

“Special Military” Holy War:

Russian Manipulation of Religious Narratives in
2022-2024



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Introductory remarks

This text will overview the position on the so-called "Special Military Operation" (SMO) of the religious communities and their leaders that are officially classified in the Russian discourse as "traditional" – Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. **It is these denominations that are the most numerous, play a key role in shaping the state policy in the religious field, and have the greatest (although difficult to "measure") influence on society.** The close control of their institutions by state bodies led not only to the clergy's demonstrative loyalty (with few exceptions) to the Kremlin's official position on the war in Ukraine, but also to more or less active promotion of its "sacralization". The idea that the Kremlin's imperial war could be interpreted in religious terms as "just", "holy" or "godly" has been promoted literally from the first days of the invasion. This imposition of the sacred dimension of war served to justify its aggressive nature, legitimize mobilization, and form the belief among part of the population that participation in hostilities is not only a civil but also a “spiritual” duty.

The term "**traditional religious denominations**" itself, despite its widespread use at the level of the highest officials¹, does not have a clear legal definition in Russian legislation². It is rather a concept that suggests that certain religions should be considered “historically rooted in Russia,” while all others are viewed as “foreign” and “borrowed”. At the same time, it is obvious that even within the framework of "traditional" religions, only those branches of religion are recognized that are under the strict control of state bodies. In the case of Christianity, for instance, this mainly refers to the Russian Orthodox Church, while Islam is recognized only in its officially sanctioned forms controlled by

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official muftis. Attempts to use a similar approach can also be traced in the attitude towards Buddhism and Judaism.

Despite the fact that the Constitution of the Russian Federation declares the country as a secular state and guarantees the equality of all citizens regardless of religious affiliation, there are clear differences in the attitude towards different faiths in practice. **Faith is seen not only as a sign of personal identity, but also as a factor in political loyalty.** Legislative mechanisms, in particular the provisions on “protection of the feelings of believers”³, ensure preferential treatment for religious communities, however, within a clear hierarchy: “traditional” religions are effectively identified with loyalty to the state, while “non-traditional” ones may be subject to administrative pressure and persecution⁴. There are no official statistics in Russia on the number of adherents of various religious groups, as the law prohibits requesting information from citizens about their religious affiliation. Data on religious affiliation are based exclusively on sociological surveys, which can hardly be considered reliable and comprehensive.

Thus, according to a study by the Public Opinion Foundation (Russian abbreviation - FOM) in April 2022, 63% of respondents indicated their affiliation with Orthodoxy, and among young people aged 18-30, only 51% chose this option of religious self-identification. At the same time, the results of this survey showed that 8% of Russians practice Islam, and among citizens aged 31 to 45, one in ten (10%) calls themselves Muslim⁵. The All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (Russian abbreviation - VTsIOM) published data in March 2024 on 66% of respondents who identified themselves as Orthodox (which is 9% less than in 2015), 6% as Muslims, and about 1% as Buddhists⁶. The number of Jewish community members is statistically insignificant (less than 0.05%), which is due to the specifics of this religious tradition.

Unlike the VTsIOM and FOM data, alternative studies and census data generally indicate a much higher percentage of individuals who self-identify as Muslims. For instance, according to a study by the Pew Research Center (2017), about

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10% of Russian citizens (approximately 14.5 million people) stated that they belong to the Muslim community⁷. These indicators are also corroborated by the data of the 2021 All-Russian Census, which recorded positive demographic and migration dynamics among certain ethnic groups that traditionally practice Islam⁸. Given the above, correctly defining the proportion of the Russian Federation's population that can be classified as "practicing believers" of any of the "traditional" faiths is problematic. Accordingly, the extent of the impact of statements, messages, sermons or fatwas by religious leaders proclaiming the "sacred" nature of the Russian-Ukrainian war on these communities remains uncertain, as well.

For example, among Muslims, the level of adherence to religious precepts is generally higher than among Orthodox or Buddhists (although Russian experts insist that they also make up no more than 10% of the entire local Ummah)⁹. At the same time, as in the case of the Russian Orthodox Church clergy, it is difficult to objectively assess how authoritative and binding the theological interpretations of the war expressed by individual muftis are for Russian Muslims, especially given the lack of complete unity among them on this issue.

Therefore, the text focuses on the fact that attempts to give the war a "sacred meaning" and attract leaders of various denominations to its support performed a predominantly symbolic function serving as a means of justifying the actions of secular authorities and strengthening their legitimacy, and did not reflect certain "demands" determined by individual religious doctrines that came "from within" the communities of believers themselves.

Role of the ROC in the Justification, Ideological Substantiation and "Sacralization" of the Russian-Ukrainian War

The question of the role and significance of the Russian Orthodox Church in today's political system of the Russian Federation remains a subject of scholarly debate. Back in 2014, one of the Russian publicists noted that *"Orthodoxy as a religion plays a certain role in Putinism, but this role differs both from the ideas of*

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the ROC hierarchs and from the interpretations of its critics"¹⁰. On the one hand, the legitimizing function of the church as a "historically rooted" institution that has a sacred status and claims a "connection with the supernatural" is important for the Russian regime. On the other hand, Vladimir Putin does not position himself as a "submissive child" of the ROC and does not view its hierarchy as an absolute spiritual authority. At the same time, he actively uses the concepts developed in church circles, in particular the "Russian world" ideology, which became one of the central ideological foundations of the war against Ukraine¹¹. In general, according to some researchers, a social religion has already been fully formed in Russia, which does not oppose itself to "real" religions, but rather "builds" on top of them absorbing their symbolism and images. The social religion is mandatory for everyone, while in private life one can believe in anything observing the ritual of loyalty. It borrows only the ritual and external form from Orthodoxy – some images, actions, and words¹².

It is also worth noting that Russia is not an "ultra-Orthodox" country, and the ROC is not an institution that can secure a decisive voice in politics by dominating the hearts of tens of millions of citizens. The Kremlin's official rhetoric (supported by the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church) suggests that the number of Orthodox Christians in Russia cannot be less than the share of ethnic Russians (approximately 80%) in the overall demographic structure¹³. At the same time, a more detailed analysis of the Russian population's religious practices has long demonstrated the formality of such self-identification. For example, a 2008 study showed that 80% of nominal Orthodox Christians in the Russian Federation had never received Eucharist, 55% had never attended a church service, 27% did not know any of the Ten Commandments, and 20% of those who identified with Orthodoxy openly declared their atheistic views¹⁴. There is no reason to believe that any significant changes have occurred in this area over the last decade. For example, according to data published by the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs at the end of 2024, church attendance on Orthodox Christmas has almost halved over the past five years, and no more

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than 2% of Russians attended this one of the most important services of the liturgical year¹⁵.

In addition to its domestic political significance, the ROC plays an important role in the Kremlin's foreign policy. Back in Soviet times, the state used it as a tool of international influence, and after 1991, as a means of expanding its presence in the post-Soviet space. In particular, the representation of the ROC in the World Council of Churches contributed to the creation of a positive image of modern Russia in the international arena. Bilateral contacts with other local Orthodox churches were also significant, allowing for indirect influence on the politics of countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Georgia. In the post-Soviet space, the ROC maintained dominant positions in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, and also performed an integration function for the Russian minority in the Baltic countries¹⁶.

The fulfillment of this foreign policy task to a certain extent limited the Patriarchate's ability to openly and fully support the Kremlin's rhetoric. In particular, Patriarch Kirill avoided direct participation in the events related to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and maintained the formal subordination of the Crimean, as well as Luhansk and Donetsk, dioceses to Kyiv (the so-called "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" in unity with the Moscow Patriarchate). All of this, of course, happened with the approval of the Kremlin, which took into account the specifics of the Patriarchate's situation and its importance for the implementation of foreign policy goals. However, after the Ecumenical Patriarchate granted autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2018, Putin may have had claims against the ROC, as well as increased doubts about its effectiveness outside Russia¹⁷.

The approach formed in previous years also influenced the strategy of the ROC leadership in February 2022, when Putin purposefully used the protection of the interests of the Russian Orthodox Church as one of the official pretexts for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On February 21, he stated that *"in Kyiv, they continue to prepare a crackdown on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the*

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*Moscow Patriarchate*¹⁸, thereby trying to legitimize aggression through the religious factor¹⁹.

It can be argued with a high degree of probability that Patriarch Kirill was aware of the decision to invade in advance²⁰. At the same time, in the first days of the war, the ROC leadership refrained from publicly supporting the hostilities²¹. Presumably, this position was agreed upon with the Kremlin, which did not insist on immediate official statements, either. Instead, the Patriarch limited himself to calls to “pray for peace”, while simultaneously using propaganda narratives about the “common historical heritage” and “united destiny” of Russia and Ukraine.

Already on March 6, on Forgiveness Sunday, Patriarch Kirill openly justified the need for war during his sermon, stating that it was directed against “*values alien to Russia*”. He emphasized that the conflict has “*not a physical, but a metaphysical meaning*”²².

On March 9, the ROC head repeated the key theses of Russian propaganda about “fraternal peoples” and accused the West of trying to impose “*values alien to Orthodoxy*” on Ukraine²³. He also claimed that holding gay pride parades was a “test of loyalty” for world powers, thereby equating Russia’s actions with “defending traditional morality”²⁴.

In early March 2022, the head of the World Council of Churches, Ioan Sauca, appealed to Patriarch Kirill to influence the RF's military-political leadership, but in response, the ROC head stated that the cause of the war was the West's attempt to “*mentally transform*” Ukrainians into enemies of Russia²⁵.

On March 16, the Moscow Patriarchate distributed a special prayer “for peace” among clergy, making it mandatory for liturgical services²⁶. However, in parallel with this gesture, Patriarch Kirill intensified his direct and unequivocal support for Russian aggression, although he avoided deeper “spiritual” interpretations of

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events. In his sermons, he repeatedly expressed praised what the Russian military did, claiming that “the future of Russia depends on their actions”.

After the publication of evidence of mass killings in Bucha, Patriarch Kirill declared that Russians are a "*peace-loving people*" ready to "*defend their home*"²⁷. This position contradicted previous church norms and principles: according to the Social Concept of the ROC, the church cannot support an aggressive war and must express sympathy for the victims of obvious aggression²⁸. Thus, the public statements of the ROC head in the first two months of the "special military operation" actually violated the established church standards and rules.

To overcome this apparent contradiction, the ROC began to emphasize that it is Russia and Russians, not Ukrainians, who are the victims of the insidious attack. On May 3, 2022, Patriarch Kirill celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Archangel Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. In his sermon, he once again emphasized that Russia has never attacked anyone, but only "*defended its borders*"²⁹. After all these statements, there were proposals to impose international sanctions on the head of the ROC, as one of those co-responsible for unleashing and justifying the war³⁰. Reacting to such statements by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, even Pope Francis, who is extremely positive about Russia, urged the Patriarch "*not to stoop to the level of Putin's altar boy*"³¹.

The transition from "religiously ornamented" political rhetoric to a direct theological justification for the war was completed in September 2022. After the announcement of mobilization in the Russian Federation, Patriarch Kirill not only publicly supported this decision, but also stated that Russian military who died as a result of hostilities receive "*absolution of sins*"³².

A separate aspect of attempts to interpret the “special military operation” as a war with a deep mystical connotation was the use of biblical categories to describe V. Putin’s “role in history”³³. For instance, in October 2022, the Patriarch called on the people of Russia to pray for the health of the president for two days on the eve of his 70th birthday. In prayer books distributed to military personnel, Vladimir Putin was called archistratigo – the leader of the heavenly army, which effectively equated him with St. Michael the Archangel³⁴.

In May 2023, during a prayer service in the Kremlin's Annunciation Cathedral, the ROC head blessed Putin to remain in power "until the end of time", which some observers perceived as another allusion to the idea of the modern era as a period of the Apocalypse ("end times")³⁵. On November 20 of the same year, during a meal on the occasion of his birthday, the Patriarch declared that the clergy *"are on the front lines today"*, and the Russian president and the state *"defend the values that are blocking... the movement to the end of time under the rule of the Antichrist"*³⁶.

In July 2024, speaking about Putin, Gundyayev emphasized that Russia was lucky because *"the Lord sent a person in this difficult time who is able not only to hold back the blow, but also to mobilize the country so that it has the strength to resist the onslaught of total evil"*³⁷.

Interestingly, since March 2022, V. Putin himself has sporadically used the term *"holy battle"* in reference to the war he has unleashed³⁸. At the same time, there is no reason to believe that he insisted on an official theological justification for this concept from the Russian Orthodox Church. Presumably, various religious actions, including religious processions, the transfer of "miraculous" icons to the front line, the activities of military clergy, etc., were considered an acceptable level of "blessing and support" from the ROC³⁹.

A clear problem for both the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church was that the fighting was being waged against fellow believers, since the majority of Ukraine's population is Orthodox. This "inconvenience" was resolved by denying the confessional status of those who resisted the aggression - they were effectively denied the right to be considered Orthodox Christians. *"What is the enemy in a confessional sense? Its core is made up of Nazis who profess racist Satanism. The instigators of the war with Russia are the militant Uniates of Galicia - traitors to Orthodoxy - and schismatics from the OCU, as well as the "Ukraine-is-Europe" idolaters of rainbow Western values"*⁴⁰ – wrote on this occasion the "venerable" Moscow archpriest V. Tsy-pin.

Accusations of the neighboring state's leadership of allegedly systematic persecution of citizens for their religious beliefs are intended to justify unprovoked aggression against it, as well. In July 2023, the Bishops' Council adopted an official document in which the Ukrainian authorities were called *"the heirs of the Bolshevik theomachists"*⁴¹.

Two key facts indicate that the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church hesitated before taking the final step of officially declaring the war “holy”. First, this was done only two years after the start of the aggression. Second, the official declaration was made not within the Patriarchate itself, but at a congress of the World Russian People’s Council (WRPC), an organization that operates under the auspices and control of the ROC, but is not formally part of its organizational structure.

A kind of “announcement” of this step was the holding in January 2024, within the framework of the XXXII Christmas Readings, of a joint conference with the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation called “Holy War: The Transformation of Russia” and dedicated to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. The event featured theses that were in line with the provisions set out in the “Mandate” of the World Russian People’s Council published on March 27, 2024. In particular, the “sacredness” of Russia’s war against Ukraine was justified by the claim that the Russian Federation was supposedly “*protecting Holy Russia and the world from the onslaught of globalism and the victory of the West, which had descended into Satanism*”⁴².

It is not known whether the act of declaring the “sacredness” of war had any significant impact on Russian society beyond a narrow circle of radical Orthodox fundamentalists. At the same time, it provoked criticism from the international Christian community.

In particular, the World Council of Churches (WCC) condemned the decision of the World Russian People’s Council, which characterized the war in Ukraine as “holy”. The WCC emphasized that such statements contradict Christian principles of peace and reconciliation⁴³. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew also issued a sharp criticism, stating that this war is not “*holy*” but “*godless*”⁴⁴.

"Jihad by Order": Strategies for Engaging Muslims in the "SMO"

The Kremlin has a multi-level interest in the support by the Muslim community. In particular, the republics with predominantly Muslim populations have until recently played a key role in ensuring the electoral stability of the Putin regime. The six main Muslim regions – Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan,

Kabardino-Balkaria, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan – have demonstrated the highest level of loyalty to the government. In exchange, the Kremlin has allowed them to retain certain cultural and legal specifics⁴⁵.

Since the 2010s, after the Russian regime shifted to a conservative ideology, the state's relationship with Muslim communities has become even stronger. In this context, Islam has come to be seen as an ally of the Kremlin in promoting so-called "traditional values." In particular, the Mufti of Tatarstan, Kamil Samigullin, has become one of the key ideologists of amendments to the Russian Constitution aimed at consolidating the traditional model of the family as a "union of a man and a woman"⁴⁶.

Both official propaganda and the controlled muftiates actively spread the idea that Islam is one of the religions treated by the Russian authorities with special respect and provided with comprehensive support⁴⁷. This idea is supported, in particular, by statements about resolving issues related to the construction of new mosques, which are critically lacking, especially in Moscow, at the highest political level⁴⁸.

It is obvious that the Kremlin's real policy towards Muslim communities differs significantly from its official declaration. Practical measures and non-public steps of the authorities often contradict the rhetoric of "special respect" for Islam. The terms actively used in official discourse – in particular, "traditional" and "non-traditional" Islam – mostly serve as a tool for repression against representatives of the Islamic clergy and organizations that seem "suspicious" to the special services.

A striking example of this is the situation with the Hizb ut-Tahrir organization, which is not recognized as a terrorist organization in most countries of the world, but has been given such status in the Russian Federation. Its supporters face severe persecution, receiving disproportionately harsh prison sentences simply for affiliation with the organization⁴⁹.

The Kremlin's policy on religious literature is chaotic and often openly anti-Muslim. A striking example was the inclusion on August 29, 2022, of a translation of the hadiths of Sahih al-Bukhari, one of the most authoritative collections of Islamic texts, in the Federal List of Extremist Materials. No other country in the world has recognized collections of hadiths as "extremist". Only

after protests from the Council of Muftis of the Russian Federation and a sharp reaction from Ramzan Kadyrov were the Russian authorities forced to reconsider this decision⁵⁰.

Regular cases of humiliation of Muslims in state structures, in particular in the penitentiary system, remain insufficiently covered in the media, which allows Russian officials to avoid responsibility. In particular, there are numerous cases where the administration of correctional institutions confiscated the Koran from prisoners, forced them to eat food prohibited by Islamic prescriptions, and committed other acts of contempt for their religious beliefs⁵¹. It is likely that the commanders' demonstrative insult to the religious feelings of two Muslims of Tajik origin was one of the main reasons for the incident with dozens of dead and injured that occurred on October 15, 2022 at a military training ground in Belgorod⁵².

A similar attitude is also evident in the actions of law enforcement agencies. Police and intelligence agencies regularly conduct raids on mosques during religious holidays and the obligatory Friday prayer (juma namaz). The most high-profile cases of mass detentions of Muslims in 2023–2024 occurred precisely during Friday prayers, which are mandatory for all adult Muslim males⁵³.

Despite all these trends, the Kremlin actively uses the message of its "special respect" for Islam not only in domestic policy, but also in rhetoric on the international stage. The Russian government positions itself as a state that protects the religious feelings of Muslims, unlike Western countries, which allegedly tolerate acts of desecration of Islamic shrines, in particular the Holy Quran. *"This is a holy thing for Muslims and for everyone else. We know that in other countries they do things differently - they do not respect people's religious feelings and say that this is not a crime"*, - V. Putin said among other things during a visit to the mosque in Derbent on June 28, 2023⁵⁴. The Russian Federation does demonstratively persecute individuals accused of insulting the Quran, as in the so-called "Zhuravel Case". However, Russian special services are most likely behind a series of similar actions in Europe. The FSB is also likely involved in supporting anti-Muslim sentiment in Moscow and organizing blasphemous anti-Islamic actions, which allows the authorities to manipulate the Muslim community using both carrot and stick methods⁵⁵.

An important element of the Kremlin's policy of independence and commitment to the concept of a "multipolar world" is the demonstration of Russia's "special" ties with the Muslim world. In the first decade of Putin's rule, the Russian Federation's approach to Muslim countries remained controversial. On the one hand, the Kremlin actively "solved" the problem of Islamic radicalism within the country, strengthening control over Muslim religious centers and restricting their activities. On the other hand, efforts to strengthen relations with Muslim states have failed to eliminate mutual distrust. In both Moscow and Muslim capitals, such initiatives were largely perceived as a demonstrative gesture designed to create the illusion of friendship and arouse "jealousy" in the West⁵⁶.

After 2014, Moscow repeatedly tried to demonstrate that the Muslim world supported its actions, including the annexation of Crimea and the war against Ukraine. One of the key propaganda messages aimed at the Muslim population of the Russian Federation was the claim that "no Muslim" or "no Arab" country had imposed sanctions against Russia.

However, Moscow received real and practical support mainly from Iran, a Shiite theocratic state, and Syria, where power remained in the hands of the Alawites until the end of 2024. The Sunni world often denies recognition of Alawites as Muslims, considering them as a separate religious group that combines elements of Islam and pre-Islamic beliefs. This specificity in itself complicated the dialogue of the Russian Federation with leading Sunni countries, many of which are in a geopolitical confrontation with Iran⁵⁷.

Although Islam does not provide for a centralized religious hierarchy, Russia does have formalized religious administrations (Muslim Spiritual Directorate, muftiats) that perform administrative functions and interact with the state. Despite the Kremlin's attempts to create a unified administrative structure to control Islam in the Russian Federation, this has never been achieved due to competition between the Tatar and Caucasian muftiats, as well as personal conflicts between their leaders.

At the same time, all key muftis demonstrate absolute loyalty to the authorities, which minimizes the risks of destabilizing Muslim communities.

Today, there are several dozen independent religious administrations, most of which are part of four main centralized organizations:

The Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia (CSAMS) (Ufa) is the oldest structure, dating back to Soviet times. It is headed by the Supreme Mufti Talgat Tajuddin, known for his eccentric behavior and scandalous statements that have drawn criticism from Russian Muslims⁵⁸. In particular, in November 2022, he called Russia “*a true caliphate of God, in which traditional values are preserved, and representatives of different nationalities and religions live in peace*”⁵⁹.

The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation (SAM RF) (Moscow) established in 1994 and headed by Ravil Gaynutdin, who also heads the Council of Muftis of Russia (CMR). He tried to become the “number 1” Muslim leader in the Russian Federation, but was unable to maintain dominant influence even in Tatarstan⁶⁰.

The Coordination Center of Muslims of the North Caucasus (CCM NC) that was headed until August 2024 by Ismail Berdiyev from Karachay-Cherkessia, whose real influence was limited due to his archaic views⁶¹, the ethnic diversity of the region, and the dominance of Sufism there. He was succeeded by the Mufti of Chechnya, Salah Mezhiyev, who is called Ramzan Kadyrov’s “pocket mufti” and who has no serious authority among the RF’s Islamic clergy, either⁶².

The Spiritual Assembly of Muslims of Russia (SAMR) established in 2016 and headed by the former Mufti of Chuvashia, Albir Krganov. It is the youngest and most active organization, with a leader who is the most sensitive and prompt in responding to changes in the political environment⁶³.

After February 24, 2022, Russian muftis publicly outlined their position on the war in Ukraine. In general, it is quite loyal to the official Kremlin policy, although it contains certain differences in the interpretation of how specifically this armed conflict can be considered a “jihad”.

For instance, the CSAMS head, Talgat Tajuddin, stated⁶⁴ that he “sincerely supports the decision to conduct a special military operation to protect the population, demilitarize, and eliminate the threat of the revival of Nazism”. He issued a special fatwa (theological opinion) in which he declared those who died during hostilities as part of the Russian Armed Forces, in particular during the “special military operation” in Donbas and Ukraine, to be shahids⁶⁵.

The SAMR Mufti, Albir Krganov, fully supported Russia's war against Ukraine, emphasizing that "*Muslims must wish victory for their Fatherland*"⁶⁶. At the same time, he did not demonstrate his own initiative in openly calling this war a jihad, limiting himself to vague phrases.

The Mufti of Chechnya, Salah Mezhiyev, was one of the first to speak out on this issue. As early as February 27, 2022, he stated that the Chechen military, who are participating in hostilities in Ukraine, "*are on the path of Allah*"⁶⁷. He compared them to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, who "*fought as part of the Ethiopian army against its opponents under the command of a Christian*". Later, during a roundtable discussion in the State Duma on March 29, Mezhiyev declared that "*fascists, Nazis, Satanists, the LGBT community, Wahhabis, and other 'black devils'*" were fighting against Russia, so all Muslims who died in this war would be recognized as shahids⁶⁸.

On March 16, 2022, the leaders of the Russian Federation's main muftiats made a joint statement in support of the war against Ukraine, calling it a "*forced measure*" to protect Russia from the threat of the use of "*nuclear and biological weapons by NATO countries*"⁶⁹. They called on Muslims to defend "*the interests of their Fatherland in dealing with fellow believers from other countries*" and "*to repulse all who try to denigrate the feat of our brothers*". It was also declared that "*all Muslims who, with faith in Allah, died while fulfilling their duty to protect the Fatherland – the Russian Federation, their citizens, are shahids*".

The only leader of the centralized muftiats who did not sign this statement was Ravil Gaynutdin, the head of the SAM RF. This probably indicates his disapproval (as a theologian) of the definition of war as "holy" for Muslims, but by no means a disagreement with military aggression itself. However, Gaynutdin "compensated" for this position with a number of other statements of a political nature. He repeatedly emphasized that Russian Muslims support President Vladimir Putin in his policies and wish him victory. In addition, he emphasized that the entire Islamic world "*understands the decision of our president. They are waiting for the victory of Russian policy and are absolutely disinterested in the hegemony of only one state and the creation of a unipolar world*"⁷⁰.

Controlled muftiats also supported partial mobilization in the fall of 2022, but appealed mainly to civic, not religious, sentiments⁷¹. In some regions (for

example, in Ingushetia),⁷² local authorities and special services even had to apply pressure on those religious figures who preferred to “remain silent” and avoid direct support for the actions of the Russian authorities. Later, the topic of the “SMO” as “jihad” continued to be periodically promoted mainly by the leadership of the Chechen Republic and the muftis under its control. However, despite the active measures of Ramzan Kadyrov, who claims to be the “main protector” of all Muslims in the Russian Federation, these efforts have yielded rather modest results. The majority of the Islamic clergy in Russia (including those who in March 2022 signed statements recognizing to one degree or another the war as “jihad”) is limited to demonstrating loyalty to the authorities and general support for Muslims participating in hostilities⁷³.

At the same time, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has not been recognized as jihad by any authoritative Islamic theologians outside the Russian Federation. On the contrary, in the Muslim world it is mostly viewed as a political conflict, far from the religious principles of just war. Many influential Islamic leaders have emphasized that jihad involves the struggle to defend Muslim lands, and not participation in the military campaigns of a non-Muslim state seeking to expand its territories⁷⁴.

Russia's Buddhists and the "SMO": Spiritual Teaching Versus Political Loyalty

Buddhism in the Russian Federation is widespread in three remote regions: Kalmykia, Buryatia and Tyva. The number of followers of the Buddha's teachings is estimated at approximately 1% of the population, which also influenced the level of attention (incommensurate with what we see in the case of Orthodoxy and Islam) from the Kremlin towards this denomination. It is characteristic, however, that during the “ceremonial” meetings of the Buddhist clergy with Russian leaders, the latter emphasized that the Russian Federation is the only European country in which Buddhism is recognized as a “traditional religion”⁷⁵.

The low “density” of communication between the central government and the Buddhist community was also due to the fact that, as in Islam, Buddhism does not have a “vertical” all-Russian structure, and in each of the regions where this

religion is practiced, separate organizations are active. Buryat Pandit Khambo Lama Damba Ayusheyev is the only Buddhist among the members of the Interreligious Council of the Russian Federation, so he was often called the "*representative of all Russian Buddhists*", which is not true. The Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia (BTSR) headed by him, as of 2023, had 52 communities in Buryatia and only 14 in the rest of the Russian Federation⁷⁶. The fact that it is the "successor" of the Central Spiritual Administration of the USSR Buddhists, of course, gave it points in the Kremlin's sporadic attempts to unite all Buddhists into one structure again. However, such projects looked unviable, if only for the reason that the BTSR headquarters remained in Ulan-Ude throughout the entire post-Soviet period.

The Kremlin has a mixed attitude towards the use of international connections by Russian Buddhists, in particular, it seeks to minimize their contacts with the Dalai Lama XIV. Since 2004, this spiritual leader's entry into Russia has been effectively blocked due to China's position, as the Dalai Lama leads the Tibetan diaspora in exile.

Damba Ayusheyev is known for his position on the autonomous development of Buddhism within the Russian Federation⁷⁷. In particular, he has repeatedly emphasized the need to focus on the internal issues of the Buryat Buddhist community and Buryatia as such⁷⁸, distancing himself from international initiatives related to the Dalai Lama.

At the same time, the influence of the Central Spiritual Administration of Buddhists of Russia headquartered in Moscow, is growing⁷⁹. It is headed by Geshe Yonten (Sergey Kirishov), a native of Kalmykia⁸⁰, who is a member of the RF's Public Chamber. Observers suggest that Kirishov could be seen as a potential successor to Ayusheev as an informal "frontman" of the Buddhist community in Russia. Despite this, he currently denies the existence of any competition between the country's two leading Buddhist organizations⁸¹. According to experts quoted in the "NG-Religion", the authorities' idea is for Ayusheyev to focus on issues of patriotic education and support for the traditional way of life of Buryat communities, while Kirishov, due to his diplomatic skills, will begin to play a more active role in the interaction with both Russian political structures and the international stage⁸².

At the same time, two other important organizations remain autonomous – the Union of Buddhists of Kalmykia, led by Tenzin Choydak (Mutul Ovyanov),⁸³ and the Union of Buddhists of Tyva, led by Kamba Lama Gelek Natsyk-Dorzhu⁸⁴.

In addition to the organizational difficulties that make it significantly harder or even impossible for the Kremlin to obtain massive support of aggressive military actions from the Buddhist clergy, there is also the specific pacifist nature of Buddhist teaching itself. Its doctrine is practically devoid of concepts similar to the idea of "holy war" inherent in some other world religions.

At the same time, certain attempts to interpret Buddhism in the spirit of justifying armed conflict have taken place⁸⁵. Indicative in this context is the increase in the number of Russian-language publications in 2022 dedicated to the question: "Can war be justified from the point of view of Buddhist teachings?"⁸⁶ Such discussions indicate efforts by individual authors to adapt the Buddhist tradition to the political context and legitimize war actions.

In any case, official support and a kind of "blessing" of the so-called "special military operation" were expressed by Khamba Lama Damba Ayusheyev on March 3, 2022⁸⁷, who stated: *"We are Buddhists and must maintain peace, harmony and tranquility. However, we live in a unified Russian state and defend the interests of our country, against which a dirty information war is being waged. We worry about our brothers and sons, who are currently in difficult military conditions. We pray for their well-being and for their return to their families. We must have a strong and reliable rear. Our Sahyusans are with us, our Great Khambo Lamas are with us, Buddha is with us!"*⁸⁸. In September 2022, Khambo Lama further "developed" his position, stating that *"Buddhists must defend their Fatherland – this is a sacred duty. If called upon, a man must go. A man's dignity, especially in Buddhism, lies in the fact that a man must defend, if necessary – fight, win and return to his family. We are proud of our soldiers!.. We, Buddhists, as long as we live on this earth, are always indebted to someone. First of all, to our Fatherland. The time has come to repay the debt. We were born, raised in Russia, there was a peaceful sky above us. Debt is Karma! Karma is like debt. Debt must be repaid! There are no other concepts here"*.⁸⁹

Damba Ayusheyev's position has provoked a mixed, mostly negative reaction among Russian Buddhists. No other high-ranking religious leader has expressed a similar level of support.

Even the head of the Buddhist community of Tyva, a region under the informal patronage of the now former RF Minister of Defense, Sergei Shoigu, refrained from making public statements of this kind. This is especially significant, given that the Kuzhuget Shoigu Cultural Foundation is a key sponsor of the construction of Buddhist religious buildings in Tyva and, in general, it was impossible for the local clergy to avoid “patriotic” statements and actions in support of the “SMO” participants⁹⁰.

At the same time, although the Dalai Lama XIV has not made public statements about the hostilities in Ukraine, his official representative in Russia, Mongolia and the post-Soviet countries, the head of the Buddhists of Kalmykia, Shajin Lama Telo Tulku Rinpoche (Erdni-Basan Ombadikov), has sharply condemned the invasion. In October 2022, he openly declared the unacceptability of the war, and in January 2023 he was recognized in Russia as a “foreign agent”⁹¹. *"This war is not needed"* Ombadikov said in an interview on the YouTube channel "Alchemy of the Soul". *"I think that the Ukrainian side, of course, is really right - they are defending their country, their land, their truth, their Constitution, their people"*⁹². His statement was unprecedented among Russian religious figures, who usually avoid public criticism of the Kremlin's actions. After that, Ombadikov resigned as Shajin Lama of Kalmykia and left Russia.

It is important to note that within the Buddhist community, Telo Tulku Rinpoche enjoyed greater authority than Damba Ayushev. Russian Buddhist expert Andrei Terentyev suggested that there was no authoritative spiritual leader in Russia capable of replacing the émigré, since he knew all the problems of Russian Buddhism very well and was not only the official representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but also his close confidant. *"Not only in Kalmykia, but also in the Russian Federation, there is no Buddhist leader close in authority, against whom one could check the correctness of one's actions. There are respected lamas who are far from worldly and even more so political issues, and there are those who obediently follow the path of state policy - without particularly thinking about how it relates to the teachings of the Buddha"*, he noted⁹³.

The new leaders of the Kalmykia Buddhists (Tenzin Choydak (Mutulom Ovyanov) selected in February 2023 by the Dalai Lama from three proposed candidates) avoids public statements about the war, which, according to external observers, is self-speaking⁹⁴. The silence of the spiritual leadership is perceived by some believers as a refusal to support military invasion, especially given the pacifist nature of Buddhist teachings.

Despite the lack of a clear official "religious sanction" for participation in hostilities, individual representatives of the Buddhist community in Russia still decide to join military operations⁹⁵. At the same time, there are also opposite cases when followers of Buddhism refuse to participate in the armed conflict referring to their religious beliefs⁹⁶. This reflects not only the lack of a unified position among Russian Buddhists, but also demonstrates the significant role of individual choice in interpreting the moral and ethical principles of the faith in the conditions of modern political reality.

"In the Shadow of War": Jewish Community Leaders Between Resistance and Adaptation to State Pressure

According to the 2020-2021 census, the number of Jews in Russia was 82,644⁹⁷. However, the small number (modern Judaism does not actually engage in proselytizing among other ethnic groups) is "compensated" by the high proportion of Jews among the country's business, scientific, cultural and artistic elites⁹⁸. In addition, the demonstration of the "absence of anti-Semitism" and a favorable attitude towards representatives of Judaism is one of Putin's long-established "tricks", which, among other things, played an important role in building his image on the international stage and in communications not only with the State of Israel, but also with the Western world⁹⁹. In the "historical insights" that the Russian leader is so fond of, the Khazar Kaganate (whose elites practiced Judaism) is also periodically mentioned, with an emphasis on the fact that the Khazars also played a role in the formation of the Russian ethnicity¹⁰⁰. Putin's views on this issue also "correspond" to the fact that the Federal Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations also lists Judaism among the religions that constitute an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia.

In today's Russia, this religion is represented by three major movements: traditional Orthodox Judaism, Hasidism, and Reform (or progressive) Judaism.

They are united in the two most influential organizations – the **Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Associations in Russia** (KJROAR)¹⁰¹, which includes Orthodox and Reform communities, and the **Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia** (FJCR)¹⁰², which operates under the auspices of Lubavitch Hasidism.

The Chief Rabbi of Russia under the KJROAR is Adolf Shayevich, while the FJCR provides this “title” to Berl Lazar. The latter’s influence and level of communication with the Kremlin is undoubtedly higher than Shayevich’s. At the same time, Russian officials feel a certain “cognitive dissonance” here, because in the case of Judaism it is somewhat difficult to operate with the terminology “traditional” and “non-traditional”. In particular, there was a well-known scandal when representatives of the Russian Security Council tried to classify certain areas of Judaism as “sectarian”. It is illustrative, however, that in October 2022, the then Secretary of the Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, publicly apologized for the mistake of his subordinate¹⁰³.

At the same time, representatives of Russian nationalists continue to insist on the "non-traditional" nature of the Chabad movement in Russia, periodically verbally "attacking" the Head of the FJCR, Alexander Boroda, and Chief Rabbi Berl Lazar¹⁰⁴.

Before the start of the so-called “special military operation,” the leaders of all official Jewish communities in Russia generally demonstrated loyalty to the authorities. This approach is explained both by domestic political pressure and by concerns for the stability and security of Jewish communities in the country. Official Jewish organizations in Russia traditionally take a cautious position, trying not to enter into conflict with the authorities, which is due to both historical experience and the specific political situation.

Despite this, there were some tense moments, which arose mainly when Putin used historical and religious analogies that were sensitive from the point of view of Jewish beliefs and traditions. One of the most striking examples of such statements was Putin’s speech of December 4, 2014, in which he compared the significance of Crimea for Russia to the sacred role of the Temple Mount in

Jerusalem for Jews and Muslims. In particular, he said: *"For Russia, Crimea, ancient Korsun, Chersonese, Sevastopol have enormous civilizational and sacred significance, just like the Temple Mount in Jerusalem for those who practice Islam and Judaism. And that is how we will treat it from now on and forever"*¹⁰⁵.

This statement caused a mixed reaction among religious Jews, as such an analogy contradicts the traditional Jewish perception of sacred places and the historical role of Jerusalem. However, leaders of Jewish organizations in Russia avoided open confrontation or public criticism of such statements by the president. This indicates a characteristic model of interaction between religious organizations and the state in the Russian political system, which involves maintaining political loyalty even in cases of ideological differences.

The specifics of communication between the Kremlin and leaders of Jewish communities do not allow us to clearly determine what level or form of support was expected from them after February 24, 2022. The Russian authorities traditionally seek to demonstrate the unanimity of religious organizations in supporting state policy, however, in the case of Jewish communities, the situation was more complicated due to their historical sensitivity to issues of war and violence.

Theoretically, Judaism has a concept of "Holy War" (Milhemet Mitzvah), which is used in cases of defense of the Jewish people or fulfillment of a divine command. However, even in a purely theoretical context, using this concept to justify Russia's war against Ukraine seems even more problematic than attempts to justify aggression with similar precepts in other Abrahamic religions.

According to the former Chief Rabbi of Moscow, Pinchas Goldschmidt, his departure from Russia in April 2022 was due to the authorities' demand to support the "special operation"¹⁰⁶. Alexander Boroda, however, categorically denied that any pressure was exerted on the leaders of the Jewish communities at all: *"There was no pressure on us. I spoke in the Israeli press and asked Goldschmidt to name the person who put pressure on him. After all, he is abroad, it is definitely safe for him. I do not think that he is the person who should be put under pressure. He was not the main speaker here or the one who expressed the opinion of the Jewish community to be under any special*

pressure. *The Chief Rabbi of Russia, Berl Lazar, did not feel anything close to pressure, and neither did I*¹⁰⁷.

It is unlikely that the words of the loyalist rabbi should be taken at face value, but indeed, despite the fact that Berl Lazar did not make a statement in support of the SMO, but called for peace, no claims were made against him at the official level¹⁰⁸. Moreover, in January 2023, the RF's Chief Rabbi, according to the FJCR, declared his readiness during a meeting with Putin to do anything to establish peace between Russia and Ukraine. He referred to the Talmud, which states that saving one person's life is equal to saving the entire world, and emphasized the importance of every person's life¹⁰⁹.

Without insisting on changing the public "pacifist position" of Jewish communities, the Kremlin, nevertheless, expected from rabbis working in Russia a clear declaration of political loyalty from the very beginning, in particular, in the matter of confirming the allegedly "Nazi" nature of modern Ukraine¹¹⁰. The Russian authorities have paid particular attention to using the historical memory of the Holocaust and the fight against Nazism as a tool to legitimize their policies. In 2023, this narrative was even reflected in the presidential address on the occasion of the Day of Salvation and Liberation¹¹, the youngest of the Jewish holidays, officially established in 2013. In its greeting to Russian Jews, the Kremlin emphasized the continuation of the "*cause of the victors*" of World War II and stressed the need to confront "*Nazi manifestations*" in the modern world, which in the context of Russian propaganda directly alluded to the events in Ukraine.

Jewish community leaders in Russia, while refraining from openly supporting the Kremlin's official narratives, generally avoided publicly denying them. At the same time, they periodically distanced themselves from or even condemned the position of their Ukrainian co-religionists, who openly supported the Armed Forces of Ukraine and condemned Russian aggression¹¹². This "balancing" between cautious loyalty to the Russian authorities and reluctance to openly engage in the war, however, did not protect them from attacks from Russian nationalist circles, which demanded unequivocal support for the so-called "SMO"¹¹³.

Skepticism and distrust of Russian Jewish leaders on the part of right-wing radical groups were particularly heightened in cases where it appeared that there were no insurmountable differences between the official representatives of the Jewish communities of Russia and Ukraine, and contacts between them had not been completely severed¹¹⁴. This created additional pressure on Jewish communities within Russia, forcing them to be even more restrained in their public statements.

At the same time, the list of those who expressed dissatisfaction with the “ambiguous” position of the Jews was not limited to Orthodox Christian fundamentalists, Russian nationalists, and popular anti-Semites. Symptomatic in this context is the case associated with Vladimir Putin’s symbolic “confirmation” of the special status of Judaism as one of the traditional religions of Russia, along with Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

On September 30, 2022, during the solemn ceremony of signing agreements on the annexation of four Ukrainian regions, Putin mentioned Judaism as one of the “fundamental traditional religions” in the Russian Federation. Russian Jewish communities promptly reprinted the relevant excerpt from his speech, demonstrating symbolic loyalty¹¹⁵. However, this gesture proved insufficient for all political groups within Russia. In particular, the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, when publishing the text of Putin’s address, demonstratively removed the mention of Judaism from it¹¹⁶, thereby emphasizing the hierarchical priorities in the official religious policy of the Russian Federation and confirming the presence of internal contradictions in the approaches to the interaction of the authorities with different religions.

Conclusions

1. The use of the concept of “Holy War” in Russian political discourse has deep historical roots, in particular in the context of the mythologizing of the “Great Patriotic War” (1941–1945). During this period, the fight against Nazism was presented as a “holy cause”, despite the fact that the USSR itself remained an atheistic/theophobic state. In modern conditions, President Vladimir Putin actively appeals to this plot, using the rhetoric of the fight against “Fascism” and “Nazism” to legitimize an aggressive foreign policy, in particular the war against

Ukraine. The lack of objective basis for such accusations indicates a deliberate manipulation of historical analogies aimed to sacralize the war. The use of religious narratives in this context not only strengthened the political argument, but also was intended to give the war a moral and religious justification, contribute to domestic support, and influence the perception of the conflict by a certain part of the international community.

2. The understanding of “holy war” in the rhetoric of Russian rulers differs significantly from the traditional theological understanding of this concept. In this case, we are talking about an attempt to create a hybrid ideological construct within the so-called “civil religion” that is being formed in Russia. For the Kremlin, this concept is primarily a mobilization tool that uses historical trauma and religious symbolism to consolidate society and justify aggression. This approach contributes to the integration of state ideology with religious motives, which, in theory, should increase the effectiveness of mobilization measures and ensure support from broad population strata.

3. A separate difficulty is the Kremlin’s use of eschatological motifs (which are present in the beliefs of all “traditional” religions of the Russian Federation) to legitimize its aggressive actions. Although these ideas are not always expressed openly, they are evident in the rhetoric of Russian leaders, especially in the international context. The Russian government is trying to position the country as a spiritual and civilizational “bulwark” against the West, which is supposedly the bearer of “moral decline”. This interpretation is aimed at forming an internal interfaith consensus on Russia’s exceptional role as a defender of traditional values.

4. From the beginning of the war, the Russian leadership sought to ensure maximum external and internal "legitimization" of its actions. At the same time, there is no reason to claim that before February 24, 2022, there was a coordinated plan to involve the clergy of "traditional denominations" for the propaganda "sacralization" of the war. It is likely that the concept of "holy war" began to develop actively after the realization of the protracted nature of hostilities, which necessitated the need for additional ideological tools to obtain both internal and external support.

5. The first to actively raise the issue of participation in the war as a duty dictated by religious precepts were Russian Muslim leaders. This may indicate a particular fear of the Russian leadership of possible overt or covert disloyalty from this group. The muftis' signature under the statements that the "special military operation" is a "jihad" and those killed in it become "shahids" was an additional "oath of allegiance" and a demonstration of their willingness to take responsibility for the sentiments of the faithful.

6. The use of religious terminology to justify the war was most active among all denominations, except the ROC, at the initial stage of the conflict, as well as during the mobilization period in the fall of 2022. Over time, this topic gradually became marginalized, and the Kremlin was satisfied with demonstrative political support from religious leaders without the need for active theological justification. This indicates the adaptability of religious institutions to political realities, where unconditional support for state policy is the priority.

7. The ROC's argument for the sacralization of war has undergone a certain evolution. Initially, the emphasis was on the "absolution of sins" for the fallen combatants, which appeared in the rhetoric after the announcement of mobilization. A year later, there was a gradual transition to the official declaration of the war as "holy". This initiative belonged to Patriarch Kirill and was not a direct instruction from the Kremlin, which indicates a certain autonomy of the church leadership in the formation of religious support for the war.

8. Only a small number of cases of resistance from "top" religious leaders have been recorded. Only the RF's Chief Rabbi, Berl Lazar, and the leader of Kalmykia Buddhists, Telo Tulku Rinpoche, have spoken out against the war in one form or another. There are known protests and statements from representatives of the lower clergy of various denominations, but they are quite few. At the same time, the number of those who have expressed open enthusiasm in supporting the war is limited, as well. These include, in particular, the ROC Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev), the "Supreme Mufti of Russia" Talgat Tatutjin, and the Head of the RF's Buddhist Traditional Sangha Damba Ayushchev. These are still Soviet cadres formed in cooperation with the KGB and oriented towards maximum loyalty and the priority of state interests over intra-religious ones.

9. Religious rhetoric and targeted statements by the clergy did not become a significant factor in increasing the number of volunteers to participate in the war. This indicates the rather low authority of the official clergy, the small percentage of truly practicing believers, and the generally limited effectiveness of religious arguments to justify a war of conquest. Although the active “pro-war” position of individual spiritual leaders probably had an impact on the level of motivation of a certain part of the servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces, it can be assumed at the same time that these leaders will be involved in the formation of the “image of Victory in the SMO” after its end - and at a level quite commensurate with what was recorded at the stages of the need to justify the invasion and carry out mobilization.

10. The declaration of war as “holy” did not bring Russia the expected results in the international arena. On the contrary, such rhetoric was subject to significant criticism from world religious and political leaders and contributed to the further loss of authority of the Russian Orthodox Church and other religious institutions in Russia. This contributed to the intensification of discussions about the inadmissibility of using religion as a tool to justify aggression and violence, which, in turn, increased criticism of the Kremlin by the international community.

- ¹ In particular, they are present in the rhetoric of V. Putin: "Our traditional denominations, traditional religions: Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism - all four constitute an excellent moral basis for raising children, for strengthening the family hearth, family ties". Cited from: Путин: Традиционные конфессии России - база для укрепления семьи. URL: <https://rg.ru/2023/06/01/putin-tradicionnye-konfessii-rossii-baza-dlia-ukrepleniia-semi.html>
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- ³ «Проснувшаяся» статья. В России резко выросло число дел об оскорблении чувств верующих. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-59228017>
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32 Патріарх кирило обіцяє «прощення гріхів» за участь у війні проти України. URL: <https://c4u.org.ua/media/news/1956>

33 The evidence that Putin is “mystical” and considers himself a character of the Apocalypse is unreliable and contradictory. Thus, when asked in an interview with Tucker Carlson (02/06/2024): “When you look at what is happening in the world, do you see the works of the Lord? Do you say to yourself that here I see the actions of some superhuman forces?” Putin replied that he did not think so, but that “the world community develops according to its own internal laws” See details in: Деркач Т. В тенетах громадянської релігії: що сказав Путін в інтерв'ю Такеру Карлсону. URL:

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35 Кирилл пожелал Путину править до конца жизни. С сайта МП это убрали. URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/kirill-pozhelal-putinu-pravitj-do-kontsa-zhizni-s-sayta-mp-eto-ubrali/32939527.html>

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38 For instance: Путин назвал СВО священной битвой с новым изданием

неонацизма. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/19887989>

³⁹ The number of the ROC chaplains is not significant, and their influence on the personnel of the Russian Armed Forces is limited. As of April 2024, there were about 100 of them, with vague plans to increase the number to 1,300. See: Митрополит РПЦ сообщил, что около 60-70% священников в зоне СВО являются добровольцами. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/20609223>

⁴⁰ Цыпин В., протоиерей. Спецоперация в свете христианского учения о войне и мире. URL: <https://pravoslavie.ru/155245.html>

⁴¹ The ROC called the Ukrainian authorities “theomachists” and the occupiers - “defenders of the faith”. URL: https://risu.ua/v-rpc-nazvali-vladuukrayinispadkoyemtsyami-bilshovikiv-bogoborciv-a-okupantiv---zahisnikami-viri_n141098

⁴² Наказ XXV Всемирного Русского Народного Собора «НАСТОЯЩЕЕ И БУДУЩЕЕ РУССКОГО МИРА». URL: https://vrns.ru/news/nakaz-xxv-vsemirnogo-russkogo-narodnogo-sobora-nastoyashchee-i-budushchee-russkogo-mira/?sphrase_id=6246

⁴³ The WCC “considers unacceptable” the decision of the World Russian People’s Council, which describes the conflict in Ukraine as a “holy war”. URL: https://www.oikoumene.org/uk/news/wcc-cannot-reconcile-world-russian-peoples-council-decree-describing-ukraine-conflict-as-holy-war?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴⁴ “This war is at least not “holy,” but “godless” - Patriarch Bartholomew to Kirill. URL:

https://risu.ua/cya-vijna-yak-minimum-ne-svyashchenna-a-bezbozhna---patriarh-varfolomij-do-kirila_n142286

⁴⁵ Ларюэль М. Ислам в России. Поиск баланса между безопасностью и интеграцией. URL: https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/migrated_files/documents/atoms/files/laruelle_russie_islam_ru_2021.pdf

⁴⁶ Конституции хотят добавить духовности. Муфтий Татарстана предложил закрепить «традиционные ценности» в основном законе. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4235335>

⁴⁷ For instance: «10 самых известных высказываний Владимира Путина об исламе». URL: <https://russia-islworld.ru/main/10-samyh-izvestnyh-vyskazyvanij-vladimira-putina-ob-islame/>

⁴⁸ Кадыров заявил о поддержке Путиным идеи строительства новой мечети в Москве. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/moscow/923247>

⁴⁹ Политзаключённые и политические репрессии в России в 2022 году. URL: <https://memopzk.org/analytics/politzaklyuchyonnye-i-politicheskie-repressii-v-rossii-v-2022-godu/>

⁵⁰ «Сахих аль-Бухари» внесен в список экстремистских книг. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5536646>

⁵¹ Рвали Коран и унижали мусульман в ИК-2 УФСИН. О первом уголовном деле по ч.4 ст.286 УК РФ. URL: <https://gulagu.net/news/2022-08-17-1412.html>;
Саримова Л. «Мусульмане в неволе»: пытки едой, запрет Корана и социализация бывших заключенных URL: <https://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/musulmane-v-nevole-pytki-edoi-zapret-korana-i-socializaciya-byvsix-zaklyucennyx-5877120>

⁵² Арни А. Бойня на белгородском полигоне: что известно. URL: <https://www.dw.com/ru/bojna-na-belgorodskom-poligone-cto-izvestno/a-63455310>

⁵³ ОМОН забрал посетителей мечети в Котельниках и принудительно отправил их в военкомат. URL: <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/10/22/sotrudniki-omon-zabrali-posetitelei-mecheti-v-kotelnikakh-i-prinuditelno-otpravili-ikh-v-voenkomat-news>

⁵⁴ Путин заявил о недопустимости оскорбления религиозных чувств граждан.

URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/909369>

⁵⁵ Baza: к памятнику Кадырову в Москве подложили голову свиньи. URL: <https://rtvi.com/news/baza-k-pamyatniku-kadyrovu-v-moskve-podlozhili-golovu-svini/>

⁵⁶ Since 2005, the Russian Federation has had observer status in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, but this has not led to any noticeable changes in relations with Muslim countries or to any fundamental improvement in relations with the main financial sponsor of this organization, Saudi Arabia.

⁵⁷ Russia has also tried to show that the long-standing Shiite-Sunni conflict is not an obstacle to cooperation. For example, in November 2022, a meeting of the Russian-Iranian Intergovernmental Commission was held not in Moscow but in Grozny, which had symbolic significance. However, the effectiveness of such gestures is questionable both in the context of relations with Sunni countries and in terms of their impact on the mood of the Muslim population (90% of which are Sunni) within the Russian Federation.

⁵⁸ «Муфтий Святой Руси». Эксперты объяснили, почему Талгат Таджуддин разжигает войну против Украины. URL: <https://www.idelreal.org/a/32630802.html>

⁵⁹ Верховный муфтий назвал Россию настоящим "божьим халифатом". URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/16328951>.

⁶⁰ Тафсирная война муфтиев. Зачем Гайнутдин атаковал своего татарстанского коллегу. URL: https://www.ng.ru/ng_religii/2021-04-20/11_506_war.html

⁶¹ «Я пошутил»: муфтий Бердиев окончательно отказался от идеи женского обрезания. Он сделал это после поднявшегося скандала и угрозы уголовного преследования. URL: <https://www.mk.ru/social/2016/08/18/ya-poshutil-muftiy-berdiev-okonchatelno-otkazalsya-ot-idei-zhenskogo-obrezaniya.html>

⁶² «Карманный муфтий Кадырова». Новый глава Координационного центра мусульман Северного Кавказа. URL: <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/karmannyi-muftiy-kadyrova-novyy-glava-koordinatsionnogo-tsentra-musuljman-severnogo-kavkaza/33143123.html>

⁶³ «Советский традиционалист» и «религиозный бюрократ» Альбир Крганов.

URL: <https://www.idelreal.org/a/32589432.html>

⁶⁴ Заявление расширенного пленума Шура-ЦДУМ 24 февраля 2022. URL: <https://cdum.ru/news/44/11232/>

⁶⁵ Фетва Меджлиса совета улемов ЦДУМ РФ 25 марта 2022. URL: <https://www.cdum.ru/news/44/11265/>

⁶⁶ Альбир Крганов: «Мусульмане должны желать победы своему Отечеству!» URL: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/542737>

⁶⁷ Муфтий ЧР объяснил действия в Украине с точки зрения религии. URL: <https://chechnyatoday.com/news/353369>

⁶⁸ Духовные лидеры: «Надо уничтожать их до конца... Никакой Украины не должно быть!». URL: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/545068>

⁶⁹ ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ лидеров мусульманских религиозных организаций Российской Федерации. URL: <https://kcmask.ru/novosti/zajavlenie-liderov-musulmanskih-religioznyh-organizacij-rossijskoj-federacii/>

⁷⁰ Российские мусульмане заявили о тотальной поддержке Путина на Украине.

Главный муфтий России Гайнутдин заявил, что мусульманский мир желает победы Путину на Украине. URL:

<https://news.ru/society/rossijskie-musulmane-zayavili-o-totalnoj-podderzhke-putina-na-ukraine/>

⁷¹ «Всё — от Аллаха»: мусульманам Татарстана разрешили участвовать в частичной мобилизации. Указ Владимира Путина изучили эксперты ДУМ РТ. URL: <https://116.ru/text/religion/2022/09/24/71681612/>

⁷² Пацифистское высказывание обернулось для ингушского имама вызовом в военкомат. URL: <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/382002>

⁷³ Мечеть увековечит память героя России Нурмагомеда Гаджимагомедова.

URL:

<https://islamnews.ru/2025/2/10/mechet-uvekovechit-pamyat-geroya-rossii-nurmagomeda-gadzhimagomedova>

⁷⁴ Обращение лидеров мусульман относительно заявлений имамов России о джихаде против Украины URL:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE20OMBV4So&t=4s&ab_channel=%D0%A4%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%A1%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%9A%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B0%2FNorthCaucasusFront

⁷⁵ Начало встречи с российскими буддистами 24 августа 2009 года. URL: <http://special.kremlin.ru/catalog/regions/BU/events/5267>

⁷⁶ Буддийская традиционная Сангха России. URL: <https://sangharussia.ru/>

⁷⁷ Традиции раболепия: лидер буддистов, буряты и война. URL: <https://utro02.tv/2022/07/11/tradiczii-rabolepiya/>

78 Глава буддистов России осудил легкомысленность главы Бурятии Цыденова. URL: <https://irkutsk.bezformata.com/listnews/osudil-legkomislennost-glavi-buryatii/121284258/>

79 Центральное Духовное Управление Буддистов. URL: <https://xn--90af9bk.xn--p1ai/>

⁸⁰ Геше Йонтен назначен председателем Центрального духовного управления буддистов. URL:

<https://riakalm.ru/news/religion/42031-geshe-jonten-naznachen-predsdatelem-tsentralnogo-dukhovnogo-upravleniya-buddistov>

⁸¹ Мельников А. Буддисты переходят под духовное управление Москвы. URL: https://www.ng.ru/facts/2024-08-06/9_577_buddhists.html

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Центральный хурул. URL: <https://khurul.ru/>

⁸⁴ Терентьев А. Тибетский буддизм в Туве в 2023 году. URL:

<https://studybuddhism.com/ru/prodvintyy-uroven/istoriya-i-kultura/buddizm-v-rossii/buddizm-v-mongolskih-i-tyurkskih-regionah-rossii-v-2023-godu/tibetskiy-buddizm-v-tuve-v-2023-godu>

⁸⁵ Буддизм на войне: новая книга изучает связь буддизма и МГП. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/columns/otherside/buddizm-i-voyna/>

⁸⁶ Позволено ли буддистам идти на войну. URL: https://www.ng.ru/people/2022-10-18/11_538_buddhism.html

⁸⁷ «С нами Будда» — глава буддистов России о спецоперации. URL: <https://regnum.ru/news/3522915>

⁸⁸ «С нами Будда!»: нравственный «каминг-аут» хамбо ламы. URL: <https://babr24.com/?IDE=225941>

⁸⁹ Глава буддистов России Дамба Аюшеев: «Мы гордимся своими солдатами». Защищать Родину – для буддистов священный долг. URL: https://newbur.ru/newsdetail/glava_buddistov_rossii_damba_ayusheev_my_gordimsya_svoimi_soldatami/

⁹⁰ Лама Тувы: хотим построить реабилитационный центр для участников СВО. URL: https://ria.ru/20231212/natsyk_dorzhu-1915188166.html

⁹¹ Буддизм и война. Верховного ламу Калмыкии признали «иноагентом». URL: <https://ovd.info/articles/2023/02/02/buddizm-i-voyna-verhovnogo-lamu-kalmykii-priznali-inoagentom>

⁹² Верховный Лама о мобилизации // Russian Buddhist against the Invasion. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVSwea3hQOA&ab_channel=%D0%90%D0%9B%D0%A5%D0%98%D0%9C%D0%98%D0%AF%D0%94%D0%A3%D0%A8%D0%98

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ «Если Россия останется такой, какая есть, — я не вижу перспектив ни у неё, ни у Калмыкии». URL:

<https://verstka.media/esli-rossiya-ostanetsi-kak-est-ya-ne-vizhu-perspektiv-ni-u-nee-ni-kalmykii>

⁹⁵ Буддизм путинского режима. Почему приверженцы самой миролюбивой веры едут на войну. URL:

<https://www.sibreal.org/a/buddizm-putinskogo-rezhima/32276081.html>; А есть и

буддисты, поддерживающие "спецоперацию". URL:

<https://buddhismofrussia.ru/news/757/>

⁹⁶ Мобилизация и ужасы войны внесли разлад в сообщество буддистов. URL:

https://www.ng.ru/people/2022-10-18/11_538_buddhism.html

⁹⁷ Амигуд И. Перепись-2021: численность еврейского населения России резко сократилась. URL:

<https://stmegi.com/posts/104348/perepis-2021-chislennost-evreyskogo-naseleniya-rossii-r-ezko-sokratilas/>

⁹⁸ Кому на Руси жить хорошо? Проект «Ленты.ру» по изучению элиты —этнический состав богатейших граждан России. URL:

<https://lenta.ru/articles/2014/10/27/reachethnic/>

⁹⁹ Putin's Chosen People. What's behind the Russian president's close relationship with an Orthodox Jewish sect? URL:

<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2014/11/vladimir-putin-chabad-whats-behind-the-russian-presidents-close-relationship-with-an-orthodox-jewish-sect.html>;

Schreckinger B. The Happy-Go-Lucky Jewish Group That Connects Trump and Putin. URL:

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/the-happy-go-lucky-jewish-group-that-connects-trump-and-putin-215007/>

¹⁰⁰ Кизиллов М. Иудеи, хазары и Россия. Как формировался русский народ.

URL: https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2020-04-22/7_7850_russians.html

¹⁰¹ Централизованная религиозная организация ортодоксального иудаизма «Конгресс еврейских религиозных организаций и объединений в России». URL:

<https://keroor.org/>

- ¹⁰² Централизованная религиозная организация ортодоксального иудаизма «Федерация еврейских общин в России». URL: <https://feor.ru/>
- ¹⁰³ Патрушев извинился за помощника: тот назвал сектой еврейское движение «Хабад Любавич» в статье о «сатанизме» в Украине. URL: <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/patrushev-izvinilsya-evreyskoe-dvizhenie-habad/32105378.html>
- ¹⁰⁴ Главный ли «главный раввин» Берл Лазар? Представляют ли лидеры любавических хасидов большинство еврейства в России? URL: https://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2023/02/04/glavnyi_li_glavnyi_ravvin_berl_lazar
- ¹⁰⁵ Путин сравнил Крым с Храмовой горой. URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2014/12/04/crimea/>
- ¹⁰⁶ Moskaus ehemaliger Oberrabbiner über Russland: «Der Eiserne Vorhang ist schon wieder zu einem Drittel zu». URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/russland-juden-ukraine-interview-1.5625273?reduced=true>
- ¹⁰⁷ Руководство ФЕОР опровергает утверждения о давлении властей на духовных лидеров. URL: https://www.ng.ru/ng_religii/2022-09-06/7_536_rabbis.html
- ¹⁰⁸ On March 2, 2022, the Chief Rabbi posted the following text on his Facebook page: *"One of the main postulates of faith in the one God is the confidence that any conflict can and should be resolved only peacefully. In our Holy Books, one of the names of the Lord is "shalom", that is, "peace". This is the goal that God voices to us every day, which we repeat several times a day in our prayers. But today the situation is special: every day we receive information from our co-religionists, from rabbis in Ukraine, about what is happening there, we feel the pain of our brothers, no matter what faith they belong to. I call on everyone to pray for peace, but that alone is not enough. Now God expects that every believer will do everything in his power to save human lives. I myself am ready for any mediation, ready to do everything in my power, and even more, just so that the guns fall silent, the bombs stop exploding!"* URL: <https://www.facebook.com/RabbiLazar/posts/4816027998432441>
- ¹⁰⁹ Берл Лазар заявил Путину о готовности на все ради мира на Украине. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/26/01/2023/63d28d549a794743953b1379>
- ¹¹⁰ Унанянц В. «Спецоперация» по «денацификации» Израиля. URL:

<https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/31834446.html>

¹¹¹ Путин отметил, что российские бойцы в ходе СВО сражаются с прямыми последователями нацизма. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/17765775>

¹¹² Лазар сообщил, что после начала СВО ни один раввин не уехал из России.

URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/20745481>

¹¹³ Православные фундаменталисты возмутились, что главный раввин РФ ни разу не поддержал российских солдат. URL:

https://risu.ua/ru/pravoslavnye-fundamentalisty-vozmutilis-chno-glavnyj-ravvin-rf-ni-razu-ne-podderzhal-russkih-soldat_n148176

¹¹⁴ Вскрылись новые подробности свадьбы дочери главного раввина России.

URL:

<https://www.mk.ru/politics/2025/02/12/vskrylis-novye-podrobnosti-svadby-docheri-glavnogo-ravvina-rossii.html>

¹¹⁵ Путин назвал иудаизм одной из основ России. URL:

<https://jewish.ru/ru/news/articles/200657/>

¹¹⁶ Кадыров отцензурировал цитату Путина: из нее убрали упоминание иудеев.

URL:

<https://www.kavkazr.com/a/kadyrov-ottsenzuroval-tsitatu-putina-iz-nee-ubrali-upominanie-iudeev/32842493.html>