



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Framing Russian State-Church Relations

Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies
Uppsala University

Master Program in Russian and Eurasian Studies

Spring 2025

Author: Torsten Greber

Supervisor: Caroline Hill & Maria Eckerdal

Abstract

In the Russian history, the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian government has fluctuated, from being a beneficial relationship for both parties in the era before Peter the Great, to almost being eradicated under the Soviet Union. Research focusing on the contemporary Russian state-church relationship have pointed to signs that the church has become a central actor in shaping the Russian identity, legitimizing the state and its policies as well as influencing government policies, but at same time research has also shown that there are more than a few critical voices expressing discontent on state policy. The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how representatives of the Russian state publicly describe its relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church by applying a framing typology, that previously have been used on Orthodox online media, on statements given by Russian government representatives between January 2012 and March 2024. This thesis concludes that there is a discrepancy in how representatives from the two government branches under investigation, the Presidential Administration and the Foreign Ministry, describe the relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church. While the Presidential Administration describes the relationship through positive commentary and the Foreign Ministry more through cooperation, the overall description should be seen somewhere between cooperation and support.

Keywords: Russia, state-church relations, Russian state-church relations, Russian Orthodox Church, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Presidential Administration of Russia, framing analysis

Word count: 23, 263

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support and guidance of several people. While not all can be mentioned here, there are some that deserve to be mentioned especially. I would like to begin by thanking both my supervisors Caroline and Maria, for all the guidance, knowledge and comments that you have shared with me on this academic journey. Emil, thank you for the proofreading and the many insightful comments. To my family, thank you for supporting me when this project felt overwhelming and for listening to me rambling about Russian state-church relations. A subject that I think you might be a little tired of by now, although you would never admit it.

Table of contents

1.	Introduction	4
1.1.	Aim and research questions	5
1.2.	Thesis Structure	5
1.3.	Background	6
1.3.1.	The church reforms of Peter the Great	6
1.3.2.	The revolutionary Era.....	8
1.3.3.	The Stalinist terror.....	10
1.3.4.	From the Second World War to Khrushchev	11
1.3.5.	Khrushchev.....	12
1.3.6.	Brezhnev, Andropov & Chernenko.....	14
1.3.7.	Gorbachev & Yeltsin.....	15
1.3.8.	2000s and onwards	17
2.	Previous research & theory	20
2.1.	What is framing?	20
2.2.	Church-state relations as framing.....	22
2.3.	Contemporary church-state relations in Russia.....	23
2.4.	Positioning in relation to previous research	29
3.	Methodology	31
3.1.	Choosing a medium/topic.....	31
3.2.	Determining the time frame	31
3.3.	The sample	32
3.4.	Identifying the unit of analysis.....	34
3.5.	Selection of a frame typology	34
3.6.	Limitations.....	35
4.	Results	36
4.1.	State-church relations frames	37
4.1.1.	Symphony frames.....	38
4.1.2.	Dialogue frames: Affinity	43
4.1.3.	Dialogue frames: Disillusionment.....	47
4.1.4.	Disestablishment frames.....	48
4.2.	Other observations outside of the framing typology	48
5.	Discussion	49
6.	Conclusions	54
7.	Bibliography.....	57
8.	Appendix I: Empirical sources	68

1. Introduction

Since its establishment in 988, with the baptism of Vladimir the Great, the Russian Orthodox Church (hence referred as the ROC or simply the church) has had a highly contrasted relationship with the Russian governments through history, having been under state control from the rule of Peter the Great in the 1700s until 1917 (Cracraft, 1971) and close to extinction under the soviet regime (Davis, 1995). Today it is the largest church among the Eastern Orthodox Churches and has territorial authority and claim over orthodox believers in the post-soviet states and their respective diaspora. The ROC also has jurisdiction over the orthodox churches in China, Japan & the United States (Strindberg, 2022, p. 3; World Council of Churches, n.d.), all together gathering over 150 million members worldwide (Konflikt, 2024).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many scholars have tried to define and understand the relationship between the ROC and the Russian state, especially in recent years due to a fundamental shift in Russian politics, called the ‘conservative turn’. These studies have utilized a large variety of methods and materials, as well differed on which actor they focus on. Some have focused on analyzing and comparing governing documents (see Bodin 2013 or Stoeckl 2022.), others have conducted case studies to investigate how new government policies that was supported by the ROC have been implemented (see Blitt, 2022 or Knox, 2005) and a third group have analyzed statements or social media posts from representatives to see how the relationship is viewed and interpreted (see Hill 2016 or Hill 2021). While each of these studies provide a snapshot in the respective area of focus, there are few instances where the research design is recurring or applied on the other actor in the relationship, and thus fails to give consistency and comparable data. For example, a scholar might investigate in what way metropolitans, a head of an ecclesiastical province, have described the state on social media. While this give an excellent picture on how the church views the relationship with the state, there are few studies that ‘turn the table’ and investigate how governors in the same geographic areas discuss the how they express their view of the church in social media.

To remedy this one-sided perspective, this thesis will build on a study by Caroline Hill from 2021, that investigated articles authored by clerics or others serving in the church and posted on religious websites between the year 2000 to 2020, by utilizing the same framing typology

on statements from government representatives. It should be said that the framing typology was originally built on church-state relations models developed by Kristina Stoeckl (2018 & 2020) and was later adjusted to frames by Hill (2021). There are two fundamental differences in the research design between this thesis and Hill's article (2021). Firstly, relating to the material, where Hill utilized statements published on orthodox media by individuals connected to the church, while this thesis will utilize statements from government representatives. The second difference relates to the time span under investigation, where Hill collected statements from the year 2000 to 2020 and I focus on the statements from 2012 to 2024. The thesis main contribution, beside the snapshot of how the Russian government views its relationship to the ROC, is the application of the framing typology on a secular actor for the first time.

1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this qualitative study is to investigate how representatives of the Russian state publicly describe its relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church. I will achieve this aim by answering the following research questions:

(1). How does Vladimir Putin, Sergey Lavrov, Grigori Karasin & spokespersons of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs describe the relationship between the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church?

(2). How effective is Caroline Hill's church-state relations framing typology in capturing key sentiments expressed by secular actors?

1.2. Thesis Structure

This thesis disposition will be structured in five segments. Firstly, I will provide a brief history of Russian state-church relations by outlining some key historic events that have affected the church and the state. I will also mention how the ROC differs from other religious organizations that are acknowledged to have contributed to the Russian historical heritage in the law of *Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations* from 1997, naming Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism (Basil, 2005, p. 154). Next, I will outline previous

research connected to framing and Russian state-church relations. Third, the method of utilizing framing strategies on statements given by representatives of the Russian government will be presented, together with discussions regarding the empirical material and methodological limitations. Fourth, the results will be presented and later discussed in section five. Sixth, conclusions will be drawn about the findings and what future research related to the findings might focus on.

1.3. Background

This section aims to contribute a foundational understanding of the ROC by providing a historic background as well as general depiction of the status of the church in contemporary Russia. I have made a selection of what part of the vast history of the ROC and its relations to the state to cover. I have thus chosen to focus on outlining key events affecting the church, by outlining on the church reforms of Peter the Great, the changes during the Soviet Union and post-soviet era.

1.3.1. The church reforms of Peter the Great

From 1672 to 1725, Peter I ruled as first Tsar of Russia, in the beginning with his half-brother Ivan V, and later as the first Emperor of Russia. During Peter's time in power, the church was subjected to a new reality where its independence and integrity was challenged. In 1686, Peter presented a special tax that was to be levied on the Patriarch, bishops and monasteries to pay for the upcoming campaign against the Ottoman empire. While similar taxes had been collected by previous tsars in times of war, Peter's government was in a constant state of war: against Turkey 1695-1700, Sweden 1700-1721 and Persia 1722-1723 (Cracraft, 1971, p. 79). This tax thus drained the church finances over a 28-year period. From 1696, all monasteries and bishops were required to each year send their account books to the tsar's *prikaz* of the Great Court, which was in charge of collecting taxes from church estates, which in turn decided if any larger investments were to be approved (Cracraft, 1971, p. 85). Peter also actively hindered church expansions both directly by prohibiting the church from acquiring new land, but also through receiving land as a gift or through a will. As argued by Cracraft, this was not a new law since it had been established by Peter's father Tsar Alexei, but what differed was the enforcement (1971, p. 82). Under previous administrations the church had

continued to buy land although they were legally hindered and in 1672 tsar Alexei himself had assigned land in Ukraine to the church (Cracraft, 1971, p. 82-84).

Tsar Peter also utilized church funds to improve the social security for Russian citizens. In July 1701 the Monastery Prikaz, whose income came from the church, assumed control of almshouses – poorhouses or hospitals for the sick and poor (Cracraft, 1971, p. 91). In 1721 the church was tasked with the responsibility of administering the 31 male and 62 female almshouses, housing a total of 4411 inmates (Cracraft, 1971, p. 91).

Another set of decrees focused on reducing the judicial privileges enjoyed by the clergy in Russia. The church stance on the relationship with the state had always related to the laws of the Byzantine emperors, with the theory of the parallel powers – the ecclesiastical and the secular – where the ecclesiastical judges the souls and the secular judges the body (Cracraft, 1971, p. 102). The church argued that all ‘bishops, archimandrites and igumens, priests, deacons and monks, and all other members of the ecclesiastical order and their dependents’ were to be judged by a bishop or someone appointed from the ecclesiastical order and not from the secular realm (Cracraft, 1971, p. 102). Peter’s father, Tsar Alexei, attempted to restrict these rights by declaring a code for the prosecution of clerics accused in criminal matters. Apprehension, interrogation and punishment were to be conducted by specially appointed officials together with the tsar’s police. Bishops were to cooperate in the process, but were not involved in the sentencing (Cracraft, 1971, p. 103). Under Peter, several decrees were implemented that reduced the judicial privileges, one example from 1697 being that all litigations between a member of the clergy and a layman was to be shared between the ecclesiastical courts and the secular (Cracraft, 1971, p. 103). In practice, from 1701 the government also assumed the responsibility for the discipline of the monastic and secular clergy, even having the right to defrock after certain infringements of state law (Cracraft, 1971, p. 105). These reforms introduced by Peter, removed the privileges that members of the ecclesiastical order had enjoyed and instead submitted them to judgment of the state, thus giving the government the power to indirectly shape church practice.

In a decree from December 1701, Peter changed the economic system for the monasteries, where all monks were to be given an annual allowance of 10 rubles and the amount of food and firewood needed for a year, while all the other revenues were to be given to the state (Cracraft, 1971, p. 138). With the goal to raising as much money as possible from the church,

the Monastery Prikaz reported receipts of 88,500 Rubles from the combined church in 1701 (Milioukov, Seignobos & Eisenmann, 1932, p. 578-613, cited in Carcraft 1971, p. 141). The Prikaz reached a peak in the revenues from the church in 1707 with 224,502 Rubles (Milioukov, Seignobos & Eisenmann, 1932:578-613, cited in Carcraft 1971, p.142). Beginning in 1711, Peter gradually restored laws relating to tax collection and administrative weight imposed on the church, in anticipation of the new administrative order that was to be imposed in 1721 (Carcraft, 1971:143).

In 1700, while Peter was laying siege to the Swedish occupation of Narva, Patriarch Adrian passed away, leaving for the tsar to appoint a new head of church. Peter however abstained to fill the seat of the Patriarch and instead named a temporary head (Carcraft, 1971, p. 130). At the time Peter reformed both the military and the government by introducing collegiums which replaced the 'prikaz', and in 1721 the Patriarchy was replaced with the Ecclesiastical college (Carcraft, 1971, p. 148). The college, which was renamed to the 'Most holy All-Ruling Synod' consisted of 11 members of various ranks from the church and was appointed by the tsar. The abolishment of the Patriarchate meant a diversion from the muscovite tradition as well as the byzantine tradition, and the church became an organization subordinate to the imperial government (Carcraft, 1971, p. 149-151).

1.3.2. The revolutionary Era

With the February Revolution of 1917, Emperor Nicholas II abdicated and thus ended the Romanov era which later led to the October revolution and the Russian Civil War. With the fall of the Russian monarchy and the establishment of a secular provisional government, the Russian Orthodox Church gathered the Great All-Russian Ecclesiastical Sobor, the highest level of authority comprised of all the bishops as well as representatives from the clergy and the laymen (Kalkandijeva, 2017, p. 12-13). This was the first all-Russian council since 1681 and since the abolishment of the Patriarch. The sobor, which opened in august 1917 and consisted of 564 delegates, voted on several drafts, the most significant being the liberation from the secular government, the 'petrine model' of church organization and the restoration of the Patriarchal office (Kalkandijeva, 2017, p. 13). On the 10th of November 1917, Metropolitan Tikhon (Vasily Ivanovich Bellavin) was enthroned as the new Patriarch – 217 years after the former Patriarch, Adrian, had passed away. The following year, 1918, the Bolsheviks began their anti-religious campaigns with decrees aimed at separation between

church & state as well as church & schools. This resulted in the abandonment of the subject of orthodox religious classes in the education system, something that had been mandatory for children of orthodox faith or children who had at least one orthodox parent (Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 20-22). As discussed by both Davis (1995) & Kalkandjieva (2017), the Bolshevik ideology believed in the extinction of religion and of God, where the communist ideology was supposed to take its place, and they sought to speed up the process by destabilizing the physical organization of the believers.

In 1921 the Russian Republic was struck by famine which together with diseases resulted in approximately seven million deaths (Davis, 1995, p. 3). During this period, the Bolsheviks seized church valuables and later properties to buy food from abroad. While the church and the newly elected Patriarch, Tikhon, offered to donate valuables not used in sacraments, it led to 1,400 clashes between believers and Bolshevik followers during the days of the campaign. All over the Russian republic, churches were closed and priests together with hierarchs were arrested (Davis, 1995, p. 5; Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 94-96). It was later revealed in a memorandum sent by Lenin to the Politburo, that the seizure of church properties had been a deliberate strategy to break the power of the clergy and the influence of the church (Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 94-96).

Besides confiscating church properties, the soviet government attempted to disrupt the ROC as an institution by disrupting key functions and decision making, as well as to sow distrust and resentment between the central church organization & the parishes. In the end of April 1921, Patriarch Tikhon was arrested in the wake of the mass seizures during the famine and was sentenced to house arrest, thus hindering him from perform his duties. The Patriarch and the church, foreseeing a situation where the Patriarch was indisposed, had designated deputies to take over the governing of the church – these were called the *locum tenens*, meaning to ‘hold the place of’ (Kalkandjieva, 2017, p. 13). During the imprisonment, the soviet government promoted a rivaling faction, the Renovationist, which was trying to take control in Tikhon’s absence. As described by Pospelovsky, members of the Renovationist declared themselves as the Supreme Church Administration, thereby disregarding the predetermined succession (Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 56). While the legitimacy of the new Supreme Church Administration was questioned, they were still able to govern the ROC until Tikhon denounced his previous actions and was released. During their time, the Renovationist leadership managed to depose 80 bishops who were seen as loyal followers of Tikhon and

received control of most of the functioning Orthodox churches in Russia from the soviet government (Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 51-61; Fletcher, 1971, p. 32). With the release of Patriarch Tikhon on June 27 1923, the renovationist movement lost many of its bishops, priests and followers, but the movement continued to attack the church both domestically and on the international arena (Kalkandjieva, 2017, p. 17-23).

1.3.3. The Stalinist terror

After the death of patriarch Tikhon in April 1925, the church had a clear succession in case the government tried to obstruct the selection of a new Patriarch, through the *locum tenens*. The state did however imprison two out of three of the locum tenens, leaving Metropolitan Peter (Pyotr Fyodorovich Polyansky) to take over. His reign was short due to allegations laid forth by the renovationist, which was still supported by the soviet government, and he was exiled to Siberia in the end of 1925. While the acting Patriarch Peter had designated deputies before his exile, their authority was questioned since they had not been elected by a Sobor but appointed by the acting Patriarch (Davies, 1995, p. 4-5). One of these deputies, Metropolitan Sergii (Starogorodskii), was arrested in 1926 after trying to register himself as interim leader of the ROC (Kalkandjieva, 2017, p. 23). He was later released and confirmed as acting head in 1927, in exchange for declaring loyalty toward the soviet government and ordering all hierarchs to pledge loyalty or risk being excommunicated from the church (Odintsov, 1992). During the struggle for power, several schismatic groups had emerged claiming to be the rightful heir to the ROC of Tikhon, thus splitting the church into several factions.

In 1932, Stalin decreed that religion was to be eradicated by 1937, but the 1937 census showed instead that over half the people in the country still considered themselves as believers. The response was to redouble the repressions and the propaganda. In the midst of the purges of 1936, the third wave of church closings were initiated. From originally having about 50 000 churches in 1918 (Meyendorff, 1981, p. 155), the church had only 200-300 open functioning churches in the whole Soviet Union by 1939 (Schmemmann, 1991, p. 2). Similar to the rest of the soviet society, the church was also subjected to liquidations under Stalin's rule and by the end of the 1930s close to 80 000 clerics, monks and nuns had lost their lives (Schmemmann, 1991, p. 2).

1.3.4. From the Second World War to Khrushchev

The relation between the ROC and the soviet government changed fundamentally with the occupation and incorporation of new territories during the second world war, where many eastern European citizens defined themselves as orthodox. Through annexation of Poland, parts of Romania and the Baltic states, the ROC gained more than 6 million new believers, 3.500 – 4.000 churches with practicing priests, monasteries, bishops and seminaries as well as other resources (Davis, 1995, p. 16). While the Soviet government continued to close churches and detain priest, this quickly changed with the attack of Germany since Stalin saw risks that orthodox believers would utilize the invasion to turn on the government, despite acting Patriarch Sergi (Ivan Nikolayevich Stragorodsky) had declared his support for the soviet government (Davis, 1995, p. 18).

In 1941, the antireligious propaganda was halted and the League of Militant Godless, an anti-religious organization connected to the communist party, which propagated the extermination of religion, was dissolved. On September 4, 1943, the acting Patriarch Sergi, together with two metropolitans, met with Stalin in the Kremlin to discuss several requests from the church (House, 1988, p. 79). During the meeting the soviet government agreed to: (1) allow the election of a Patriarch at the earliest convenience, (2) let the church organize theological courses for priest and establish seminaries & academies, (3) set up shops and candle factories, (4) publish a church newspaper, (5) open new churches, (6) to consecrate bishops and ordain more priests (Odintsov, 1989 , p. 9). The subjects of imprisoned hierarchs and clergy as well as the seizure of properties was also voiced but was tabled for the future. Four days after the historic meeting, acting Patriarch Sergi was officially enthroned as Patriarch (Struve, 1967, p. 66).

With the time of Patriarch Sergi's death in 1944, the terms negotiated with the government was continuing to be implemented and the acting Patriarch, Aleksii I (Sergey Vladimirovich Simansky), proclaimed that in the year after Patriarch Sergi had been enthroned, over 200 churches had been built in the soviet heartland (Davies, 1995, p. 20). Through two decrees in 1944 and 1945, the government also returned over 300 churches to the ROC (Curtis, 1953, p. 294; Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 204). From August 1945, the church was granted the right to once again become a legal entity and thus to lease, construct and purchase budlings, although they were prohibited to own the land the houses rested on (Bociurkiw, 1969, p. 91). This gave the

church an opportunity to start growing once again by establishing physical locations across the Soviet to worship and to consolidate the suppressed influence that the believers constituted.

As the second world war continued, the Soviet Union managed to liberate lost territory taken by Germany which resulted in two issues for the church: (1) the shortage of clerics in relation to functioning churches and (2) the imbalance of nationality and geography within the church. As reported by the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, the bishop of Kishinev had focused exclusively for two years to recruit priests to the parishes in Moldova, only to supply around 50% with adequate staff (*Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1947, p. 42, cited in Davis, 1995, p. 23). The same problem was identified in several areas in the new territories and resulted in 1,000-2,000 churches only in the Baltic states being denied registration by the state (Davies, 1995, p. 24). The second issue for the church was the geographical inequality in the ROC where close to two thirds of all its churches were located in Ukraine and if the churches in Belarus, the Baltics and Romania were included, they together accounted for 80% (Davis, 1995, p. 24). This could possibly threaten the internal stability of the church, since Ukrainian interests might influence the ROC, its organization and in turn its relationship with the central committee of the Soviet state.

From 1948 and until Stalin's death in 1953, the policy toward the church shifted back to repression. With statistics compiled and presented by Davis, showing the number of ROC affiliated churches each year between 1947 and 1954, we can see that the number of churches decreased from 14,039 in 1947 to 13,422 in 1954 (1995, p. 27). This is a result of decrease, and later stop, of registrations of new churches and parishes in the USSR (Fletcher, 1971), together with the start of deregistration of parishes and church buildings in 1948 (*Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1946, cited in Davis 1995, p. 28).

1.3.5. Khrushchev

The early era of Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964) signified a somewhat neutral stance towards the church, where the government even cut back its anti-religious propaganda (Davis, 1995:31) and declared mass amnesties, which led to the release of many clerics and believers that had been sentenced to gulag labor camps (Radyshevski, 1990, p. 16). This was a result of Khrushchev admitting and denouncing the crimes of Stalin in 1956, forcing the soviet

leadership to adjust the ideological policies. Between 1955 and 1958, the number of ROC affiliated churches also confirmed the relative stability of the church growing from 13,376 to 13,415 (Davies, 1995, p. 31).

The first signs of real opposition came in 1958 when the authorities removed the deferment of military service for students attending religious seminars (Pospelovsky, 1984:237). The anti-religious propaganda was also intensified (Bociurkiw, 1969:96, cited in Davies 1995, p. 32) and refocused from spreading anti-religious arguments to spreading allegations toward named hierarchs in the church (Stroyen, 1967, p. 93, cited in Davies 1995, p. 32). In 1959, the government also terminated tax exemptions for some of the church holdings, agricultural lands and church businesses, while the prices on some of the products that the church sold were frozen. This resulted in economic crises for the central church administration and local parishes, which struggled to pay out salaries (Gordun, 1993A, p. 12).

From 1960, the number of churches affiliated to the ROC started to drop once again. During the year 1960, 1,400 churches in the USSR were deregistered, representing close to 11 percent of the total amount and constituted the biggest decline since 1945 (Davis, 1995, p. 37). The situation worsened for the church in 1961, when the government forbade the central church administration to give financial support to local parishes (Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 342). Furthermore, the authorities ruled that there could only be one church per village, that churches in towns must be far away from each other and that a priest was not allowed to serve in more than one church (Struve, 1967, p. 292-3, cited in Pospelovsky 1984, p. 342). Priests and hierarchs that resisted the new decrees were arrested (Pospelovsky 1984, p. 342).

Another major change aimed at closing churches that was pursued by the Soviet government in 1961 was to change the power structure in the parishes from the priests to the lay executives (Gordun, 1993B, p. 24). This made it easier for the government to close churches since some of the lay executives were government sympathizers. Through forcing priests to re-register, and thus accept the new power balance in the parishes, the government was able to close even more churches where the priests refused to re-register or had been removed (Konstantinov, 1979, p. 267).

The propaganda, regulation and closing of churches under Khrushchev's era was devastating for the ROC. Out of the 8 theological seminaries operating in 1959, only 3 remained in 1966

and over two thirds of all the monasteries and nunneries had been closed (Davis, 1995, p. 43). Over an eight-year period, from 1958 to 1966, the church went from 13,415 to 7,466, thus losing 5,499 churches constituting 44 percent of those functioning in 1958 (Davis, 1995, p. 43). Of all the functioning priests in 1958, close to 40 percent had been lost in 1966 due to retirement, death or to having lost the authorization from the government to serve (Davis, 1995, p. 126).

1.3.6. Brezhnev, Andropov & Chernenko

The time period under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982), Yuri Andropov (1982-1984) & Konstantin Chernenko (1984-1985) is commonly referred as the period of stagnation (*zastoy*), a name which is also suitable for describing the church-state relations during their time. With the death of Khrushchev in 1964, the public battle against the church ceased, although the church closings continued. From 1965 to 1971, the main focus of the soviet government's anti-religious campaign was not aimed at the ROC, but rather on other religious communities that had avoided registration and thus to comply to Soviet decrees (Boiter, 1980, p. 46-47; Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 343). While several laws were passed that aimed to force such communities to register, and thus not affecting the ROC to any larger extent, a penal code was updated that mandated punishment for spreading religious superstition, collecting money through coercion or teaching religion to minors (Boiter, 1980, p. 36-37, 60).

With the events of the Prague Spring in 1968, where a reformist was elected leader for the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union invaded, the Soviet government and the ROC cooperated to suppress the religious and nationalist movement in the country. The interests for both parties were to obtain control in the respective sphere: for the ROC to hinder the Ukrainian Greek-Catholics and other rivaling religious communities to expand and attain a legal status; while the Soviet government needed to reverse the reformist sentiments in the country (Kelher, 1992, p. 294-6; Markus, 1985, p. 113-115). While there were corresponding interests regarding Czechoslovakia, it was the only major cooperation between the ROC and the government during the stagnation era.

In April 1970, Patriarch Aleksii passed away at the age of 92 and Metropolitan Pimen (Sergey Mikhailovich Izvekov) became his successor in June 1971 (Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 391-394).

Between the years of 1971 and 1975, statistics shows a net decline of around 35 churches per year (Davis, 1995, p. 59) and while the government approved more registrations between 1978-1980, especially in Siberia and Central Asia to promote russification in the regions (Henry, 1987, p. 19), the church still lost 724 churches between 1966 to 1986 (Davis, 1995, p. 55).

1.3.7. Gorbachev & Yeltsin

With Michail Gorbachev at the helm (1985-1991) came a turnaround in the Russian state-church relations in relation to Khrushchev and the era of stagnation. This can both be a related to the millennium celebration for the ROC 1988, where the church celebrated 1000 years since the establishment of the orthodox faith, which was highlighted by international media, but it also relates to the changes Gorbachev sought to introduce in the soviet Society, where he needed support against soviet traditionalists and with the implementation of his liberal policies (Davies, 1995, p. 60).

By 1986, a number of changes had been implemented that positively affected the operations of the church such as once again letting priests serve in parishes other than their own, letting children from the age of 10 to volunteer in religious rites and declaring that parishes and other religious societies should be seen as a judicial entity, thus letting them own property (Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1986, p. 80, cited in Davies, 1995, p. 62). Furthermore, they government also changed the requirements for the registrations of religious societies by broadening the area of membership from a village to a region, thus enabling believers in scattered rural areas to register (Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1986, p. 80, cited in Davies, 1995, p. 63). Despite the policy changes, it only increased the registrations marginally until Gorbachev met with Patriarch Pimen and the church leadership in April 1988 (Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1988, p. 4, cited in Davis, 1995, p. 63). During the meeting Gorbachev thanked the church for their patriotism and support during the second world war, as well as acknowledging how the church was mistreated during the years of Stalin and Khrushchev (Bourdeaux, 1992, p. 234). The Patriarch replied by requesting help from the government regarding: (1) restoration of churches closed in the 1960s; (2) simplifying the registration process for new church societies; (3) building new churches; (4) permission to increase the number of monks and nuns; (5) permission to expand the training programs for priests and other church professions; (6) permission to open seminaries in soviet republics; (7)

increase the production of bibles and other literature and (8) to revise legislation regulating churches and cults (Potapov, 1988, cited in Davies, 1995, p. 63). The Soviet government accommodated all the requests presented by the Patriarch (1995, p. 64) through the Freedom of Religion law (*O svobode Veroyisповedanii*) which was passed in 1990 and was the first substantial legal change since the 1920s (Pospelovsky, 1984, p. 164-165). This meeting is significant in several ways for the Russian church-state relation. Apart from showing how the soviet government committed to strengthen the church, the government acknowledged the hardships they had exposed the church of and, more importantly, described the church as patriotic and thus an ally rather than an enemy to the state.

With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the new president Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999), a new constitution passed in 1993 included elements from the law of Freedom of Religion from 1990 and stated that all churches should be separated from state control and forbade the establishment of any state church in the Russian Federation. The constitution also guaranteed the right to publicly proclaim religious beliefs and did not express any right for the government to monitor religious beliefs in the country (Basil, 2005, p. 153; Feodorov, 1998, p. 450). This led however to a conservative backlash, hoping to give the ROC a more prominent legal status as a moral and patriotic defender in a time when foreign religious movements were being established in the country. The church leadership also expressed their displeasure with increasing number of religious movements, exemplified by a speech given by Patriarch Kirill, at the time Metropolitan of Smolensk & Kaliningrad, to the World Council of Churches in 1996 (Witte & Bourdeaux, 1999:72-5). Besides conservative voices and the ROC, several regional governors called for more restrictive legislation against foreign religious movements (Shterin, 2000, p. 238-239).

In September 1997, the Duma voted on the law Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations (*O svobode sovesti i o religioznykh ob'yedineniyakh*) which was approved by a strong majority, including members from the communist party. The new law required all religious organizations to register and submit information regarding church doctrine, leadership and number of followers to the department of justice. An advisory panel was also implemented to advise the department on each application, which consisted of scholars of religion but without religious commitment. In several cases each religious organization was required to re-register each year (Basil, 2005, p. 154). While the law was vetoed by President Boris Yeltsin in the spring of 1997, it was later implemented with some small adjustments

such as recognizing the ROC for its cultural and spiritual contributions to Russian history (Basil, 2005, p. 154). Reactions to the law were somewhat mixed, while some argued that the law was in breach with the constitution from 1993, since the government could be viewed as selecting which church was allowed to operate in the country, others argued that it was necessary to save the common history and identity. A third reaction was that the increased privileges for the ROC might reset the state-church relations to the pre-1917 bond, where the church was tied to the state (Basil, 2005, p. 155).

1.3.8. 2000s and onwards

In the year 2000, the ROC published the *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church (Osnovy sotsial'noi kontseptsii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy)* which state the position of the church on a number of issues such as health, war & peace and its relationship to the state. As outlined by Zoe Knox, the document was developed by a working group headed by Patriarch Kirill, at the time a Metropolitan of the ROC Department of External Church Relations, and is a guide for how the organization should act in relation to the government, secular institutions and the media. The document affirms the wish of the church to be separate from the government, but not the society itself. At the same time Knox notes how the document suggests unusual areas for cooperation with the state including spiritual, cultural, moral and patriotic education and formation or involvement in law-enforcement and military. Besides the two examples, the church also implies that talks with governmental bodies in all branches of government and levels on subjects important to the church is suitable, thus implying it expects to be able to influence Russian legislation (Knox, 2005, p. 213-215). The ROC was later officially granted the right to preview and comment on legislation that was under consideration in the Duma (Richters, 2013, p. 1). As argued by Alar Klip and Jerry G. Pankhurst, the document also defines the Russian culture and civilization as morally superior in a global context, which justifies the engagement of the ROC in the defense of Russianness, Russian national identity, and national sovereignty (Klip & Pankhurst, 2022, p. 5).

In the early 2000s the church and state also increased their cooperation in the armed forces, a cooperation that originally began in 1995 when Patriarch Aleksii II (Aleksii Mikhailovich Ridiger) and the Russian Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev formalized what previously had been individual projects. For the opportunity to influence such a central and diverse

institution, the church created the Department for relations with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies (DRAFLEA) to be the link between the armed forces and the church. The task given by the state was to improve discipline and lawfulness among the servicemen and women, by having priests assigned to regiments to provide patriotic and spiritual education as well as to satisfy religious needs (Richters, 2013, p. 57 & 72-73). Between 2003 and 2007, the DRAFLEA signed nine agreements with specific institutions in the armed forces and in 2005 it was projected that roughly 2000 priests were already working informally within the armed forces (Richters, 2013, p. 58).

From the re-election of President Putin in 2012, the government has initiated an ideological reversal which has affected the church's position in the Russian society and its relation to the Russian state (Shcherbak, 2023; Laurelle, 2013, Kolesnikov, 2015). This trend has been named the 'conservative turn' by researchers and is characterized by the support for conservative values (Ostbo, 2017), a shift in the legislative agenda (Muravyeva, 2017) and a more aggressive foreign policy (Engström, 2014). Following the anti-Putin protests of 2011 and the exposed Pussy Riot trial in 2012, Putin began to engage in a more identity driven narrative for example expressed in a speech given in September 2013 at the Valdai Club:

“Today we need new strategies to preserve our identity in a rapidly changing world, a world that has become more open, transparent and interdependent. (...) It is evident that it is impossible to move forward without spiritual, cultural and national self-determination. (...) We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual.” (Putin, 2013).

While a lot can be said about legislative changes affecting the church-state relationship and the Russian identity, I will only list a few examples here. In 2012, the Duma passed Federal Law No. 121, more commonly known as the 'Foreign Agents Law', which was primarily aimed at hindering non-governmental organizations from engaging in political activity by requiring those that receive funds to register and be labeled as "Foreign Agents" (Tysiachniouk, Tulaeva & Henry, 2018). Another example is a law introduced in 2013 which bans propaganda of nontraditional sexual nature among minors, including supportive

statements. This legislation was justified to protect children and came with fines up to \$31,000 as well as possible jail time for the offenders (Thoreson, 2015).

Besides legislative changes, there has also been initiatives focused on affecting a cultural shift, from the Soviet idea of a multi-ethnic society to a more ethnic Russian centered society. One of these attempts was the design and the proclamation of the Declaration of the Russian Identity at the All-Russian People's Sobor in 2014 (Nalbandov, 2016, p. 34-36), which define that to be a Russian you have to (1) consider yourself a Russian, (2) have no other ethnic preference, (3) speak and think in Russian, (4) recognize that Orthodox Christianity is the basis of the national spiritual culture and (5) have a conscious solidarity with the fate of the Russian people (Moscow Patriarchate/Russian Orthodox Church, 2014).

The armed conflict in Ukraine has also affected the Russian state-church relationship. In the wake of the limited conflict in 2014 and the subsequent annexations of Crimea, Patriarch Kirill did not participate in the signing ceremony and thus expressed his disapproval of the conflict. As noted by Mikhail Suslov, the ROC refrained from publicly supporting the pro-Russian forces and instead described it as a tragic event and later also using the term fratricide (Suslov, 2016, p. 141). According to Suslov, this dissatisfaction stems from the notion that the church was forced to become a church for the Russian Federation and not one for all in its canonical territory, including its orthodox members in Ukraine. This also led to moving away from the conception of 'Holy Rus', which was aimed at uniting the orthodox Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians, to a more nationalistic 'Holy Russia' and later 'Russian World'. In April 2014 representatives of the ROC began to take a more active role and frame the conflict as a religious conflict blaming schismatics for sparking the conflict (Suslov, 2016, p. 141-143).

With the 2022 full scale invasion of Ukraine, the church took a more active and aggressive stance by firstly spreading narratives that could be used for justifying the war (Klip & Pankhurst, 2022, p. 8-12) and later fully supporting the Russian military endeavor (Luchenko, 2023).

In the beginning of 2020, President Putin initiated the process of amending the Russian constitution, proposing the largest changes since its ratification in 1993. Among the ratified changes were the reference to God and the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman (Partlett, 2022, p. 331; Teague, 2022, p. 306). Other changes that indirectly

affect the Russian state-church relations are associated with constitutionalizing a duty to oppose falsification and expanding the support for compatriots abroad (Blitt, 2022, p. 2-3), something that will be further discussed in section 2.3.

2. Previous research & theory

The section of previous research and theory is divided into four parts. The first section will give a background of the history of framing, which in this thesis constitutes both a theoretical and methodological standpoint. The second section will focus outlining the history of the framing typology that will later be used to analyze the empirical material. The third part will cover previous research relating to contemporary Russian state-church relations, while the last section will discuss how this thesis relates and differs from the research presented in the third section.

Since one can argue that a large part of the research connected to the church, with the exception of pure theological studies, in some way can be linked to state-church relations, only research with the specific aim of covering Russian state-church relations will be presented. This is done to limit the object of the study and navigate in the vast number of studies relating to the ROC.

2.1. What is framing?

In order to investigate how the Russian state describes its relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church, the thesis will utilize a framing theory. It is thus necessary to give a brief background of what frames are and how the specific framing typology was developed.

The theory of framing, originally developed by Erving Goffman (1974), aims to illuminate how influence over a human consciousness is exercised through the transfer of information from location, such as text or verbally, to a consciousness. As described by Robert Entman, to frame is to choose certain aspects of a perceived reality and make them more prominent in order to: (1) *promote a particular problem definition*, (2) *make a causal interpretation* of the problem, (3) *conduct moral evaluation*, and/or (4) *treatment recommendation*” (1993, p. 52). While several of these framing functions can be identified in a sentence, a text doesn’t necessarily need to include all of them. In the same way, several sentences might not include any of the above mentioned functions, depending on what aspect of the perceived reality that is analyzed (Entman, 1993, p.52).

Another aspect of framing that Entman discusses is that while frames select and call attention to certain aspects, they simultaneously divert attention from other aspects (1993, p.54). Entman references an experiment conducted by Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky (1984), which showed that the response of the information receiver is affected if they only have access to the framed interpretation without any data of the alternatives (Entman, 1993, p.54). Thus, what is excluded can be just as important to what is framed.

Stephen D. Reese expand the idea of frames by defining them as principles or organizing structure in the social word:

*“Frames are **organizing principles** that are socially **shared** and **persistent** over time, that work **symbolically** to meaningfully **structure** the social world.*

- **Organizing:** *Framing varies in how successfully, comprehensively, or completely it organizes information.*
- **Principles:** *The frame is based on an abstract principle and is not the same as the texts through which it manifests itself.*
- **Shared:** *The frame must be shared on some level for it to be significant and communicable.*
- **Persistent:** *The significance of frames lies in their durability, their persistent and routine use over time.*
- **Symbolically:** *The frame is revealed in symbolic forms of expression.*
- **Structure:** *Frames organize [the social world] by providing identifiable patterns or structures, which can vary in their complexity“ [I have marked the words that originally were in italics to keep Reese’s emphasis in the definition] (Stephen D. Reese, 2001, p. 11).*

As discussed by Esaiasson et. al., framing can be utilized to emphasize how a problem or event is described and thus which beliefs and ideas that are connected (2017, p. 212-213). Related to the context of the thesis, how an event or organization such as the ROC, is framed by the Russian government has significance since underlying governmental organizations operate in relation to the event or organization (Esaiasson et. al., 2017:218).

2.2. Church-state relations as framing

One of the few researchers that have focused on the church's perspective of the contemporary Russian state-church relations is Kristina Stoeckl, who in an article from 2018 and a later version from 2020, describe how the church employs three parallel models in its dealings with the state.

The first is taking on the role of the unofficial state church by creating personal relationships between hierarchs in the church and politicians can influence lawmaking. Stoeckl lists as examples of this, several laws, such as 1997 *Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations* and the 2012 *Law on the Fundamental Healthcare Principles in the Russian Federation*, where researchers have concluded that the church has been engaged in the drafting of the laws or pushed for their implementation (Stoeckl, 2020, p. 246-247).

The second model employed is positioning the church as one religious organization among several others in the country in order to unite with other religious organizations and achieve mutual interests. As described by the Stoeckl, this has been the case when the ROC united with Islamic, Jewish and Buddhist organizations to promote more religious education in the Russian curriculum (Stoeckl, 2020, p. 248). Within this model Stoeckl also argues that the ROC tends to emphasize that the state has obligations through religious commitments expressed in the constitution and public laws, as a way of achieving procedural changes (2020, p. 248).

The third and last model is one of disestablishment where the church takes an antagonistic stance toward the state by supporting smaller grassroots movements. These movements in turn engage in activities to change policy by depicting the state, and in some cases part of the hierarchy which favor closer cooperation with the state, as an enemy that threatens the orthodox tradition (Stoeckl, 2020, p. 248-249). Examples of opposition given by Stoeckl refer to the initiative to start a referendum against abortion, which gathered close to half a million signatures including Patriarch Kirill, and a growing trend of homeschooling due to the lack of conservative values and religious education in the education system (2020, p. 249-250).

While Stoeckl concludes that all three models of interaction with the state exist in parallel, these can mainly be linked to the church leadership and not to lower levels of the church hierarchy (Stoeckl, 2020, p. 250-251).

Caroline Hill (2021) builds on Stoeckl's models (2018, 2020), by investigating how clerics and others serving in the church view the ROC's relationship with the state. She does this by

analyzing statements on Russian Orthodox media sources (2021), which are also called religious media (see Hjarvard, 2016). Hill has developed frames based on Stoeckl's three models, Hill's frames are: *Symphony*, *dialogue* and *disestablishment*. The symphony frame is closely linked to Stoeckl's first model and is applicable on statements covering or expressing support of joint ventures, exemplified by being involved in drafting laws or having counselors in state medical clinics (Hill, 2021, p. 6). The second framing type is what Hill calls dialogue frames and are divided into affinity and disillusionment frames, in which the church comments on policies or state-run institutions and is thus not seeking to be involved in the work of government. Depending on the views expressed, the statement can either be connected to the affinity frame if positive, or to the disillusionment frame if it's negative. The third and last framing type is disestablishment, it relates strongly to Stoeckl's third model and applies to statements where the government is described as a threat toward the church and, or, the public, in which case the church should break contact with the state (Hill, 2021, p. 6-7).

Hill finds that out of the 454 statements she analyzed, 166 expressed comments on the Russian state-church relationship, with 12% relating to the symphonic frame, 38% to the affinity frame, 47% to the disillusionment frame and 3% to the disestablishment frame (Hill, 2021, p. 14). Hill concludes that a majority of the statements expressed views that neither support a symphonic relationship nor a disestablished relationship, but rather one of dialogue (Hill, 2021, p. 18).

2.3. Contemporary church-state relations in Russia

Alicja Curanovic, a political science professor, argues that the Russian government's and the ROC's relationship can be described as mutually influential and co-dependent. The government can utilize the orthodox tradition to shape identity and create legitimization for the government as well as improve the international image. On account of the church, the government can improve the status of it, through regulatory means (2012, p. 142). While the relationship seems beneficial, Curanovic emphasizes that the relationship is not equal in the transactions of influence and favors. She maintains that the "religious institution ... adapts to the Kremlin and not *vice versa*" (2012, p. 142). Cyril Hovorun, professor in Ecclesiology, International Relations and Ecumenism and former theological advisor to Patriarch Kirill (Matranga, 2022), argues in an interview with Aljazeera that the church is also successful in influencing the state, pointing to the state's adoption of the church's political language and discourse, such as the 'Russian World' (*Rússkiy mir*) (Vorobyov, 2022). Further, he argues in

another interview with CBS News, that the church is the main supplier of Putin's ideology and that Putin sees the war in Ukraine as a mission from God to purge the world of Western ideas and values (Matranga, 2022). Another perspective brought forward by Maria Engström, professor in Russian studies, is that the ROC is not the main actor pushing for orthodox messianism and the need to combat western ideas and values, depicted as antichrist (2022). According to Engström, it is rather Russian neo-conservative organizations that highlight the orthodox creed to legitimize the Russian government and its domestic and foreign policy (2022).

Irina Papkova, scholar of religion and international relations, investigated how the ROC might influence the Russian Federation and found four theoretically viable alternatives. The first of these are by lobbying the state through legislative and executive channels. The second alternative includes writing policy in a way that is attractive to the Russian government. Third, through recognition of the ROC's influence on voters or the regime's positive attitude toward the church, political parties reflect the church's position in their political platforms. And lastly, by mobilizing members of the church in an effort to achieve a political change (Papkova, 2011A, p. 12).

In another article by Papkova, she notes how the rhetoric of the ROC changed with the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill in 2009. The new agenda focused on a more active involvement in the social and political sphere. She highlights three principle aims at the time: the introduction of religious programs in the federal curriculum, the integration of priests in the armed forces and the return of property seized under the soviet era (Papkova, 2011B).

Marcin Skladanowski & Cezary Smuniewski, both researchers in security studies, on the other hand, argue that Russia is on a path of collectivism where all social institutions are becoming subordinate to the state, and is not on the path of de-secularization. While the authors argue that several changes in the legal, ideological and social level – such as introducing 'God' in the Russian constitution or the increase of religious references in politics – have been carried out, the ROC is increasingly becoming a tool for the implementation of state policy, e.g. the spread of state propaganda and legitimizing of the political leadership (Skladanowski & Smuniewski, 2023, p. 3). This is a return to the role the church had in imperial Russia, and to some extent in the Soviet Union, where the church had to adapt to the rhetoric of the state (Skladanowski & Smuniewski, 2023, p. 4-5 & 10).

Others, like Engström, argues that we see a politicization of the church through the cultural and political usage of the idea of 'Katechon' – where Russia is seen as the third Rome and protector against the Antichrist and the apocalyptic forces of chaos (2014, p. 356-7). She discusses how the church has become central in the ideological shift experienced in Russia in both mainstream media and far right networks. In the more extreme groups, the concept of 'Atomic Orthodoxy' has been established which assert orthodoxy, and in turn also the church, as equally important to Russian sovereignty (Engström, 2014, p. 368-369). While the concept of atomic orthodoxy has not become mainstream, it is reasonable to conclude that politicians in the Russian parliament have proposed initiatives to strengthen the position of the ROC in the country by amending the constitution (Engström, 2014, p. 375-376). This is something that William Partlett (2022, p. 331), law professor, and Elizabeth Teague (2022, p. 306), analyst of Russian politics, argues have happened with regard to the constitutional amendments in 2020, which emphasized the importance of the orthodox religious identity by introducing a reference to God and defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

Several researchers have also acknowledged the connection between the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian foreign policy, where the church actively assists in accomplishing policy objectives. Daniel Payne, researcher in religion, discusses how the Russian Foreign Ministry (RFM) have utilized the ROC to firstly strengthen the relationship with and consolidate influence over the Russian diaspora, and secondly to reacquire property outside of Russia, property which was lost in the Soviet era (Payne, 2010, p. 713). Dmitri Trenin, security researcher, exemplifies how the ROC have been used to initiate dialogue with different actors by looking at the conflict in Syria. He discusses how religion has become one of four central pillars in Russian foreign policy in the Syrian context, the other three being considerations in relation to the international order, the Arab Spring and material interests. Through Orthodox Christianity and the ROC especially, Russia has been able to initiate dialogue with other actors in the middle east, such as Israel (Trenin, 2013, p. 13).

The professor of law Robert C. Blitt has argued that several of the constitutional changes ratified in 2020 can be interpreted as a will to increase the collaboration between the government and church. One of the examples listed is a new amendment that expands the support to compatriots living abroad in exercising their rights. With a broader definition discussed by President Putin, arguing that "*Everyone is Russian outside of Russia, and everyone who speaks Russian and is steeped in Russian culture is entitled to call themselves*

that” (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2020C), together with the new amendment amplifies Russia’s influence in the former soviet states by legitimizing Russian involvement. Blitt argues, that it is in this context that the ROC, with its canonical territory, can provide the government with a legitimizing cause to assert influence in foreign states by stating that religious rights are being threatened or suppressed. This is a narrative that has been prominent when it comes to Ukraine and Montenegro (Blitt, 2022, p. 3-4 & 7-8).

Kristina Stoeckl, professor of sociology, has also studied the idea of orthodoxy as a central aspect in Russian national security. She has been analyzing the concept of ‘spiritual security’ in Russian policy documents, namely the National Security Strategy, the Russian Constitution and the Declaration on Values of the Union of Russia and Belarus in 2019. Stoeckl argues that while the term, ‘spiritual security’, is not used in the policy documents explicitly, but is instead employed in public, as well as in church and in academic discourse, with the aim to legitimize repression internally and armed conflict externally (2022, p. 38, 42-43). As highlighted by Stoeckl, spiritual security was one of the narratives employed to legitimize the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022, p. 42).

In *The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: Politics, Culture and Greater Russia*, Katja Richters, researcher in state-church relations, investigates the increasing interaction and cooperation between the ROC and the Russian armed forces, something previously mentioned in the background section. She found that besides fulfilling the duties tasked on the ROC, mainly to improve discipline and the lawfulness of the troops through the priests assigned to the military regiments, the church has focused on spreading the orthodox religion among soldiers within the ranks (Richters, 2012, p. 63, 73). While the church has been pushing hard to portray the project as beneficial for the armed forces, only a third of the servicemen and -women support having military chaplains and the work they do (Richters, 2012, p. 74). Furthermore, Richters present five key themes employed by the ROC in the military context. The first of these is the love and support for the homeland through depicting Russia as a blessed country, through the belief of orthodoxy. Patriotism is, according to the DRAFLEA, expressed through the willingness of self-sacrifice for the nation as well as dedication to the church. The second theme is the focus on military achievements and the disregard for the humanitarian aspect of war, both for the servicemen and -women as well as in the civilian context. The third theme is the depiction of politicized Muslims as a threat together with western Christians, creating a narrative where Russia is surrounded by enemies and needs to

be alert for hostile interventions. Fourth, is a focus on depicting Orthodox Serbia as an ally and the fifth theme is the focus on improving the relation with high-ranking officers and the elite with the purpose of gaining political influence, rather than seeking the support of the majority of the armed forces (Richters, 2012. p. 73-74).

In a paper from 2013, Per-Arne Bodin, professor of Slavic languages, investigates the Russian state-church relationship based on 3 aspects: (1) formulations in governing documents within each organization, the Russian constitution & law of religion and the 'Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church', (2) interpretations of the national symbol, the double headed eagle, as well as (3) the inauguration of president Medvedev and the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill. Some of the findings relating to the government's key documents are that they utilize divine legitimization, and how the law of religion recognizes the orthodox faith as different from other denominations in the country's history and culture. In the document 'Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church', Bodin highlights how the ideal relationship – *Symphony* – is described, he notes that it has been used to illustrate the current and future relationship, as co-operation and mutual support, where they both abstain from intruding in the exclusive domain of the other (Bodin, 2013, p. 223-225).

Irina Papkova (2011A) has also tried to investigate what different forms of cooperation the ROC have considered in relation to the Russian state, by looking at different formulations in the 'Basis of the Social Concept of the ROC'. Papkova notes that the 'Basis of the Social Concept', while reflecting numerous alternatives of cooperation, highlights three modes: ROC as a state church, symphonia and distancing itself from the state (2011A, p. 28-32). The first of these, becoming a state church, the document is somewhat unclear on exactly what it details, since it clearly rejects the *sergianists* model, which stems from Metropolitan Sergius who in 1927 signed a declaration of loyalty to the Soviet state, that resulted in the complete subjugation of the church (Papkova, 2011A, p. 28-29). Papkova argues that since the option of becoming a state church is listed, and that the hierarchy's sentiment against the form of cooperation is absent, shows that a certain dissent persists within the church (2011A, p. 30). Symphonia, the second mode of cooperation highlighted by Papkova, is the form that is mostly discussed in determining the proper distance between the state and the church. It consists of the idea that each party is responsible for one out of two spheres, the political and the moral (Papkova, 2011A, p. 30). It is further outlined that the church thus should be tasked

with “spiritual, cultural, moral and patriotic education and upbringings” (Moscow Patriarchate, 2000), to name a few. The third mode identified is one of distancing and encouraging opposition. By depicting a scenario where the state strays from its task of maximizing goodness and the limitation of sin and is forced to distance itself from the state, it is demonstrating that the support to the state is not unconditional. Papkova also notes that the document lists situations that the church will not be involved with: political competition, civil war or aggressive external war (2011A, p. 31-32). Due to the fact that the ROC is supporting the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, one can question the significance of the document and its representativeness for the ROC today.

Mikhail Antonov, a Russian professor of law, has also investigated the concept of symphony and argues that the usage of the term has lost its historic meaning in contemporary Russia. Antonov has created ideal types that describe general tendencies in the Russian church-state relationship during four historical eras: Byzantium, Kievan Rus, Muscovite Rus and the Russian Empire. In the Byzantine era the church and state were part of one political and spiritual entity led by the emperor. The Kievan Rus era was characterized by a weak church and state, which forced the actors to respect each other’s autonomy. Symphony was here understood as advisory, where the government would take the counsel of the church under considerations (Antonov, 2021, p. 557-559). The Muscovite Rus period was defined by a strong church and state, which mutually legitimized each other but at the same time competed for influence and power. The term of symphony was here understood as consent since the church had de fact acquired the power to hinder certain legislation (Antonov, 2021, p. 560). In the last ideal type-era, the Russian Empire, the state was strong while the church was weak and subordinate to the state. The concept of symphony was forgotten, and the relationship was instead administrative where the church became a government institution (Antonov, 2021, p. 561-563). Antonov argues that the ROC in the post-soviet context have sought an ideologic role and adopted identity narratives based on traditional values. Based on how symphony is used in *The Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* to describe the ideal relation with the church, this interpretation differs from the historic understanding of the concept, described by the ideal types. Antonov predicts that this unspecified usage of the term will create tensions in the relationship, especially if the government’s policy changes in the future (Antonov, 2021, p. 567-569).

2.4. Positioning in relation to previous research

As has been described in the previous section, scholars have taken several different approaches in trying to understand and conceptualize the Russian state-church relations. I will in this section try to categorize them in terms of approach taken to understand the state-church relations as well as what they have contributed to the field, to be able to discuss how this thesis aims to contribute to the field. As was noted earlier, only research with the specific aim of covering Russian state-church relations have been presented in the previous research section. Four themes can be identified among the articles referenced in the previous section.

The first theme among the articles is the focus on legal aspects of the relationship, by investigating laws and policy documents addressing cooperation between the two entities (Papkova, 2011A; Richters, 2012; Bodin, 2013; Antonov, 2021; Blitt, 2022; Stoeckl, 2022; Partlett, 2022; Teague, 2022). Some of these have tried to interpret and compare different views expressed by the entities (Bodin, 2013; Antonov, 2021, Stoeckl, 2022). Other have focused on how the amendments made to the Russian constitution might affect the relationship (Blitt, 2022; Partlett, 2022; Teague, 2022), while a third group have taken interest in how different governmental organizations cooperate with the church (Richters 2012).

The second theme among the articles is the focus on identity and how the entities influence each other. Curanovic (2012) and Hovorun (through interviews in Vorobyov, 2022 and Matranga, 2022) have presented different views on whether it is the government or the church that is the dominant actor in the relationship, while Engström (2022) has argued that it is neo-conservative organizations that is promoting orthodox values. Engström (2014) have also discussed how the notion of Russian as the third Rome and protector against antichrist, together with the idea of *atomic orthodoxy* have resulted in a politization of the church and orthodox values.

A third group of scholars have also taken an interest in how the cooperation between the ROC and the Russian government contributes to achieving Russian foreign policy objectives. Payne (2010) has argued that the ROC has been utilized as a tool to consolidate influence over the Russian diaspora and acquiring property overseas. Trenin (2013) has discussed that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been able, through the ROC, to initiate dialogue with new partners in the middle east.

A fourth group of scholars have been focusing on analyzing statements from representatives from the respective entities. These mostly descriptive studies have drawn

statements from bishops and the patriarch from the ROC while the Russian president and government ministers have been the primary candidates for understanding the government position. The sister study of this thesis (Hill, 2021) has analyzed statements drawn from orthodox online media, while Papkova (2011B) partly utilize statements from Patriarch Aleksii II.

When it comes to positioning this project in relation to the four themes of scholarly discussion on Russian church-state relations, it is clear that this thesis differs from the first three themes when it comes to the aim, methodology and intended contribution. This thesis utilizes statements to draw insights on how the government describes the relationship and thus not devote any attention to policy document, ideology or how the cooperation affect domestic or foreign policy. The findings of the articles will however be discussed in relation to the results to show possible correlation or differences as well as to strengthen arguments related to the findings.

This thesis relates to the last theme identified from the previous research, which focused on analyzing statements given by representatives, both in terms of the method employed as well as the intended contribution. What differentiates this project with articles in the fourth group is three factors combined: the focus on the government, the contemporary context and the relation to its sister study.

As has previously been discussed, this thesis developed from the Hill's article (2021), with the aim of applying a similar research design and the same framing typology on government representatives to be able to compare possible differences in the views described by the representatives of the respective entity. The aim, methodology and the intended contribution is thus similar with the exception of the timeframe, where Hill collected statements from the years 2000-2020 and this study focus 2012-2024.

The second article that this thesis primarily relates to when it comes to the method of analyzing statement is Papkova's article (2011B), although the analysis of statements from Patriarch Aleksii II is not the only method used. Besides a similar aim and intended contribution, but with the focus on the government and not the ROC, this project utilizes more contemporary sources to describe a context that is fundamentally different from the time Papkova's article was published.

As has been shown above, there is a gap in the scholarly research when it comes to understanding how the church and the government describe the relationship with the other. Most research in the field has primarily been descriptive studies centered on interpreting different kinds of policy documents, thus failing to understand how the relationship is addressed and commented on in the day-to-day and in relation contexts that is not addressed in policy documents. Among the two studies that have been utilizing statements from representatives, they have been utilizing empirical sources from the ROC exclusively and not addressed the other entity in the state-church relationship. It is also worth noting that the findings presented by Papkova (2011B), are bound to the context before the conservative turn and are not representative in describing the role the church holds in present-day Russia.

I thus conclude this section by noting that there is an absence in the scholarly literature in regard to understanding how representatives of the Russian government describe the relationship with the ROC. The intended contribution of gaining contextual knowledge that can be compared with Hill's article (2021) as well as testing the church-state relations framing typology can thus be of interest to the research community.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in this thesis and the structure of this section is built around the steps outlined by Margeret Lindström & Willemien Marais for conducting a frame analysis (2012). While Lindström and Marais originally focus on frame analysis on news media, the steps outlined are applicable in the context this thesis is investigating.

3.1. Choosing a medium/topic.

As already defined by the research aim and questions, the thesis will investigate how key representatives of the Russian government describe the state's relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church by analyzing transcripts of statements and speeches published on the webpages of the Russian Presidential Administration and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (RMFA).

3.2. Determining the time frame

The time frame for the samples is set between January 2012 and March 2024. The first of the two time-boundaries relate to the beginning of Putin's return as president of the Russian

Federation, as well as the start for the conservative turn, while the later boundary is set to include the high profiled interview of President Putin with the American news anchor Tucker Carlson, which was recorded in February 2024. Although the changes to the Russian constitution in July 2020 or the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 could have constituted a natural limitation of what to include in the empirical material, I have however chosen to set March 2024. This is done to be able to include material from the Russian government in a context of open war, as well as where the church highest leadership publicly has supported the war. Some scholars have also argued that the state and the church have continued to grow closer after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (see Vernon & Horti, 2023 or Tharoor, 2023).

3.3. The sample

As previously mentioned, the sample was collected from the websites of the Presidential Administration & the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The selection of the Presidential Administration is motivated due to it being the highest political office in the country and thus the ultimate authority in defining the Russian state-church relations. Choosing to include the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was primarily motivated through findings in the scholarly debate, where research has shown that the ROC is increasingly involved in promoting foreign policy objective (see Payne 2010 or Trenin 2013), but also since initial searches based on selected keywords produced a high quantity of statements on the ministry's webpage. While the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior were also considered to be included, not as many articles were found in relation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and thus the chance of finding statements that address the church-state relation was lower. Due to restrictions inherent in a master thesis together with the ambition of providing representative data for the respective branch of government, led to the decision to only utilize sources from the Presidential Administration and the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs.

It can be argued that since the two branches of government under investigation fulfills different functions in the Russian society and to a large extent have a different audience can pose an issue for the project, I would however argue that it necessarily doesn't constitute an issue. Referring to the aim of the thesis, it does not restrict the context of the respective statements to either a domestic or international setting. Since each branch of the government, to some extent, have an individual relationship with the ROC, while also being bound to a general relational policy, it is fundamental to map how this relationship is described. Since

previous research has implied that the ROC and the Foreign Ministry is increasingly cooperating (see Payne 2010 or Trenin 2013) and the initial survey indicated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs webpage would yield a higher sample, motivates the selection.

The material has been gathered through Google advanced searches by targeting the English Kremlin (en.kremlin.ru) & Russian Foreign Ministry (mid.ru/en) sites using the following keywords: Religion, spirit, orthodox, church & Christian. Based on low and fraudulent results, I manually searched each website database for the selected keywords to attain the empirical sources. Sources were then selected if they, besides from containing one of the keywords, actually described or commented on the state's relation. In an initial survey of the empirical material it became evident that only utilizing keywords would include sources that would give an inaccurate view of the depiction of the Russian state-church relation when the analytical framework was applied. One example was a statement depicting that President Putin had a very close relationship with Patriarch Kirill, regularly having lunches together and affirming the importance of the ROC in Russia, but without specifying in what capacity (see Presidential Administration of Russia, 2018I). When applying the analytical framework on this statement, affinity frames could be identified although the statement didn't give any direct insight in the relationship of the two institutions. Thus, all empirical sources have been checked for the context in which the keywords have been used in the source, so that the empirical material actually consists of sources describing the church-state relation.

While some might argue that it would have been more fruitful to include other kinds of empirical sources, such as articles from Russian state media or statements from other influential politicians and government officials, I have made an active decision to focus on materials from the official websites. Even though state media and other government officials could give some important insights and might give an accurate view of how the state views its relation toward the church, it is difficult to value these in relation to the original sources, such as Putin & Lavrov. It might also be difficult to assess how much influence the state has over the media institutions and thus difficult to understand whether a news agency is spreading state narratives or promoting their own interests. Another consideration regarding the state media are ethical considerations since a large part of Russian media are under sanctions by the European Union, since they have been accused of spreading disinformation (European Council, 2023). Although some might argue that critical research which is based on or affects

sanctioned information still needs to be conducted, it is not necessary for this study to include these sources.

Since there have been reports that statements from governmental officials have been edited after being published or uploaded to support a changing narrative, the author has downloaded all the empirical sources to be able to back up the claims and insights reached in the thesis. There is thus a risk that the sources might have changed after the empirical material was gathered, which might damage the reliability for those who would like to replicate the study without using the same downloaded files which this thesis is based on.

3.4. Identifying the unit of analysis

When the sample was initially collected, all sections that touched on the subject of state-church relations were marked. While the respective transcript formally is the unit of analysis, close to all sources only have a few sentences or a complete section containing phrases that affect the church-state relation. While this might be seen as insufficient to analyze or see as an individual unit of analysis, Entman argues that just one sentence can change the meaning of how we interpret a situation (1993, p. 52) or in other words frame a situation.

3.5. Selection of a frame typology

This thesis will utilize the framing typology developed by Caroline Hill (2021), which, as mentioned above in section 2.2, originally was developed from the models of Stoeckl (2018).

To give a quick summary, the typology developed by Hill, consists of three types of frames: *symphony*, *dialogue* and *disestablishment*, where the dialogue frames are further divided into sub-groups of *affinity* and *disillusionment*. In the analysis, I will although, treat the subcategories as separate entities, i.e. as independent frames, with the aim to enhance detected differences.

The symphonic frame relates to statements describing the cooperation or expressing a will to cooperate.

The dialogue frames are applicable to statements commenting on the work or policy of the state or its institution. In this model a positive comment correlates to the affinity frame and a negative is ascribed to the disillusionment frame.

The disestablishment frame relates to statements where the state is described as a threat to the public and, or, the church, in which case the church-state interaction is deemed to be inappropriate (Hill, 2021, p. 6-7). The fundamental difference between this thesis and Hill's study is that the framing typology will be used on a secular actor, representatives of the Russian government.

Besides utilizing Hill's church-state frames, I have inductively identified a number of subframes which will be presented in the result section. Due to the possibility of identifying more than one frame in the unit of analysis, transcript, I decided beforehand to only count the dominant frame. This is also true for the dominant sub-frame.

Another inductive element employed is to account for more general observations, to be able to account for trends or themes that are covered by the state-church relations frames. This could for example highlight in what context the state representatives discuss its relationship with the church or give insight into how the relationship is expressed. These eventual findings will be presented separately from the state-church relations frames. Relating back to the aim and research questions of the thesis, the inductive element will serve as a complementary to the deductive frames in furthering the understanding of the state's view on the Russian state-church relationship.

3.6. Limitations

Firstly, it is good to remember that the results and conclusions drawn in this thesis are based on the empirical material, i.e. the statement, and transcriptions given by certain representatives of the Russian government. I will thus not be able to define how the state actually views its relationship with the church but only conclude how the relationship is described in the public communication. It is also important to acknowledge that the result represents the views expressed by the Russian Presidential Administration and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other branches of the Russian government who have some interaction with the ROC might describe the relationship as different.

Another possible limitation is the analytical framework, the framing typology. As mentioned earlier, the typology was originally created to analyze how religious actors, i.e. clerics and other serving in the church, described the church's relationship with the state. This thesis is

thus for the first time applying the typology on secular actors. This comes with some inherent risks, that the typology is insufficient in conceptualizing the descriptions given by the representatives or that there are better methods to analyze public communications from secular actors. While these risks are valid, it is an important contribution to the field of state-church relations to test if the framing typology efficiently can be used on secular actors.

A third limitation is apparent when considering the empirical material. The material, as described above, consists of statements and speech transcripts between January 2012 and March 2024, a timespan of over 12 years. Over these years there have been some numerous small developments affecting the Russian state-church relationship, developments that the thesis won't be able to consider or even mention on this aggregated level due to the structural limitations of this project. The study will also only account for how representatives of the Russian government describe the relationship over the 12 years and will not be able to detail how the view might have fluctuated over the years under investigation. This is because the amount of data for each year is highly unbalanced as well as the lack of data available for the respective years and representatives. To analyze how the relationship has fluctuated requires data from several more branches and levels of government, something that is too big for a master's thesis.

In regard to the material, it is also important to acknowledge that the thesis uses English transcripts gathered from Russian government sites. While it would of course have been favorable to use transcripts in Russian, the author has been bound to utilize English translations. Since translations are used there are risks that the interpretations made by the translator to some extent differ from the original text. While this is beyond my control as the thesis author, I am aware of the risk and have thus actively chosen to only include sources from the government sites which they themselves have translated.

4. Results

I will in this section present the findings, first from the state-church relations frames and secondly the more general observations.

4.1. State-church relations frames

The results and the identified frames can be found in Table 1 below, which list the number of empirical sources that was collected and the number of frames identified by year, while Table 2 shows the number of frames identified from the respective governmental webpages. Figure 1 also provides an overview of the state-church relations frames where the second level are the deductive frames drawn from Hill (2021), while the third level contain inductive sub-frames. I will now go into further details and list examples for each of the four framing types, while the number of frames identified from the respective governmental webpage will be covered in the discussion section. It is also worth noting that several sources displayed elements of more than one frame. As mentioned in the methods section, I have in those cases counted the number of frames to find which was the dominant one. The statistic in the tables are thus aggregated results.

Year	Number of sources	Symphony frames	Affinity frames	Disillusionment frames	Disestablishment frames
2012	2	0	2	0	0
2013	8	3	5	0	0
2014	8	2	6	0	0
2015	6	1	5	0	0
2016	6	2	4	0	0
2017	9	3	6	0	0
2018	12	3	9	0	0
2019	9	4	5	0	0
2020	9	2	7	0	0
2021	13	4	9	0	0
2022	4	2	2	0	0
2023	17	6	11	0	0
2024	4	2	2	0	0
Total	107	34	73	0	0
Percentage	100%	31.8%	68.2%	0%	0%

Table 1: Number of statements and frames found in each year.

Government site	Number of sources	Symphony	Symphony %	Affinity	Affinity %
Kremlin.ru	59	7	11.9%	52	88.1%
Mid.ru	48	27	56.4%	21	43.4%

Table 2: Number & percentage of symphony & affinity frames found from each governmental site.

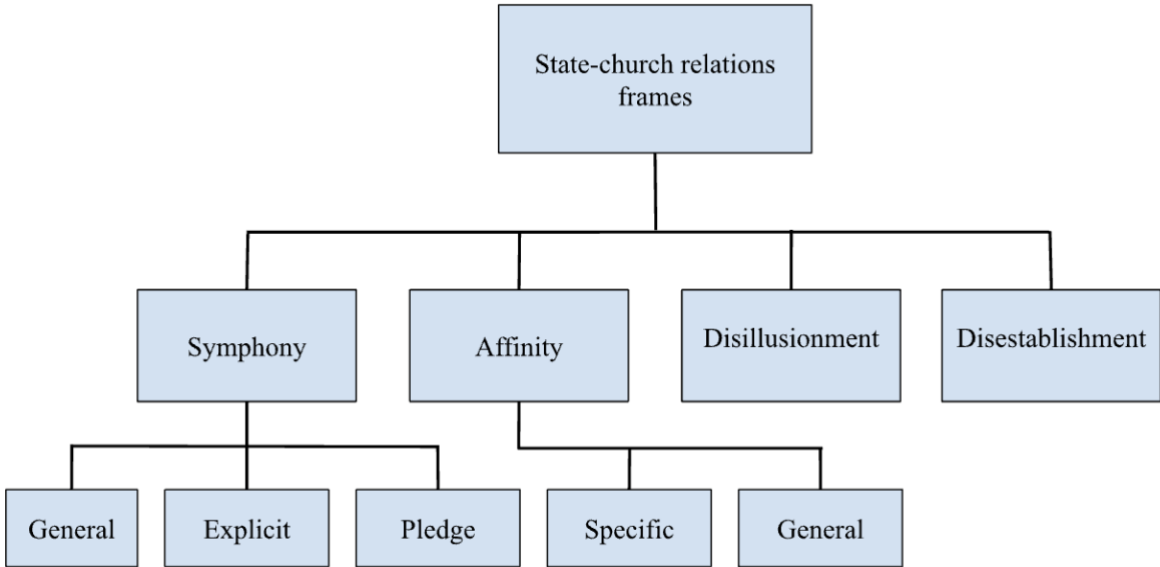


Figure 1: Framing typology hierarchy

4.1.1. Symphony frames

As seen in Table 1 above, 34 frames were identified in the empirical material. Among the frames, three sub-frames were identified in the material: (1) general expressions of cooperation, (2) explicit examples of cooperation and (3) pledges from governmental representatives to increase the interaction between the two institutions. These three sub-frames will be exemplified and discussed individually below.

Number of symphony frames	General symphony frames	Explicit symphony frames	Pledges of symphony frames
34	18	10	6

Table 3: Symphony sub-frames

4.1.1.1. General symphony frames

Among the extracts of the empirical material where general expressions of cooperation were found was in speeches given in connection to recurring events such as press releases during the major Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter, as well as joint meetings in mutual working groups or conventions.

One example of how the government mentions the cooperation in general terms is from a meeting between Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Patriarch Kirill in April 2019, where Lavrov says:

“We have always worked closely together. We have a joint working group that facilitates cooperation between the Foreign Ministry and the Russian Orthodox Church. The group has regular meetings to exchange views on various situations in many regions of the world inhabited by Orthodox Christians. The group discusses problems of Orthodox Christians in Ukraine, who belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as the problems of Christians, and not only Orthodox Christians, in the Middle East and in many other regions of the world. Our cooperation is instrumental in meeting the legitimate interests and needs of a large number of our compatriots and people professing Orthodox Christian values” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2019C).

While the citation above does mention that there is a joint working group with members from the Russian MFA and the ROC that is somewhat regularly mentioned in public statements, there are no extracts or summaries of what is actually achieved in these meetings.

Another example of support is the following extract from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

“Russian diplomacy invariably receives the support of the Russian Orthodox Church. We highly appreciate the ROC's contribution to strengthening the country's moral authority, to creating an unbiased image of our country, to unifying the Russian world, and promoting the Russian language and culture” (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017B).

Unlike the first example, the statement is more indirect with how it describes the cooperation and rather relates to the work the church does in supporting Russian diplomats. What is the key in this statement is the phrase ‘invariably receives the support’ and the word ‘contribution’. Together they affirm that there is a cooperation and thus implies a symphonic relationship, from the side of the government.

4.1.1.2. Explicit symphony frames

One example of how state representatives explicitly address its cooperation with the church is from a speech given by Deputy Foreign Minister Grigori Karasin at the 20th World Russian People's Council (WRPC) in 2016:

“It is hard to exaggerate the importance of the Russian Orthodox Church, close cooperation with which is one of the oldest traditions of domestic diplomatic service since the times of the Ambassadorial Department (Posolsky Prikaz). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs invariably enjoys support from the church and unanimity of views on a broad range of issues related to the elaboration and implementation of the foreign policy of our great country. We respect the efforts of the Moscow Patriarchate to preserve the unity of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, protect the Christians of the Middle East and North Africa, and develop cooperation with foreign partners through the mechanisms of inter-church dialogue.

In turn, the World Russian People's Council headed by Your Holiness is a highly sought religious and public institution that can play a major role not only in upholding our positions on many urgent international issues but also spreading objective information about Russia, its culture and traditions. The

consultative status of the WRPC at the UN Economic and Social Council since 2005 facilitates these tasks, which opens more opportunities to express views on a broad range of issues at this leading international venue”. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016B).

In the statement above there are several concrete aspects of how the church supports the foreign ministry, where the most distinct example is through the engagement in the World Russian People’s Council (WRPC) that in turn opens doors in the UN. Similar statements have been given at the opening of the WRPC in different years but mentioning other examples how the ROC contributes to Russian foreign policy.

One of the clearest examples how the state describes a symphonic relationship with concrete examples, refers to a swap of prisoners of war in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine, in June 2023:

“Indeed, this prisoner swap did take place. As you may have learned from an article posted on the website of the Russian Orthodox Church's Moscow Patriarchate on June 8, 2023, it was the church that coordinated this exchange. I would like to refer you to the Russian Orthodox Church for further details” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023D). [According to Reuters, this prisoner swap saw the return of 94 Russian and 95 Ukrainian servicemen] (Popeski, 2023).

While only consisting of two sentences, this statement exemplifies how the government utilizes the ROC to negotiate with actors that state is unable to interact with. Further it shows that the two institutions don’t just interact with each other, but that the government can compel the church to interact on its behalf on politically delicate issues. This is a testament to the trust and close relationship that exists between the two parties. It is worth mentioning that this statement stands out in relation to most of the other ones identified in the theme, due to the case that the claim can be verified by other sources.

A third example I want to lift is a statement that describe several aspects of how the actors cooperate domestically in Russia:

Today, the Russian Orthodox Church coordinates and contributes to over 6,500 social projects, thereby significantly strengthening the efforts of the state and society in this area.

[...]

I would like to offer special thanks to Patriarch Kirill and the Church for the spiritual guidance of the Russian army. Your sincere, heartfelt words help the soldiers and officers to defend their homeland with honour, instil in them confidence in their military prowess and moral righteousness.

The educational activities of the ROC deserve great respect, as do the restoration of old churches and the building of new ones. Patriarch Kirill and I recently attended the ceremony to consecrate the foundation of one of them – a majestic cathedral commemorating the soldiers of the Great Patriotic War, named the Resurrection of Christ (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2019A).

This third example lists areas where there is an active cooperation between the two institutions and partly corresponds to what previous researchers have concluded, such as Katja Richter's study on the ROC's Department for Relations with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement (DRAFLEA).

4.1.1.3. Pledges of symphony frames

The pledging frame relates to the government's remarks of wanting to increase the cooperation and interaction with the church. These frames were present in a majority of the statements collected, but due to being the dominant sub-frame in many of the texts, there are only a few examples that are to be given. With the extensive usage of phrases connected to pledge frames, while not being dominating in the statement, it paints the picture that it's more for show than an actual will to increase cooperation. Due to other themes of symphonic frames being more dominant in a majority of the texts, there are only a few examples that are to be given. One of them is:

“It is also important that relations between the church and the state are developing at a new level. We are acting as true partners and co-workers to resolve the most pressing domestic and international challenges, developing joint ventures for the good of our Fatherland and our people” (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2013H).

Worth noting is that almost all pledges are described in general terms without any clear or concrete example of what level or on what subjects the state seeks to cooperate on. It is also interesting how such pledges are consistent in the materials from almost all the studied years. This leads to the question whether the cooperation (1) is highly fluctuating, (2) is strongly increased in certain years only to be dropped the next or (3) that it’s all for show.

The most concrete example given on what actions the state aims to take to increase its cooperation with the church on is the following:

“Our Ministry will further build-up multifaceted partnership with the Russian Orthodox Church at the international arena, but our joint efforts will promote the advancement of principles of supremacy of law and justice, reinforcement of the unique, creative role played by Russia in global affairs in accordance with our centuries-old traditions, in international relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013).

Obviously, while this being the most detailed example, there are still a lot of questions that can be asked on what role the church can play to reinforce *the unique, creative role played by Russia in global affairs*.

4.1.2. Dialogue frames: Affinity

As stated in Table 1, a total of 73 affinity frames were identified in the empirical material and constituted 68.2% of the total number of frames identified. A majority of the affinity frames were identified in sources collected from the webpage of the Presidential Administration, 52 affinity frames, while 21 affinity frames were found in sources from the web page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The frames can generally be divided into two themes: One with statements specifying areas or activities where the church is successful and another with more

general comments of support. It is worth noting that not all of the frames specifically name the ROC but sometimes include it in terms such as ‘with other Christian denominations’ or ‘traditional religions in Russia’.

Total number of affinity frames	Specific affinity frames	General affinity frames
73	23	50

Table 4: Affinity sub-frames

4.1.2.1. Specific affinity frames

Among the material containing specific affinity frames, there is a mix of statements commenting on the church’s international and domestic work. While most of the statements have some general descriptions, for example that the ROC inspires the orthodox people or remains faithful to the ideals of humanism, this is later projected in an international context. The following statement is one of several doing this:

“Today, like at all times, the Russian Orthodox Church performs its noble and responsible mission with dignity, each year expanding its public and social service.

In its selfless mission, the Russian Orthodox Church knows no national boundaries. Its canonical territory extends beyond Russia. You do a lot to support compatriots and Orthodox communities abroad, strengthen mutual trust and develop cultural, spiritual and human connections that unite us and have done so for ages.

I hope that the Russian Orthodox Church, using its international authority, will do all in its power to help the international community to join efforts for the sake of Syria's rebirth, humanitarian assistance to its people and the restoration of ruined cultural and religious centres” (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2017E).

As can be seen in the statement, the government supports specific areas of the church's work, focusing here supporting Russians citizens and orthodox believers outside of Russia as well as expressing a will for the church to be more active in the Syrian context. While not specifically addressing how the church contributes in supporting Russians outside of the country, it is still one of the apparent examples of the sub-frame.

A few of the statements focus on domestic issues and praise the church for how they react to the needs of the public. One example is from a meeting in November 2020 with Putin and representatives of religious associations active in Russia, where Putin says the following:

“The spiritual leaders of Russia have a special role to harmonise interethnic and interreligious relations and prevent extremism and terrorism. People listen to your opinions, your words, and when you voice your position of solidarity, your clear commitment to the values of peace, kindness and mercy – this is extremely important.

I would like to point out the great potential of religious organisations in community service. Representatives of all religions are contributing to our common struggle against the spread of the dangerous virus. You unite caring people around you, who, together with the clergy, become involved in voluntary work, sometimes risking their own lives to support those who need help and care, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

I will say it again that the clergy works in close proximity to individuals infected with the coronavirus and they sometimes risk their own lives to support their close ones. Unfortunately, tragedies can happen when they themselves die while selflessly carrying out their pastoral duty, selflessly and not for money” (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2020A).

While not specifically directed toward the ROC, it is an expression of support towards the church, and the other religious organizations. It is also a clear example of how the government expresses approval of the church's non-religious work, instead expressing support for the voluntary efforts in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. While most of the statements

containing affinity frames are expressing support for more moral and religious work, it is interesting to find examples such as the one above that deviates from the majority.

A third group of statements are more centered on praising the church for its work in creating and promoting a specific values-based identity:

The Russian Orthodox Church plays an enormous formative role in preserving our rich historical and cultural heritage and in reviving eternal moral values. It works tirelessly to bring unity, to strengthen family ties and to educate the younger generation in the spirit of patriotism. It is making a great contribution to resolving social issues and strengthening inter-ethnic and inter-religious accord in the country. Such multifaceted work is very important today and deserves deep respect (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015C).

While it at first glance might seem that the statement gives diverse praises, there is a connection between the stated areas, namely identity creation. Focusing on selected historical segments together with ‘traditional values’ and patriotism, the church has been instrumental in shaping the state narrative. This statement exemplifies how the government acknowledges the church contribution in shaping identity and culture.

4.1.2.2. General affinity frames

The frames identified as general affinity frames generally describe the church in a positive way in some recurring themes and do not give any specific detail to what the church is actually doing.

One of these recurring themes are *inter-religious* or *interfaith* cooperation, to promote dialogue and stability between different religious denominations both domestically and internationally. Below is one example of statements addressing this:

“It is important to note the truly productive and devoted work the Russian Orthodox Church does to support civil peace and harmony in Russia and promote interfaith and interethnic dialogue. The Church is tireless in its efforts to strengthen in our society lofty moral and

ethical ideals and family values, educate our young people, and resolve pressing social problems” (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2013C).

The example above is one of two statements mentioning inter-religious cooperation where the ROC is mentioned without any references to other denominations. Similar to the other statements in the theme, there is no mention of how the church achieves this cooperation or what insight the state has in the work to be able to praise the work of the ROC.

The other theme identified refers to the church as a protector or defender in different contexts, as exemplified by the following extract from one of the statements:

“The Russian Orthodox Church is a great prophet of love for the Fatherland and its powerful moral defender that has always upheld the principles of kindness, truth and loyalty to our country.

The Russian Orthodox Church, joined by our other traditional faiths, is the main spiritual foundation of our people and statehood. This is especially important at a time when the world community faces new and complex challenges and needs mutual understanding, accord and trust between countries and peoples more than ever before” (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2016D).

While these themes were evident in statements containing specific affinity frames as well as symphony frames, they were the most prominent statements where general affinity frames were dominant.

4.1.3. Dialogue frames: Disillusionment

As can be seen in Table 1 above, there were no disillusionment frames identified in the empirical material. While this could be argued to be a failure, it is an interesting finding that will further be discussed in section 5.

4.1.4. Disestablishment frames

Similar to the disillusionment frame, the empirical material did not display any disestablishment frames and will also be discussed in section 5.

4.2. Other observations outside of the framing typology

In this section I will highlight other aspects not covered by the framing. This section accounts for observations not related to the framing typology, but which I believe give insights to the relation between the state and the ROC. One interesting observation relates to how the government tends to describe the church in relation to other spiritual denominations in the county.

In the statements addressing the different religious organizations present in Russia, the ROC is in most cases spelled out with its formal name, while the others are included in phrases such as *religious organizations* or *Christian denominations*. Here is one example of this rhetoric collected from the Presidential administration:

“With great satisfaction, I would like to acknowledge the fruitful and truly selfless efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christian denominations that support civil society and accord in our country, and the development of the inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue. Another important contribution they make is to strengthening lofty moral values and ideals in society, educating the younger generation and resolving current social issues (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2018A).

Since this is a recurring tendency, it could be interpreted that the government views the church as *Primus inter pares* (the first among equals) in the context of different denominations or religions. While this status by itself don't come with any practical perks, other than prestige and increased exposure in relation to other denomination, it might be close to contradict the Russian constitution which states that: “Religious association shall be separate from the State and shall be equal before the law” (European Commission for Democracy through Law, 2021, section 1, article 14, §2). As the observant reader also might have noticed, the end of the first sentence together with the second sentence are the same used

in one of the previous examples given in section 4.2.2. (referenced as Presidential Administration of Russia, 2013B). That the usage of the same exact phrases in statements five years apart is also a testament to the importance and the prestige given to the church in the context of promoting interfaith and interethnic dialogue.

5. Discussion

The discussion section will be centered around four topics, building on the findings presented above: (1) the absence of disillusionment and disestablishment frames, (2) the relation of frames used in statements from the respective government website, (3) how this affect the overall view of how the state describe its relationship with the ROC, (4) how statements relate to findings in the previous research and (5) briefly discuss the suitability of utilizing the framing typology on secular actors. I will also close this section with some proposals for future research in Russian state-church relations.

As stated in the result section, the material did not show any examples of disillusionment and disestablishment frames. There are three possible explanations to account for this result. Firstly, that the empirical material, that the analysis is based on, isn't representative to the views of the state. While it could be possible that statements containing disillusionment and disestablishment frames were missed when gathering the empirical material, it is however unlikely due to the method used for collecting the material, which was done through advanced searches on Google and later manually on the individual sites.

The second possibility is that the government doesn't express such views in public, which in turn explains why the frames are absent in the material. This is probable due to how previous research has claimed that the government is basing some of its policy narratives on central values of the church (see previous research section or Matranga, 2022; Vorobyov, 2022). If we accept this assumption, then it would not be politically viable to criticize the church which the state is dependent on, and also the fact that the ROC has become central in the Russian state's identity discourse (see Engström, 2014 for an example).

The third possible explanation is that the state simply doesn't see any negative aspects when it comes to its relationship with the church. While possible, it is not likely and above all difficult to prove. The most viable explanation for not finding any disillusionment and disestablishment is thus that those views are not publicly expressed by the state.

Moving on to discuss the second finding, the relation between the usage of symphony and affinity frames as well as the difference in the usage between the presidential administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As mentioned earlier, 34 symphony (31.8%) and 73 (68.2%) affinity frames were identified in the material. That the affinity frames more than double the amount of the symphony frames is interesting but could possibly be explained by the extract from the Russian constitution previously mentioned, which states that Russia should not have a state religion and that all religious organizations shall be equal to the law. Whether this stance is actually enforced can be discussed, but I argue that it has a dampening effect in how the state publicly describes its relationship with the church in relation to other denominations in the country.

What is more interesting is that the Kremlin almost exclusively described the relationship with affinity frames, 88.1%, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was more equal in describing the relationship through symphonic, 56.4%, and affinity frames, 43.4%. One possible explanation is that the ministry of foreign affairs has a more defined cooperation with the church than the presidential administration. This has partly been shown by the examples listed in the results section, the empirical material reference how the church was involved in contributing through dialogues with other foreign religious organizations, while the presidential administration more generally can describe a cooperation. Another explanation is that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is freer to express a symphonic relationship than representatives of the presidential administration. This is linked to what previously have been discussed in relation to the Russian constitution and the need to have a balanced public relationship to the ROC in relation to other denominations in the country. Since the presidential administration represents the highest political authority, it is a possibility that they are cautious in describing the relationship with the church through symphonic frames, rather than through affinity frames, in that such a description would give the ROC too much of a prominent position.

The fact that the Kremlin and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a large extent differ in what frames are employed to describe the relationship with the church naturally lead to the question of how an overall view of how the state as such describes the relationship, and how it can be understood. There are different interpretations that are possible to apply on this matter:

The first interpretation is that we should ultimately understand the relationship based on what the presidential administration is communicating. This is due to the fact that the presidential administration represents the highest political office in the country and whose

statements should be seen as more representative of the official view than those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By accepting this interpretation, we would then value the descriptions articulated by the presidential administration more highly than those of the Foreign office and conclude that the relationship to a larger degree is supportive rather than cooperative.

The second interpretation to be made is that the foreign ministry describes the relationship in terms that the presidential administration is hindered to do, due to the political implications that could follow if the Kremlin described a more symphonic relationship. According to this interpretation we value the descriptions articulated by the foreign office more than those of the presidential administration. Since the foreign office described the relationship through symphony frames somewhat more than affinity, we would conclude that the relationship is somewhere in-between symphony and affinity.

The third interpretation is that the two stances are incompatible with each other and that there exist multiple relationships between the church and the respective governmental actors. With this interpretation we value both descriptions respectively and further accept that other branches of the Russian government that interact with the ROC have their own special relationship with the church. We thus conclude that the Kremlin describes the relationship with the church through phrases connected to the affinity frame, while the Foreign Ministry tends to describe a relationship that falls somewhere between symphony and affinity.

While all of the interpretations above are valid, I argue that we should understand the findings based on the second interpretation, that values the description given by the foreign ministry higher than those of the Kremlin and that the cooperation should be seen as somewhere in-between symphony and affinity. This is based on two notions that have previously been discussed.

The first is that it would be politically inappropriate for the highest political office to openly favor one religious organization in the country, however large or influential it is, since it would go against the Russian constitution, in its current form. That the government didn't introduce any constitutional changes in 2020 that directly affects the Russian state-church relations shows that they want to keep the somewhat ambiguous relationship with the ROC as it is. Related to the findings, I argue that the phrases utilized by the foreign ministry, where there is a 60% symphonic majority and a 40% affinity minority, demonstrates how they keep the relationship so elusive. As was exemplified in the results, the state was able to get the church to act as its proxy in negotiating with adversaries in an ongoing war, displaying that

the government both trusts and continuously interacts with the church. The second notion is the recurring theme of describing the ROC as the first among equals, in relation to the other religious organization. This shows that the state already views the church as the leading figure on the religious arena and thus implies that cooperation would firstly be sought with the ROC.

Having concluded which interpretation is the most probable, I will now briefly discuss how the findings relate to the previous research, focusing primarily on Hill's (2021) study on Russian state-church relations. In Hill's article (2021), which was the forerunner to this thesis, she introduced and applied the same framing typology, used in this thesis, on statements given by clerics and others serving in the church on certain social media. Out of 166 quotes containing church-state relations frames, 12% were coded as symphony frames, 38% affinity, 47% disillusionment and 3% disestablishment. As can be seen, there is a clear difference in our findings, where 100% of the frames identified in the government statements contained symphony, 31.8%, and affinity, 68.2%, while those frames represented 50%, 12% symphony and 38% affinity, in Hill's study. Based on these statistics, one can argue that the government describes the relationship in more positive terms and to a larger extent utilizes symphony and affinity than any other frames. This conclusion should however be taken with a pinch of salt, due to the different levels of analysis in the respective institution, Hill investigates statements from individuals in a local setting while this study is based on statements from officials. It is probable that Hill's results are more critical than the official statements from the ROC, since the statements in Hill's article are individual views expressed on orthodox websites by members in the lower levels of the organization. While the comparison can give an indication to differences in how the institutions respectively view and describe the relationship, it is necessary to analyze the descriptions expressed on the same level in each organization to be able to draw any definitive conclusions on the subject.

Relating to other parts of the previous research discussed, there are several examples that relate or confirm their findings. Dimitri Trenin for example, discusses how the Russian government has used the church to speak on its behalf to achieve certain foreign policy objectives (2013, p. 13), something that Payne also has noted (2010, p. 713). This corresponds to one of the examples given above, where the church was used to negotiate with the Ukrainian government on securing a swap of captured soldiers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023).

Going back to the scholarly discussion of whether it is the state or the church which is the influential part in the relationship, discussed by Alicja Curanovic (2012), Marcin Skladanowski

& Cezary Smuniewski (2023), Cyril Hovorun (Matranga, 2022; Vorobyov, 2022) and Maria Engström (2022), there are some examples that imply that the state is to be viewed as the dominant part. Here we have the statement discussing the prisoner swap (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023) together with a statement describing how the ROC interacts in the UN Economic and Social Council and helps spread national narratives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016). While these examples mainly correspond to the views of Curanivic, who argued that the state has the dominant role in the relationship (2012), it would be surprising if the government acknowledge that it is other party, either the ROC as Hovorun argues (Matranga, 2022; Vorobyov, 2022) or that it's neo-conservative groups as Engström discuss (2022), that are governing what role the ROC has in the political arena.

There are also some phrases that can be partly linked to some of the research listed. In one of the transcripts, it mentions how the church contributes by providing “spiritual guidance of the Russian army” (Presidential Administration of Russia, 2019). This correlates with examples given by Katja Richters, who outlined the increasing cooperation between the ROC and the Russian Armed Forces (2012). Another such correlating example is how the government acknowledges the church's work to lift and discuss the problems related to orthodox Christians in Ukraine and Christians in general in the Middle East and in other regions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2019). This partly relates to Stoeckl's article which discusses the Russian term ‘spiritual security’ and how it has been employed as a tool in foreign policy, most notably in the context of Ukraine (2022).

Circling back to the researchers that have discussed the idea of symphony and its relevance in contemporary Russia, namely Per-Arne Bodin (2013), Irina Papkova (2011) and Mikhail Antonov (2021), it is difficult to draw conclusions of how the government interprets the term. While several statements contain symphonic frames, the phrases used are inconsistent in how they describe the relationship. As shown by the symphonic examples, the government describes the symphonic relationship as contributing to foreign policy, engaging in negotiations with adversaries and promoting traditional values. Based on the idea of two spheres, one secular and one religious or spiritual, the work in promoting traditional values, and to some extent contributing to foreign policy through engagement with other religious actors, can be understood as fitting in a symphonic relationship. But engaging in negotiations with foreign state adversaries and in other ways contributing to Russian foreign policy falls more on the secular sphere than the religious. It is thus difficult to conclude how the government understands the concept of symphony today. This in turn relates back to what

Antonov (2021) has argued, that the term is inconsistently used in relation to its historical meaning.

Since the second research question sought to evaluate the how Caroline Hill's state-church relations framing typology (2021) could be used on a secular material, I will now discuss the effectiveness of the typology. The application of the framing typology on the secular material was done without any complications, which primarily relate to how Hill has defined each frame. As can be seen in the definitions, see section 2.2 or 3.5, they are not religious specific in how they define the concepts under investigation. The only actual religious connection is using the term symphony for describing an ideal form of cooperation. As has been discussed earlier, there was a consistent theme, how the government mentioned the ROC and no other religious organizations, that, as I have interpreted Hill's definitions of the frames, was not covered by the typology. While being a highly contextual and implicit notion of showing support, I have no proposition of how the typology can be adjusted to account for such themes. I would however recommend future projects utilizing the typology to be aware of such implicit actions that might affect relationships. I would thus highly recommend utilizing the framing typology in the context of Russia as well as other cases of state-church relations.

I will give some proposals for further research related to Russian state-church relations. As stated in the discussion, it would be beneficial to have data from each institution at the same level in the hierarchy, since Hill (2021) analyzed material published by lower-level individuals in the church while this study analyzed the highest representatives of the government. One could thus either analyze statements from the church leadership or collect statements from lower ranking officials. Additionally, a possible path is to broaden the understanding of how the government views the relationship with church by analyzing more government branches, such as the Ministry of Culture, Defense or Interior.

Another angle of interpreting Russian state-church relations would be to focus on how different policies affect the ROC. While possibly being more demanding, it would give concrete examples of how the state realizes the relationship, instead of just describing it.

6. Conclusions

My intention with this thesis is to investigate which framing strategies prominent government representatives, such as Vladimir Putin, Sergey Lavrov, Maria Zacharova and others, use to describe the state's relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church between January 2012 and March 2024. With this aim, I hoped to test a framing typology, that previously was developed for, and tested, the Russian Orthodox Church's relation to the Russian state. I use the method of framing by reversing, so to say, the perspective, (compared to Caroline Hill's study), and apply her strategy of framing to secular statements of the state, expressing the view of the Russian Orthodox Church. In doing so, I hoped to produce contextual knowledge in the field of Russian state-church relations, as well as conceptual knowledge by testing Hill's typology on a new type of material.

I have found that Vladimir Putin, Sergey Lavrov, Maria Zacharova and other spokespersons of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have utilized a mixture of statements connected to *symphony* and *affinity*, thus (both) describing the relationship as cooperative and distantly supportive at the same time.

In the statements from the Presidential Administration, *symphonic* frames related to 11,9% of the statements while *affinity* accounted for 88,1%. In the statements from the Russian Foreign Ministry, 56,4% of the frames identified were *symphonic*- and 43,4% were *affinity* frames. While the difference and the implications of this discrepancy can be discussed at length, I argue that the highest level of the Russian government describes the relationship somewhat between the two frames, or concepts, of *symphony* and *affinity*.

Another important result is that none of the two branches utilized any negative frames when describing the relationship i.e., *disillusionment* or *disestablishment* frames. If negative sentiments toward the church exist in the ranks of the government, they are more probable to be articulated in other forms of communications than official statements, and most likely by other individuals than those analyzed here.

These results clearly differ from the results of the sister study by Hill, which instead found that individuals associated with the church described the relationship to the state almost exclusively through *dialogue* frames i.e., *affinity* and *disillusionment* frames. It is also worth noting that 50% of the frames identified by Hill were frames describing the relationship in a negative way, 47% were *disillusionment* frames and 3% were *disestablishment* frames. This discrepancy in the description of the relationship show that the actors view the relationship quite differently. While it is important to note that the empirical material in the two studies

partly differ, the contrast in the descriptions is so fundamental that it cannot be overlooked and warrants further research.

The negative attitude towards the state expressed in the church organization, might lead to tensions within the church, and as a consequence it might also affect the church-state relation, if the current trend of increased cooperation with the church and the government continues. With the contemporary understanding of what a symphonic relationship entails have lost its conceptual meaning, as some scholars have argued, makes it all the more unclear of what the respective partner see as the ideal form of relationship. Without a clear vision the risk for tensions is obvious, and might lead to grievances between the parties which in turn might have possible implications for Russian society, as well for its politics.

How this scenario might develop is almost impossible to predict. Since some researchers, above mentioned, argue that the church is increasingly influencing state policy, with a particular narrative of theological character, it is unclear which of the two actors will have, or take, the lead in the relationship.

I have also found that Hill's state-church relations framing typology has been effective at highlighting and conceptualizing the views expressed in the statements. Since the definitions for the respective frame are not tied to any religious notion, the typology can favorably be utilized on both religious and secular actors.

I conclude that representatives of the Russian government have framed the relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church in positive terms, utilizing a mixture of *symphony* and *affinity* frames, between the years 2012 and 2024. By recurrently emphasizing the prominent role of the ROC in relation to other religious organizations, the government legitimizes the church as the most prominent and influential religious organization in Russia. Due to the growing role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Russian society, and the increasing cooperation with the government, comprehending Russian state-church relations is becoming more and more important in understanding the domestic situation.

7. Bibliography¹

Antonov, Mikhail. (2021). 'The Varieties of Symphonia and the State–Church Relations in Russia'. *The Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, 9(3), 552–570.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ojlr/rwaa035>

Basil, John, D. (2005) 'Church-State Relations in Russia: Orthodoxy and Federation Law, 1990-2004'. *Religion, state & society*. 33 (2), 151–164.

Blitt, Robert, C. (2022). 'Russia's 2020 Constitutional Amendments and the Entrenchment of the Moscow Patriarchate as a Lever of Foreign Policy Soft Power', in Peter Mandaville (ed.). *The Geopolitics of Religious Soft Power: How States Use Religion in Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3930235>

Bociurkiw, Bohdan. R. (1969). 'Church-State Relations in the U.S.S.R'. In Hayward, Max. & Fletcher, William, C. (eds). *Religion and the Soviet State: A Dilemma of Power*. London: Pall Mall Press.

Bodin, Per-Arne. (2013) 'Legitimacy and symphony: On the relationship between state and Church in post-Soviet Russia', in Bodin, Per-Arne., Hedlund, Stefan. & Namli, Elena. (Eds.). *Power and Legitimacy - Challenges from Russia*. 1st edition. United Kingdom: Routledge. pp. 220–234.

Boiter, Albert. (1980). '*Religion in the Soviet Union*'. Sage Publications.

Bourdeaux, Michael. (1977). '*Opium of the people: the Christian religion in the U.S.S.R.*'. London: Mowbrays

Bourdeaux, Michael. (1992). 'Patriarch Aleksii II: Between the Hammer and the Anvil'. *Religion, State and Society*. Vol. 20, No. 2. pp. 231-235.

¹ I would like to recommend using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) if you want to access the sources from either the Presidential Administration of Russia, [Kremlin.ru](http://kremlin.ru), or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Russia, [Mid.ru](http://mid.ru), due to them being Russian governmental sites and it is unclear what data that is collected when accessed. Open at your own risk.

- Burgess, John, P. (2011). 'Monasticism as a Force for Religious and Cultural Renewal in Post-Communist Russia'. *Journal of religion in Europe*. 4 (2), 225–244.
- Burgess, John, P. (2014). 'In-Churching Russia'. *First Things*. 243, 37-43.
<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/05/in-churching-russia> (accessed on 21 November 2023).
- Chebankova, Elena. (2016). 'Contemporary Russian conservatism'. *Post-Soviet affairs*. 32 (1), 28–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2015.1019242>
- Cracraft, James (1971). *The church reform of Peter the Great*. London: MacMillan and co.
- Curanović, Alicja. (2012) *The religious factor in Russia's foreign policy*. London: Routledge.
- Curtis, John, S. (1953). *The Russian church and the Soviet state, 1917-1950*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Davis, Nathaniel. (1995) *A long walk to church: a contemporary history of Russian orthodoxy*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Engström, Maria. (2014). 'Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy'. *Contemporary security policy*. 35 (3), 356–379.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2014.965888>
- Engström, Maria. (2022). 'Maria Engström: För Putin har kriget bibliska proportioner'. *Svenska Dagbladet*. 20 March. <https://www.svd.se/a/28kQGR/for-putin-har-kriget-bibliska-proportioner> (Accessed 25 February 2025).
- Ellis, Jane. (1996) *The Russian Orthodox Church: triumphalism and defensiveness*. Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St Antony's College, Oxford.
- Esaiasson, Peter. Gilljam, Mikael. Oscarsson, Henrik. Towns, Ann & Wängnerud, Lena. (2017). *Metodpraktikan: konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. 5th ed. Stockholm: Wolters Kluwer.

- European Council. 'EU sanctions against Russia explained'.
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/sanctions-against-russia-explained/#media> (Accessed on 21 November 2023).
- European Commission for Democracy through Law – Venice Commission. (2021). 'Russian Federation – Constitution'. (Report: CDL-REF(2021)010-e). Available at:
[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-REF\(2021\)010-e#](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-REF(2021)010-e#) (Accessed on 14 February 2025).
- Feodorov, Vladimir. (1998) 'Religious Freedom in Russia Today'. *The Ecumenical review*. 50 (4), 449–459.
- Fletcher, William, C. (1968). 'Nikolai: Portrait of a Dilemma'. London: Macmillan Publishers.
- Fletcher, William, C. (1971). 'The Russian orthodox church underground, 1917-1970'. Oxford University Press.
- Goffman, Erving. (1975). 'Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience'. Harvard University Press.
- Gordun, Sergi. (1993A). 'Russkaya pravoslavnyaya tserkov v period s 1943 po 1970 god'. *Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarkhii*. No. 1 (January), 39-49.
- Gordun, Sergi. (1993B). 'Russkaya pravoslavnyaya tserkov v period s 1943 po 1970 god'. *Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarkhii*. No. 2 (February), 10-29.
- Gsovski, Vladimir. (Ed.). (1955). 'Church and state behind the Iron Curtain: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, with an introduction on the Soviet Union'. Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Gustafsson Kurki, Pär. (2024). 'Apostles of violence: the Russian-orthodox church's role in Russian militarism'. Stockholm: Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut FOI.
- Heisler, Martin, O. (2008). 'The Political Currency of the Past: History, Memory, and Identity'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617, 14–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716208315024>

Henry, Catherine. P. (1987), 'Registration of Churches in the Soviet Union. *Religion in Communist Areas*'. Vol. 26 (1 – Winter). 19.

House, Francis. (1988). '*The Russian Phoenix: The Story of Russian Christians, 988-1988*'. London: SPCK Publishing.

Hill, Caroline. (2017). '*Framing "Gay Propaganda": The Orthodox Church and Morality Policy in Russia*'. Master thesis, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, January 31. Available online: <http://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1069954/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Hill, Caroline. (2021) 'Framing of Abortion and Church-State Relations in Russian Orthodox Online Portals'. *Religions (Basel, Switzerland)*. 12 (12), 1084-.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12121084>

Hjarvard, Stig. (2016). 'Mediatization and the changing authority of religion'. *Media, Culture & Society*, 38(1), 8–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715615412>

Jakobson, Lev, I. Rudnik, Boris & Toepler, Stefan. (2018). 'From liberal to conservative: shifting cultural policy regimes in post-Soviet Russia'. *International journal of cultural policy*: CP. 24 (3), 297–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2016.1186663>

Kalkandjieva, Daniela. (2017). '*The Russian Orthodox Church, 1917-1948: from decline to resurrection*'. London: Routledge.

Karpov, Vyacheslav. & Lisovskaya, Elena. (2008). 'Religious intolerance among Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Russia'. *Religion, state & society*. 36 (4), 361–377.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09637490802442975>

Khaneman, Daniel & Tversky, Amos. (1984). 'Choices, Values & Framing'. *American Psychologist*, 39(4), 341–350. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.39.4.341>

Kilp, Alar and Pankhurst, Jerry G. (2022) 'Soft, Sharp, and Evil Power: The Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine'. *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 42(5). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2361>

Kelher, Serge. (1992). 'Church in the Middle: Greek-Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe'. *Religion, State and Society*. Vol. 20, Nos. 3 and 4, 289-302.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09637499208431559>

Knox, Zoe. (2005) 'Symphonia, the Moscow Patriarchate and the State'. *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*. 1st edition. United Kingdom: Routledge.

Kolesnikov, Andrei. (2015). 'Russian Ideology After Crimea' (Vol. 22). *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2015/07/russian-ideology-after-crimea?lang=en>

(accessed on 13 December 2024)

Konflikt. (2024). 'Putins dolda maktmedel – så blev den ryskortodoxa kyrkan ett politiskt vapen' [Radio Program]. Sveriges Radio. 22 November.

<https://sverigesradio.se/avsnitt/putins-dolda-maktmedel-sa-blev-den-ryskortodoxa-kyrkan-ett-politiskt-vapen> (accessed on 22 November 2024)

Konstantinov, Dimitry. (1979). '*The Crown of Thorns: Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR, 1917-1967*'. Zaria.

Kratochvíl, Petr. & Shakhanova, Gaziza. (2021) 'The Patriotic Turn and Re-Building Russia's Historical Memory: Resisting the West, Leading the Post-Soviet East?'. *Problems of post-communism*. 68 (5), 442–456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2020.1757467>

Laurelle, Marlene. (2013). 'Conservatism as the Kremlin's New Toolkit: An Ideology at the Lowest Cost'. *Russian Analytical Digest*. 138, 2-4.

Levada-Center. (2020). '*Velikiy Post i Religioznost*'. Levada-Tsentr.

<https://www.levada.ru/2020/03/03/velikij-post-ireligioznost/> (accessed on 21 November 2023).

Lindstöm, Margaret. & Willemien, Marias. (2012). 'Qualitative news frame analysis: a methodology'. *Communitasm*, 17, 21-38. <https://doi.org/10.38140/com.v17i0.991>

Luchenko, Ksenia. (2023). 'Why the Russian Orthodox Church Supports the War in Ukraine'. *Carnegie Politica*. 31 January. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia->

[eurasia/politika/2023/01/why-the-russian-orthodox-church-supports-the-war-in-ukraine?lang=en](https://eurasia.politika/2023/01/why-the-russian-orthodox-church-supports-the-war-in-ukraine?lang=en)
(Accessed on 13 March 2025).

Markus, Vasylyshyn. (1985). *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine After 1945*. Ukrainian Studies Fund, Harvard University

Matranga, Anna (2022). 'Putin's war creates schism in Russian Orthodox Church'. *CBS News*. 1 May. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/putins-war-russian-orthodox-church/> (accessed on 25 February 2025).

Meyendorff, Jean. (1981). *The Orthodox church: its past and its role in the world today*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press

Milioukov, Paul; Seignobos, Charles. & Eisenmann, Louise. (1932). *Histoire de Russie*. Vol. i: *Des origines à la mort de Pierre le Grand*. Librairie Ernest Leroux, Bibliothèque du Monde Slave. Paris.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2013). *Speech of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the reception on the occasion of Orthodox Easter, Moscow, 21 May 2013*. Posted on 21 May 2013. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1588139/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2015). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at a reception for Orthodox Easter, Moscow, April 20, 2015*. Posted on 20 April 2015. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1507614/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2016B). *State Secretary and Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin's speech at the opening ceremony of the 20th World Russian People's Council (WRPC), Moscow, November 1, 2016*. Posted on 1 November 2016. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1537492/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2017B). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at a reception for Orthodox Easter, Moscow, April 18, 2017*. Posted on 18 April 2017. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1545555/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019C). ‘*Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s opening remarks during his meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, April 12, 2019*’. Posted on 12 April 2019. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1458288/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023D). ‘*Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s address at the opening of the exhibition and presentation of books from the Russian Classical Writers and Orthodoxy series, Dushanbe, June 6, 2023*’. Posted on 6 June 2023. Available at: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Moscow Patriarchate. (2000). ‘Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church’. *Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate*. Available at: <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>. (Accessed on 7 September 2023).

Moscow Patriarchate. (2014). ‘*Deklaraciya Russkoi Identichnosti*’. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/508347.html>. (Accessed on 5 February 2025).

Muravyeva, Marianna. (2017). ‘Conservative Jurisprudence and the Russian State’. *Europe-Asia studies*. 69 (8), 1145–1152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2017.1377504>

Nalbandov, Robert. (2016). ‘*Not by bread alone: Russian foreign policy under Putin*’. Lincoln, Nebraska: Potomac Books.

Odintsov, Mikhail. (1989). ‘Drugogo raza ne bylo ...’. *Nauka I Religiya*, 19 (2).

Odintsov, Mikhail. (1992). ‘Deklaratsiya Mitropolita Sergiya ot 29 iyulya 1927g’. i bor’ba vokrug nee. *Otechestvennaya istoria*. 1992 (6), 132.

Ostbo, Jardar. (2017). ‘Securitizing ‘spiritual-moral values’ in Russia. *Post-Soviet affairs*’. 33 (3), 200–216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2016.1251023>

Papkova, Irina. (2011A). ‘*The Orthodox Church and Russian politics*’. New York: Oxford University Press.

Papkova, Irina. (2011B). ‘Russian Orthodox concordat? Church and state under Medvedev’. *Nationalities Papers*, 39(5), 667–683. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.602394>

Partlett, William. (2022). 'Russia's 2020 Constitutional Amendments: A Comparative Perspective'. *The Cambridge yearbook of European legal studies*, 23, 311-342.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/cel.2021.7>

Payne, Daniel, P. (2010). 'Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?'. *A journal of church and state*. 52 (4), 712–727. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/esq102>

Pospelovsky, Dimitry. (1984). *The Russian church under the Soviet regime, 1917-1982*. Vol. 2. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Potapov, Victor, S. (1988). 'The celebration of the Millennium of the Baptism of Rus in the U.S.S.R.'. *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas*. Vol. XXVII, No. 4 (Fall).

Popeski, Ron. (2023). 'Russia and Ukraine swap total of nearly 200 prisoners'. *Reuters*. June 11. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-ukraine-swap-total-nearly-200-prisoners-2023-06-11/> (Accessed 7 March 2025).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013C). '*Congratulations on Orthodox Easter*'. Posted 5 May 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/30/events/18026> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013H). '*Meeting with members of Holy Synod of Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate*'. Posted 27 July 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18960> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2015C). '*Congratulations on Orthodox Easter-*'. Posted on 12 April 2015. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49240> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2016D). '*Visit to Christ the Saviour Cathedral*'. Posted on 22 November 2016. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53305> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2017E). '*Meeting of Russian Orthodox Church Bishops' Council*'. Posted on 1 December 2017. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56255> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018A). ‘*Christmas greetings*’. Posted on 7 January 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56626> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018I). ‘*Meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia*’. Posted on 1 February 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56762> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2019A). ‘*Gathering in honour of the 10th anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church Local Council and the Patriarch's enthronement*’. Posted on 31 January 2019. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59757> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2020C). ‘*Meeting with members of the working group on drafting proposals for amendments to the Constitution*’. Posted on 6 February 2020. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/62862> (Accessed on 16 March 2025).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2020A). ‘*Meeting with representatives of religious associations*’. Posted on 4 November 2020. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64336> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Radyshevski, Dimitry. (1990). ‘Gonimye za veru’. *Moskovskie Novistu*, No. 18, May 6, 9.

Reese, Stephen D. (2001). ‘Prologue—Framing Public Life: A Bridging Model for Media Research’, in Reese, Stephen D., Gandy, Oscar H. & Grant, August E. (Eds.). *Framing public life: perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 7-31.

Richters, Katja. (2013) ‘*The post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: politics, culture and greater Russia*’. 1st ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Schmemann, Serge. (1991). ‘St. Petersburg Journal; Patriarch's Church Revives, but Will Spirituality?’. *The New York Times*. 9 November.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/09/world/st-petersburg-journal-patriarch-s-church-revives-but-will-spirituality.html> (accessed on 6 November 2024).

Shcherbak, Andrey. (2023) 'Russia's 'conservative turn' after 2012: evidence from the European Social Survey'. *East European politics*. 39 (2), 194–219.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2022.2084077>

Skladanowski, Marcin & Smuniewski, Cezary. (2023). 'The Secularism of Putin's Russia and Patriarch Kirill's Church: The Russian Model of State–Church Relations and Its Social Reception'. *Religions*, 14(1), 119-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010119>

Shterin, Marat. (2000) 'Church-state relationships and religious legislation in Russia in the 1990s', in Kotiranta, Matti (ed.), *Religious Transition in Russia* (Helsinki, Kikumora Publications), pp. 218 – 50.

Stoeckl, Kristina. (2018). 'Tri Modeli Tserkovno-Gosudarstvennykh Otnosheniy v Sovremennoy Rossii'. *Gosudarstvo, Religiya, Tserkov* 36 (4), 219–46.

Stoeckl, Kristina. (2020). 'Chapter 14: Three models of church-state relations in contemporary Russia'. In Mancini, Susanna. (Eds.). *Constitutions and Religion*. Edward Elgar Publishing. 237-251. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786439291.00020>

Stoeckl, Kristina. (2022). 'Russia's Spiritual Security Doctrine as a Challenge to European Comprehensive Security Approaches'. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 20(4), 37–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2022.2139536>

Strindberg, Anders. (2022). 'En översikt över den rysk-ortodoxa kyrkans Moskvpatriarkat som påverkansoperatör'. Swedish Defense Research Agency.

<https://foi.se/rapporter/rapportsammanfattning.html?reportNo=FOI%20Memo%207865>

(accessed 23 November 2024).

Stroyen, William, B. (1967). 'Communist Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1943-1962'. The Catholic University of America Press.

Struve, Nikita, A. (1967). 'Christians in Contemporary Russia'. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. (Translated by Sheppard, Lancelot & Manson, A).

Suslov, Mikhail. (2016). 'The Russian Orthodox Church and the Crisis in Ukraine', in Krawchuk, Andrii. & Bremer, Thomas. (eds.). *Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis*. 1st ed. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 133-162.

Tarasova, Daria, Markina (2024). 'Ukraine's president signs law banning Russia-linked religious groups'. *Cable News Network (CNN)*. 25 August.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/24/europe/ukraine-zelensky-orthodox-church-ban-intl/index.html> (accessed on 14 December 2024).

Teague, Elizabeth. (2020). 'Russia's Constitutional Reforms of 2020'. *Russian Politics* 5, 3, 301-328. <https://doi.org/10.30965/24518921-00503003>

Tharoor, Ishaan. (2023). 'The Christian nationalism behind Putin's war'. *The Washington Post*. April 19. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/19/patriarch-kirill-orthodox-church-russia-ukraine/> (accessed on 21 November 2023).

Trenin, Dmitri. (2013). '*The Mythical Alliance: Russia's Syria Policy*'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13011>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2025.

Tysiachniouk, Maria; Tulaeva & Henry, Laura, A.. (2018). 'Civil Society under the Law 'On Foreign Agents': NGO Strategies and Network Transformation'. *Europe-Asia studies*. 70 (4), 615–637. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1463512>

Vernon, Will. & Horti, Samuel. (2023). 'Ukraine war: Kyiv rejects Putin's Russian Orthodox Christmas truce'. *BBC*. January 6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-64178912> (accessed on 21 November 2023).

Vorobyov, Niko. (2022). 'Patriarch Kirill: Putin ally faces backlash after 'blessing' war'. *Aljazeera*. 28 March. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/28/patriarch-kirill-putin-ally-faces-backlash> (accessed 25 February 2025).

Witte, John & Bourdeaux, Michael (red.) (1999). '*Proselytism and orthodoxy in Russia: the new war for souls*'. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books

World Council of Churches. (n.d.). 'Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)'. <https://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches/russian-orthodox-church-moscow-patriarchate> (accessed on 25 November 2024).

Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii. (1946). No. 10 (October), 3.

Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii. (1947). No. 8 (August), 42.

Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii. (1960). No. 21 (September), 27.

Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, (1986). No. 1 (January), 80.

Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, (1988). No. 7 (July), 4.

8. Appendix I: Empirical sources

2012

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2012A). *Dmitry Medvedev wished Orthodox Christians and all Russian citizens a Merry Christmas*. Posted 7 January 2012. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/14225> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2012B). *Congratulations to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia*. Posted 15 April. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15039> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

2013

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2013). *Speech of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the reception on the occasion of Orthodox Easter, Moscow, 21 May 2013*. Posted on 21 May 2013. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1588139/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013A). *Merry Christmas greetings*. Posted on 7 January 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17308> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013B). *Meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia*. Posted 1 February 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17408> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013C). *Congratulations on Orthodox Easter*. Posted 5 May 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/30/events/18026> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013D). *Congratulations to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on the Easter holiday*. Posted on 5 May 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18025> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013E). *Interview for the documentary film The Second Baptism of Rus*. Posted 23 July 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18872> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013F). *Meeting with representatives of different Orthodox Patriarchates and Churches*. Posted 25 July 2013. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/30/events/18942> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013G). *Orthodox-Slavic Values: The Foundation of Ukraine's Civilisational Choice conference*. Posted 27 July 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18961> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2013H). *Meeting with members of Holy Synod of Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate*. Posted 27 July 2013. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18960> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

2014

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2014A). *Interview of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to "Bloomberg TV", Moscow, 14th of May 2014*. Posted on 14 May 2014. Available on: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/international_safety/1596432/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2014B). *Ceremonial reception in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of Orthodox Easter*. Posted on 28 May 2014. Available on: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1602918/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2014C). *Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, at the protocol event on the occasion of Orthodox Easter, Moscow, 28 May 2014*. Posted on 28 May 2014. Available at:

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1602878/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2014A). *Christmas greetings*. Posted on 7 January 2014. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20033> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2014B). *Interview to Russian and foreign media*. Posted on 19 January 2014. Available at:

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/20080> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2014C). *Easter greetings to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia*. Posted on 20 April 2014. Available at:

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20811> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2014D). *Congratulations on Orthodox Easter*. Posted on 20 April 2014. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20810> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2014E). *Meeting with members of the Holy Synod and representatives of local Orthodox Churches*. Posted on 18 July 2014. Available at:

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46247> (Accessed on 23 October 2023).

2015

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2015). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at a reception for Orthodox Easter, Moscow, April 20, 2015*. Posted on 20 April 2015. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1507614/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2015A). *Meeting with Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria and All Africa*. Posted on 10 February 2015. Available at:

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47652> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2015B). *Press statement and replies to journalists' questions after meeting with Prime Minister of Greece Alexis Tsipras*. Posted on 8 April 2015. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49220> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2015C). *Congratulations on Orthodox Easter*. Posted on 12 April 2015. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49240> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2015D). *Reception to mark 1000 years since the death of St. Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles*. Posted on 28 July 2015. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50068> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2015E). *World Congress of Compatriots*. Posted on 5 November 2015. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/32/events/50639> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

2016

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2016A). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at a Foreign Ministry reception marking Orthodox Easter, Moscow, June 2, 2016*. Posted on 2 June 2016. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/photos/pesov/1529411/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2016B). *State Secretary and Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin's speech at the opening ceremony of the 20th World Russian People's Council (WRPC), Moscow, November 1, 2016*. Posted on 1 November 2016. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1537492/ (Accessed on 29 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2016C). *Meeting with Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill*. Posted on 1 February 2016. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/51239> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2016B). *Greetings to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and participants in the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church*. Posted on 2 February 2016. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51256> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2016C). *70th anniversary of the founding of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations*. Posted on 19 May 2016. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/administration/51946> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2016D). *Visit to Christ the Saviour Cathedral*. Posted on 22 November 2016. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53305> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

2017

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2017A). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the opening ceremony of the 25th International Educational Christmas Readings, Moscow, January 25, 2017*. Posted on 25 January 2017. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1541075/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2017B). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at a reception for Orthodox Easter, Moscow, April 18, 2017*. Posted on 18 April 2017. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1545555/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2017C). *Press release on the 22nd meeting of the Working Group for cooperation between the Foreign Ministry and the Russian Orthodox Church*. Posted on 13 November 2016. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1556843/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2017A). *Congratulations to Orthodox Christians and all Russians celebrating Easter*. Posted on 16 April 2017. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54297> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2017B). *Visit to Sretensky Monastery*. Posted on 25 May 2017. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/54573> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2017C). *Meeting with Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin*. Posted on 23 August 2017. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55402> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2017D). *Vladimir Putin supported Viktor Medvedchuk's proposed prisoner exchange between Ukraine and Donetsk and Lugansk republics*. Posted on 15 November 2017. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56095> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2017E). *Meeting of Russian Orthodox Church Bishops' Council*. Posted on 1 December 2017. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56255> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2017F). *Meeting with heads of delegations of local Orthodox churches*. Posted on 2 December 2017. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56271> (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

2018

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018A). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the opening ceremony of the 26th International Educational Christmas Readings, Moscow, January 24, 2018*. Posted on 24 January 2018. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1561803/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018B). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at a gala reception on the occasion of the Orthodox Easter, Moscow, April 17, 2018*. Posted on 17 April 2018. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1568881/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018C). *Press release on the reception at the Foreign Ministry on the occasion of Orthodox Easter*. Posted on 17 April

2018. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1568887/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018D). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to questions during a meeting with students and professors of Academy of Public Administration under the President of Belarus, Minsk, May 29, 2018*. Posted on 29 May 2018. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/minister_speeches/1572250/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018A). *Christmas greetings*. Posted on 7 January 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56626> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018B). *Congratulations to Orthodox Christians and all Russians celebrating Easter*. Posted on 8 April 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57221> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018C). *Congratulations to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on Easter*. Posted on 8 April 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57222> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018D). *Greetings to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Russia on his Name Day*. Posted on 24 May 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57536> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018E). *1030th anniversary of Baptism of Rus celebrations*. Posted on 28 July 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58123> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018F). *Talks with President of Moldova Igor Dodon*. Posted on 31 October 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59006> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018G). *World Russian People's Council*. Posted on 1 November 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59013> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2018H). *Vladimir Putin's annual news conference*. Posted on 20 December 2018. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59455> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

2019

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019A). *Delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church visits Addis Ababa*. Posted on 25 January 2019. Available at: https://ethiopia.mid.ru/en/press_center/embassy_s_news/delegation_of_the_russian_orthodox_church_visits_addis_ababa/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019B). *Press release on the situation in Ukraine ahead of the 5th anniversary of coup d'état*. Posted on 21 February 2019. Available at: https://botswana.mid.ru/en/bilateral_relations/articles_in_mass_media/press_release_on_the_situation_in_ukraine_ahead_of_the_5th_anniversary_of_coup_d_tat/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019C). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's opening remarks during his meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, April 12, 2019*. Posted on 12 April 2019. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1458288/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019D). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at a gala reception for Orthodox Easter, Moscow, May 20, 2019*. Posted on 20 May 2019. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1461532/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019E). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, Moscow, November 14, 2019*. Posted on 14 November 2019. Available at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1475889/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019F). *Press release on the 24th meeting of the working group for cooperation between the Foreign Ministry and the Russian*

Orthodox Church. Posted on 3 December 2019. Available at:

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1478033/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019G). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, Moscow, December 18, 2019*. Posted on 18 December 2019.

Available at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1479657/ (Accessed on 1 November 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2019A). *Gathering in honour of the 10th anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church Local Council and the Patriarch's enthronement*. Posted on 31 January 2019. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59757> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2019B). *Meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem*. Posted on 20 November 2019.

Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62081> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

2020

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020A). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, Moscow, January 23, 2020*. Posted on 23 January 2020.

Available at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1425353/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020B). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the opening of the 28th International Educational Christmas Readings, "The Great Victory: Heritage and Inheritors," Moscow, January 27, 2020*. Posted on 27

January 2020. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1425498/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020C). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, Moscow, March 6, 2020*. Posted on 6 March 2020. Available

at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1429080/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020D). *Comment by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on the blocking of Tsargrad TV Channel on Google services*. Posted on 28 July 2020. Available at:

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1438045/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020E). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, October 1, 2020*. Posted on 1 October 2020:

Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1443363/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020E). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, December 13, 2020*. Posted on 13 December 2020.

Available at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1450721/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020D). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, December 24, 2020*. Posted on 24 December 2020.

Available at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1450390/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2020A). *Meeting with representatives of religious associations*. Posted on 4 November 2020. Available at:

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64336> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2020B). *Meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia*. Posted on 20 November 2020. Available at:

http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/community_meetings/64451 (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

2021

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2021A). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, May 13, 2021*. Posted on 13 May 2021. Available

at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1422027/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2021B). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the New Knowledge Educational Marathon, Moscow, May 21, 2021*. Posted on 21 May 2021. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1422969/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2021C). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with Rossiya 24 television network on the occasion of the 55th birth anniversary of Metropolitan Hilarion Moscow, July 24, 2021*. Posted on 24 July 2021. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1770056/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2021D). *Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to questions during a meeting with the WWII veteran community, fallen war hero search unit, volunteers, students from Volgograd universities and representatives of the people's diplomacy centre, Volgograd, August 30, 2021*. Posted on: 30 August 2021. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1774590/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2021E). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to media questions at a modern journalism forum All of Russia 2021 in Sochi, September 10, 2021*. Posted on 10 September 2021. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1775320/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2021F). Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, October 21, 2021. Posted on 21 October 2021. Available at: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/international_organizations/1784209/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2021A). *Meeting with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko*. Posted on 22 April 2021. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65428> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2021B). *Greetings on Orthodox Easter*. Posted on 2 May 2021. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/30/events/65522> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2021C). *Greetings to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on Orthodox Easter*. Posted on 2 May 2021. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65523> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2021D). *Greetings on 75th anniversary of Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations*. Posted on 19 May 2021. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65611> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2021E). *Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"*. Posted on 12 July 2021. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2021F). *Vladimir Putin answered questions on the article "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"*. Posted on 13 July 2012. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/66191> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

2022

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2022A). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to media questions at a news conference on Russia's foreign policy performance in 2021, Moscow, January 14, 2022*. Posted on 14 January 2022. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1794396/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2022B). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, October 20, 2022*. Posted on 20 October 2022. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1834459/ (Accessed on 3 November 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2022A). *Address by the President of the Russian Federation*. Posted on 21 February 2022. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2022B). *Valdai International Discussion Club meeting*. Posted on 27 October 2022. Available at:

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69695> (Accessed on 25 October 2023).

2023

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023A). *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*. Posted on 31 March 2023. Available at:

https://mid.ru/en/press_service/video/briefingi/1863130/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023B). *Regarding the pressure put on the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra leaders amid the Great Lent*. Posted on 3 April 2023. Available at:

https://botswana.mid.ru/en/press-service/news/regarding_the_pressure_put_on_the_kiev_pechersk_lavra_leaders_amid_the_great_lent/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023C). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, April 12, 2023*. Posted on 12 April 2023.

Available at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1912059/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023D). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's address at the opening of the exhibition and presentation of books from the Russian Classical Writers and Orthodoxy series, Dushanbe, June 6, 2023*. Posted on 6 June 2023.

Available at: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023E). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, June 21, 2023*. Posted on 21 June 2023. Available at:

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1890329/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023F). *REPORT of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation «Illegal actions by the Kiev regime targeting the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), its clergy and parishioners»*. Posted on 25 July 2023.

Available at: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/humanitarian_cooperation/1898457/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023G). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, August 2, 2023*. Posted on 2 August 2023.

Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1898513/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023H). *Excerpts from briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, October 10, 2023*. Posted on 10 October 2023. Available at https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1899422/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023I). *Excerpts from the briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, October 26, 2023*. Posted on 26 October 2023. Available at: https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1908554/ (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023A). *Christmas greetings*. Posted on 7 January 2023. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023B). *Greetings to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on enthronement anniversary*. Posted on 1 February 2023. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70425> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023C). *Presidential Address to Federal Assembly*. Posted on 21 February 2023. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023D). *Easter greetings*. Posted on 16 April 2023. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70334> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023E). *News conference with Maria Lvova-Belova at Russia's Foreign Ministry*. Posted on 16 October 2023. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70936> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023F). *Meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia*. Posted on 14 October 2023. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71284> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023G). *Meeting with representatives of religious associations*. Posted on 25 October 2023. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72593> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2023H). *Plenary session of the World Russian People's Council*. Posted on 28 November 2023. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/administration/72608> (Accessed on 18 December 2024).

2024

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2024A). *Excerpts from the briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, January 17, 2024*. Posted on 17 January 2024. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1925990/ (Accessed on 19 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2024B). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, February 2, 2024*. Posted on 2 February 2024. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/19327423/ (Accessed on 19 December 2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2024C). *Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, February 14, 2024*. Posted on 14 February 2024. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1932121/ (Accessed on 19 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2024A). *Interview to Tucker Carlson*. Posted on 9 February 2024. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73411> (Accessed on 19 December 2024).

Presidential Administration of Russia. (2024B). *Meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia*. Posted on 3 March 2024. Available at:
<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/events/73237> (Accessed on 19 December 2024).