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Is There a Russian Version of US Christian Nationalism?

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Abstract

Christian Nationalism is a phenomenon specific to US political culture. To the extent that it has traveled to Latin America and Africa, it has been under the proselytizing influence of evangelicals from the United States. One case that allows for a comparative framework without being a product of US cultural influence has been Russia. Indeed, Russia has a long tradition of political Orthodoxy and entanglement between spiritual and temporal powers—what is called, in the Byzantine tradition, the symphonies of powers, or sobornost' in Russian—that may take some contemporary forms similar to what we observe in the United States. What Russia has achieved is what many American Christian Nationalists desire for their country but have yet to be able to implement. Comparison is not reason, but it does offer a relevant analytical framework for thinking about the historical contingencies of such ideological projects and the paradoxical mirror games between the United States and Russia.

Keywords: Russia, Russian Orthodox Church, symphony of powers, Russian Bible Belt, Vladimir Putin

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Russia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state. Of the 80% of citizens who identify themselves as ethnically Russian, around two-thirds think of themselves as Orthodox, but only half of these 80% as believers (and the number of churchgoers is minimal, at European levels of around 5% weekly mass attendance). This means that for the majority of Russians, identification with Orthodoxy is cultural and identity-based, not a matter of belief in God. This does not mean, however, that the Church does not enjoy legitimacy: indeed, it is seen as an important point of reference for affirming the nation's historical continuity and identity, with most Russians being in favor of the anti-blasphemy laws that protect it.[1] Of the 20% of citizens who are not ethnically Russian, around two-thirds are Muslim, while the remaining third are Buddhist or animist. Among these ethnic minorities, the presence of Islam is the most notable in terms of identity and faith, as the vast majority of Russian Muslim citizens declare themselves to be believers.

At the official federal level, Russian law recognizes four traditional religions protected by privileged rights (Orthodox Christianity, Sunni Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism), and marginalizes other faiths deemed foreign, banning their proselytizing as potentially dangerous to the country's unity, whether they be charismatic Protestant movements, Islamic currents considered radical, or Jehovah's Witnesses (who are the most repressed). While the Orthodox Church is unified by the Moscow Patriarchate, the administrative representation of Russian Muslims is divided into several competing muftiates: the Muftiate of Ufa, historically the oldest, created by Catherine the Great in the 18th century, competes with the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Russia, which is based in Moscow and was created in the 1990s. Alongside these, more than 60 regional muftiates coexist with varying degrees of legitimacy.[2]

Russia is officially a secular country, with a law separating religion and state, but religious references have gradually been reintroduced in certain official texts, for example in the amendments to the Constitution passed in summer 2020, which mention the Russian Orthodox Church's right to participate in societal and moral decisions. Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as most of cabinet members and political figures, regularly evoke spirituality as a key element of national identity.[3] This usage is largely instrumental and malleable, advanced mainly to justify new legislation inspired by a conservative worldview, reconsolidate the social body around the regime, and explain Russia's unique position on the world stage.[4]

Internationally, the Moscow Patriarchate is the most active religious institution, presenting itself as the Kremlin's spiritual arm in promoting Russia abroad.[5] Until 2022, however, this did not mean complete agreement on all issues: the Patriarchate continued, for example, to have close ties with Ukraine and Georgia, two countries in tension with Russia, in the name of the continuity of the Church's canonical territory.

1 Marlene Laruelle, "A Grassroots Conservatism? Taking a Fine-Grained View of Conservative Attitudes among Russians," *East European Politics 39*, no. 2 (2022): 173–193. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2022.2045962.

2 Gulnaz Sibgatullina, *Languages of Islam and Christianity in Post-Soviet Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 2020); Gulnaz Sibgatullina, "The Muftis and the Myths: Constructing the Russian 'Church for Islam,' " *Problems of Post-Communism* (2023): 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2023.2185899.

3 Marlene Laruelle, "Conservatism: Russia's Answer to Liberalism," chap. 8 in *Ideology and Meaning-Making under the Putin Regime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2025), 170–192.

4 Paul Robinson, *Russian Conservatism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2020); Mikhail Suslov and Dmitry Uzlaner, eds., *Contemporary Russian Conservatism: Problems, Paradoxes, and Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

5 Alicja Curanović, *The Sense of Mission in Russian Foreign Policy: Destined for Greatness!* (London: Routledge, 2021).

In Ukraine, this position was greatly weakened in 2018 when the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the most respected but not the most powerful, recognized the autocephaly (autonomy) of the Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The various muftiates also have a role to play in foreign policy, with regard to Muslim countries in the Middle East and Asia, and to a lesser extent, with Muslims in the "near abroad" (the Russian term used to describe the post-Soviet space) and other European Muslims. This Islamic paradiplomacy is not left to the muftiates alone. For a long time, the religious authorities in Tatarstan enjoyed considerable room for maneuver and quasi-diplomatic representation abroad, which was gradually reduced and replaced by a form of Islamic paradiplomacy coming from Chechnya, led by the infamous dictatorial leader of the small North Caucasian republic, Ramzan Kadyrov.[6]

Comparing US and Russian Christian Nationalism

Russian society is much more secular than its US counterpart, and the Russian Orthodox Church does not have megachurches or televangelists like those the American culture produces. The Church has its own television channel, Spas, which is quite sober and intellectual, and with a modest outreach. The parish churches are largely empty except during major religious events or pilgrimages, especially those related to cultural and historical identities. For instance, the procession in memory of Tsar Nicholas II's family, who were assassinated by the Bolsheviks, takes place every year in July in Yekaterinburg and is attended by several tens of thousands of people.[7] Besides these major differences, some similar features can be found in Christian Nationalism.

If one defines Christian Nationalism as a political theology, or a use of religious reference for a political project, there is indeed a Russian version of it, based on a long tradition of millenarian political philosophies inspired by Byzantine Orthodoxy. Russian religious references belong largely to the realm of millenarianism and eschatology and are centered around the biblical concept of the *katechon* ("he/the one who holds back," in ancient Greek), which originates in the writings of Saint Paul,[8] and which is referred to in Russian literature as early as the 16th century. In her seminal work, Maria Engström examines the contemporary reinvention of this tradition, translating the term *katechon* as "guardian of chaos." She explains: "Russia sees itself not so much as an empire holding back chaos beyond the borders of the world through its own internal order, but as a military power resisting a metaphysical enemy sent by the Antichrist. This metaphysical enemy takes different forms over time: Tatars, Turks, Freemasons, Napoleon, Hitler, and today, American agents, Ukrainian fascists, the Kievan junta."[9]

6 Marlene Laruelle, "Kadyrovism: Hardline Islam as a Tool of the Kremlin," Institut Français des Relations Internationales, IFRI Notes, Russie. NEI.Vision, 99 (2017), https://www.ifri.org/en/papers/kadyrovism-hardline-islam-tool-kremlin.

7 "V Ekaterinburge proshel krestnyi khod v godovshchiny gibeli tsarskoi sem'i," Smotrim.ru, July 17, 2024, https://smotrim.ru/article/4050673.

8 "And you know what is holding [the man of lawlessness] back [*katechon*], for he can be revealed only when his time comes. For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back [*katechon*] steps out of the way." (II Thessalonians 2:6–7, NLT) For the full passage in context, see II Thessalonians 2:3–10, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202&version=NLT.

9 Maria Engström, "Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy," *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 3 (2014), 365. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2014.965888.

These entrepreneurs of a Russian version of Christian Nationalism represent different intellectual trends, with various patrons inside the regime's ecosystem. One belongs to mainstream conservatism—embodied by the Young Conservatives movement and its leading figures such as Mikhail Remizov and Boris Mezhuev—and states that Orthodoxy should be the state religion of Russia and inspire its main laws and policies.[10] A second one belongs to radical, reactionary, thinking—represented by the "technofuturist" writer and essayist Alexander Prokhanov, the infamous geopolitician Alexander Dugin, and their Izborsky Club[11]—for whom Russia's messianic destiny is to hold, preserve, and expand authentic human values and not be afraid of engaging in violence if this is the price to pay to protect and spread its faith. They all share some similar ideological components: the belief in Russia's exceptionalism and unique destiny (similar to the idea of the US as a nation of God's elect); a worldview defined by civilizational identities (similar to the US Christian Nationalism's language on Western civilization); and the idea that faith should inspire policy, legislation, and the public space.

One of the key representatives of this Russian Christian Nationalism is the Orthodox oligarch Konstantin Malofeev, a key powerbroker between the Church, the conservative lobby at the Duma (the National Assembly), and the presidential administration. Malofeev uses his wealth, his Orthodox charity the St. Basil Foundation, and his online TV channel Tsargrad (the Russian name for Byzantium) to sponsor several pro-natural family lobbies inside and outside the Church and influence Russian legislation on abortion, LBGTQ+ rights, and a large array of family, gender, and sexual policies.

Malofeev's empire has taken direct inspiration from the US Christian right. He told the *Financial Times* that Tsargrad was largely inspired by Fox News, and even hired Jack Hanick, who had worked at Fox News for 15 years as news director, as Tsargrad's executive producer.[12] Further evidence of Malofeev's relationship with the US comes from his links to the reactionary international World Congress of Families (WCF), a U.S.-based interdenominational, multinational coalition that endorses the militant defense of the "natural family," fights against legislation that normalizes same-sex marriage, and supports countries with anti-gay agendas.[13] While the "traditional family" has long been the core theme of Malofeev's endeavors, new topics have emerged, inspired by the culture of the US Christian Right: anti-vaccine narratives during the Covid-19 pandemic, young Earth creationist and anti-Darwinist themes, as well as homeschooling.[14]

A key difference between the US and the Russian versions of Christian Nationalism relates to the place of ethnic nationalism and racial issues. While US Christian

10 Marlene Laruelle, "The Emergence of the Russian Young Conservatives," in *Contemporary Far-Right Thinkers and the Future of Liberal Democracy*, eds. A. James McAdams and Alejandro Castrillon (London: Routledge, 2021): 149–166; Alexander Pavlov, "The Great Expectations of Russian Young Conservatism," in Mikhail Suslov and Dmitry Uzlaner, *Contemporary Russian Conservatism: Problems, Paradoxes, and Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 153–176.

11 Marlene Laruelle, "The Izborsky Club, or the New Conservative Avant-Garde in Russia," *Russian Review* 75, no. 4 (2016): 626–644. https://doi.org/10.1111/russ.12106.

12 Tim Dickinson, "How a Former Fox News Director Landed in Jail for Pushing Putin Propaganda," *Rolling Stone*, March 7, 2022, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/jack-hanick-indictment-putin-russia-propaganda-fox-news-1317789/.

13 Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner, *The Moralist International: Russia in the Global Culture Wars* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022).

14 For more on this, see Marlene Laruelle, "Values Entrepreneurship and Ideological Reaction: The Case of Konstantin Malofeev," in *Political Legitimacy and Traditional Values in Putin's Russia*, eds. Helge Blakkisrud and Pål Kolstø (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2025): Page numbers?

Nationalism appears systematically, implicitly or explicitly, to relate to white identity in one way or another, the Russian version of Christian Nationalism develops a more ambivalent language of ethnic supremacy. The Moscow Patriarchate, through the voice of Patriarch Kirill, has traditionally defended the Russianness of Russia and highlighted the dominant role of ethnic Russians and Russian culture and language in Russia.[15] Yet, it has continued to pay lip service to the country's multinationalism and religious diversity, and has entered into partnership with the muftiates around the promotion of conservative values, especially in family policies.[16] Issues of ethnic supremacy are therefore less visible in the Russian than in the US version of Christian Nationalism.

Sociologically speaking, Russia seems to have a sort of "Bible Belt," yet to a lesser extent than can be found in the US's political culture. This Russian Bible Belt, which displays more conservative values and higher religiosity than the rest of the country, comprises regions south and north of Moscow (the historic core of the Russian state prior to its massive expansion in the 16th century) and extends to the Ukrainian border to the west and Krasnodar to the south. Scherbak and Ukhvatova, the first to apply the notion of a "Bible Belt" in the Russian context and draw a comparison with the US, see these regions as featuring strong support for the Church, a high degree of social conformity, and a symbiotic relationship with the central government.[17]

The center of this Russian Bible Belt, the region of Belgorod, led the way on a number of conservative measures, including initiating campaigns against obscenity as early as 2004 (the federal law on obscenity dates from 2014); calling for making coursework on the Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture mandatory in schools as early as 2006 (the course was introduced at the federal level only in 2012, though it was just one of several options parents have to choose from to fulfill a philosophy and ethics coursework requirement); imposing fines for prostitution; discouraging the celebration of Valentine's Day and Halloween, seen as foreign to Russia's national traditions; and forbidding gay pride events, heavy metal and rap groups, and censoring some modern art shows.[18] In 2010, the Belgorod regional authorities imposed the first decree on "ensuring spiritual security" in Russia, several years before Vladimir Putin began adopting similar language.[19]

Yevgeny Savchenko (governor of the Belgorod region from 1993 to 2020 and senator for the region since then), has been a key figure in Russia's growing illiberal civil society.[20] He gave the Russian Orthodox Church quasi-state status, allowing it to have a chapel in each hospital and to visit schools for the first day of classes on September 1. Belgorod has also taken the lead on promoting pro-life movements,

15 Mikhail Suslov, "Mapping 'Holy Rus": Ideology and Utopia in Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," *Russian Politics and Law* 52, no. 3 (2014): 67–86. https://doi.org/10.2753/RUP1061-1940520303; Mikhail Suslov, " 'Russian World' Concept: Post-Soviet Geopolitical Ideology and the Logic of 'Spheres of Influence,' " *Geopolitics* 23, no. 2 (2018): 330–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1407921.

16 Gulnaz Sibgatullina, "Russia's Muslim Leaders on Women's and LGBT's Rights," *Culture Wars Papers Series*, GW Illiberalism Studies Program, February 14, 2022, https://www.illiberalism.org/russias-muslim-leaders-on-womens-and-lgbt-rights/.

17 Andrei Shcherbak, Maria Ukhvatova, "From the Red Belt to the Bible Belt? Religiosity and Voting in Russia since 2011," *Nationalities Papers* 51, no. 1 (2023): 177-204. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.5.

18 Sergei Kalashnikov, "V Belgorode, Kurske i Orle ne razreshili gei-parady," *Kommersant'*, September 29, 2016, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3101672.

19 Credo.ru, "Meropriiatiia po obespecheniiu dukhovnoi bezopasnosti v Belgorodskoi oblasti na 2010 god," Portal Credo, May 17, 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20220122162546/https://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=77756.

20 Ivan Grek, "The Grassroots of Putin's Ideology: Civil Origins of an Uncivil Regime," *East European Politics* 39, no. 2 (2023): 220–329. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2023.2164849

being the first region to strongly encourage all women who sought abortions to first get the authorization of a psychologist and a local priest, who must sign a document that is then brought to the hospital—doctors can still agree to perform an abortion without this document, but they may also decline to do so.[21] Last but not least, the region is home to grassroots Orthodox activism. Two important spiritual figures, Father Sergii Kliuiko and Father Nikolai Germanskii, serve in the region and have initiated active communities, both lay and ecclesiastical, to help people in financial and spiritual need, as well as connect urban elites from Belgorod and Moscow alike to their surrounding rural communities.[22]

Ideological Fusionism between Church and State Language

What would best embody a Russian version of US Christian Nationalism is the growing fusionism between the Church's ideological precepts and the regime's political language—a component whereby Russia has achieved what American Christian Nationalists may only dream of. This fusionism was first evident between the Church and the Russian Army in the 1990s, when both institutions had to rise from the ashes of the Soviet era: the demoralized Army was looking for a new meaning and mission, while the Church was seeking to regain its foothold in society, to avoid finding itself once again reduced to nothing by an anti-religious regime.[23] The Orthodox Church has gradually positioned itself as "the guardian of the state's nuclear potential, and as such, claims the role of guarantor of Russian nuclear safety."[24] The fact that the Soviet A-bomb was developed on the territory of the Sarov Monastery, some 450 km. east of Moscow—on Stalin's orders—is interpreted as a sign of "the divine predestination of the Soviet nuclear project,"[25] the corollary being that the two institutions can rely on each other. The Church formalized its cooperation with the Ministries of Defense and the Interior, and with the Federal Security Service, in the mid-1990s.[26]

But it was after 2008, with the joint accession of Alexis' successor Kirill to the patriarchal throne and Dmitry Medvedev to the presidency, that the Church and the Army entered into a kind of symbiosis.[27] The Church re-established a training center for military clergy in 2009, and since then has steadily extended its influence within the Army, and particularly within the nuclear forces. The military space is saturated with religious symbols: garrison churches, pastoral accompaniment for military personnel, catechism as part of the military training program, the consecration of equipment, processions, the attribution of a patron saint to each element of the nuclear triad, etc. The symbiosis between Church and Army has found its most spectacular incarnation in the Main Cathedral of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (Russia's third-largest cathedral), built in 2020 in Moscow's Patriot

21 Olesia Gerasimenko, "Za podpis'iu v tserkov': kak v Belgorodskoi oblasti ne puskaiut delat' aborty." *BBC News Russkaia Sluzhba*, May 29, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-44281632.

22 John P. Burgess, "Social Activism in the Russian Orthodox Church," in *Varieties of Russian Activism: State-Society Contestation in Everyday Life*, eds. Jeremy Morris, Andrei Semenov, and Regina Smyth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2023): 97–119.

23 Dmitri Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy: Religion, Politics, and Strategy* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press).

24 Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy*.

25 Michael Kofman, "Blessed Be Thy Nuclear Weapons: The Rise of Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy," War on the Rocks, June 21, 2019, https://warontherocks.com/2019/06/blessed-be-thy-nuclear-weapons-the-rise-of-russian-nuclear-orthodoxy/.

26 Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy*.

27 Petr Kratochvíl and Gaziza Shakhanova, "The Patriotic Turn and Re-Building Russia's Historical Memory: Resisting the West, Leading the Post-Soviet East?" *Problems of Post-Communism* 68, no. 5 (2021): 442–456. https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2020.1757467.

Park. The building of the church was financed with public money and directed by the Ministry of Defense, with the participation of members of the Church's hierarchy.[28]

In the 2010s, along with the regime's "conservative turn" that followed Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, Russia's involvement alongside Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria intensified the presence of religion in Russian political language. The Syrian Civil War was essentially presented in the Russian media as a war waged against an Eastern Christian territory to which Moscow owes a debt and a duty of protection. For the Russian public at large, Syria is the last place in the world where the language of Jesus, Aramaic, is spoken, giving it a powerful symbolic value.

Within the Church, a form of "militant piety" and a rhetoric of political violence, which have always been present at the margins of the institution, are gradually gaining ground in the upper echelons of the hierarchy. Back in 2012, Patriarch Kirill spoke of "God's miracle" in relation to Putin's reign,[29] and justified intervention in Syria in the name of Russia's historic mission. Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the Synodal Department for Relations between Church and Society, spoke of a "holy battle" to defend ancestral Christian lands.[30] Archpriest Oleg Trofimov explained that, "in this war, Russia is acting as the representative of the civilization of Jesus Christ—the Holy Rus'. … Whatever wars are waged, Russia is invested with the mission of katechon."[31]

It was in the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 that the eschatological potential of Russian discourse was realized. The concept of the Antichrist, already used by far-right thinkers such as Alexander Dugin and Alexander Prokhanov, now finds its way into official discourse: Patriarch Kirill has suggested that Putin is "fighting the Antichrist."[32] In the same vein, the terms "Satan" and "Satanism" have reappeared on the public stage. Kadyrov and Nikolai Patrushev's advisor Alexei Pavlov called for the "de-Satanization" of Ukraine,[33] while Dmitry Medvedev has declared that the war is aimed at stopping "the supreme ruler of hell, whatever his name—Satan, Lucifer or Iblis."[34] In 2022, the Russian People's World Council, a central connecting platform between the Church, nationalist circles, and government officials, organized a session on "Ideological Warfare against Satan,"[35] and Sergei Naryshkin, director of the Counterintelligence Service, vowed to send the "Anglo-Saxons" back to "their old friend, the devil."[36] Dzhambulat Umarov, President of the Chechen Academy of Sciences, went further, linking the "de-Nazification" of Ukraine

28 Shaun Walker, "Angels and Artillery: A Cathedral to Russia's New National Identity," *Guardian*, October 20, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/20/orthodox-cathedral-of-the-armed-force-russian-national-identity-military-disneyland.

29 Gleb Bryanski, "Russian Church under Attack after Backing Putin," *Reuters*, April 3, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-church-statement/russian-church-under-attack-after-backing-putin-idUSBRE83214B20120403/.

30 Ishaan Tharoor, "The Christian Zeal behind Russia's War in Syria" *Washington Post*, October 1, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/10/01/the-christian-zeal-behind-russias-war-in-syria/.

31 Pravoslavie.fm "Slovo Russkoi tsivilizatsii v sviashchennoi voine v Sirii: Protoierei Oleg Trofimov," Pravoslavie.fm, December 2023, https://pravoslavie.fm/articles/slovo-russkoy-civilizacii-v-svyashhennoy-voine-v-sirii-protoierey-oleg-trofimov/.

32 Patriarch Kirill, "Doklad Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na plenarnom zasedanii XXIV Vsemirnogo Russkogo Narodnogo Sobora," Patriarchia.ru, October 25, 2022, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5971182.html.

33 RBK, "V Sovbeze Rossii prizvali k 'desatanizatsii' Ukrainy," *RBK*, October 25, 2022. https://www.rbc.ru/politics/25/10/2022/63581bbe9a7947dfb157c030.

34 Dmitri Medvedev, Telegram channel, November 4, 2022, https://t.me/medvedev_telegram/206.

35 World Russian People's Congress, "Programma," November 27–28, 2023, https://vrns.ru/documents/xxv-vrns-nastoyashhee-i-budushhee-russkogo-mira/.

36 "Naryshkin nazval Anglosaksov 'starymi priiateliami d'iavola,'" *Russian News Agency TASS*, May 24, 2023, https://tass.ru/politika/17827999.

with the fight against the rights of LGBT+ communities, declaring that "sodomy is the heart of Satanism, against which our brothers and sons are dying on Ukrainian soil."[37]

The katechonic vision of Russia has long been present in radical circles, but the war has turned it from an implicit message in official discourse into an explicit one. This discourse may be heavily imbued with religious metaphors, but it is nonetheless profoundly secular: "the chosen ones" refers to the state, not to the community of believers. Yet, several religious circles reserved for the political elite circles have taken shape around confessing priests and influential figures such as Sergei Kirienko, Deputy Director of the Presidential Administration, who has organized a new religious brotherhood for the Russian elite at the Diveevo Monastery, near Sarov.[38] Figures known for their religiosity have also been promoted, such as Andrei Belousov, the new defense minister.

Conclusion

The Russian version of Christian Nationalism cannot rely on the same sociological basis that white evangelical communities in the US do. Yet there is a parallel phenomenon in Russia that can be captured by looking at the ecosystem of political Orthodoxy, with its oligarchs, patrons inside the regime, MPs in the Duma, entrepreneurs of influence and public intellectuals, Church figures, social media channels and influencers, and their constituencies. While the US version gives faith and racial issues a more pronounced feature than the Russian one, both draw from existing pools of ideological references inspired by messianism, exceptionalism, election by God, their respective states' status as great powers, and some forms of ethnic supremacism—albeit contextualized differently.

Benedictions given at Donald Trump's second inauguration on January 20, 2025, offer impressive resonances with the Russian language of *miracle* for instance (in reference to the near-miss Trump's assassination attempt in Pennsylvania in July 2024) and *shield* (to guide the nation along the path that will "make America great again").[39] Where Russia leads, it is obviously in the "symphony" between political authorities, the army, and religious institutions, and the penetration of a religiously-inspired political language at the highest level of the state. The mirror games between the US and Russian Christian Nationalist scenes, made of intellectual exchanges, implicit or explicit mutual admiration, have amplified with the arrival of a second Trump Administration, open fascinating avenues for new research.

37 Kommersant', "Parlamentarizm protiv satanizma," *Kommersant'*, October 17, 2022, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5619814.

38 Illia Kabachynskyi, "In Russia, Religious Rituals and Elite Clubs Shape War Strategy," *United24media*, May 27, 2024, https://united24media.com/world/in-russia-religious-rituals-and-elite-private-clubs-shape-war-strategy-467.

39 Davison Drumm, "Presidential Inaugural Prayers Bless and Contest," *Juicy Ecumenism*, January 21, 2025, https://juicyecumenism.com/2025/01/21/presidential-inaugural-prayers-bless-contest/.