Religious narratives in the Russian-Ukrainian conflicts of the 21st century-2

Jiaqi Cao¹

¹Peking University

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine have continued. The Orthodox Church has often been given a unique role in the conflicts and, to some extent, has become “complicit” in escalating the situation. Over the past two decades, religion has become increasingly present in Russian domestic and foreign policy. From the introduction of the concept of the “Russian world” to the recovery of the “sacred place” of Crimea, religious and nationalist narratives have been carefully fused to justify the Russian government’s “expansionist policy” under the integration of the “Holy Rus” civilizational space. In this context, Ukrainian nationalists have actively pursued a “church indigenization” program to break away from Russian control in the spiritual sphere. Ukrainian church activists have proposed a “Kyivan Christianity” distinct from the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). Politicians have responded positively with the slogan “Independent state - independent church” and promoted the formation of the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) in 2018. The interaction between religion and politics has emerged in the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, which provides a new starting point for understanding the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine since the 21st century. The proposed study was conducted using the methods of discursive and narrative analysis and allowed to identify similarities and differences in the religious narratives of Russian and Ukrainian political and spiritual leaders.

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