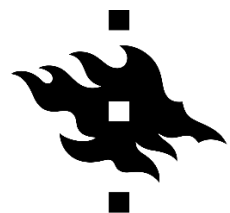


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Master's Thesis
Russian Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Helsinki
June 2021

Russia and Religion
An Analysis of the Lockean Separation of Church and State in
Contemporary Russia



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Abstract

Faculty: Faculty of Arts

Degree programme: Russian Studies

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Title: Russia and Religion - An Analysis of the Lockean Separation of Church and State in Contemporary Russia

Level: MA

Month and year: June 2021

Number of pages: 44 + 1

Keywords: Russian Orthodox Church, Religion, Secular, Traditional, Values, Locke

Supervisor or supervisors: Kaarina Aitamurto

Where deposited: Helsinki University Library – Helda / E-thesis

Additional information: -

Abstract:

Is there a Lockean separation of church and state in contemporary Russia? The answer to this question has, for a long time, been yes, at least on paper. However recent amendments to the Russian secular constitution now include a mention of Russia's belief in God. This is not the only piece of legislation in Russia that has adopted religious rhetoric. In fact, after a few decades of a complicated relationship, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Russian state have increased their cooperation. Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials have declared that Russian Orthodox values, are part of the newly promoted Russian identity. This acceptance of conservative Orthodox values as part of the Russian identity, has had its influence on Russian legislation and thus Russian society. Examples of this are restrictions on abortion, the ban on 'homosexual propaganda', the importance of the family and traditional gender role in society etc. This has an influence on the status of the Lockean separation of church and state in Russia. Lockean because this thesis utilises John Locke's theory of tolerance, slightly adapted to the modern context, to analyse the status of the separation of church and state in contemporary Russia. A secular state is defined here as a state with not just a separation of institutions, but also one with freedom of conscience based on the idea of tolerance. This policy of tolerance entails that a government 1) cannot deprive any citizen of their civil rights based on their values, 2) they cannot prosecute a citizen based on their values and 3) a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. These three criteria form the theoretical framework of this thesis. The case materials of this thesis include the Bases of the Social Concept by the ROC to analyse what values they promote, speeches by Putin that outline foreign and domestic policy to show that the Russian government also promotes Orthodox values, and Russian federal legislation regarding family values to analyse the effect of the values of the ROC on Russian legislation. After studying federal legislation affected by the adoption of Orthodox values this thesis concludes that although criteria 1) and 3) are violated to some extent, there is not enough proof that criteria 2) is affected. Discourse in Russian legislation has gotten more religious, but in practice this religious influence has not led to Russian citizens being prosecuted for things like getting an abortion or falling in love with someone of the same sex. However, an increased cooperation between church and state has led to the dilution of the separation between the religious and the secular, and the Russian government has started using the conservative values of the church as a political tool to suppress those who think differently or are critical of the government.

“Freethinkers are those who are willing to use their minds without prejudice and without fearing to understand things that clash with their own customs, privileges, or beliefs. This state of mind is not common, but it is essential for right thinking.”

-
Tolstoy, L., 1934. On Life and Essays On Religion - Translated with an introduction by Aylmer Maude, London, Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press.

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1. Introduction

What does being religious mean? When someone tells you, that they consider themselves to be religious, do you assume this means they regularly go to a house of worship? Do you assume they celebrate religious holidays? Or maybe you just assume they believe in one or several powerful beings? In Russia there are several big religious groups of which Russian Orthodox is the biggest one (Pew Research Center 2017). About 68% of Russians say they identify as Orthodox (Levada 2020). However, 59% says that religion plays a very small role or no role at all in their lives (ibid.). 52% says their religious identity is mainly a matter of national culture/family tradition, not of personal faith (Pew Research Center 2017). In Russia it seems religion is a cultural affiliation and not a religious one.

The idea of a religious affiliation being part of one's culture is something that has been utilised by the Russian government. Vladimir Putin (president of Russia) and other Russian officials have declared that Russian Orthodox values are part of the newly promoted Russian identity. This acceptance of conservative Orthodox values as part of the Russian identity, has had its influence on Russian legislation and thus Russian society. Examples are restrictions on abortion, the ban on 'homosexual propaganda', the importance of the family and traditional gender roles in society etc. This has an influence on the status of the Lockean separation of church and state in Russia. This thesis aims to analyse the current status of this separation.

1.1 Secular Constitution

The Russian constitution, adopted in 1993 after the fall of the Soviet Union, leaves no room for ambiguity when it comes to the Lockean separation of church and state: "1. The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be established as a state or obligatory one. 2. Religious associations shall be separated from the State and shall be equal before the law." (Russian Federation 1993, Art. 14). Recent changes to this part of the constitution have made Russia's secularity a little more ambiguous. This thesis will investigate these changes in more detail in chapter 2.

The Russian constitution also states that "The State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms of man and citizen, regardless of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, place of residence, religion, convictions, membership of public associations, and also of other circumstances. All forms of limitations of human rights on social, racial, national, linguistic or religious grounds shall be banned." (Russian Federation 1993, Art. 19.2).

Besides declaring its secularity, the Russian constitution also guarantees religious freedom and freedom of conscience: "Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with other any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them." (Russian Federation 1993, Art. 28).

However secular its constitution may be, is the separation of church and state in Russia also guaranteed in practice? Besides the constitutional amendments, there have been additional changes in the past few years to Russian policy, which has affected the role of religion in Russian society. This calls for another look at the Lockean separation of church and state in Russia.

1.2 Research Question and Hypothesis

There have been many scholars who have written about secularism and the separation of church and state. Among them was also John Locke (1632 - 1704). Unlike those before him, he argued that a secular state does not only require secular institutions, a state should also be tolerant towards those who think or believe differently. Although his ideas may sound mundane today, when Locke himself wrote them down they were quite revolutionary. As Ian Shapiro writes in his introduction to Locke's works: "Locke is something of a hybrid figure. He makes arguments that endure as defining features of political argument in the modern West, yet he does so in ways that reflect and embody premodern concerns. Reading Locke reveals that we have more complex links to our past than we might otherwise perceive" (Locke 2003, XIV). Due to Locke's focus on freedom of conscience, Locke's argument is an interesting standpoint to analyse the separation of church and state in Russia. The research question of this thesis is therefore: Examining the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church; is there a Lockean separation of church and state in contemporary Russia?

I use the word Lockean here because to look at the entire Russian separation of church and state would take at least ten theses. A total separation of church and state in a modern society does not just include legislation, but also, for example, celebration of religious holidays, religious education, minority religions etc. With a 'Lockean' approach this thesis constrains itself to the *political* separation of church and state, specifically top down influence on legislation and thus society. As a case study this thesis will look at legislation regarding family values, because (as we will see in the chapter 3) these are important to the ROC.

My hypothesis is the following: By turning Russian Orthodox values into values of 'the Russian identity' and by using these values to change legislation that infringes upon the freedom of individuals (e.g. sexual minorities, women etc.), Russian freedom of conscience gets damaged and the strict Lockean separation of church and state is weakened. According to Locke, religion or the church itself cannot be forced upon others. Yet, by adopting Russian Orthodox values as the only 'true' values and implementing laws that are in line with these ideas, the Russian state does, indirectly, subdue others to a certain religion.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

To prove this hypothesis there are a few sub questions this thesis must answer. Firstly, what a secular state according to Locke (chapter 2)? What are the conservative Orthodox values the ROC promotes (chapter 3) and are the values of the Russian government based on the Orthodox ones or are they merely conservative (chapter 4)? When having established this shared discourse, can we find it in legislation regarding family

values as well (chapter 5) and, if so, has this legislation made it impossible, or significantly more difficult to think or be different in Russian society, thus damaging the Lockean separation of church and state according to Locke (chapter 6)?

Chapter 5 is the case study of this thesis. According to Locke a separation of church and state is not just a separation of institution but also entails freedom of conscience. To see if Russian Orthodox values have been adopted by the state to such an extent, meaning that there is little room for other belief systems in Russian society, this thesis will look at legislation. Specifically, legislation regarding family values, since these are important to the ROC (see chapter 3). One of the most important of these family values to the ROC is reproduction, which, according to the ROC, is the main purpose of the family. Thus, this thesis will examine legislation regarding abortion and the LGBTQ+ community. If freedom of conscience for these two groups of people (women and non-heterosexual citizens) is damaged, due to legislation with religious values, it might be true for other groups as well.

The next chapter will outline the theoretical framework of this thesis, which is based on Locke's theory on tolerance. According to Locke, separation of church and state is not solely a separation of institutions, but also entails freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Russia's constitution, as highlighted above, is based on this Western interpretation (Locke's interpretation) of a secular state. The theoretical framework will be used to analyse the discourse and legislation of the Russian government. If the criteria imposed by the theoretical framework are fulfilled, we can argue there is a Lockean separation of church and state in Russia. If not, there is no Lockean separation of church and state in Russia. Furthermore, to analyse the discourse of the Russian government, chapter 4 will make use of a discourse analysis. To examine how traditional values are portrayed in foreign and domestic policy speeches by Putin, I have established a set of codes (keywords) that are related to Russian Orthodoxy and traditional values. By searching for these codes, I have filtered out a set of speeches, which will be analysed more in depth for rhetoric on Russian Orthodoxy and traditional values.

To limit the scope of this thesis, I will focus on of Putin's last two terms (2012 to present), since many scholars argue (see chapter 3) that this is when Russia's government really turned more conservative, and started focussing more on this newly promoted Russian identity (chapter 3). I use the word promoted here, because I will argue this process is very much a top-down process. Although I will briefly mention it in terms of providing context, it is not the purpose of this thesis to investigate whether public opinion in Russia agrees with this increased church/state cooperation. It is also not the purpose of this thesis to investigate for what reason (religious or political) the Russian government adopts religious rhetoric. This thesis will not focus on religion per se, but on the societal consequences of the political use of religious norms and values. It is, however, the purpose of this thesis to see if church/state cooperation has increased to such an extent that it has had an influence on Russian society and thus on the Lockean separation of church and state.

2. Locke and Toleration

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of Locke's theory on tolerance slightly adapted to fit the modern context. Since this theory was written several centuries ago, it might seem strange to use it to analyse a contemporary country. On the contrary, it is still very relevant today. To make sure the theory is fit to look at contemporary examples, I will expand the theory to create a framework, which will be more apt to analyse modern Russia. After an explanation of Locke's theory this chapter includes a short justification on why this theory is useful for examining Russia in particular and what needs to be adapted to make it fit to look at contemporary countries.

2.1 An Essay Concerning Toleration

John Locke, famous for his *Two Treatise of Government*, is known for his ideas on the ideal organization of the commonwealth. Part of this institutional way of looking at politics is thinking about the role of religion within the commonwealth. Locke did exactly this when he himself was in religious exile in the Dutch Republic. Written in 1686 *An Essay Concerning Toleration* discusses the role of religion in the state and proposes the principle of tolerance.

Locke's principle of tolerance was important for the discussion on freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. D. Lacorne, C. Delogu, and R. Emlein point out, in their analysis of the text, that although Locke was not the first to discuss tolerance, "Locke's regime of tolerance is revolutionary because it posits the complete autonomy of the individual, or, more precisely, the splitting of the individual into two parts: the believer, who alone has the power to judge his true faith, and the citizen, whose acts must conform to the rule of law" (Lacorne et. al. 2019, 30). This means that, according to Locke, a separation between church and state does not only concern a church's involvement in politics. It also entails a separation between the *beliefs* of the individual and the *beliefs* of the church. A church should not be able to impose its norms and values on others. The state is responsible through legislation to guarantee this separation.

According to Locke, the church and the state should be separated, because it is not the goal of the commonwealth to take care of religions, since we join political communities for other reasons (Locke 2003, 218). Locke argues, "...faith is not faith without believing" (Ibid. 219). One can try and subdue someone to a certain faith, but it is not true faith unless the individual themselves truly believes.

Secondly, faith is about salvation, which only the individual himself can do (Ibid 219). A magistrate can try to salvage an individual with outward force, but "true and saving religion", as Locke calls it, "consists in the inward persuasion of the mind" (Ibid. 219).

Thirdly, Locke argues, the state has no purpose in regulating religion, because it is outside of its jurisdiction (Ibid. 220). In other words, the state's interests only relate to the civil interests of its citizens in this world, not in what might come next. Religion is mainly a very specific interest through which people unite. It can be institutionalized to a certain extent (only within the boundaries of the laws of the commonwealth) but it can only belong to those who agreed to join. Religion or the church itself cannot be imposed on others. As Locke describes it: "Freedom of thought excludes all mediation, for the Life and Power of true Religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind" (Locke 2003, 219).

But true faith being individual is not the only reason why, the state and the church should be separate institutions. Locke also argues, toleration is the duty of the magistrate. Views on religion and faith may differ, but no one on earth has the claim to the possession of truth (Stanton 2006, 89). Neither the magistrate, nor the clergy has better access to 'the truth' than other individuals. Timothy Stanton points out that, while in medieval times, religious institutions and monarchs assumed that individuals needed guidance to obtain salvation and 'true faith', Locke assumed that individuals were naturally capable of reaching these themselves (Stanton 2006, 86). This duty of tolerance has three important consequences for individuals in a commonwealth. Firstly, although a church may excommunicate members, it may not do so forcefully (Locke 2003, 223). The use of force is exclusive to the state and should only be used to protect the worldly belongings of its subjects (life, liberty, health, and freedom from pain and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like) (Lacorne et. al. 2019, 18). Secondly, "No private person has any right in any manner to prejudice another person in his civil enjoyments, because he is of another church or religion" (Locke 2003, 224). Unless it is dangerous to the commonwealth, it should not matter which religion someone is a part of, and they and their belief should be tolerated. Thirdly Locke writes, "No man therefore, with whatsoever ecclesiastical office he be dignified, can deprive another man, that is not of his church and faith, either of liberty, or of any part of his worldly goods, upon the account of that difference which is between them in religion" (Locke 2003, 226). In other words, followers and religious leaders cannot prosecute those who adhere to a different religion.

2.2 Secularism and modernity

Locke's theory is outdated in the sense that Locke had a very 17th century view on religion. One was religious when belonging to a certain church and when actively worshipping according to its traditions. Besides this, it was not an option not to be religious. When described in the way I did above it may seem that Locke was in favour of complete secularism. On the contrary, he writes in his letter that being atheist would pose a threat to the commonwealth (Locke 2003, 246 & 276). Locke argued that atheists do not believe in a "higher moral order" and will therefore never peacefully adhere to the rules of the commonwealth or the social order (Forst 2017). In other words, to live in a commonwealth peacefully, citizens need some form of moral compass. Without religion, Locke did not believe humans to possess this compass.

But while Locke lived in a society where being a non-believer was an exception, today we live in a very different world. With the coming of modernity many scholars thought the world would slowly secularize, this has not happened everywhere. Many countries have not seen a dramatic decline in religion and some countries (like in Russia, Poland, Hungary etc) have even seen what some would call desecularization; the return of religion after a period of secularization. José Casanova argues that it is a very Western idea that modernity goes hand in hand with secularization (Casanova 2009). Casanova argues that in a lot of Western countries, the enlightenment and its discussions on religion brought with it the idea that “to be secular is not experienced as an existential choice modern individuals or modern societies make, but rather as a natural outcome of becoming modern. In this respect, the theory of secularization (...) tends to function as a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Ibid. 1055). Instead, we now live in a post secular world according to scholars like Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls. This means that we live in societies with a plurality of views on which we need to find a consensus (Stoeckl & Ulzner 2020, 9).

There are also those that argue that there are different forms of secularization and scholars tend to focus on the Western interpretations. Rajeev Bhargava for example, argues that a strict state-church separation is but one interpretation of the concept of secularism (Bhargava 2013). He argues that Western interpretations of secularism always seem very anti-religious, whereas secularism should not be “against religion, but against religious homogenization and institutionalized religious domination” (ibid. 69). Bhargava explains that many Western interpretations of secularism rely on the idea that laws cannot be based on religious rationale and should be based on secular morale. “By asking the religious to exercise restraint and exclude theological reasons from their justification for a coercive law, liberal secularism forces them to act against their conscience and, in so doing, violates its own principle of equal respect” (Ibid. 76). In modern societies that are increasingly connected by, for example migration, and thus more and more diverse, this is not an option anymore. But how does a country deal with religious diversity without picking sides? Bhargava instead opts for the Indian model of secularization, which allows for contextual secularism (ibid. 84). Religion interfering in politics and politics interfering in religion is allowed if such an intervention promotes “freedom, equality or any other values integral to secularism” (ibid. 85). Both the state and representatives of religions can act when these values are promoted or undermined. The idea behind this being that people can come to the same conclusions or strive for the same values based on different ways of thinking.

All these developments have caused scholars and philosophers after Locke to wonder whether the definitions we have of religion and the ideas we have of the role of religion in society are outdated or not. This thesis will not focus on religion per se, but on the societal consequences of the political use of religious norms and values. Although Locke’s argument was written in a different century, his theory on the Lockean separation of church and state still stands. A Lockean separation of church and state is not solely a separation of

institutions, but also entails freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Besides, Russia's constitution, as highlighted in the introduction, is based on this Western interpretation (Locke's interpretation) of a secular state.

To fit Locke's theory to modernity I would like to refute his argument that morality requires religion. It is safe to argue that in a lot of modern societies, what is good and what is bad is not solely based on religious assumptions. In fact, there are a lot of nation states with a legislation and a judicial system that consider their governments to be secular (e.g. the Netherlands, Cuba, France, China, Laos, USA). Legislation and morality are not the same, but legislation is based on a country's moral beliefs. One can agree or disagree with their moral compass, but the moral compass itself is not solely based on religion. Thus, to make sure Locke's theory fits the Russian modern context I will expand Locke's argument of toleration to include non-religious beliefs, as it does not make sense to examine a modern context without permitting tolerance of these. In Locke's theory, freedom of conscience only entails religious ideas, but in modern secular societies it should include a more elaborate definition of norms and values. We take the basis of Locke's religion (a secular state is more than just secular institutions) and expand his definition of toleration.

2.3 Criteria for theoretical framework

The following theoretical framework emerges from this elaboration on Locke; a secular state will be defined in this thesis as a state with secular institutions and a broad sense of tolerance. Tolerance here includes freedom of conscience for citizens of a nation state. This policy of tolerance entails a government 1) cannot deprive any citizen of their civil rights based on their values, 2) they cannot prosecute a citizen based on their values and most importantly of all, 3) a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. With the help of these criteria this thesis will have a look at the Lockean separation of church and state in contemporary Russia.

Furthermore, in chapter 4, a discourse analysis approach will also be used to analyse the rhetoric of the Russian government. To examine how traditional values are portrayed in foreign and domestic policy speeches by Putin, I have established a set of codes (keywords) that are related to Russian Orthodoxy and traditional values. By searching for these codes, I have filtered out a set of speeches, which will be analysed more in depth for rhetoric on Russian Orthodoxy and traditional values.

2.4 What will and will not be analysed

This thesis will not investigate whether the promotion of traditional values by the state is done due to the state being religious. Traditional values are clearly based on Russian Orthodox values (as will become clear in the next chapter) but this does not mean that they are used by the Russian state for religious reasons. They could choose to promote them for political reasons too. This thesis will not investigate *why* the Russian state increased its cooperation with the ROC, it will solely look at the consequences of this cooperation.

Besides, Locke's focus on norms and values and on the state leader's (top-down) responsibility for tolerance, makes his theory perfect for looking at Russia and its traditional value rhetoric. Therefore, this thesis will not make use of a more sociological theory on secularism, but instead on Locke's political theory on a secular state.

2.5 Conclusion

Locke argues that the state and the church should be separated, because firstly it is not the goal of the commonwealth to take care of religions, secondly faith is about salvation, which only an individual can reach, and thirdly the state's interests concern civil interests in this world, not the next.

A secular state does not just entail a separation of institutions, according to Locke it also needs tolerance. Tolerance means that a magistrate cannot impose a certain religion on the members of the commonwealth. This also means a magistrate cannot improve or worsen the kind of civil enjoyments (rights) a citizen belonging to a particular religion has. And thirdly, citizens of different religions, than the common ones in a state may not be prosecuted. What Locke does here is creating a separation not just of institutions but also between the mind of the individual and the mind of the state. Tolerance not only means a state should let people believe what they want to believe, it also entails that they do not undertake any actions to limit the rights and freedoms of those who do think differently (unless they are a threat to the commonwealth).

Since Locke wrote his book, the composition of societies has changed, as well as views on the definition of religion. By expanding Locke's theory to include atheism, it becomes more useful for a case study like modern Russia. Thus, this thesis defines a secular state as a state with both secular institutions and a policy of tolerance towards those with different values (secular or religious).

Using the criteria for a secular state, as defined by Locke (a state cannot impose a belief system, cannot prosecute and limit the civil rights of those with different values), this thesis will look into the Lockean separation of church and state in Russia. The next chapter will elaborate what other scholars have written about this topic before.

3. Literature review

This thesis will use the phrases ‘traditional values’, ‘Orthodox values’ and ‘family values’ many times, but what do they mean? This chapter will discuss the meaning of these terms according to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and how they connect to the church’s ideology. The last part of this chapter will provide an overview on what has already been written on the subject of the cooperation between the church, as well as the state and what conclusions have been drawn before by other academics, on which this thesis is based.

3.1 Orthodox values according to the ROC

In 2000, the bishop’s council of the ROC adopted the *Bases of the Social Concept* of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the document the ROC explains the “basic provisions of her teaching on church-state relations and a number of socially significant problems” (ROC 2000a). Katja Richter points out in her book *The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: Politics, Culture and Greater Russia* that the ROC does not always stick to their own guidelines. As an example, Richter mentions that, even though the doctrine prohibits officials of the ROC to get involved in election campaigns, several officials ran for political positions (2013, 20). This does not mean that the doctrine is insignificant. As Richter writes, the document still provides insight into the ideals and aims the ROC strives towards (ibid.). This is important to understand what the ROC presents as its norms and values. It should be pointed out however, that the ROC is not a homogenous organization, but instead a collection of individuals with different opinions and there are also Russian Orthodox Christians who do not belong to or consider the ROC to represent them. Not everyone will agree to with the ideas of the ROC as presented in its documents and even those that do may differ in degrees. However, to prevent this thesis from becoming overly complicated, it will focus on official documents, not on the opinions of individuals.

In the *Social Concept* the ROC argues that there should not be a complete integration of church and state. However, they argue (as opposed to Locke) that the two institutions should work together more closely, to contain sin and promote certain morals that help individuals reach salvation (ROC 2000b). However, Knox and Mitrofanova point out that the document also mentions that the theocracy is always considered more important than the state (2014, 44). *The Social Concept* writes that its followers should obey the state, but “According to the teaching of the Church, power itself has no right to make itself absolute by extending its limits up to complete autonomy from God and from the order of things established by Him. This can lead to the abuse of power and even to the deification of rulers” (ROC 2000b, III.2) To justify this, the document explains that religion should not be something personal, but that believers should practice their faith openly (Belov 2016, 229). Thus, while Locke thinks religion is a private matter, the ROC says that religion is a public matter. This means that society, according to the ROC, should be organized according to religious norms. Secular values should not enjoy a monopoly in any part of society (e.g. education or science). Instead,

religious beliefs should be regarded an equal source of knowledge alongside science. This argument is similar to the Indian interpretation of secularism mentioned in the previous chapter (Bhargava 2013) which argues for contextual secularism. Just like the ROC seems to do here, the Indian interpretation argues that people can come to the same conclusion based on different ways of thinking.

However, *the Social Concept* also mentions that even though the church seeks cooperation with the state and society (believer and non-believers), it will do so “...without setting herself the direct task to have all converted to Orthodoxy as a condition for co-operation, the Church hopes that joint charity will lead its workers and people around them to the knowledge of the Truth...” (ROC 2000b, I.3)

The ROC does agree with Locke on the fact that the state should not interfere in the preaching of the church (ROC 2000b, III.5). If the state prevents the church from fulfilling its task of salvation, the ROC reserves the right to refuse to obey the state (ibid. III.5). The same principle goes for law and culture. The ROC believes that culture helps preserve religious heritage, but reserves the right to morally assess and possibly disapprove of secular culture, when they deem it anti-religious (Ibid. XIV.2) According to the ROC the law has to abide to the ‘God-established principles’, if they do not, and if a law rejects their divine norms, the ROC cannot adhere to it (Ibid. IV.3) Thus, the followers of the ROC should be law-abiding citizens unless, the law prevents their path to salvation. This is very different from the Indian interpretation of secularism. The Indian interpretation argues that there are a set of values both believers and non-believers should adhere to. One truth is not worth more than the other as the ROC seems to argue here.

Just like Locke, the ROC also comments on freedom of conscience in *the Social Concept*. They argue, that since freedom of conscience means religion moves from the social to the personal sphere, they do not inherently support it (Ibid. III.6). When religion is exclusive to the personal sphere, less people get into contact with it. However, the ROC also recognizes that if there was no legal freedom of conscience, the church could not act freely and independently from the state (Ibid. III.6).

When it comes to the ROC’s view on society, there are a few clear statements in the document that explain their norms and values. Firstly, the ROC believes family values are very important. For the ROC, the family “represents the initial cell of human society”, meaning that it preceded the state and the nation as form of social organization (ROC 2000b, III.1). Included in these family values is a traditional role for women in society (Ibid. X.5). Women cannot have an equal position to men in society as their primary role is reserved for child-care. “While appreciating the social role of women and welcoming their political, cultural and social equality with men, the Church opposes the tendency to diminish the role of woman as wife and mother. The fundamental equality of the sexes does not annihilate the natural distinction between them, nor does it imply the identity of their callings in family and society” (Ibid. X.5).

The Social Concept also condemns homosexuality and transgenders as well as ‘homosexual propaganda’ for the same reason (Ibid. XII.9.) Both of these ‘damage’ the image of the nuclear family and it hinders the birth of children. Sex education is therefore also out of the question, if it promotes homosexuality or relationships outside of marriage (Ibid. XII.9) Since procreation is deemed important for society, contraception and abortion are considered sins (Ibid. XII.4) The same goes for surrogacy and artificial insemination when the cells do not come from the people included in the marriage (Ibid. XII.4).

To conclude, the ROC has a different perspective on the Lockean separation of church and state. In principle its followers adhere to the state, but if anything within the state (legislation, culture, education) goes firmly against their God-chosen principles, the ROC reserves the right to protest or not comply to with. These God-chosen principles exist to secure one’s path to salvation, as such the church deem them more important than the state.

3.2 The relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state

The cooperation between the ROC and the Russian state is not a new development. It has been going on for a long time. Thus, much has already been written about this topic. Although, academics do not always agree with each other there are a few conclusions, which we can draw, based on articles that have been written before.

There is a consensus among academics in the field of Russian Studies, that the role of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) within the Russian state has changed under Putin and Dmitry Medvedev (former president and prime minister) (Kremlin n.d.). While the role of religion during Soviet times was limited due to the Soviet secularization efforts, today’s Russia is going through a process of desecularization. Firstly, in 1990 then President Mikhail Gorbachev implemented the Religious Freedom Act. This law was adapted in 1997 by his successor Boris Yeltsin. While the 1990 law guaranteed that no religion may enjoy certain privileges (Fagan 2012, 67), the 1997 Religious Freedom Act announced, in its preamble, a special role for four existing religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism) (N. 125-F3). Although the law affirms that Russia is a secular state, it also refers to ‘the special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of its spirituality and culture’ (Knox and Mitrofanova 2014, 43). The law requires all existing religions to get registered at the Ministry of Justice and to present them with a document, which explains their attitude towards the family, marriage, education, the health of its followers and any restrictions they impose on their members or clergy (Richters 2013, 38). The registered religions also have to provide proof that they have existed in Russia for over 15 years (ibid. 38). If they cannot prove this, they can still operate as a religious group, but they do not enjoy the same privileges as a religious organization. This process is more complicated than in the 1990 version of the law (Fagan 2012, 68). Furthermore, the law explains that

a religion can be banned from Russia when it “forces a family to disintegrate, damages a citizen’s health or morality, uses hypnosis or narcotics as part of its religious activities, encourages suicides or the refusal to receive compulsory education, or threatens revenge if a person seeks to leave the association” (Richter 2013, 38).

A. Curanović and L. Leustean (2015, 5) write, in their article *The Guardians of Traditional Values; Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Quest for Status*, that the role of the ROC in Russian society grew under Medvedev’s presidency. Under his presidency, military chaplains were reintroduced, as well as religious education in high school and the ROC got the right to preview and comment on considered legislation (Richters 2013, 1). Afterwards, Putin has continued this trend. Under Putin, the ROC regained some property with religious significance and Putin first mentioned the connection between Russian Orthodoxy and Russian statehood (Knox and Mitrofanova 2014, 43-49). As an example Z. Knox and A. Mitrofanova (2014, 49) mention the connection Putin made between nuclear weapons and Russian Orthodoxy in 2007: “Both topics are closely related to each other because both the traditional confession of the Russian Federation and the nuclear shield of Russia are components increasing Russian statehood, creating preconditions necessary to provide internal and external security of the country”. Knox and Mitrofanova explain that the connection is not surprising: “Together they are understood by leaders and most citizens as guarantees of Russia’s twofold independence: spiritual and geopolitical” (ibid. 49).

Thus, scholars agree on the fact that the cooperation between the church and state has increased, but they differ in their explanations on how this cooperation took place and what its effects are. R. L. Schroeder and V. Karpov ((2013, 303) argue in their article *The Crimes and Punishments of the ‘Enemies of the Church’ and the Nature of Russia’s Desecularising Regime*, that the increased role of the ROC in the Russian included an increase in intolerance of ‘anti-church actions’ by the ROC. Schroeder and Karpov (Ibid. 303) argue that the increasingly aggressive responses by the ROC and the public to people and activities that are ‘anti-Orthodox’, “...mark the gradual consolidation of a new normative climate in Russia that emerged through the process of desecularisation ‘from above’ and the rise of a particular desecularising regime in post-Soviet Russia”. They define desecularisation as “...a process of counter-secularization through which religion reasserts its societal influence in response to previous and/or co-occurring secularizing tendencies” (Schroeder and Karpov 2013, 303). Karpov and Schroeder (Ibid. 305) argue desecularisation in Russia has come, primarily from the top, resulting in what they call a desecularising regime; “a system of political, normative and ideological arrangements through which the role of religion in society is increased and sustained”. This ‘regime’ prevents competing desecularising movements from gaining influence and uses economic and political resources to increase the influence of the ‘official religion’ in a society.

In her article *The Russian Orthodox Church as Moral Norm Entrepreneur*, K. Stoeckl (2016, 132) calls for less focus on desecularisation as a form of soft power from the government and instead describes the

ROC as a norm protagonist. A norm protagonist is an institution, individual or group of people that call attention to 'new' issues that have not resulted in new norms yet. In other words, "They construct cognitive frames, often in opposition to rival frames, effectively causing a shift in public perceptions of appropriateness" (Stoeckl 2016, 132). To contextualize this, many of the ROC's 'new' issues are in fact old, but the ROC is reiterating them, so as to promote a discussion on what post-soviet norm/values should be.

As an example, Stoeckl (Ibid. 138) uses the ROC's stance on human rights in the international sphere. In 2010 in Geneva, a workshop was held at the UNHRC where traditional values and human rights were discussed. The workshop was an initiative of the ROC and was voted against by most Western countries but got enough votes to take place anyway. Representatives of the ROC argued that religious views should be considered when developing and establishing human rights. The argument was based on the idea that believers adhere to more 'traditional' norms and values, which do not allow as much room for "the right to sexual orientation, euthanasia, abortion, experimentation with human nature" (Ibid. 138). Thus, according to Stoeckl (Ibid. 138), the ROC is a norm protagonist because it has made itself the spokesperson of a traditional values agenda: through "(1) asserting Russian national legal sovereignty; (2) defending Orthodox Christianity; (3) forming coalitions with traditionalist forces from the rest of the world, including the global south; and (4) promoting philosophical conservatism, including the Russian religious philosophical tradition".

In their article Vyacheslav Karpov and Rachel L. Schroeder (2013, 299) point out that the ROC equals 'enemies of the church' to 'enemies of the state'. They give a few examples in their article on how this comparison seems to be supported by others within the Russian state. They mention "punitive 'redressive mechanisms' employed against the perceived anti-Orthodox anti-clerical actors" varying from "sizeable fines to lengthy imprisonments and mandatory psychiatric hospitalization". Schroeder and Karpov argue that by showing that opponents of the ROC can be tried without having committed a crime, both the ROC and the Russian government confirm that enemies of the church are also enemies of the state.

Irina Kotkina agrees in her article *We will ROC you!*, that the Russian state seems to stand behind the call of the ROC to stick to Orthodox values in Russian society. She uses the term 'moral panic' to explain how the ROC securitizes aspects of culture in order to impose 'censorship' (Kotkina 2016, 68). Kotkina defines censorship in this case as "...any kind of external suppression of ideas or cultural forms, deemed objectionable or inappropriate by the external agency" (Ibid. 68). Since there is no ruling ideology in today's Russia, Kotkina argues, what defines a threat becomes arbitrary. As an example of moral panic and censorship she mentions the cancelled performance of the opera *Tänhauser* in Novosibirsk in 2015. The performance was cancelled after pressure from the ROC and the public on grounds of it being an insult to religious beliefs. As explained by Schroeder and Karpov, the *Tänhauser* case was an example of traditional Orthodox values being equalled with Russian values. The metropolitan of Berdsk and Novosibirsk argued that because 80% of Russians identifies as Orthodox, the performance did not only insult religious believers, but Russian citizens

in general (Kotkina 2016, 73). Since, the project was state funded, it was deemed ‘insulting’ that tax payers money was being spent on an ‘immoral’ performance.

After the Pussy Riot performance in 2012, a law was adopted to protect ‘the feelings’ of believers (Staehe 2020, 255). “Public actions expressing explicit disrespect for society and committed with the purpose of insulting religious feelings” are punishable by fines and if they take place in places of worship, religious rites or ceremonies they are punishable by prison time. Hanna Staehle (2020, 256) points out that the law does not include a clear definition of religious feelings, opening up the possibility for arbitrary interpretation and thus selective implementation.

Joachim Willems (2006, 288), however, argues that the support of the state for the ROC depends on the ROC’s ability to argue that its case goes beyond an internal church debate. In this sense, it is not certain the church will always be listened to. Willems (2006, 287-288) argues, that although there seems to be an increasing ‘symbiosis’ between church and state, on paper Russia is still a secular state and because of its atheist history, many Russians identify as Orthodox, but have no in-depth knowledge of Christian Orthodoxy. However, Willems’ article was written almost 15 years ago. Much has changed in Russia between the church and the state since then.

The idea that Orthodoxy is at the heart of Russian statehood is not new. *The Social Concept* itself writes: “When a nation, civil or ethnic, represents fully or predominantly a monoconfessional Orthodox community, it can in a certain sense be regarded as the one community of faith — an Orthodox nation” (ROC 2000b, II. 3). Alicja Curanović and Lucian Leustean (2015, 3) write that “as a reaction to cultural pressure by the West and a serious socio-economic crisis that undermined the foundations of social stability”, were two causes for a traditionalist re-orientation in Russia in the 90’s. This, and a high level of Russians identifying as Russian (nationality) and a high level of trust in the ROC, makes for a visible effect of retraditionalization on domestic affairs and Russian foreign policy (Curanović and Leustean 2015, 3). According to the Levada Centre in 2020, 68% of respondents identifies as Orthodox and of those 68%, 38% considered the role of religion in their life as ‘not very important’, while 36% answered ‘fairly important’ (Levada 2020). 53% of respondents who identified as Orthodox considered themselves to be ‘somewhat religious’ as opposed to 42% of total respondents. To the question “Do you believe the church should influence government decision-making?” 40% of total respondents and 32% of Orthodox respondents answered, ‘definitely not’. Only 11% of Orthodox respondents and 9% of total respondents answered, ‘definitely yes’ (Levada 2020).

Curanović and Leustean (2015, 8) argue that, in order to stay true to its political tradition and to distinguish itself from the West, Russia felt it had to define its own set of values, distinct from the Western ones. This set of values has been equalled with the values of the ROC. “In short, the efficiency of Russian modernization is conditioned by the revival of tradition, which in turn is identified with religion” (ibid. 8).

Curanović and Leustean (2015, 11) show that in the field of foreign policy, officials of the ROC refer to Russia as a 'moral leader' or 'a defender of the truth', while they refer to the West as immoral.

3.3 Conclusion

The role of the ROC in the Russian state has increased under the presidencies of Putin and Medvedev. Schroeder and Karpov (2013) argue that the ROC has used soft power to consolidate its power over society from above. Whilst Stoeckl (2016) prefers to describe the ROC as a 'norm protagonist', that tries to shift public perception of issues it finds important. Karpov and Schroeder (2013), Kotkina (2016) and, Staehle (2020) do agree that one of the consequences of this increased influence of the ROC has been the apparent crackdown of the state on those who do not adhere to Orthodox values. Willems (2006) nuances this statement by pointing out that the state does not always support the ROC. This depends on the ability of the ROC to argue that an issue affects society as a whole, not just the church. Most of the authors do seem to agree on the importance of these norms and values being equalled with Russian statehood.

The traditional or Orthodox values in the Bases of the Social concept analysed in this chapter include: a believe in God, an aversion against homosexuality, transgenderism, sex education, contraception and abortion, and the importance of the family in society and its function; reproduction. These values all flow from the same conviction, which is that the family precedes all forms of social organisation and is therefore most important in human society. The definition of a family, according to the ROC, is a heterosexual union, solidified through marriage with the purpose of reproduction. Thus, anything that might hinder reproduction is not acceptable. Besides this, anything that the church deems 'unnatural' (i.e. not the work of God), like In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) or surrogacy is also not acceptable. All these convictions and aversion together form the values of the ROC this thesis will discuss. The next chapter in this thesis will investigate Putin's rhetoric on Orthodox values and the connection he makes between these values and identifying as Russian.

4. Rhetoric of the government

In the previous chapter we established that the traditional values of the ROC and Russian identity are often connected. To show that this is the case for the Russian government, and to show that promoted traditional values are not just conservative values, but are connected to spirituality, this chapter will highlight some speeches by Putin. To analyse the speeches this chapter will make use of a discourse analysis. To study or analyse discourse means to “...to study language in action, looking at texts in relation to the social contexts in which they are used” (Hyland and Paltridge 2011, 1). This chapter will analyse annual speeches by Putin to the Russian Federal Assembly, speeches made by Putin to the UN General Assembly and Putin’s speeches at the Valdai Discussion Club. The Russian Federal Assembly and the speeches to the UN have been added to make sure domestic and foreign policy are covered. The Valdai Discussion Club is a Moscow based think tank and discussion forum, often attended by prominent Russian politicians such as the president, the prime minister, and the foreign minister. The speeches at the Valdai Discussion Club are included because their discussions are often used in academic articles as ways of analysing (un)official Russian domestic and foreign policy.

To mark the most relevant speeches for analysis I have selected a set of codes; ‘identity’, ‘Orthodox’, ‘value’, ‘spiritual’, ‘national’, and ‘tradition’. The words ‘Orthodox’ and ‘spiritual’ were selected to highlight the role of the ROC and Russian Orthodoxy in government rhetoric. The word ‘value’ was chosen to analyse what values are mentioned in the speeches and in what context (i.e. spiritual, secular, or both). The words ‘national’ and ‘traditional’ were chosen to identify the parts of Putin’s speeches related to the Russian national identity and to investigate whether this identity is linked to Russian Orthodox values. This set of codes was chosen as to limit the amount of speeches and to find the most relevant ones. In order to do this a smaller set of codes was used. This also works to focus the research.

The speeches that matched these keywords were then analysed to search for discourse related to the ROC and things presented as Russian or Orthodox values. An overview of all the speeches and the codes can be found in the appendix.

Although Putin alone is not the government of Russia each of the speeches chosen include an outline of domestic and foreign policy. Therefore, they are illustrative of the policy course the Russian government has taken and/or wants to take. After selecting the speeches that include the codes, this chapter will zoom in on discourse fragments that use these keywords. The end of this chapter also includes a small paragraph on the recent constitutional amendments, as it affects the secular nature of the Russian constitution.

Since this thesis is about contemporary Russia, the search was limited to Putin’s last two terms (2012 to present). Besides this, as we have seen in the previous chapter, scholars argue that this period is crucial for Russia’s conservative turn (e.g. Curanović and Leustean 2015; Knox and Mitrofanova 2014; Schroeder and Karpov 2013).

4.1 Historic importance

Putin often makes the connection between religion and historic continuity. In his 2014 speech to the Federal Assembly Putin spoke about the importance of the invasion of Crimea. He said: "...and the peninsula is of strategic importance for Russia as the spiritual source of the development of a multifaceted but solid Russian nation and a centralised Russian state. It was in Crimea, in the ancient city of Chersonesus or Korsun, as ancient Russian chroniclers called it, that Grand Prince Vladimir was baptised before bringing Christianity to Rus" (Putin 2014). He continues by arguing that Christianity for Russia has been a "powerful spiritual unifying force", something which had brought the different Slavic tribes together and created the "united nation" of Russia (Putin 2014). Foreign Minister Lavrov even went as far as to claim that the tensions in relations between the West and Russia after the invasion of Crimea, were caused by Russia's return to traditional values (Interfax 2014).

The connection between Russian Christianity and Russia's history allows for the creation of a solid and permanent foundation of Russian identity. One that, according to Putin, has not changed for over a 1000 years. Elena Stepanova (research fellow Russian Academy of Science) explains the importance of historical continuity: "The purpose of the principle of 'continuity' is to diminish, if not exclude, the debates about historic past, to neutralize controversial interpretations as the source of alternative future and to absorb it as inalienable part of common cultural-historic heritage" (2015, 127). Thus, by arguing Russian Orthodoxy has always been part of Russia and by establishing a continuity that goes beyond past and present, the Russian government already touches upon one of the criteria from the theoretical framework; a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. By enhancing the importance of Russian Orthodoxy, alternative religions slowly become more excluded.

4.2 Russia vs. the West

In the speeches, Russia is often described as a country that is morally superior to an immoral West. In a speech at the Valdai Discussion Club in 2013 Putin said: "We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilisation. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan. (...) What else but the loss of the ability to self-reproduce could act as the greatest testimony of the moral crisis facing a human society?" (Putin 2013a). Here it is made clear that the values Russia strives to adhere to are Christian ones. The focus on the family and reproduction is something, which we have seen in the previous chapter on Orthodox values. Although Russian Orthodoxy itself is not specifically mentioned here, Putin singles it out later in the speech: "Russia – as philosopher Konstantin Leontyev vividly put it – has always evolved in "blossoming complexity" as a state-civilisation, reinforced by the Russian people, Russian language, Russian culture, Russian Orthodox Church and the country's other traditional

religions. It is precisely the state-civilisation model that has shaped our state polity. It has always sought to flexibly accommodate the ethnic and religious specificity of particular territories, ensuring diversity in unity” (Putin 2013a). Although Putin argues all traditional religions are “an integral part of Russian identity” Russian Orthodoxy is mentioned separately, just like in the preamble of the law on Religious Freedom of 1997.

In a speech to the Federal Assembly in 2012, Putin highlights how Russia needs to make sure it stays on top of global development. He argues that, unlike the West, countries should not just focus on economic and technological process, but also on spirituality and patriotism. “Russia must be a sovereign and influential country. We should not just develop with confidence, but also preserve our national and spiritual identity, not lose our sense of national unity. We must be and remain Russia” (Putin 2012). This also includes morality. Putin explains that at the beginning of the 20st century Russia went through a demographic and moral crisis, because of world wars and civil wars. To be a “sovereign and strong nation” Russia must also be a moral nation (Putin 2012). Later in the same speech he argues there is still an “apparent deficit of spiritual values such as charity, empathy, compassion, support and mutual assistance” (Putin 2012). Putin argues that “We must wholeheartedly support the institutions that are the carriers of traditional values, which have historically proven their ability to pass these values from generation to generation” (2012). This is because Putin argues that, although the law can protect morality, it would be totalitarianist of the state to impose a certain morality.

In Putin’s speech to the Federal Assembly in 2013, he again points out, how Russia sees itself as a ‘defender of traditional values’ as opposed to a ‘too liberal’ West: “We know that there are more and more people in the world who support our position on defending traditional values that have made up the spiritual and moral foundation of civilisation in every nation for thousands of years: the values of traditional families, real human life, including religious life, not just material existence but also spirituality, the values of humanism and global diversity” (Putin 2013). Again, the traditionalist values that Russia aspires to promote are equalled with spirituality and morality.

While the West is usually portrayed in a negative light, in his 2019 speech at the Valdai Discussion Club, Putin highlights the independence of Asian states: “While demonstrating impressive examples of progress, the Asian nations still preserve their unique features and traditions. They remember their roots and prove in their forward progress that the principles of state sovereignty do not contradict openness and globalisation, that sustainable development can be based on independence and self-sufficiency rather than their mandatory renunciation, and that growing national economic and humanitarian potential requires political identity” (Putin 2019). Putin praises the Asian states for staying true to their convictions and traditions whilst, regaining an important position on the world stage. Something which the Russian government would like to be able to do as well, judging from Putin’s other speeches mentioned above. Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s foreign minister since 2004, seemed to agree in 2012 when he said that foreign policy should be guided by religious values (RIA Novosti 2012). Later on in the speech, Putin argues that universality is by definition impossible,

instead “A system is required whereby different values, ideas and traditions can co-exist, interact and mutually enrich one another while retaining and highlighting their peculiarities and differences” (Putin 2019).

4.3 Family values

The speeches also show an emphasis on an important Orthodox value; family values. The Russian family and demographics are topics that come up in several speeches. In Putin’s speech to the Federal Assembly in 2012, Putin puts a lot of emphasize on the fact that the birth rate is only barely higher than the death rate in 2012 (Putin 2012). It is also in this year that Putin implements maternity capital at the birth of the second child, meaning that parents get financial support when they get a second child (Putin 2012). In 2013, the birth rate is mentioned again (Putin 2013). In the 2020 speech to the Federal Assembly, almost a third of the speech is dedicated to demography and the wellbeing of families and mothers (Putin 2020). Putin emphasizes again, that the Russian government is alarmed at the low birth rate and calls the “preservation and increase of Russia’s population” their top national priority (Putin 2020). The rest of the speech includes new policy to increase the amount of day care spots, to extend maternity capital and child benefits. Even though the birth rate is not negative every year, Putin emphasizes how important Russia finds its demography. A country could also choose to focus on immigration, but instead Putin uses the words ‘preservation of Russia’s population’ and focuses in his speeches on maternity capital and financial support for starting families.

4.4 The 2020 constitution

Although it is not a speech, the recent proposed constitutional changes in Russia deserve some discussion here too. At the beginning of 2020 Putin proposed a set of constitutional amendments and called for a public vote on these proposals (AFP 2020). Although the results of the vote are disputed (there were several reports of voter fraud and voter coercion), 78% of Russian voted in favour of the amendments (EEAS 2020). The amendments were formally approved in March 2020 and went into effect in July that same year (Teague 2020, 301). Although the amendment that made international headlines was the abolishment of term limits for the Russian president, the proposal also includes the mention of Russians’ faith in God and the fact that marriage is a heterosexual union (AFP 2020). Adding an homage to the “ancestors who bequeathed to us their ideals and belief in God” was coined by the Presidential Administration at the urge of the Russian Orthodox Church Elizabeth Teague writes (2020, 306). The Russian Orthodox Church had been wanting to add God to the Russian constitution, but this proved difficult because Article 14 defines Russia as a secular state (Teague 2020, 306). Now the constitution contains both Article 14, which mentions Russia’s secularity and it includes a mention of Russia’s belief in God.

This is a clear example of an intrusion of our last criteria; a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. Adding to the constitution that Russians believe in God and that marriage is a heterosexual union rules out atheism and non-heterosexual marriages as an alternative value

system. Although the constitution does not state being homosexual, or atheist is illegal, its status has significant social consequences. A constitution constitutes the basis of a country's judicial system. All other legislation is held accountable to the constitution. As such, adding a belief in God and traditional family values to your constitution has serious impact on society.

It is also a first step towards breaking the second criteria; a government cannot prosecute a citizen based on their values. Although the law does not make homosexuality illegal it does specifically target those who are and who accept homosexuals. Thus, the law can be used to prosecute exactly this group anyway. This thesis will have a more detailed look at this kind of legislation in the next chapter.

4.5 Conclusion

Through an analysis of Putin's speeches, we can establish that he often makes a connection between traditional values, Russian Orthodoxy and spirituality. These Orthodox values are portrayed as being historic and thus part of Russia's history and identity. To display that these are 'good' values, Russia is compared to an immoral West that only focusses on materialism and not on a country's uniqueness and tradition like Russia does. One of the traditional values highlighted in the speeches and in the previous chapter is family values. Several of the Federal Assembly speeches (that highlight domestic policy for the upcoming year) show that this is an important topic for the Russian government. The speeches focussed on reproduction, but the constitutional amendments now also show what a marriage can consist of; a man and a woman. The same constitutional amendments resulted in the mention of God in the Russian secular constitution. This is interesting because when asking the question 'is there a separation between church and state in Russia' one could always answer 'on paper there is'. Now this has become more ambiguous.

The statements made in these speeches touch upon one of the criteria from the theoretical framework; a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. By establishing Russian Orthodoxy as integral to Russia and its history, other religions become less important and less of an alternative. Besides this, the constitutional amendments now express a favour for Orthodox Christianity and its family values over non-religious belief systems. However, Russia is not unique in favouring one religion over another. And since most other big religions in Russia share most of the Orthodox conservative values, we cannot speak of Russia violating the rights of other religions either. However, the Russian government having a clear favourite (religion) is a sign of the growing influence of the ROC.

5. Legislation

In the previous chapters this thesis looked at traditional value rhetoric in Russian politics and the Russian Orthodox Church. But to look at what the consequences of this rhetoric is, and thus the consequences on the Lockean separation of church and state, we need to examine what this development has meant for Russian society. As Muravyeva writes in her article on traditional values and modern families: “Traditional values are in need of conservative jurisprudence as a framework for their enforcement” (Muravyeva 2014, 633). Legislation directly affects what citizens can and cannot do and is therefore a way to see if the increased cooperation between the church and the state has influenced the lives of Russian citizens. Thus, this chapter will investigate to what extent legislation regarding women’s reproductive rights and the LGBTQ+ community has gotten more conservative during Putin’s last two terms. This chapter will focus on these two groups, because one of the focus points in the traditional value rhetoric of the church and the state has been the importance of the family. Family here being a union between a man and a woman and with the woman preferably as mother. First, this chapter will highlight legislation regarding reproductive rights and afterwards legislation regarding the LGBTQ+ community.

5.1 Female reproductive rights

According to the ROC the ideal image of a woman as a wife and a mother (ROC 2000, X.1). As such she should bear children. However, Russia has one of the highest abortion rates in the world, although the amount of abortions has been in decline for some years now (see table below).

Table 1: Abortion rate in Russia 2005-2018

	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total abortions (x1000)	1675,7	1186,1	848,2	836,6	779,8	661,0**
Per 1000 women age 15 - 49	42,7	31,7	23,8	23,8	22,3	19,0
Per 100 births	117,4	66,6	44,0	44,6	46,4	41,5
Including mini-abortions*** (x1000)	405,5	316,1	241,0
Per 1000 women age 15 - 49	10,3	8,5	6,8
Number of abortions in primary pregnant women (x1000)*	161,5	98,7	58,4	54,1	45,7	43,4

* Data are provided by organizations of the system of the Ministry of Health of Russia

** Change in the methodology of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation

*** Abortion in the first trimester

Source: Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) (2019), *Healthcare in Russia; statistical compilation*, Russia, Moscow [Author's Translation], Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Zdravoohran-2019.pdf> [Accessed February 25, 2021]

In 2018, Russia reported 41,5 abortions per 100 births compared to 16,4 per 100 births in the Netherlands which has a comparable¹ abortion policy (Inspectie Gezondheidszorg en Jeugd 2019). Since the Soviet Union, Russia's abortion laws have been relatively liberal, with the possibility of having an abortion without limitations before week 12, with social conditions between week 12 and week 22 and for medical reasons after week 22 (Muravyeva 2018, 22). Abortion was (and is) covered by basic medical insurance, which means it is free for Russian women (Ibid. 22). In 2015, a draft bill was introduced to remove abortion from state insurance, but the bill did not make it through parliament (N. 796109-6, 2015). Russia used to be very liberal compared to other countries regarding the reasons women could give to terminate the pregnancy in the

¹ In the Netherlands, just like in Russia, it is possible to get an abortion in all three trimesters. In the first two trimesters, an abortion is allowed for social reasons, in the third trimester only for medical reasons. These social reasons are not clearly defined in the law and in practice women are never refused an abortion in the first or second trimester. Once a woman is 16 days overdue, she legally has to undergo a 5-day reflection period after the first visit to a doctor. Doctors can refuse to perform an abortion, although in practice this does not happen in the Netherlands (Wet afbreking zwangerschap 1981, <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0003396/2020-03-19>).

third trimester. While the law in 1996 listed 13 reasons to terminate the pregnancy in the third trimester, in 2003 these were reduced to four and in 2012 only rape is a reason to terminate the pregnancy in the third trimester (N. 567, 1996 & N. 485, 2003 & N. 98, 2012).

Things changed after 2011. The Russian government introduced a new health law imposed a period of silence and social and psychological consulting for termination up to 12 weeks. Before the procedure is performed, a 48 hour to 7 day 'cooling off' period was introduced depending on the gestational age of the child (N. 323, 2013). This same law makes it possible for doctors to refuse to perform an abortion, if it does not directly threaten the life and health of others (ibid.). After a pregnant woman has gone through a period of silence and has found a willing doctor, the Ministry of Health decided in 2016 that women should also listen to the foetus' heartbeat (if there is one) and look at an image of the embryo during an ultrasound before taking a decision (N-5n, 2016). This decision is recorded in *The procedure for the provision of medical care in the field of "obstetrics and gynaecology (except for the use of assisted reproductive technologies)"*, which specifically states that listening to the heartbeat and looking at the embryo are specifically done to "maintain pregnancy" (В целях сохранения беременности), not to take away doubt or for a medical reason (ibid.). The passing of the law led to much discussion in Russia. Many church and religious organisations were involved in the development of the draft bill, which was much more conservative than the final version (New York Times 2011). The draft law included measurements such as the obligation for married women to get written permission from their husband before being allowed to get an abortion and "...measures to ensure a woman can only be issued drugs for a medical abortion by a doctor with whom she is registered" (Parfitt 2011, 1288). After fierce debate and some small protests in Moscow and St. Petersburg these measures were dropped.

Then in 2013, the Concept on State Family Policy of the Russian Federation was adopted, which aims to set out government policy priorities and preferences regarding reproductive health and the family (Stella and Nartova 2016, 21). This white paper, like the speeches analysed in chapter 4 and the documents of the ROC, emphasize the importance of the family in Russian society and of traditional values. The paper argues that "The priorities of state family policy in the contemporary period are the approval of traditional family values and family lifestyle, revival and preservation of spiritual and moral traditions in family relationships and family education, creating conditions for ensuring family well-being, responsible parenting, increasing the authority of parents in the family and society and maintaining the social stability of each family" (Russian Federation 2014). Just like the ROC, the Concept highlights the importance of the family in society, and the fact that the family functions as a preserver of spiritual and traditional values. The traditional family values mentioned in the quote are elaborated later in the Concept: "The traditional family values, proclaimed by the Concept, include the values of marriage, understood as the union of a man and a woman, based on state registration with civil registration authorities, concluded for the purpose of creating a family, birth and (or)

joint education of children, based on care and respect” (Russian Federation 2014). Again, just like the ROC, the concept emphasizes that marriage is a heterosexual union concluded for the purpose of reproduction. The statement that marriage is a union between man and women had no legal basis when the concept was written. However, as mentioned in chapter 2, the recent amendments to the Russian constitution have now included the mention of marriage as a heterosexual union in the Russian constitution.

To ensure support and compliance to traditional values the Concept aims at “...conducting targeted propaganda in support of traditional values in the mass media on an ongoing basis; family and marriage, morality and ethics; conducting an information campaign to increase the public prestige of a family lifestyle, large families and a large family by creating special television and radio broadcasts, talk shows, newspaper and magazine headings, and other information projects that popularize traditional family values and contributing to the formation of a positive attitude towards marriage, parenting, a dignified attitude towards the older generation and home” (Russian Federation 2014). Contrary to this, the law states that advertisements concerning abortion “...must be accompanied by a warning about the possibility of infertility and other harmful consequences for the health of a woman as a result of artificial termination of pregnancy, and such a warning must be allocated at least ten percent of the advertising space. (...) Advertisements for abortion medical services must not contain a statement about the safety of such medical services” (N. 38-F3, 2006).

An information campaign is a clear example of our third criteria; a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. Although any government on the planet will have information campaigns to influence their citizens, the Russian government is actively leaving out certain parts of the story. This is different from trying to convince a group of people by explaining why one thing is better than the other. Thus, indirectly subduing its citizens to a certain belief system.

Since the 1990's ROC has tried to influence legislation regarding reproductive rights. With the 2011 law as one of their big successes. As mentioned above, in 2015 there was also an attempt to remove abortion from state coverage, a development the ROC promotes. The idea that reproductive rights of women should be limited, is not only based on the idea that the primary role of a woman is to be a mother. The ROC also promotes the idea of “the inviolability of human life from the moment of conception” (ROC 2017). This entails an embryo should have rights such as the right to live, the right to identify (to be called human) and the right to develop (from conception to natural death) (ROC 2017). Even though women might not always have the funds or support for a child or there might be medical need to get an abortion the ROC writes that “She needs to be helped to understand that there is an undeniable benefit in the birth of her child, and the happiness that this child can bring to her and her family outweighs such earthly benefits as comfort and well-being that a woman is afraid of losing as a result of pregnancy and childbirth” (ROC 2017). The draft document's aim was to be turned into a draft bill. This kind of rhetoric (outweighs such earthly benefits as comfort and well-being) would be a clear violation of our first criteria; a government cannot deprive any citizen of their civil

rights based on their values. The Russian constitution writes: “1. Everyone shall have the right to health protection and medical aid. Medical aid in state and municipal health establishments shall be rendered to individuals gratis, at the expense of the corresponding budget, insurance contributions, and other proceeds. (...) 3. The concealment by officials of the facts and circumstances posing a threat to the life and health of people shall entail responsibility according to the federal law” (Russian Federation 1993, Art. 41). Arguing that reproduction and childbirth is more important than the constitutional right to health protection and medical aid is a clear example of a government promoted value system depriving citizens of civil rights.

In November 2017 representatives of the “For life!” movement (an anti-abortion organisation), sent a petition to the Russian presidential administration to accept embryos as humans from the moment of conception, to prohibit abortion completely and to ask for material assistance to pregnant women and families with children (Kommersant 2019). The document was signed by over a million people including Patriarch Kirill, but never made it to parliament (ibid.). Material assistance, however, is already provided by the Russian government in the form of maternity capital. Maternity capital was introduced in 2006 and gives financial assistance to women who have more than one child (Muravyeva 2018, 20). The money cannot be freely spent, as it needs to be spent in order to benefit the child and the family (e.g. housing conditions, education, pension). In a campaign similar to “for life”, “Give me life” run by Svetlana Medvedeva, the wife of former president and prime minister Dmitry Medvedev, organised a temporary abortion stop in several regions in Russia in 2018 (Meduza 2018). However, only 5 regions joined, and back then it was still illegal for doctors to refuse to perform an abortion based on ideology. The fact that these doctors were charged says something about possible societal opposition to pronatalist policies.

Attitudes towards abortion have traditionally been liberal in Russia. In 1998 Levada asked people about their attitudes towards abortion and only 12% answered that they thought it was unacceptable (Levada 2018). In 2018 this number had risen to 35%. Levada noted there is not a big difference in this number between different age groups (ibid.) 35% is still a minority, but it seems attitudes are slowly changing. Izvestia (a newspaper) wrote an article about the survey and suggested the change in attitude might be due to government policy and the ROC (Berishvili 2018). It is also not clear to which extent differences in opinion exist within the government. It is not a homogenous organisation. Yes, the Russian government has pushed conservative legislation regarding abortion, but there are also more pro-choice voices to be heard in the Duma like Oksana Pushkina or Natalya Polonskaya (both from United Russia) (Moscow times 2021).

All in all, it is clear abortion is still a very controversial topic in Russian society. Going from an extremely liberal abortion policy in the Soviet Union to a more conservative one in the span of one generation is difficult to justify to the population. However, while much of the legislation proposed by conservatives and religious

representatives does not make it through parliament, overall legislation regarding reproduction rights has gotten much more conservative in a relatively short period of time. Showing the convergence of the ideology of the church and the state.

5.2 Regulation of sexuality

Homosexuality still suffers from stigma in Russia. In 2013 Levada reported that 35% of respondents thought homosexuality was the result of trauma or mental illness and 43% considered it a bad habit (Levada 2013). And to the question “Do you think the state should stop any public manifestation of homosexuality and its justification?”, 48% answered ‘definitely yes’ and 25% answered ‘rather yes [then no]’ (ibid.). However, this survey was taken around the time that the homosexual propaganda laws (see below) were passed. A more recent survey from 2019 shows a more nuanced image. In 2019 56% of respondents have a slightly negative attitude towards LGBT people, 39% feels neutral (Levada 2019). However, Levada explains that there is a very big difference in responses between age groups and people with LGBT friends: “According to the survey, those Russians who have gays and lesbians among their friends have the best attitude towards LGBT people. Here, a “neutral or positive” attitude is demonstrated by about 80% of respondents - this is noticeably more than in any other group. The youngest Russians under 25 also have a positive attitude (60% of “neutral and positive” answers versus 33% among the oldest) (...) The worst attitude towards LGBT people is the oldest Russians over 65, as well as the poorest citizens and those living outside the cities. Here, about 65% of respondents experience negative feelings (with an average indicator for the sample of 56%).” (Levada 2019).

On the 29th of June 2013, the Russian Federation approved the anti-gay propaganda law by altering article 16.21 in the administrative codex (N. 195-F3, 2001). The article prohibits “the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations to minors (...) aimed at the formation of non-traditional sexual attitudes of minors, the attractiveness of non-traditional sexual relations, a distorted view of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relations, or imposition information about non-traditional sexual relations that arouses interest in such relations” (ibid.). The ‘propaganda’ does not have to be committed in person. As Kondakov explains in his article on the law, there are two ways of ‘promoting non-traditional sexuality’; “Personal presentation (private conversation, teaching, public rally and campaigning. Or, mediated presentation (airing on the Internet or TV, in newspapers and magazines). Moreover, an actual child must not be in fact exposed to the information in question: children in general should be able to access the information for it to be considered “propaganda” (Kondakov 2019, 213-214).

The use of the word ‘non-traditional’, instead of homosexual, in and of its own says something about the view of the government towards sexual minorities. It implies that the (legal) norm in Russia is and should be heterosexuality and whoever deviates from this norm is not ‘normal’. As, Stella and Nartova write in their article on the law, the fact that the law focusses on the exposure of children to same-sex relationships and

does not prohibit homosexuality itself, means it does not contradict laws on discrimination (2016, 28). However, the 'vague' terminology used in the law makes it prone to arbitrary implementation and thus, discrimination. As described above, something is considered propaganda under the law when a child *could* access it. This also means the action does not have to have had any consequences, the act of doing it is already considered illegal. Therefore, it can be considered a censorship law (Kondakov 2019, 214). Since its implementation it has been used to ban gay prides and detain gay right activists (Kondakov 2019, 215; The Moscow Times 2020).

In 2014, Russia also made it illegal for same-sex couples to adopt. The government added the following paragraph to the family code: "Adopters can be adults of both sexes, with the exception of (...) persons who are in an alliance concluded between persons of the same sex, recognized as a marriage and registered in accordance with the legislation of the state in which such marriage is permitted, as well as persons who are citizens of that state and who are not married" (N. 223-F3, 1995). The code also writes that "Persons who are not married to each other cannot jointly adopt the same child." (N. 223-F3, 1995). This makes it difficult for same-sex couple to adopt as well, because Russia does not register same-sex marriages. Although it does recognise marriages that were registered abroad, if they are not between relatives or people who were already registered as married (N. 223-F3, 1995). In 2020 a draft bill was introduced through which same sex marriage would be completely banned, but it was abolished after the first reading (N. 989008-7, 2020). Like with the propaganda law, the adoption law was implemented to protect children from 'non-traditional' sexual behaviour. Implying that same-sex couples would be a bad influence and thus unsuitable as parents.

5.3 Sexual citizenship

Both reproductive rights and rights of sexual minorities fall under 'sexual citizenship'. The concept of citizenship is "...based on the view that being a citizen of a country also means that that country, and its government, should grant its citizens various rights and entitlements. These include the right to be protected from discrimination and the right of equal access to government services and welfare benefits" (Johnson 2015, 728). This is the same idea as the first criteria from the theoretical framework: a government cannot deprive any citizen of their civil rights based on their values.

Sexual citizenship is based on the idea that this division of rights and entitlements has been influenced by sexuality. Sexual citizenship thus includes the sexual right of 1) practice (the right to engage in sexual activity) 2) the right of self-definition (e.g. to identify as homosexual or for women to control reproductive rights) and 3) the rights gained through social institutions (e.g. the right to marry, the right to register as a different gender) (ibid. 728). In Russia (like in most countries) citizenship is still defined from a heterosexual norm.

Although homosexuality is not illegal in Russia, a heteronormative regime like Russia's and the legislation it produces, create a (as Kondakov writes) conservative division between the public and the private (2014, 170). In this division non-heterosexual citizens have to live a double life in which they cannot be who they are in the public sphere. They are not equal before the law and do not have the same rights as other citizens.

A similar thing happens to pregnant women. Making it more difficult to get an abortion has not just legal but also social consequences. The actions of the state can lead to the stigmatization of abortion and thus to the marginalisation of women that have undergone one or who are planning too. Besides this, like with same-sex relations, legislation sets the norm for what is considered 'normal' in society and what is 'deviant'.

5.4 Conclusion

Overall, it is clear legislation regarding family values has gotten more conservative in Russia. Especially during Putin's last terms (2012 to now). Although not directly implemented, draft legislation proposed by the church, and thus the ROC's political agenda, seem to have been partly adopted by the Russian government. At least in terminology. Legislation and policy documents now speak of non-traditional sexuality, traditional family values, spirituality and the importance of the family and reproduction. Terminology directly adopted from the rhetoric of the church. Getting an abortion has become more difficult in the third trimester and more psychologically taxing during the first two trimesters, but it is still legal, covered by the state and widely made use of.

A more notable conservative development has been the adaptation of several policy outlines with very Orthodox views on women, reproduction, and marriage. The idea that the family is at the basis of society, and that this family consists of one woman and one man, who are together for the purpose of conceiving children, has consequences not just for reproductive rights but also for the rights of sexual minorities.

A similar development took place with legislation targeting sexual minorities specifically. Although homosexuality by itself is not illegal, non-heterosexual couples are not allowed to adopt children, to marry or talk about the LGBTQ+ community in public or on the internet. Although it is not illegal to be yourself yet, it has been made significantly more difficult to be who you are in public.

Currently, the conservative turn of legislation in Russia is mostly one of words. By adopting policy documents that emphasize Russian Orthodox values, and by implementing conservative legislation, Russia makes it harder for different values to enter the public sphere. Public calls to completely ban abortion and homosexuality have been largely ignored or shut down so far, but for how long? It is beyond the scope of this thesis to predict the future, but at the moment we can conclude that over the past two terms legislation in Russia adopted a more religious rhetoric.

6. Conclusion

According to Locke religion is primarily a very specific interest through which people unite. It can be institutionalized to a certain extent, but it can only belong to those who agreed to join. Thus, the question this thesis wanted to answer was: is there a Lockean separation of church and state in contemporary Russia? The hypothesis was the following: by turning Russian Orthodox values into values of 'the Russian identity' and by using these values to change legislation that concerns the freedom of individuals (e.g. sexual minorities, women etc.), Russian freedom of conscience gets damaged and the Lockean separation of church and state is weakened.

To answer the research question, the introduction summed up what needed to be established first:

1. What is a secular state?
2. What are the values promoted by the ROC as written in the Social Concept?
3. Are the values promoted by the Russian government directly based on these?
4. Can we find this shared rhetoric in legislation?
5. Has legislation with this rhetoric, had such an effect on society that we can no longer speak of Lockean separation of church and state?

This line of thinking is based on John Locke's definition of a secular state. This theory is useful for a country like Russia, because although there are many interpretations of secularism, their constitution is based on this Western interpretation of secularism. Or at least it was. It has always been easy to say that, at least on paper, Russia is a secular state, but with the recent amendments to the constitution, this has gotten more ambiguous. Now, the constitution includes both the statement that Russia is a secular state and Russia as a country believes in God. But these changes were implemented *after* a series of other changes to federal legislation. Before we go into these changes, let's first have a look at the answer of questions 1 to 3.

6.1 What is a secular state?

There are many different definitions of a secular state, but this thesis uses Locke's definition; a state with not just a separation of institutions, but also one with freedom of conscience based on the idea of tolerance. This policy of tolerance entails that a government 1) cannot deprive any citizen of their civil rights based on their values, 2) they cannot prosecute a citizen based on their values and most importantly of all, 3) a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. These three criteria together then form our theoretical framework for testing whether there is a Lockean separation of church and state in contemporary Russia or not.

Locke did not include atheism as an option in the concept of tolerance. However, since non-religious beliefs are also prominent in modern societies, this thesis assumes values includes both religious and non-religious values.

6.2. What are the values promoted by the ROC as written in the Social Concept?

The values of the ROC are based on a Christian belief in an omnipotent, monotheistic being simply referred to as God. God is responsible for and the creator of the natural state of being, the normal or natural state of affairs, without interference of humans. This 'normal' includes a few assumptions in which we can find the values of the ROC. It includes the idea that the most natural or ancient way of social organisation is the family. The family consists of one man and one woman who are married and are together for reproduction. If this heterosexual union is considered normal or natural, then anything that is different (such as homosexuality) is considered deviant and not acceptable. This also includes interference in the 'natural' process of reproduction i.e. IVF, abortion, contraception. Thus, Orthodox values include, the importance of the family and its function, a more traditional role for women (as a mother), a belief in God and an animosity against that which differs from the 'normal' state of being (e.g. homosexuality, transgenders) or that which actively interferes with this 'normal' state of being (e.g. euthanasia, abortion).

However, the ROC is a very big organization and not a homogeneous one. Neither is 'being Orthodox'. Just because this thesis has highlighted these values from documents of the ROC does not mean all attached to this organisation agree to the same extent with these values.

6.3. Are the values promoted by the Russian government directly based on those of the ROC?

To answer this question, chapter 3 analysed several speeches about Russian domestic and foreign policy. When comparing these speeches, it became clear that the conservative values, which the Russian government promotes, are inspired by the Orthodox ones. Firstly, it was apparent that a connection between religion and historic continuity was made in several speeches. The Christianisation of the Kievan Rus was often mentioned as the moment Russia, as we know it today, was founded. By equalling the Christianisation of Russia with its beginning the idea of an unchanged Christian identity emerges, of continuation: we have always been Christian, Christianity is part of our tradition etc.

Secondly the speeches portrayed the states, who do not base their rule on these conservative values, as immoral. The West was portrayed as immoral, because it is secular and does not respect the same Christian values as Russia. Russia was presented here as the 'defender' of traditional values. These values included a spiritual tradition, family values and the importance of reproduction, as we have seen in documents of the ROC. Reproduction in Russia is not just a religious issue, but also a political one, due to the low birth rate and the possible economic consequences of this. In the speeches that cover this topic, Putin uses phrases like

‘the preservation’ of the Russian population and the importance of the family in society, linking the topic to Orthodox values again.

6.4. Can we find Orthodox values in legislation?

Yes, we can, but this thesis cannot prove that the Russian government was *only* influenced by the Russian Orthodox Church. There are other big religious groups in Russia with similar values. However, given the central role of the ROC, a similarity in rhetoric is an important clue that the ROC played a significant role in enhancing the importance of conservative family values.

I already mentioned the change to the constitution above. The constitution now includes the statements that Russia, as a country, believes in God and that marriage is a heterosexual union. On a smaller scale we can also see the Orthodox values, as described above, in contemporary legislation. In the previous chapter this thesis concluded that, during Putin’s last two terms, legislation regarding reproductive rights and the LGBTQ+ community has become more conservative. It is not so much what is allowed or not allowed that has gotten more conservative, but the discourse that is used in these policy documents and laws has become more religious. Legislation and policy documents now speak of non-traditional sexuality, traditional family values, spirituality and the importance of the family and reproduction. Terminology directly adopted from the rhetoric of the church. In practice it has also gotten more difficult to hear or see an alternative view on abortion or sexuality, due to the ‘propaganda ban’ and the advertisement ban on abortion. All of these measures affect the public sphere, not necessarily by saying ‘it is not allowed’, but by only allowing what is ‘normal’. By disallowing the expression of non-hetero sexuality, or by forcing women who want an abortion to ‘think about it again’, a dominant (conservative) way of thinking becomes overrepresented in the public sphere.

6.5. Has legislation with this rhetoric, had such an effect on society that we can no longer speak of Lockean separation of church and state?

Language use in Russian legislation has gotten more religious, but in practice this religious influence has not led to Russian citizens not being allowed to do things like getting an abortion or being in love with someone of the same sex. However, the kind of laws that are passed, as discussed in the previous paragraph, make it more difficult for alternative norms and values to enter the public sphere. You can still be who you are, but only at home. You can still get an abortion, but not without people legally trying to talk you out of it first. On top of this, comes the acknowledgement of the heterosexual family and the mention of a belief in God in the constitution. This has not led to prosecution or prohibition of much, but it has started to repress norms and values other than the Orthodox ones.

Let’s have a look at our criteria for a Lockean separation of church and state again; a government 1) cannot deprive any citizen of their civil rights based on their values, 2) they cannot prosecute a citizen based

on their values and 3) a government cannot impose a certain belief system on their citizens directly or indirectly. When it comes to LGBTQ+ rights the first criterium is broken. When in a non-heterosexual relationship, Russian citizens are denied the right to marry and to complete freedom of speech (propaganda law). When looking at both reproduction laws and laws about sexuality, the third criterium is also damaged. The discourse used in Russian policy and legislation has become very one-sided. Thus, indirectly imposing a certain belief system on citizens. I use the word 'damaged' because imposing a certain belief system requires a little more than imposing certain laws. You can still practice different religions than Russian Orthodoxy in Russia, there is no full-blown censorship in the country, and this thesis has also not examined the role of Orthodox values in education. Legislation is however, one of the most interventionist ways of imposing certain values in a state. It directly determines what a state allows and does not allow.

That leaves us with the second criterium. There is not enough data to prove that this criterium is broken. It has become increasingly difficult in Russia to be non-heterosexual and it has become slightly more difficult to get an abortion, but you are not prosecuted for either. It is clear that Russia has taken a more conservative turn and more and more rights are infringed upon by new legislation, but Russia has not reached the point yet where we can argue that there is no Lockean separation of church and state. The answer is a little more nuanced than this.

6.6 Is Russia unique?

I mentioned in the introduction that this thesis will only look at the consequences of the increased cooperation between the church and the state in Russia. Not at why these two institutions might have come closer together (for religious, political, or ideological reasons). However, I would like to point out that this development (desecularization, religious nationalism) is not unique to Russia or Christian countries. We have seen it in countries like Poland, Hungary, the US, Indonesia, and Turkey. Russia is however an interesting case study due to its 'strange' historical relationship with religion (from a religious Tsarist empire, to a more atheist Soviet Union and back to religion in contemporary Russia). The importance of religion in the Russian state has varied much throughout the years, and although many Russians identify as Orthodox, this does not mean they go to church every Sunday or follow all traditions during holiday (see sub-chapter 3.2). Being Orthodox has come to stand for more than just religion. Being Orthodox, for some, is now also part of being Russian.

It should be noted that it's not only the ROC that applauds the adaptation of its rhetoric by the government. The Orthodox values presented in this thesis are shared by some Russian Muslims, Buddhists, Jews etc. They too encourage this conservative turn, but they do not have as much influence as the ROC (see the discussion in Fagan 2012, 122-151 & 172-193).

I want to mention that an increased influence of religion on the policy of a state is not unique to Russia. No country is unique. Russia might be interesting, but it has a lot in common with countries around it. I also want

to mention it because an increased influence of religion on policy, does not necessarily need to, but can have serious political consequences for societies. Not necessarily due to the religious aspect, but because of the ideological aspect religion can have. Every country has some kind of idea of what they think is normal or allowed within its borders, but too strong of a belief of what is 'normal' can lead to exclusion.

6.7 Final words

This thesis cannot argue there is no Lockean separation of church and state in Russian anymore. However, it can also not be said that this separation is still as clear as it once was. Instead an increased cooperation between church and state has led to the dilution of the separation between the religious and the secular. In a way the Russian government has started using the Orthodox values of the church as a political tool to suppress those who think differently or are critical of the government.

This thesis was written in 2021. The last two years have been extremely eventful when it comes to the implementation of suppressive legislation in Russia. Covid-19 provided a welcome distraction for the government to push all kinds of oppressive legislation and to repress opposition. The poisoning and arrest of main opposition candidate Aleksey Navalny, the labelling of opposition organisations as extremist, police violence during peaceful demonstrations. The adoption of conservative discourse from the ROC is but one small step in a series of political tools used to solidify the power of the Russian government. An adaptation of Orthodox rhetoric might not yet mean the disappearance of the separation of the church and state, but it certainly has had societal and political consequences already.

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Appendix

1. Keywords overview chapter 4

Putin Speech	Identity	Orthodox	Value(s)	Spiritual	National	Tradition
FA 2012	2	0	4	5	45	12
FA 2013	4	0	13	2	32	10
FA 2014	2	0	4	3	35	4
FA 2015	0	0	3	0	17	4
FA 2016	0	0	8	0	25	3
FA 2018	3	0	9	1	26	1
FA 2019	1	0	5	0	30	2
FA 2020	0	0	6	0	27	2
UN 2015	0	0	2	1	12	0
UN 2020	0	0	1	0	11	1
Valdai 2013	19	1	10	8	29	8
Valdai 2014	0	0	2	0	26	3
Valdai 2015	0	0	5	0	22	3
Valdai 2016	3	0	0	0	16	0
Valdai 2017	1	0	3	0	21	5
Valdai 2019	1	0	3	1	14	14
Valdai 2020	0	0	3	1	27	5

The speeches highlighted are the ones selected to be studied more in depth for this thesis.