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The Religious Diplomacy of the Russian Federation

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ABSTRACT

This paper consists of a dedicated research work in the field of Russian Diplomacy with relation to religion that has been explained in detail in the five chapters of the paper. Russia has always been looked up as a country that considers itself to be one of a kind and has a general idea by the common masses of being a nation that is run by extreme nationalisms. With this paper the Researcher has tried to analyse the moves and policies made by the Russian Federation to change its image with the help of Religious Democracy being one of the major contributors of the Russian soft power. This paper has a detailed analysis of all the religious ties as well as international dominance of the Russian Democracy after the fall of the rigid USSR. The paper consists of data that has been recorded as well as the Researcher's own opinion on the entire Religious Diplomacy structure in Russia along with suggestions related to improvement and conclusive statements.

I. INTRODUCTION

To The world witnessed that during the end of the 20th century there was a new tension that started emerging due to a rift in ideological differences between two geopolitical poles. During this period of time we saw that religion and spirituality became the flag bearers for the same, as the entire ideology purely served as a source of mere political legitimacy. It acted as an identity factor and even today explains the harsh reality faced by the universally equipped world. Due to the being of post socialistic realms, we often notice that the concept of re-experiencing religion is measured to be an attempt to regain the forgotten legacy, as a method of reconstruction of the nation's identity and lastly, we can say that it is also allied with generations of ancient memories. The former Soviet republics serve as a good example for the above phenomenon. One of such expressions of religious renaissance applicable in Russia's public sphere is the model of a growing conjunction of the activities of the Russian state and religious societies in the international podium. The entire Russian tradition of using religion as a purpose of state policy inclusive of diplomacy has a long going record and the Soviet period

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again was no exception to this. We can see that the Russian Federation is trying to shape its religious diplomacy and instantaneously is exercising it with growing efficiency. Firstly, we can see that there is a close proximity with the remake of religious conviction in the entire Russian political structure as well as the social life. Many of the Russians that also includes the political elite consider religion to be a very privileged component and a part of tradition. They consider religion to be the institute of values for the Russian society as well as aims to regain the powerful status of Russia.²

It can also be noted that religion has repeatedly appeared in Russia official concept for the entire state policy. The country is disingenuously known as a civilizational pole consisting of its own cultural space that are used in promoting interdenominational conversation. The cultural space as well as the interfaith dialogue have deep rooted association with the well-being of this state as well as the soft power. The loyal religious organizations That are capable of conducting are the most valued asset of state diplomacy in Russia.

II. CULTURAL SECURITY AND SOFT POWER

The entire religion structure has been showcased in three documents that are present in the Russian Federation foreign policy.

1. National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (2020)
2. Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (2010)
3. Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation (2008)

In all the three documents as mentioned above we can see that religion emerges as a major factor of cultural as well as idiosyncratic features off the civilization either ranging as an isolated factor or falling within a broader scope.

By advocating an efficient interface dialogue on the National Front the Russian authorities optimistically prevent the entire inter-ethnic and inter religious hostilities inside the nation. We can also say that this can be considered to be a good beginning point in order to build Russia international believability as a unique civilization which promotes a successful model that thrives on achieving congenial cohabitation as far as religion is considered. It is no less Than a cultural appeal and an asset as far as the nation's soft power is considered.

The foreign policy concept in Russia prepares for a abstract ground as far as religious

² Z. Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism*, London-New York, Routledge, 2005.

S. Mozgovoy, *The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia Since 1990*.

J.C. Garrard, *Russian Orthodoxy Resurgent: Faith and Power in the New Russia*, Princeton University Press, 2008.

diplomacy is considered. It deeply stresses on the fact that as a multi-confessional and a cosmopolitan state Russia has proved to be able to pursue interfaith and intercultural dialogues within the intercontinental organizations that include the UNESCO, The United nations, the Council of Europe as well as OSCE And many other regional as well as international organizations not to mention the assistance with the entire organization of the Islamic conference.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS DIPLOMACY

Religious diplomacy simply means or can have been reflected as a state activity that consists of the use of a religious factor in the complete foreign policy in other words it simply means that the whole set of working machinery for the state cooperation is dealt with religious associations in pursuit of national interests as well as international activity.

In such cases we see that the word cooperation is intentionally used in order to describe the relations that exist between the state and the religious organisations dealing with religious diplomacy. However, we can conclude that there is no noticeable pattern as such, sometimes we do see that this state uses the softer religious institutions as instruments. Keeping aside few nuances we often see that church and state interactions is resembled with collaboration, which is more or less a lucrative situation to both the sides as it is based on the theories of mutual dependency.³

In the field of diplomacy, a state however is considered to be the tougher player by the definition.⁴Such dominant standing of the state is often mirrored by the fact that the opinions or appeals our diverge and it is a religious institution which adapts to the demand of secular authorities and not vice versa.

IV. TRANSITIONAL FEATURES OF RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

The Orthodox Church of Russia hasn't strikingly distinguished feature of earth transitional actor, under pressure from the ROC's growing activity, Russian muftiates, Have started to develop potential to conduct all kinds of activities beyond the Russian borders.⁵ During this

³ A. Tsygankov, *Whose World Order? Russia's Perception of American Ideas after the Cold War*, University of Notre Dame, 2004.

V. Tsymburski, *Rossiya--Zemlya za Velikim Limitrofom. Civilizaciya i.e. Geopolitika [Russia—Land Beyond a Big Border. Civilization and its Geopolitics]*, Editorial URSS, Moscow 2010.

⁴ Volker Stanzel, *New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century*, Germany, SWP Research Paper 2018/RP 11, 12.11.2018.

<https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/new-realities-in-foreign-affairs-diplomacy-in-the-21st-century>

⁵ Kaarina Aitamurto, *Patriotic loyalty and interest representation among the Russian Islamic elite*, RELIGION Volume 51, 2021 - Issue 2: Thematic issue: Beyond 'Radical' versus 'Moderate'? New Perspectives on the Politics of Moderation in Muslim Majority and Muslim Minority Settings. Guest Editors: Margaretha A. van Es, Nina ter

course of time we see that the Buddhist or the Jews organization actions are usually the ones that raised the interest of the Russian foreign affairs ministry only on few peculiar and particular context which includes any action or to be exact situation that is related in regard to the Dalai Lama or the Jackson Vanik amendment. This screams In itself that Russia religious diplomacy is ruled by the ROC and the muftiates to a great extent. ⁶

As mentioned earlier the ROC Has the capacity to manage further than the borders off the Russian Federation. This is so because of the worst canonical territory that covers the area of the Soviet Union that occurred officially with exception of Armenia and Georgia. It can be noted that the ROC takes care of all the churches and Parishes is infrastructure or not only one but six continents. ⁷

Chronological events have certainly created an influence on the diplomatic experience of Russia which is said to be industrialised over hundreds of years. Still it can be noted that the fully professional department of the external relations came into existence in 1946. Under Bishop Nikodin Ranging from 1960 to 1970s the external relations department grew to become the most prominent se nodal department within the whole of Moscow. According to Bishop Hilarion the department was believed to be an intellectual kitchen of the ROC.⁸ Under the regime of Bishop Kirill the department Came to be known as the rearing ground for all the new ideas as it was considered to be responsible for formulating the social concept of the ROC . Further it can be noted that the choice of Bishop krill as the 15th Partridge of Moscow is a clear indication of the central position that the branch of external relations acquired within the ROC .⁹

On the 65th anniversary of the department of external relations back in the year 2011, the minister of foreign affairs known as Sergey lavron Praised the patriarchate's diplomacy For its relevant skills and engrossment in supporting the Russian diaspora and all the interfaith dialogue. Thus, we can say that it is no correlation that the foreign affairs ministry is the most

Laan and Erik Meinema

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0048721X.2021.1865604>

⁶ Hichem Kadri & Elmira Akhmetova, When Politics Allied with Religion: Russia's New Strategy to Dominate the Middle East under the Pretext of Fighting Terrorism, Scientific Research, Open Journal of Political Science ,Vol.2, April 2020.

<https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=98693>

⁷ International Alert , The role of the Church in Georgian-Russian relations and the reaction in Abkhazia to the visit of Ilia II to Moscow, International Alert .

<https://www.international-alert.org/fr/blog/role-church-georgian-russian-relations-english-0>

⁸ Official web site of the Moscow Patriarchate, "Missiya dvizhet diplomatiey" [Diplomacy is Moved by Mission], August 3rd 2011.

⁹ J. & C. Garrard, op. cit. [1]; N. Mitrokhin, op. cit. [1]; M. Mchedlov, O social'noy koncepcii russkogo pravoslaviya [On the Social Concept of Russian Orthodoxy], Moscow, Respublika, 2002.

enthusiastically emerging ministry among all the ministries as far as its cooperation with the Moscow patriarchate is considered.

Talking about the ROC we can say that it is a special institution Which represents the Russian state on the intercontinental arena to a great extent. On the 2nd February 2011 patriarch Kirill stated” More and more countries comprehend the Moscow patriarchate as an important and respectful applicant in international dialogue.....representatives of high political and diplomatic circles show interest in the ROC’s pinion on Concrete problems of current international affairs.”¹⁰ the proof that encourages this conviction can be found in Russia contacts with North Korea , Iceland and Cuba. In all of these territories the presence of an Orthodox Church was highly motivated by the desire to speed in the relationship with Russia. It was considered to be a sign of generosity towards North Korea or the act of gratitude for the Russian government From Iceland.¹¹The ROC can we said to have a strong position as it has a will to act and strengthen the all-inclusive government In international relations As an institution that is not only religious but also political in nature.

However, it can be studied that the diplomatic activity of Russian Muslim is considered to be less striking. One of the justifications for such serious disadvantage is the limits of the muftiates Transitional possibility due to the dispersal of Islamic institution in Russia and the squabble between the mufti’s itself. Despite several efforts made by different groups to establish one powerful central establishment to represent all the Russian ummah, That which are considered to be the neighborhoods bearing traditional Islam are becoming increasingly fragmented and are on the verge of decentralization.

It is seen that the mufti’s have a great ambition to become the representative of Russian Muslims on the international arena we see that the council of muftis of Russia worked out a document in the year 2001 known as the” essential standards of the social program of Russian Muslims”. This document talks about the goals as well as the internal and external activities by the council of muftis. On the international front we see that the authors of the social programme of Russian Muslims acknowledge all the contracts with other institutions which include the Organization of the Islamic Conference known as the OIC, the league of Arab states, and also the Muslim states which particularly includes Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and

¹⁰ 6 Official site of the Moscow Patriarchate, Predstoyatel russkoy pravoslavnoy tserkvi: vse bolshie chislo gosudarstv vosprinimaet Moskovskiy Patrarkhat kak avtoritetnogo uchastnika mezhdunarodnogo dialoga [The Chief of Russian Orthodox Church: More and More States Perceive the Moscow Patriarchate as an Important Actor of the International Dialog], 3 February 2011, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1399948.html>

¹¹ The construction of the Holy Trinity Church in Pyongyang in 2004 was to denote a new impetus to the relations between North Korea and Russia.

Egypt as the most imperative goal. In this way we can see that the mufti it's want to become a recognizable part of a process of building strategic partnership of Russia with the above mentioned countries.

It is important for us to keep in mind that the mufti's have no property or governmental capacity Beyond the borders of Russia so tare activity is concerned not only to recover the last position that they once had but also to participate themselves in building a new international role on its own. It can be considered as a leading explanation as to why the Islamic organizations pay wholeheartedly less attention as far as international activity is concerned Than the Moscow patriarchate.

V. RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

Religion is often used as a conceptual tool in order to legitimise the political power. We can also read the proceedings by the ROC and related to this context. The activity of the ROC can we divide it into three classifications namely the classic diplomacy, endeavours associated with the self-identification process of Russia and lastly the undertakings to boost Russia soft power.

In the very first category we see that the ROC believes its role to be that of an understandable diplomat and act as a 'mediator and a peacemaker'. Whereas in the second activity we see that it acts as a good sheep herd or embark on national repository, lastly, we see that in the third activity the ROC acts as an orthodox leader and in other words an experienced reconcile are and a protector.

Taking an account, the word classic diplomacy here we see in order to possess their own diplomatic connections the religious institutions easily serve as a 'black channel 'for the state officials especially when we see that the political relations are overburdened with problems. The ROC near contracts with the Georgian orthodox church Can be believed as a classic example for the same. Even though we see that there was a deep post war crisis and strain on both other states relation but still the church is kept underscoring on their brotherhood and mutual account of trust. They appeared as a significant communication link in the year 2010 and mutually appointed representatives to both the capitals which acted as a passageway or a kind of message box even for the politicians.

Another way in which the ROC acted as an UN discernible diplomat is considered to be the dialogue between Polish Catholic churches and the Moscow nationalists in the year 2009. Since then, there has been several meetings in order to prepare a common memorandum. This initiative runs parallel to all the attempts by the government to safeguard a rich ground for a

symbolic and a long-awaited reconciliation and breakthrough in the Polish Russian relations.¹²

The second category of activity here refers to the role in the post-Soviet universe. The ROC here appear to be in a very challenging position. On one hand we see that it tries to act as a national repository in account for the Russian society heritage and it considers itself to be the true guardian of the national uniqueness. Whereas on the other hand we see that the ROC Makes efforts in order to influence the other post-Soviet orthodox nations that it is not just a Russian institution but contemplates itself to be a super national Repository and Protector for of the memories of the people who died fighting against the evils of fascism in the second World war .

A clear instance for the approach mentioned above was seen when the ROC sees new strategy in the direction of Ukraine came out. The ROC joined the commemorating of the victims in the Ukraine on 26th of November 2011. However, we can witness that the Rose frames the event to be in a wider context correlating to sufferings of all the people living in the USSR during the term of 1932 to 1933. Likewise we saw that partridge Carol consistently stressed on the fact that he is the patriots of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus , And Moldova during his diplomatic visits. In the year 2011 he also made sure to send an Easter address to the presidents of all the four orthodox republics.

Russia's entire plan regarding building up of its soft power started in the post Soviet space still we see that its ambitions went far ahead of its immediate neighbours. Russia considers it to be a international project and is concentrated on creating a new image that it wants to project and it's considered to be suitable in the 21st century. As far as the orthodox population is concerned the arrow wants to be itself to be considered as the leader of the universal Orthodox Church. The idea of transforming and setting in Moscow to be a kind of orthodox in or establishing a conference of orthodox state would influence Russia's position as well.

Finally when we considered the activities or the roles of a reconcile are and justice protector then we find that they are interconnected. Russia wants to see itself as an important mediator in the dialogue of civilizations and it strongly aspires do you have status of the Parton of the poor and weak in the north versus South rivalry that exists here interdenominational dialogue becomes important to both the roles.

¹² Official site of the Moscow Patriarchate, Communiqué on the Results of a Meeting between Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Poland, March 1st, 2010., <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1103693.html>

VI. HIGHEST PRIORITY TO THE INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

The entire concept of having an interfaith dialogue is considered to be at a highest priority level as far as Russia's religious diplomacy is concerned. This is the main focus of the ROC most intensive activity. The Islamic organizations to have their involvement here in this policy. They too are likewise dedicated to escalating and magnify the entire debate on interfaith an inter civilizational contracts. One of the necessary preconditions required year is that there should be a keen interest and proper commitment of the international community for the same. The general intention year focuses on encourage on the international actors so that they consider the opinions that are produced by these religious representatives during the entire decision making process.

It can be seen that on the territories of the CIS the patriot of Moscow and the muftis use their influence in order to smooth out the inter religious tensions that exists there and also moderate the entire dialogue between actors. The important platform off such activities carried out by them is the inter religious council of the Commonwealth of independent state which was established in the year 2004 which helps its meeting once a year. The Russian state diplomacy as well as the Russian clergy supports it as an economical institutional solution to cater all the inter confessional tension.

It is a symbol of winning a dialogue between religions in the post-Soviet moment in time. The activity of the council is indeed expanding with time as in the year 2011 it founded a new body of itself known as the Commission for peace-making at the interfaith council of Russia. The Muslim clergy also upheld the proposals by attempting to lessen the ark diplomatic advantages in the CIS. In the year 2009 the muftis of Russia held the first summit meeting of leaders of Islamic religious institutions of the CIS in Moscow which was dedicated to strengthen the relations between the state and integration of the ummah of the former Soviet Union.

Notwithstanding all the big attempts made by the Russian muftis we see that the status of the ROC as the main Russian religious institution letting out and facilitating the dialogues with the world of Islam will probably remain an undisputed fact in the near future as well. We can say that the Moscow patriarchate prides itself on being the Christian Church with the closest relations possible with the Iranian ayatollahs. The important effect that we saw of this cooperation of Russia and the Iranian clerics was the activity of the Islam orthodox Commission which was created in the year 1997. The very first session of this took place in the same year in Tehran. During this board meeting issues such as dialogue of civilizations, role of religion in modern societies, globalization coma moral crisis of socialism, Islamic and

Christian theology, terrorism and extremism were discussed.¹³

Another country with a Muslim population that attracts the attention of the ROC is Turkey. It is not any go incidents that partridge Carol choose is Stan bull to be the destination office very first visit outside the CIS. During his meeting with the Prime Minister, Kirill expressed his interest in developing close corporation with the Turkish Islamic institutions for a better and smooth functioning.

Russia has recognized the complete interfaith dialogue to be of highest priority in the Russian foreign policy and considers it to be interpreted in a fuller context in order to save the world from Huntington's Vision of an inevitable civilizational clash. The Russian selecting this as a priority Reflects the three aspects off the discourse that Russia is not good enough to promote on international level. The three-discourse based on a new implanted seed majorly concerns the image of Russia considering it to be a unique civilization, Russia's vision of the global order which talks about multi polarity and lastly Russia's role as a bridge between civilization acting as a mediator a conceptual leader etc.

VII. CONCLUSION

The religious diplomacy that flourishes in Russia has certainly backed few achievements and the first of all is none other than the help of ROC as it has improved the Russians to promote their imaginations and vistas on the world stage. The ROC series transitional potential has been growing with time and this eventually benefits the Kremlin as the church has been increasingly active in many international fronts. The all-inclusive status that an observer has at the OIC and the additional diplomatic channel that has contacts with Iran are considered to be undoubtedly a noteworthy success. Russia has efficaciously and intentionally used the Muslim component to participate in the work of organizations that are generally closed to the USA and the European Union, this move benefits them gain a good amount of advantage over any other West nation as far as relations with the Islamic world is concerned. The ROC's Influence mainly in the territory of CIS is a hard to deny fact as well as it's appreciated positive role played in the Caucasus .

However, we still can see that the biggest challenge for the Moscow patriots that exists in the post-Soviet area is building up the trustworthiness as a religious institution which is bound not only to correspond to Russian interests. This is a problematic case especially when countries

¹³ Gergory L.Freeze , Russian Orthodoxy and Politics in the Putin Era ,Carnegie Endowment For International Peace , Task Force White Paper ,9th February ,2017. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/02/09/russian-orthodoxy-and-politics-in-putin-era-pub-67959>

like Ukraine or the Baltic republics are concerned.

We can say that religious diplomacy here is a rather positive instrument in relations between states still we cannot ignore that there are few fundamental false assumptions that exist about the concept itself. The questions that one must raise here should be concerning the long term credibility of the interfaith dialogue which is presented to be Russia's precious *Savoir faire*. The inter religious harmony is considered to be the important aspect of Russian soft power and also the new identity that it possesses including the attractive image and missions led by the nation. Meanwhile we find that there is a great deal of inter confessional tensions that are rising in Russia. The fragile equilibrium is considered to be slowly ending. It was seen that in the year 2010, 54% of respondents in a poll proclaimed a positive attitude towards the slogan Russia for Russians. If this comes to an outpouring it will certainly undermined the Russian credibility as a country fostering inter religious Concord. This is nothing less than a serious shortcoming of the religious model in which the certificate to preach is something that is granted only to the few loyal ones. It has a unique concern for traditional mufti's who are demonstrating only part of the Russian Oh ummah.

The Russian soft power however has at least one other flaw. It sometimes seems so in the kremlin's opinion that the soft power should be successful even if it is based on the ideals of pure construct. The administrative approach here can be generating an impression as if the entire soft power is nothing but appear trick. This entire concept is nothing but a fundamentally flawed concept as it is hard to find authenticity and belief in the propagated ideas to have achieved a desired effect. It can also be determined by saying that the cultural appeal of Russia is still considered to be weak outside the CIS and not to mention that is weakening even there specifically in the regions of Georgia and Moldova because of their obvious openness and fondness to the western concepts.

The religious diplomacy that exists here is not a Russian invention although we can say that it does have a long tradition in this field. The revitalization of religion from the social margins that exist since the fall of the former USSR has had a extraordinary impact on the Russian diplomacy and foreign policy in general. Russia's religious diplomacy is now simply taking its form so it might be considered as a perilous thought to judge it on the characteristics of whether or not it can become a transformative element of Russian soft power.
