-modern concepts and a post-modern paradigm. But that does not mean that post-
modernism would completely replace modernism. Both paradigms have co-existed for quite some time already. In religiosity, post-modernism finds its expression in counter-modernism, or what Vyacheslav Karpov calls "counter-secularization." (7) According to Karpov, religious resistance to modernization is caused by the following two interconnected elements.

1. Modernization has brought about secularization around the world and has diminished the ancient role of religion in society. Under these circumstances, counter-secularization appears to be a natural reaction - a rejection of modernism by more traditional and economically less developed societies.

2. The economical, political, environmental and moral consequences of modernization are ambivalent. This means that progress in one field is quite often a cause of a regress in another (7).

Globalization, on the one hand, is beneficial everyone, even for the developing world. On the other hand, it increases the economics gap between low and high income countries. Humans in the developed world experience unheard of abundance. However, mass culture has practically demolished art, and moral and spiritual degradation are consequences of Western consumerism. As a result, traditional religions like Orthodox Christianity and Islam view negative aspects of globalization as absolute.

According to Vladimir Leksin, all civilizations are to a different extent "entities formed around tradition." (8) Tradition is desired by most societies and humans because it creates economic, political, and, of course, cultural stability. Tradition is a defense of the core uniqueness of every civilization. Thanks to tradition only civilizations are able to keep their identity, values, and language. Leksin considers pursuit of tradition as "a civilizational self-defense." (9) A loss of tradition, according to him, would be a virtual surrender. For instance, even though a people still populates the same territory under the same political regime, surrendering their traditions would mean they become part of a
different civilization and culture. That is why the bearers of each national identity instinctively treat that tradition with respect and intuitively do not easily assume new customs, unless the new culture coordinates with their own accepted one and does not threaten their identity.

Elites of every civilization are constantly guarding their civilizational values because they perceive that this is a defense of the state’s sovereignty and their power. States within a civilization consolidating for defense or spreading their values can easily be observed today in Western and Islamic civilizations. History has little or no examples of one civilization consciously and voluntarily surrendering to another.

In the Information Age, and the subsequent manipulation of human consciousness through mass media, mass culture, and social networks, civilizational self-defense or active support of such manipulations has become an interest of many people let alone state structures. For instance, the level of awareness of one’s own national identity is different from one person to another and depends on many factors: social, educational, gender, and so forth. A good portion of those people responsible for forming public opinion in Russia today, including public figures from politicians to artists, are convinced of Western civilizational expansion and invasion of a cultural space that just 25 years ago filtered whatever it deemed good or bad for its internal use. In the minds of the Russian people, and many of popular ideologists like Alexander Dugin, for instance, Western values implanted into Russian soil keep eroding Christian Orthodox civilization. Most people still remember how quickly liberal values had replaced communist ideology and the devastating consequences of 'the shock therapy' of the 90's. The memory of the very unfortunate attempt to implant foreign ideas in such a short time span intensifies the
rejection of Western hypertrophy of individual freedom, same sex marriage, and the military establishing "democratic regimes" around the world. Or, as Catherine Danks puts it, "the impact of shock therapy fanned the flames of anti-Westernism." (10)

Civilizational self-defense is not exclusive to the states under Western civilizational attack, it is a feature of every civilization. Both the U.S. and Europe actively protect their civilizational values and counter-attack external influences. This can be seen with McCarthyism in the 1950s and the rise of ultra-right in France. More recent examples include Brexit in the UK and Trump in the U.S., which both could arguably fall into that category of civilizational self-defense. Self-defense discourse is a staple of any right wing politician. A French politician, for instance, stated that, "we now observe, on our national soil, a clash between two fundamentally different cultures. Islam.....is opposed to any assimilation and threatens our own identity, our Western Christian civilization" (11).

Vladimir Leksin notes that "white" Europeans are afraid to wake up in a completely Muslim France (Belgium or Germany) however they fail to realize that for that they would have to return to Christianity and increase Christian demography." (12) That is, apparently, a solution that the Russian authorities have committed themselves to in order to preserve national identity. And while demographically Russia is dragging behind (13), ideology is always a plan that could be implemented at a tremendous speed, provided one's access to mass media is free of dissenting opinions.

A young Russian state is in dire need of its own identity, and very often the search for that identity takes extreme forms when one path is followed with a complete rejection
of the other. It is as if the further one pushes the pendulum of Russian political thought to the right the further it will go to the left afterwards.

And so on Dec 2013, when Putin gave a speech before State Duma, the Kremlin officially declared a cultural war declaring, "We know that there are more and more people in the world backing us up in our struggle for traditional values, which for millennia had been the spiritual, moral basis of every civilization, every people: values of traditional family, values of true human existence including a religious one." (14)

Civilizational defense has two vectors. One is directed outward and concerns foreign policies of the state. The other one is inward and involves many things, such as educational and demographic policies. As Catarina Kinvall in her work on the rise of religious nationalism in India maintains, "Dominance and resistance are... two sides of the same coin. Globalization has assisted in bringing back notions of bounded cultures, ethnic resilience and the re-emergence of powerful nationalistic sentiments." (15) Self-defense of a Russian civilization has found its expression in a rather unfortunate "de-modernizing impulse.....that seeks a reversal of the modern trends that have left the individual alienated and beset with the threats of meaninglessness." (16)

The second half of the first decade of the 21st century has seen the transition of Russia's policies and ideologies to its great past, re-constructing seemingly incompatible symbols of both Romanov's Empire and the USSR. This has become Russia’s response to the Westernization and the major discourse of Russian officials of all levels. On the material level, Russia perceives the West as having no interest in an equal partner but instead a politically, economically and culturally weak provider of cheap natural resources and dumping ground for nuclear waste. Even the most liberally minded people
could not ignore unequal cultural exchange, "Russian ballet and opera companies spend much of their time touring abroad to earn money and in return the Russian people get Hollywood action films and pornography." (17) According to polls conducted in 2015 by the Levada Center, 48% of Russians think that the US is creating obstacles for Russia to become a strong state (39% in 2007), and 36% perceive the U.S. as wanting to impose its cultural influence on Russia (44% in 2007) (18).

The anti-Westernism of modern Russia’s narrative has no choice but to be rooted in religious discourse as the West in Russia is perceived as secularized, godless and even satanic. Here's what Patriarch of Moscow all Rus' Kirill has to say on that matter, “Things that modern civilization preaches today - is an absolutely godless idea. I would say - a satanic idea.... People do not understand that, looking through those glossy magazines with beautiful ads - it is dizzying. In reality, it is just a wrapping, what could be inside of that wrapping? The most horrendous things." (19)

The views of a Patriarch Kirill are met with understanding in Kremlin, especially his blatantly anti-liberal stance. Here are just a few of his statements from the past years. "These days we are witnessing how the concept of human rights is used to cover up lies and insults our national and religious values." (20) "A state public sphere should only spread and support those values that have backing of majority of people." (21) The Patriarch also disagrees with defining the Russian Federation as a secular or multi-confessional state, saying, "We have to drop that term 'multi-confessional' country for Russia is a Christian Orthodox territory with national and religious minorities in it." (22) In 1995, during the Second Russian's People Council, Kirill (then a Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad) declared that "our soil was imbued with alien and ugly ideas.
There has been a deformation of a national self-consciousness, it was replaced with a foreign cosmopolitan self-consciousness." (23)

If modernity's main feature is a constant change and adaptation to circumstances, then religion provides structure, stability, and a shelter from the chaos of the ever-changing and globalizing world. The social function of religion is to preserve "truth" as it is a constant and does not conform to history, regimes or politics. This way religion quite often supports intolerance towards the bearers of other faiths who have different “truths”. Hence attacks on religion as a purveyor of stability, provider of truth, and base of national identity is considered as assault against the nation.

The current change in church-state relations in Russia becomes clearer when the current discourse between clergy and politicians is juxtaposed against the times when the first post-Soviet Russian Patriarch, Patriarch Alexii II, was the head of the ROC. Alexii openly rejected Orthodox Christianity as a national ideology. He was against a literal interpretation of the formula "the Church serves Russia" and actively criticized clergy who tried "to marry Church and state." He repeatedly addressed that issue in his preaching, reminding people that "wherever church was tying a knot with any state regime or ideology, it was always left a 'political widow' when a new regime or ideology came along." (24)

We can currently observe the ROC's return to shaping Russia’s internal and external policies. For that purpose a Department of External Church Affairs (DECA) of the ROC was created. Apart from handling the Russian Orthodox Church's connections with local Russian churches, Orthodox churches abroad, Christian and non-Christian confessions, DECA interacts with NGOs and Russian governmental and State Duma
agencies. While being a head of DECA, the current Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus has developed his own globalizational project, which later has become a part of the "Bases". This project contains the main vectors of the ROC's policies, as Patriarch Kirill sees it. Russia's international affairs, while in close connection with the ROC, are being "transformed into seeing a full picture of national interests". For instance, due to the ROC's stand on the Vatican, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs cannot permit a Papal visit.

Creating a special status for Orthodox Christianity was started back in 1997 when the State Duma passed the law "On Freedom of Conscience and Associations." (25) The law, in clear contradiction to equality of all religions declared in Constitution of 1993, divided religious institutions into traditional and nontraditional groups. The traditional organizations remained entitled for full legal privileges and tax exemptions. The nontraditional groups, which included Catholic, Baptist, and sectarian Russian Orthodox groups operating outside of the ROC, were denied full privileges and were required to undergo an annual and highly restrictive registration. Legal privileges included the ability to own property, distribute literature, run radio and television programs, and conduct services in alternative locations such as hospitals and prisons (26). Echoing that law three years later, "The Doctrine of Informational Security of the Russian Federation" declares "the opposition to the influence of foreign religious organizations and missionaries (Article 6, 2000)" - one of the main directions of informational security (27).

The fact that President Putin has meetings with his private confessor ('duhovnik') Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov) has bothered many human rights activists in Russia not because he should not do it as a private individual but rather because Shevkunov
belongs to a highly politicized movement in Christian Orthodoxy. The very old idea of Moscow being the heir to Rome and Constantinople – “the Third Rome” - was a main message in Shevkunov’s film "The Fall of an Empire: the Lesson of Byzantium" (2008). According to this theory, Russia is the inheritor of Byzantium’s fallen Orthodox greatness, since "Byzantium rotted from within and succumbed to ideological predation by an envious West." (28) The film's plot has been criticized by many Russian liberals and historians for distorting and over-simplifying facts. The plot portrays Byzantium’s fall as having occurred prior to the Ottoman Invasion. Constantinople decided to reform under the advice of Western (Venetian) bankers, thereby replacing the culture of Byzantium with Western ultra-individualistic values. The Eastern Empire had then become a part of Western ideology. The documentary was broadcast three times on public national TV, earning sky-high ratings.

While the amendments to religious freedoms law in 1997 have complicated the operation of any religious denominations in Russia, aside from the "traditional four", in the U.S. law provides equality for all confessions with no state privileges for any faith. The state does not finance or politically support any religious denomination and at the same time does not create obstacles to any confession, including so-called cults. The most prominent Protestant denominations in the U.S. were historically created on the basis of democratic principles since both environment and ideology dictated democratic forms for confessional organizations. Even the centralized and authoritarian Catholic Church had to form around democratic principles that were built in the bureaucratic axis of its structure. Democratic principles inherent in American religious life have yet another aspect: human rights and civil freedoms gradually become staples of any major
religious denomination in the U.S. Religion becomes a keeper and judge of the democratic regime itself as opposed to preserving and defending state power and officials. Representatives of different confessions often openly criticize politicians for their policies not being moral or just, as interpreted not only in the Christian context but also in a purely democratic secular context.

The ideas of anti-Westernism are easily detected in the discourse of clergy and church officials. Here are just a few examples. Metropolitan Kurskii Juvenalii (Tarasov) criticizes Europeanization, which in his words has become "a disease of Russian life" and "threatens to dissolve Orthodox Christianity in an unseen before mix of heresies behind which is the Satan himself." (29) The worst of all heresies in his view is Catholicism. Archbishop of Novosibirsk Tikhon (Yemelyanov) is also convinced that "a hand of the West is behind Russia's erosion." (30) As for the Archbishop of Vladivostok Veniamin (Pushkar), the prime enemy is not just the West but rather the Jews of Western civilization "for they love the material more than heavenly....and for that from the chosen people of God has turned into an accursed one. Russian people have to sever the knot that Zionists and masons have tied and for that Russia cannot exist without a Tsar." (31) The most extreme opinion was voiced by Metropolitan of Saint Petersburg Ioann, who simply refuses to admit the legitimacy of "human rights" and "universal human values." (32)

The latest example of "the Orthodox Christian is Russian" discourse has transpired just recently, during the opening ceremony of the monument to Prince Vladimir who baptized Rus' back in 988 AD. Addressing all Russian people and President Putin personally, Patriarch Kirill states that "a loss of spiritual identity spells
doom for any culture," adding that "if not for Vladimir's choice of Byzantine Christianity there would have been no Rus' no modern Russia at all." (33) The central message of the Patriarch's speech was that the right choice was made already 1000 years ago (apparently for Ukraine and Byelorussia as well), and the Russian people were granted their civilizational code and immutable identity. The task, therefore, is simple: to preserve that identity from cultural and other assaults from abroad.

Another indicator of the collaboration between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state involves the mass return of Russian Orthodox philosophers to the public and state discourse. Deemed "semi-fascist" by the liberal press (34), Ivan Ilyin has been repeatedly quoted by Putin and many other elite members, including film director Nikita Mikhalkov, who along with Gleb Pavlovski and Vladislav Surkov constitute an intellectual circle around the Russian President. Putin's interest in conservative philosophers did not remain just his private fascination. Since becoming president he has quoted Nikolai Berdyaev in one of his speeches in 2013 after a special course in conservative philosophy held for the Kremlin officials. (35)

I will briefly summarize the main ideas of Ilyin to further explain Russia's search for identity in Christian Orthodoxy. Freedom in Ilyin's philosophy has two dimensions: "freedom from what?" and "freedom for what?" Freedom is needed for defense of spiritual values and protection of "Faith, Tsar and Fatherland". A Russian man feels and recognizes this “freedom” as a heart's desire to fulfill its duty like its own vital need and sacred mission. This is a freedom of a Russian conservative (a Slavophil as opposed to westerner or 'zapadnik' - the one who adheres to liberal ideas). "The Russian people have more than just political rights, they have political duties - to save and to protect Russian
Tsar and Russian Church." (36) Ilyin's vision is radical: the more Russia's way of thinking is denounced, the less your chances of understanding its culture and history are. For Russia is the bearer of the Divine Truth: the Orthodox Christianity. Accordingly, Ilyin is quite content with the West not accepting Russia's way because it reveals the West’s emptiness. Thus, Russia rejects universal values, seen as the values of the West, and gravitates towards its traditional values and a spiritual society that is rooted in their religion: Orthodox Christianity. In his article "On Russian Idea," Ilyin states, "We are not to imitate spiritual culture from other peoples... every people create what they can accordingly to what is given to them and is not supposed to 'beg and pan-handle'... our task is to create Russian spiritual culture from the Russian heart, with Russian contemplation, in Russian freedom - that is the essence of the Russian idea." (37)

In his recent work, "In Putin's Head," philosopher and writer Michel Eltchaninoff has analyzed the main ideas behind Putin's favorite philosophers and has come to a conclusion that the Russian President is guided by the three principles of Russian Orthodox thought:

a) Conservatism. Europe is a decadent continent against which Russia has to battle by using Christian Orthodoxy's moral order (Ilyin);

b) The Russian Way. This is a popular idea of Slavophils of the XIXth century. The West seeks to make Russia a weak state, and so Russia must protect its cultural and political system. This point is made by Nikolay Danilevski and his "Russia and Europe," a popular work in Putin's circles.

c) The Eurasianism of Lev Gumilev. Russia, the "Empire of Earth," confronts the West, the "Atlantic Empire." Russia "as a Eurasian country, is a unique example where the dialogue of cultural civilizations has become a centuries-old tradition of state and public life.” (from Putin's speech made during the Culture and Art Council, 25 November 2003, Moscow) (38).
More modern philosophy has a considerable impact on Putin's policies as well. Alexander Dugin, another proponent of Eurasianism, is said to be Putin's adviser on ideology, which includes a standard conservative agenda. He commented recently on last U.S. elections, "the main objective is to stop the spread of liberal globalism." (39).

As for the Russian people themselves, after 25 years it looks like they are having a hard time adapting to full scale consumerism, individualism and secularism, the three main features of modern Western culture. No doubt personal freedom is valued, especially by the ones who grew up in U.S.S.R., as is an access to a variety of goods unavailable for many years. At the same time, the Russian people do not rush into a full scale acceptance of individualism as a cultural ideal and consumerism as modus vivendi. The image of the Orthodox Church as a fortress of conservatism has become attractive for millions of people who, just like Church itself, could not adapt to the shock therapy of the 1990’s and were marginalized in yet another wave of modernization in Russia. The Russian government fully realizes that and its amalgamation with ROC is also a calculated step in order to receive ideological support and legitimization from people that it could not provide for economically.

With that narrative constantly present in the political discourse of state and ROC's officials, any pressure on Russia to fully adopt secular liberal values of the West would create more rejection and further tightening of the ROC and State union. One of the recent forms of such an opposition to globalizing forces has become a "Federal Law on Changes in Article 148 of the Criminal Code of RF in Order to Counteract Actions That Insult Religious Feelings of Citizens." (40)
The criminalization of blasphemy in Russia was spurred by the infamous "Pussy Riot case." On February 21, 2012, members of the punk protest group "Pussy Riot" staged a performance in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Their actions were qualified by court as "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred", and each member was sentenced to two years' imprisonment." Just over a year after the incident the Russian Parliament ('State Duma') adopted "On Insulting Religious Feelings of Believers" (Article 148 "Violation of rights on the freedom of consciousness and faith") to the Criminal Code, according to which such actions could lead to up to three years of imprisonment.

By adopting changes in legislation that criminalize insulting religious feelings Russia has gone in the opposite direction of the blasphemy de-criminalization trend in Europe. The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 made blasphemous actions legal in England and Wales; the Netherlands, Norway, and Iceland have since followed that path, with Ireland campaigning for a referendum to repeal the blasphemy law.

While the general perception of blasphemy laws in the West is of something "ancient" (41) or "illiberal" (42), the State Duma and President Putin apparently hold a different opinion. When questioned on Pussy Riot’s imprisonment prior to their sentence, Putin explicitly stated that he considers their actions to be "blasphemous and a blow to society's moral values." (43)

Archpriest Alexander Shargunov, a head of the Committee "For Moral Renaissance of the Fatherhood," was even more specific. He considered Pussy Riot's protest as a link in a chain of actions that "targeted Orthodox Christianity as a base of Russia's statehood." In his view "a reign of sexual minorities and 'wizards' is taking a
hold of the world and Russia ...and the 'protest' that happened in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior concerns not just ROC but all the Russian people." (44) Alexander Vishnyakov of the World Russian People's Council headed by Patriarch Kirill echoes these words in his disagreement for forgiveness of Pussy Riot's actions. Krill states that "Destroying the Church's authority is a link in a long chain of events that leads to a total catastrophe of Russian civilization's value system." (45)

The president's, people's and priesthood's perception of the so called "punk-prayer" performed by Pussy Riot in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior had found its reflection in State Duma that have initiated the debates on a new law almost instantaneously. The authors of blasphemy criminalization belong to the unofficial "Orthodox lobby" of the Russian parliament. This group is comprised of members of a few parties, including the dominant "United Russia", Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, "Just Russia" and the communists. Altogether the unofficial and unregistered group includes about 40 people (Duma totals 450 members), they, in the words of their 'coordinator' Sergei Popov, aim for "supporting the policies of Patriarch Kirill, his legislative initiatives and an overall strengthening of ROC's positions." (46)

In September 2012, seven months before law's adoption, the Levada Center conducted a poll to clarify people's attitudes towards possible blasphemy criminalization. They found that 67% of poll participants supported the idea of introducing criminalization of blasphemy (47).

However popular that measure was at that time, its practical application is doubted by almost all expert lawyers since it is almost impossible to create definitions for terms like "feelings" for criminal legislation. Only one person has been indicted since the
law's adoption. From the moment of its adoption the law has been repeatedly criticized in the liberal mass media. It has even been publicly protested by some members of ROC themselves, who maintain that "true believers are under protection of God not Criminal code." (48)

In November 2016, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation initiated a review of this law as being in contradiction with the State Constitution. So far, however, the law is being actively used by ROC's representatives to protest any cultural event that they deem as "insulting to their religiosity". This has included a performance of Wagner's "Tannhäuser" opera in Novosibirsk (49) and even an unfinished film on Nicholas II - the last Romanov who was canonized by ROC in 2000. (50) It is important to note that while the case of Pussy Riot was about intrusion on the "church's territory", the new law now permits the ROC to interfere into what was once completely secular matters. The law has also untied the hands of so called 'Orthodox Christian activists' who with authority's silent agreement have been protesting various artistic endeavors around the country.

In the meanwhile, during 2016, The World Russian People's Council has declared that expression of hatred towards members of the ROC or of desecration of sacred sites and objects is equaled to the acts of Rusophobia. Pussy Riot's performance is mentioned in the declaration as an instance of Rusophobia, alongside Islamic terrorism. (51)

It is too early to tell whether the joint determination of the power structures and the ROC to secure the national identity with re-affirming and protecting its Orthodox Christian part through criminalization of blasphemy has brought any results. The article 148 of the State Criminal Code might survive the petitions to abolish it but it would
hardly be of any practical use aside from intimidating people into self-censoring.

Attempting to 'securitize subjectivity' through blasphemy criminalization might just distance Russia further away from the west with no guarantee of actual protection of the national identity.
Chapter 4. Conclusion

On the whole, the increased and unrestricted influence of Western liberal ideas and culture in post-Soviet Russia has caused the unmooring of national identity from its ethnic and religious foundation. In Russia, the amalgamation of the ROC and the state, and the subsequent criminalization of blasphemy, has been caused by the complex combination of the following three factors: the pronounced anti-Western position of the ROC's clergy, the need to fill in the identity vacuum left by the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., and the determination of the Russian executive branch to assert its ability to restore Russia's international status lost in the 1990s.

Consequently, with the Kremlin actively supporting the ROC with its legislative, administrative and mass media resources, it could be confirmed that the Russian state is "becoming increasingly identified with the ROC as part of its search for identity and resistance to perceived Western pressures." (1) The very fact that the Pussy Riot political protest was staged in the Orthodox Cathedral could be interpreted as evidence of the amalgamation of the Church and state in Russia.

Although, according to the latest polls, citizens of Russia exhibit support for the ROC as a main provider of cultural identity and a link to their historical past (2), it could be said that merging the state and the Church in Russia is predominantly a top-down decision. The society itself treats the expansion of ROC with indifference, thus giving a carte blanche to authorities and making the merging of the state and the ROC almost an irreversible course.

The criminalization of blasphemy is actively used to censor the internet (3) and the mass media, as well as a leverage against various artistic (4,5) and liberal endeavors.
The law contradicts the constitution of the Russian Federation and is detrimental to the development of freedom of speech in Russia. Over 18,000 people have already signed a petition on Change.org for abolition of the blasphemy law. (6) The petition points out the fact that it is impossible to define what exactly constitutes "religious feelings of believers." As a result of this ambiguity, any citizen or organization could be accused of blasphemy. And although it does not always lead to indictment it creates a situation of practically unrestricted censorship. The vague wording of the criminal law is fertile soil for various abuses in courts and for feeding a state funded propaganda machine. Being aware of that, most organizations and citizens are conditioned to the constant self-censoring and vigilance towards possible "religious insults".

It could be said that in the past 16 years Russia is experiencing "a definite turn towards an anti-liberal 'special way', i.e., a totalitarian imperial regime using nationalist-clerical ideology." (7) Despite the collaboration between the state and the ROC, one must recall that historically religious pluralism has never been a part of official Russian policies. Indeed, the present situation is a vast improvement on both Tsarist and Soviet religious administration. It does not seem that full scale religious freedom and Western secular state are possible in Russia under the present conditions. However, it becomes increasingly apparent that there will be more pressure applied to Russia internationally the more resistant its internal religious policies become. As I have attempted to demonstrate, both the structure of national identity and Huntington's polarization thesis help illuminate de-secularization, be it a top-down or bottom-up resistance to the secularizing influences of the West. A dialogue among cultures is possible only when all participants make an effort to be on the same level with each other, yet the discourse of
Westernization excludes that possibility. And so the Kremlin's policies would remain consistently anti-secular and anti-Western in general.

Along with that, the outright anti-democratic position of the ROC is one of the main elements that distances Russia from the West and holds back social and economic modernization. One might hope that a more democratic evolution of the ROC-state relationship in Russia is inevitable, and that the ROC is simply complying with the political demands of the current Russian government. And yet it is becoming clear that the ROC itself is lacking alternative views of people like Andrei Kurayev, Fathers Mitrofanov, and Innokenty Pavlov who have distanced themselves from the hard-line conservative position of the Moscow Patriarchate. Russia's future as a leading world power is very much dependant on whether it will be able to bring up a multi-national and multi-confessional identity.

How far will Russia go in its resistance to the West to secure its national identity? The question remains open. Strengthening its own identity may mean distancing itself from everyone else. The path of separating itself from the West might lead to isolationism that eventually was one of the major causes of the Soviet Union's demise. It is clear that other countries experience similar processes of westernization however it is hard to tell whether they would follow Russia's current suit, considering anti-westernism is not a part of every country's history.
End notes.

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