
Russian Orthodox Church: From Orthodox Patriotism to Etatism

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Abstract

The paper makes a historical and conceptual analysis of the etatist Orthodox ideology; its essence and attributive quality are disclosed. Some features of Orthodox patriotism conversion into etatism and inadequacy of the last spirit of the Orthodox religion are grounded. The specificity of the Russian etatism from its origination to the present day has been investigated. Also the logic of its formation through the consideration of such concepts as: “Moscow – the Third Rome”, “the theory of an official nationality”, “a multipolar society”, “...” (The Russian World) has been given. On the basis of different documents the leading role and high dynamics of interaction between the Russian authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church in the restoration of etatist ideology have been shown. At the same time, the local nature of these processes, reduced to the socio-political and spiritual spheres of society, has been revealed. The current research defines the problem of the excessive politicization of the Russian Orthodox Church and its rapid transformation into a religious department of the Russian state.

Keywords

Etatism, Orthodox Patriotism, Byzantinism, the Third Rome, the Theory of an Official Nationality, the Russian World

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1. Introduction

The modern civilized world demonstrates a cautious attitude to any manifestations of religious fundamentalism. Speaking about this phenomenon, they turn as a rule to its Islamic variant (Islamism), which is a threat to the national security situation in the United States, Europe and some African and Asian countries. Within the frame of a significant number of comprehensive fundamental research efforts, Islamism and other expressions of religious fundamentalism remain scarcely investigated, particularly the Orthodox fundamentalism, which has a complicated ideological basis, its own specificity and history. It is believed that the Orthodox fundamentalism as a socio-political factor has exhausted itself and is not a threat to humanity any more. Therefore, its recovery trends not only at the level of radical groups and near-church circles, but also at the institutional level have been almost unnoticed by the scientific

community. These are the reasons we turn to this topic, since representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church leading denomination are more and more insistently speaking of the need to create a special space for the transcontinental Orthodox civilization to be centered in Moscow. This suggests the possibility of revival of etatism through the church. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to confirm or refute such a hypothesis. The verification of the hypothesis will provide: a consistent analysis of the phenomenon of etatism and related with it phenomena; an illumination of the patterns of its formation; an analysis of the Russian etatism specificity not only through historical, but also through conceptual discourses; an identification of new trends in transformation of the Russian etatism in terms of the scale of its impact on society.

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2. Research Significance

The specificity of etatism is such that it can be realized only under special historical and socio-political conditions and we think that it cannot be revived in today's secularized society. However, this does not exclude the etatization of some certain areas of public life. The leading role in this process belongs to the institution of church, which, expressing positive point of view about certain political events, creates a sacred ground for their legitimization. The means of formation of a public opinion by the Russian Orthodox Church is, first of all, a word embodied not only in its documents, but also in its public sermons, appeals, and conversations of the heads of the church with their congregation. In recent years, we are witnessing the transformation of public rhetoric of the Russian Orthodox Church by updating its geopolitical and civilizational discourses. The analysis of the logic of this transformation will let us not only understand the processes inside the church, but also see the threat that these processes will constitute to the church and society.

3. Etatism and Related Phenomena with It

Etatism is the political doctrine aimed at becoming (rebirth) of an "Orthodox state" and "Orthodox monarchy" as the only possible model for a further coexistence of true believers, which is coming into being under the assumption that they will recognize the Empire "not just a secular apparatus, but a mysterious soteriological body, which prevents the Antichrist's coming" [1 p.64]. The etatist ideology is based on the belief in excellence of theological knowledge of a certain church when the attempts to provide it with universal values approximate an imaginary perspective of the political association called "Orthodox peoples" under the rule of an "Orthodox King". As a cultural and historical phenomenon, it is rooted in the ideological and civilizational occurrence of Byzantinism. It stipulates the application of a systems approach, which will help us study etatism as a complex of interconnected elements that make a special unity. This unity, in its turn, appears to be the element of a senior system – Byzantinism.

Under Byzantinism, they understand a series of political, religious and ethnographic features of the oriental Greco-Roman Empire in the 11th-12th centuries, which later influenced on the social, political and cultural development of Orthodox countries [2 p.80]. Alternatively, it is "a large complex of religious and public, national and political, philosophical and moral ideas and corresponding to them forms of social practice, the origins of which date back

genetically to the samples-archetypes of the Byzantine civilization" [3 p.41]. Byzantinism within a state means monarchy, in religion – Christianity with certain features that distinguish it from Western churches and heresies, and concerning the moral aspect – denial of the extremely exaggerated notion of an earthly personality, which was introduced into history by the German feudalism. Finally, Byzantinism means disappointment in all earthly things: no cult of earthly existence and earthly man, the focus is only on man's proper self-perfection in his moral life [4 p.94].

Etatism, as a component of Byzantinism, is correlated with the following requirements:

- the restoration of a symphonic interaction of church and state, politics and religion;
- the perception of power (government) as means of a religious service;
- the restoration of the Christian state as a monarchy of conscience;
- the recognition of the monarch as a substance of good and light, which is designed to Christianize the world;
- the subordination of all spheres of public life to religion;
- the recognition of the unity of national traditions and the Holy Tradition as a prerequisite of the holistic life of people;
- the recognition of the unity of people and power (autocracy) and the responsibility of an autocrat for his own people;
- the cultivation of the idea of an Orthodox state and interethnic unity (an Empire);
- the recognition of the messianic role of a single nation to be a salvation way for other peoples.

Notably, the social background of etatism is a radical penetration of religion in all spheres of social life and at the same time transformation of Orthodoxy into a leading state ideology.

Etatism should not be confused with the Orthodox patriotism. The differences between them have been extremely aptly described by A. Kartashov. In his view, etatism involves not only recognition of the special mission of a specific nation and state, aimed at saving the world, but also the recognition of the king – a ruler of the country of all Christians [5 p.112]. In this case, they refer to messianism of the Russian people, their state and king, when they act not only as defenders of Orthodoxy, but also of their people and their faith. Hence, any threat to the Orthodox Empire is perceived not only as a desire to conquer the state, but also as longing to destroy the Orthodox Church and bring the Chosen People under a

complete control of evil forces.

Etatism, unlike the Orthodox patriotism, is a harmful ideology both to religion and to society, because it does not guarantee a recreation of “true” religion and, at the same time, embodies the desire of a certain group of people to be protected from the complex and contradictory world. It is not a coincidence that etatism is in unison with the Orthodox fundamentalism in its most principal positions: anti-ecumenism, especially anti-Catholicism; criticizing modernism and all its manifestations associated with modern forms of social life. We may agree with the opinion of K. Kostyuk, who notes that the Orthodox fundamentalism, whose integral component is etatism, can be considered as a natural expression of tribal morality, aimed at protecting the integrity of the kind (kin) before the “threats” of today’s actual release of an individual from the power of a community [6 pp.146-147]. This has been evidenced by the crushing criticism of social values and institutions, which promote this release by fundamentalists, namely: freedom of conscience, democracy, civil society, private property and so on.

We are convinced that etatism is a form of Christian totalitarianism and contradicts both the “letter” and the “spirit” of Orthodoxy. It is no coincidence that the Orthodox priests, who criticize etatism, see in it an ethnocentric distortion of the ideas of the Orthodox patriotism. Among the arguments cited in favor of “non-Orthodox” etatism, there is an interpretation of it as the attempt to master the historical process externally that is accompanied by an aggravation of social tension [7 pp.431-434]. This leads to the cultivation of anti-personalistic and ethnocentric attitudes in society when for the “higher” purpose, that is a construction of an Orthodox state; it is allowed to “sacrifice” individuals, creating a foundation for the ideological justification of totalitarian regimes.

4. Formation of Etatism as an Ideological Phenomenon

Finding out the genesis and phased development of etatism needs taking into account different historical, social, political and spiritual factors, which have influenced on that process. Therefore, it makes actual the application of social-cultural and cultural-historical approaches.

The origin of etatism was preceded by social and political processes in the Roman Empire. The formation of etatism was the result of the destruction of the idea of Christian universalism, which was based on the idea of a holy state, united by God only, unified values and a common objective. The universalism of Rome was formed not of the deification

of the nation, but of the deification of the great cosmopolitan state, the ideology of which was aimed at overcoming any national differences, recognition of equality of all nations that had accepted the cultural values of Hellenism. It took its final shape as a result of the division of the Empire into the West and the East, as well as during the existence of the Nicene Kingdom (the 13th century). During that period, the Eastern Christianity started to be called the Greek Christianity and the Western Christianity – the Latin Christianity accordingly. Their religious patriotism acquired some traits of messianism and began to gravitate to the “etatist” design, which marked its rebirth into an etatist ideology. The golden age of the Byzantine etatism was associated not only with the Crusades, but also with the opposition of the true (Greek) faith and the false (Latin) one. Therefore, “if the Western nationalism expected an independent development of church life, the language of every nation; then “the Big Idea” in the Greeks’ interpretation provided only propagation of the Orthodox faith and fostering the Greek language. The Greeks began to identify Orthodoxy with their nation and the only one empire, creating a monopoly of the Orthodox religion. At the same time not only the Christian Empire was gradually becoming the highest value (as before), but the nation as a basis for the formation of the Orthodox community and the center of that empire.

After Constantinople had lost its etatist charisma, the Moscow Orthodoxy gradually employed its place. The slogan “association of co-religionists” was put forward and led by Moscow. Consequently and further, the etatist idea was transformed into a confrontation between Hellenism and Slavism (the idea of the “Second” and the “Third” Rome). The doctrine of Constantinople megalomania gave way to the doctrine of Pan-Slavism. The Russian version of the main slogan was: “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality”. That slogan was first formulated in 1834 by the Minister of National Enlightenment of the Russian Empire S. Uvarov, as opposed to the slogan of the Great French Revolution, which was: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”. Further it was recorded in the so-called “Theory of an Official Nationality” and declared a deep Orthodox religiosity (“Orthodoxy”), devotion to the King (“Autocracy”) and following the folk traditions (“Nation”) as the authentic values of the Russian Empire. At the level of a state policy, those “three great principles of the government” were not only declared, but they were also actively implemented at the institutional level, until the revolutionary events of 1917. The establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, the atheistic nature of the communist ideology and its oppression of not only the Orthodox religion, but also of all other religions for a long time (for almost seventy years) have slowed down these processes. Besides, together with the religious persecution

and extermination of the Orthodox priesthood by Stalin in 1943 there was formed the Patriarchate of Moscow, which was controlled by the government and coordinated its activities with the policy of the state.

5. The Specificity of Modern Russian Etatism

A revival of the etatist ideology became possible only on the basis of the Russian Orthodox Church after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It happened because firstly, it had an etatist tradition of interaction with the state; secondly, huge human and financial resources made it possible to keep in their jurisdiction the rights of more or less autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. It should be noticed that it was not a single Orthodox denomination in Ukraine. There were Moldovan, Latvian, Belarusian, Japanese and Chinese Orthodox Churches. We will opportunely remark here that in Ukraine the branch of the Russian Orthodox Church exists at a time when there is a substantial confessional difference with a cultural and religious pluralism. The western analysts repeatedly write about it. [8 pp.81-103]. In the contrary way, the factors that would hinder the revival of the Russian etatism could be a secular character of the Russian state and absence of a state status in the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the church and the state are separated nominally in Russia. In addition, the country has a sufficiently high level of the Orthodox religion (it was 68% in 2013) [9]. As for the public trust in the ecclesiastical institution, it reached 48% in 2015 [10]. This allows the church to influence greatly on the public opinion, forming attitudes of the Russian people to the different socio-political events.

At the turn of the previous century, in the early 1990s, attitudes to the etatist prospective views were rather mixed in the Russian church circles. This stage, associated with adaptation of the Church to new realities of post-Soviet life, was accompanied by discussions on further ways of its social service. In terms of their radicality, there were various approaches to methods of evangelization of society, including the involvement of state institutions into those processes.

Among the most notable adherents of the conservative way, we can enumerate such figures as A. Kuraev, I. Snychov, K. Gundyayev and others. These representatives of the clergy saw their task in a radicalization of Christian claims to the society and a restoration of the social paradigm of the Byzantine Empire, renewing the etatist principles of cooperation between church, state, and nation. More soberly minded church representatives, including M. Mudyuhin, A. Blum, A. Men, and V. Novik insisted on the negative impact of etatism not only on the evangelization of society,

but also on the fate of the Ecumenical Orthodoxy.

The first manifestations of etatism appeared in the Russian Orthodox Church in the late 1990s of the 20th century with the strengthening geopolitical ambitions of the Russian state. Significantly, that in the official document, called “The Fundamentals of a Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”, adopted in 2000, the church expressed the spirit of an Orthodox patriotism. Speaking about the importance of spiritual kinship, rooted in a common homeland, language and religion, it recognized the right of every nation to its own identity, declared the requirement to love the native land, which had a territorial dimension, to be fond of the brothers by blood who lived all around the world. It warned against the negative effects of national feelings, such as aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, national exclusiveness, interethnic hostility, strongly denying the division of peoples into better and worse. However, it insisted on the privilege of a monoconfessional Orthodox society, which within one nation (civil or ethnic) “may be perceived as a single community of faith – an Orthodox nation” [11 pp.3-4]. Simultaneously, in that period the upper clergy more and more frequently were speaking about the need to restore the public (national) status of Orthodoxy and the formation of a global Orthodox space. In particular, Kirill (Gundyayev), the leading Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus repeatedly expressed support of the geopolitical project of a “multipolar society”, which was brought forward in contrast to the Catholic doctrine of the “association of the whole Christian Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals” [12]. According to that concept, the confrontation of the western ideologies expansion could only take place under conditions of the union of religion and politics. Among the strategic goals of the church, they singled out the restoration and propagation of Orthodox values through the so-called “gathering of lands” that traditionally belonged to the Orthodox world. Entirely in the messianic spirit, Moscow, as the “Third Rome”, was proclaimed the center of that “gathering”.

The next stage of creation of the modern etatist ideology was the formation of its core – a concept of “Russkiy Mir” (the Russian World). Using the semiotic approach and hermeneutic procedures, we will analyse this concept. As for the semantics of the word combination, the word “Russkiy” is explained by the upper clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church in the way that “Russkiy” is not identical to the word “Russian” and has a much broader concept, which is not associated with any ethnic or national origin. The word “Mir” (world) is polysemantic, and it means:

1) the universe; 2) all surrounding reality; 3) a community, society; 3) a state of harmony without hostility, wars and so on. Additionally, in spite of the fact that some of its adherents express their point of view: “It is all people, the

whole world” [13]; this word combination refers more to a community – the community that has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other communities. Of course, the Russian Orthodox Church does not give a clear definition of “Russkiy Mir” (the Russian World). Nevertheless, at the official level they more often transmit the following formulation: *Russkiy Mir* is a large Russian civilization that has come out of the Kievan font of Baptism and spread to vast areas of Eurasia; it is based on Orthodoxy and moral values.

We take notice of the fact that in the same speech Kirill said that Ukraine’s sovereignty should not destroy the “Russian World” [14]. Also under the “Russian World” they understand “the only spiritual and cultural world of the eastern Slavs”, based on “spiritual, cultural and value dimensions of a human individual” [15] and united by the affiliation to Russia, the Russian language and culture. That is why we see several dimensions of this phenomenon. Firstly, it is a matter of the historical discourse – the cultural and spiritual kinship with the Ukrainian, Russian, and Belarusian people that have come out of the joint “cradle” – the Kievan Rus – a powerful state that existed in the period from the 9th to the 13th centuries. It is known that the Kievan princes laid the foundations of the Rus statehood by all possible political and military means, and in 988, during the reign of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, the Christianization of Rus was made. Secondly, it is the matter of existence of so-called “spiritual clamps (ties)” (the Russian Orthodox Church terminology), especially the Orthodox faith and the Russian language. Thirdly, in recent years more weight has been given to the civilization dimension and the common perspective of the nations that are numbered with that formation.

Summing up, the “Russian World” is an ideal structure, a transcontinental and international community, connected by common values, so-called spiritual clamps (ties) in the historical past and aimed at a common civilizational future.

For the last few years, we have been witnessing the next stage of the Russian etatism development. It lies in the transition from a retrospective to prospective thematics aimed at the formation of an “Orthodox civilization” with the spiritual center in Moscow and in strengthening of etatistic cooperation between church and state. These tendencies became especially noticeable during the events of 2013-2015 in Ukraine: Maidan (the Independence Square), the Russian annexation of the Crimea, a war conflict in the east of Ukraine. During those events, the Russian Orthodox Church did not urge the Russian authorities in any way to stop the aggressive policy towards Ukraine. On the contrary, it tried to legitimize the aggression, explaining it as a renovation of Russkiy Mir (the Russian World). Immediately after the

annexation of the Crimea by Russia, in his Annunciation Sermon Kirill (Gundyayev) did not only condemn the annexation, but on the contrary, he made an excursus into the history of lands gathering by Moscow “from ocean to ocean”, emphasizing the wisdom, honesty and devotion of Russian rulers to the Motherland. He also underlined the role of the Russian troops, ready to sacrifice their lives for the emperor, for the land, and for the Orthodox faith. Then pointed to the great mission and responsibility of the Russian people before God [16]. The appeal of March 1, 2014 made by Vsevolod Chaplin, Very Reverend Father, the Chairman of the Synodal Department of the relationship of the church and society became resonant: “Ensure the identity and close interaction between the peoples of historical Rus with the help of a peacekeeping mission of Russia in Ukraine!” Referring to the Russian People’s Council of 2014, also led by Kirill (Gundiajev), it expressed the hope that “the mission of the Russian soldiers to protect the freedom and the unique identity of the citizens of Ukraine who class themselves as Russian people ... will not meet the large-scale conflicts and hard resistance” likely on the part of the very citizens of Ukraine” (the author’s note – N. I.) and [17]. It is significant that concerning the already mentioned events the satellite of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate has taken the analogic and a more restrained stand. Contrary to other Christian confessions in Ukraine that in one or another measure supported the demands of Maidan and within which the brand of the “Revolution of Dignity” was born [18], the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate made another public discourse, by which they dispraised Maidan and later persuaded the Ukrainians not to resist the Russian aggression.

So, there was a quite natural attempt to outline the “circle” of the enemies of the Russian civilization. On April 28, 2015 at the Russian People’s Council, they adopted a document called by the Russian Orthodox Church “Memorandum of the Expert Center of the World’s Russian People’s Council on Russophobia” [19]. The content of this document needs a detailed analysis in the form of another article. The authors of the document do not conceal its purpose – to create a list of threats to the Russian identity, which, by the author’s definition, has been brought up to date by the Western civilization and the “internal” enemies that do not stop “the propagandistic and organizational activities aimed at neutralizing, dismemberment and maximal weakening of Russia”. In the “Memorandum” *Russophobia* is defined as “hostility, hatred for Russia, the Russians, their ethnic and cultural manifestations, religious and national identity”. The religious identity is associated with Orthodoxy, “which gave impetus to the development of the Russian statehood and the

formation of the best features of the Russian national character” [20]. Thus, according to the author, to the expressions of Russophobia a so-called “persecution” of Orthodoxy in all manifestations belongs: from some certain critical attitudes and historical events, cultural and mental peculiarities of Orthodoxy to the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church and others. Significantly, that any critical actions, speeches and performances of writers, public figures, journalists, any notes or posts in social networks in relation to the religion and church are also considered to be the manifestations of Russophobia. Next, it is emphasized that Russophobia has “not only ethnic, but also civilizational, geopolitical, and cultural dimensions”, and all actions aimed at undermining the basic values can lead to a social disaster not only in Russia, but also in the “neighboring countries historically included in our civilization and share our basic values”. Finally, on May 24, 2015 during the church service in the Cathedral of the Redeemer Kirill (Gundyayev) stressed: “Godlessness becomes the state ideology in Ukraine” [21]. *Ipsa facto*, he indirectly put the latter on the list of the “enemies” of the Orthodox world.

We will opportunely remark here that the analysis of the public stand of the Russian authorities in terms of etatism is complicated, because they not so much strive for creating an Orthodox state as want to use this idea for their own purposes. This, for example, can be proved by the analysis of the public discourse, which has arisen in connection with the Russian annexation of the Crimea. Soon after that, president Putin in his allocution to the Federal Assembly made a number of statements with the purpose of legitimization of the crime against Ukraine in the eyes of the Russian people. The arguments, he stated, are worth mentioning here: the huge civilizational and sacral meaning of the Crimea for those who advocate Islam and Judaism having been compared with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem by V. Putin; the sacral meaning of the Crimean town Korsun, where Prince Vladimir was baptized and who baptized all Rus then; the existence of a spiritual source of forming a multifaced, but monolithic Russian nation and a centralized Russian state; the importance of Christianity for Rus as a powerful stateforming and uniting force. As a matter of fact, here are reproduced the main components of the etatist ideology: the idea of eternity of a sacred tradition for a nation and state, the civilizational role of Orthodoxy, longing for the lost Orthodox paradise and the desire to come back to spiritual sources. There is a monarchical component of etatism in V. Putin’s report, which is fixed by a rather imperative phrase: “And that is the very way we will regard it henceforth and forever” [22].

It is a well-known fact that according to the etatist ideal, a king was required to have devotion to the Orthodox faith and

determination in defending the Orthodox Empire. Hence came the ideal of a king and monarch, the blessed head of a theocratic state whose vocation was to convert society to Christianity. However, according to the present Orthodox canon, cooperation of church and state is possible only under the condition where the church is conscience and a creative force for the state, and the state, in its turn, is for the church an exterior historical design of the people’s life. In the situation when a state provokes wars and annexes a foreign territory, it must be deprived of the church’s support even when these events are taking place under the slogan of serving Orthodoxy.

Summing up, we observe a linkage of the Russian identity to Orthodoxy; the future of the Russian state – to the propagation of the values of “*Russkiy Mir*” (the Russian World); the future of the Russian church – to legitimization of any actions of the authorities, aimed at the revival of the Orthodox state.

6. Conclusions

Etatism is a contradictory value phenomenon, rooted in the history of the Ecumenical Orthodoxy. This inconsistency stems from the fact that firstly, it is formed at the intersection of religious and political ideology, and secondly, it is the product of a close cooperation between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. These circumstances cause a symbiosis of values when at the level of hierarchy of objectives, the ultimate goal to form an Orthodox state is declared. At the same time, the government recognizes the right to choose any methods to achieve this goal. The result is a dichotomy: an Orthodox ideal – non-Orthodox methods of its implementation. Therefore, they distort this ideal. At the ideological level, there is a simulacrumization of metaphysical values, turning them into the necessary tools to achieve pragmatic goals. At the institutional level, it causes socialization and even politicization of church and parallel sacral legitimization of a state power.

Etatism has emerged as a result of ideas transformations of the Orthodox patriotism when, instead of an Orthodox unity in faith and truth, some certain people become a carrier of the national-state idea, which appears to be a focal point of their self-consciousness. These transformations involve a number of social and political factors:

- the geopolitical situation related to the presence of antagonistic civilizational systems;
- the coincidence of interests of separate institutions and a powerful, militant, and expansion-oriented state;
- the presence of a state church;

- the high level of religiousness in society, the members of which identify themselves with the determined church and state.

The Russian etatism is retrospectively and systemically linked to the civilizational system of Byzantium. At the first stage of its formation it became conceptualized by contrasting such ideas as the “Second Rome” and the “Third Rome”, notably Hellenism and Slavism. The next stage of its conceptualizing is the theory of an “official nationality”, whose guiding principle – “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality” is opposed to the ideals of the French Revolution – “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”.

The specificity of the modern etatist transformations of the Russian Orthodoxy lies in the fact that they take place under the conditions of a secular society existence and the availability of a nominal separation of church from the state. These circumstances make the total etatisation of society impossible, but, unfortunately, they do not prevent the etatisation of some social spheres.

Today the civilization dominant is the cornerstone of these processes through which the church substantiates the concepts of a “multipolar society” and the “Russian World” – a unique Russian civilization, connected by so-called “spiritual clamps (ties)” in the historical past and aimed at a common civilizational future.

In recent years we have witnessed some strengthening of the etatist cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian government, which is reflected in legitimization of rather militaristic actions of the Russian government in Ukraine by the Church, justifying this by the need of “gathering the Russian lands” led by Moscow.

Summing up, we state that the withdrawal of the Russian Orthodox Church from the “Letter” and “Spirit” of Orthodoxy, its politicization and transformation into the religious department of the Russian state will have very negative consequences not only for the Church, but also for the Russian society.

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