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Orthodox Internationalism: State and Church in Modern Russia and Ethiopia

TOBIAS RUPPRECHT

University of Exeter

Scholars of the constructivist school of international relations have long acknowledged that religion shapes global politics in multiple ways. Secular nationalism failed in the 1960s and is now seen as an alien, European concept in much of the postcolonial world. The ensuing revival of ethno-religious conflicts, smoldering since the 1970s and increasingly apparent after 1989, has budged many a former champion of Westphalian views of international order. To most of today's realists, too, religious traditions have proven to alter the patterns of political decision-making. Religious beliefs can shape world-views and constrain leaders, and they can be a source of political legitimacy. Religion also matters to foreign policy in its institutionalized form: time and again, states have harnessed churches, and constituents' cross-border religious loyalties and identities, to their interests in the international arena.[1]

Religion has been a driving force of globalization, the basso continuo of international relations from the late nineteenth century onward.[2] Historical sociology long suggested that the modern world underwent a great shift toward secularization, but in fact, it was shaped by complex patterns of ecclesial reform and global homogenization of religious groups. The age of nationalism was

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[1] Nukhet Sandal and Jonathan Fox, *Religion in International Relations Theory: Interactions and Possibilities* (London: Routledge, 2013); Jack Snyder, ed., *Religion and International Relations Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[2] Modern globalization is defined here as the expansion of global commerce, communication, and cultural exchange onward from the late nineteenth century. This definition is in line with much recent scholarship, which speaks of two waves of modern globalization: one from the age of European imperialism, interrupted by the Great Depression and the ensuing nationalist isolationism, and another from the 1970s. For an overview of this scholarship, see James Mark and Tobias Rupprecht, "The Socialist Camp in Global History: From Absentee to Victim to Co-Producer," in Matthias Middell, ed., *The Practice of Global History* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, forthcoming 2018).

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also a time when new forms of transnational identity and group constitution were formed through spiritual beliefs. Religion spawned intellectual debates and violent rebellions, stratified societies, shaped foreign and domestic policies, and gave meaning to the individual lives of the overwhelming majority of the world's population.[3] Acknowledging religion's key role in modern global history, and complementing the theoretical approaches of scholars of international relations, many recent historiographical assessments have highlighted the transnational interplay of religion and politics, and churches and states. They have engaged topics ranging from global Islamic revival groups to new forms taken by Hinduism and Buddhism in their confrontations with Western imperialism and Protestant and Catholic missionizing in Africa and Asia.[4]

Scholars of another transnational religious community, Orthodox Christianity, have been less global in their outlook, and most have sustained a more inward-looking perspective.[5] Studies of pan-Orthodoxy have tended to focus on the Russian Orthodox Church in Europe.[6] While several recent studies have examined how Moscow has employed Islam in its foreign policy, the role of Orthodoxy in its global activities remains understudied.[7]

[3] Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: C. H. Beck, 2009), 1239–78; Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 326–64.

[4] For example, Timothy S. Dobe and Hindu Christian Faqir, *Modern Monks, Global Christianity, and Indian Sainthood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Robert Woodberry, "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 2 (2012): 244–74; Martin Marty, *The Christian World: A Global History* (New York: Random House, 2007); Kevin Ward, *A History of Global Anglicanism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Nazeer Ahmed, *Islam in Global History: From the Death of Prophet Muhammed to the First World War* (Concord: American Institute of Islamic History and Culture, 2000); Jonathan S. Walters, *Finding Buddhists in Global History: Essays on Global and Comparative History* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1998).

[5] Vasilios N. Makrides, "Why Are Orthodox Churches Particularly Prone to Nationalization and Even to Nationalism?," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 3 (2013): 325–52; Martin Schulze Wessel, ed., *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006); Tataiana Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* (London: Routledge, 2002); Dimitry Pospielovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998). An exception, with a contemporary rather than historical outlook, is Alexander Agadjanian, ed., *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the 21st Century* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2006).

[6] Nadežda Beljakova, "Kontrolle, Kooptation, Kooperation: Sowjetstaat und Orthodoxe Kirche," *Osteuropa* 9 (2009): 113–31; Denis Vovchenko, "Modernizing Orthodoxy: Russia and the Christian East 1856–1914," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3 (2012), 295–317; Nikolay Mitrokhin, *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov': Sovremennoe Sostojanie i Aktual'nye Problemy* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006); Mikhail Shkarovskij, *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov' v XX veke* (Moskva: Lepta, 2010), 283–337. The only exception comes from theologians of the (Ethiopian) Orthodox Church: Joachim Persoon, *Spirituality, Power and Revolution: Contemporary Monasticism in Communist Ethiopia, with an Overview of the Orthodox Church during Communism by Vásclav Ježek* (Volos: Volos Academy for Theological Studies, 2014).

[7] For the Soviet Union's use of Islam in foreign policy, see Eileen Kane, *Russian Hajj: Empire and Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet*

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This article will discuss the global political relevance of the Orthodox churches and Orthodox world-views through an examination of Russia and Ethiopia over the *longue durée*. It assesses the contacts between the two traditionally Orthodox empires from the late nineteenth century until the end of the Cold War. Religion-inspired visions of global order, it will be argued, proved surprisingly tenacious even while geopolitical and ideological constellations changed. Drawing on archival documentation from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and personal interviews with Ethiopian Orthodox priests, this article will also examine the transfer of ideas and concepts between the two states and discuss the particular political role Orthodoxy played in this process. Both churches were forced to submit to state interests domestically, but also occasionally collaborated with their ideological enemies to pursue their own goals in the international arena. The churches' roles in domestic and foreign policy were strikingly similar in Russia and in Ethiopia, irrespective of the ideological orientation of different governments over time. This suggests, first, that similar Orthodox traditions and world-views impinged on political decision-making in both empires, and second, that secular regimes exchanged ideas about coopting the church.

During the European scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century, the Russian Empire's Orthodox ruling elite developed a special interest in the Ethiopian Empire. Its proximity to the Red Sea and the Middle East, and its position between northern and southeast Africa, made it a strategic asset in the geopolitical Great Game against the British Empire. Ethiopia was the only African society that, with some help from Russia, managed to stave off Western colonizers. The Russian clergy and many believers at that time developed a fascination and sense of solidarity with people they saw as their Orthodox brethren in the distant Horn of Africa. Ethiopia retained a special position in Moscow's perception of the world after the takeover of the Bolsheviks, and especially so as the Soviet Union became increasingly active in the Third World in the wake of Stalin's death and the 1955 Bandung Conference.

Positive reinterpretations of and inspirations from Russian religious and imperial history helped the Soviet state justify these expensive global activities vis-à-vis its own population. When Ethiopia came under communist rule in the 1970s, the Soviet leadership used the Russian Orthodox Church as a gateway into the country, which it propped up as Moscow's closest ally in Africa. What is called here "Orthodox internationalism" became an integral part of the numerous entanglements between the Second and Third Worlds of the Cold War, entanglements that historians of the socialist world and scholars of

Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), esp. 175–78, 584–89.

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globalization have recently rediscovered.[8] Much of this literature has mostly ignored religion. There are occasional references to the role of the Catholic Church in the Cold War, and to the rise of radical Islam, which broke up the dualism of the conflict and became a principal ideological adversary of both the West and the East. The place of the Russian Orthodox Church in Soviet foreign policy has interested only a handful of scholars who studied Eastern European secret service activities in the ecumenical movement.[9]

Orthodoxy's role in modern global politics in fact went far beyond Cold War espionage. The entangled history of modern Russia and Ethiopia elucidates how Orthodoxy, like other institutionalized religions, was a source of cross-border identity, legitimized political decision-making, and was a force for mobilizing and controlling populations. This was true even in states that repressed believers and considered expressions of spirituality to be backwards. Looking at institutionalized religion as engine of global integration underscores that the increasing interconnectedness of the modern world, from its very beginning, encompassed not only Western(-dominated) regions but also alternative globalizing processes perceived as counter-models to Western liberal modernity.[10]

RUSSIA AND ETHIOPIA AROUND 1900

Religious revivals took place on a global scale in the nineteenth century, including in the Russian and Ethiopian empires. Elites combined spiritual beliefs with their projects of nationalism and envisioned homogenous religions that would embody the national essence. Slavophiles in Russia linked anti-Western and anti-materialist Orthodox traditions with a romantic nationalism; Coptic priests in Ethiopia collected and systematized old religious texts and cast the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as the embodiment of the emerging Ethiopian nation. At the same time, clerics and believers profited from new, modern means of travel and communication,[11] and contacts between the two distant Christian cultures intensified. That both churches are called "Orthodox" (*pravoslavnyj* in Russian; *aortodoks* in Amharic/Ge'ez), along with certain similarities in the rites and appearances of their respective priests, helped those who sought to establish links obscure the significant doctrinal differences between the two. The Ethiopian church, autocephalous only beginning in the 1950s,

[8] Mark and Rupprecht, "Socialist Camp."

[9] Peter Morée, "Allies against the Imperial West: Josef L. Hromádka, the Ecumenical Movement, and the Internationalization of the Eastern Bloc since the 1950s," in Katharina Kunter and Christian Albers, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen: Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen und die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 169–88; Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 428.

[10] Vovchenko, "Modernizing Orthodoxy," 317.

[11] Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 349.

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actually belongs to the Oriental Orthodox churches that had split from European Christianity half a millennium before the Russian church was even founded.

The Russian Orthodox Church had less of a foreign missionary history than did the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches, but it did have a long tradition of following the political power as the Russian Empire expanded through Asia and North America. In the nineteenth century, the Russian Holy Synod took great interest in the Holy Land and Mount Athos. It was also active in building Orthodox churches as symbols of Russian power in European parts of the empire such as Poland, and chapels for Russians living or traveling in Western Europe and the United States. During the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the Tsar and the Russian Orthodox Church came to style themselves as the defenders of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans (Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Rumania), Syria, and Egypt.[12] This pan-Orthodoxy, a concept that transcended the ethnically defined pan-Slavism, has been argued to have been the first modern attempt to "decentre both in theory and practice the mainstream Western European modernity and divest it of its self-proclaimed universal progressivist mission."[13] Some Russian clerics and pundits embraced this new, all-encompassing Eastern Orthodox culture in hopes of creating a counterweight to Romano-Germanic Europe and, as one Slavophile put it, to "stop Jewish materialism, the ideas of equalizing prosperity, and international mixing."[14]

These explicitly anti-Western ideas shaped the enthusiastic perception of what were now seen as exotic brothers in the faith in East Africa surrounded by Western European colonial powers. Ethiopia was the only country in Africa with a tradition of contacts with Russia, dating back to fourteenth-century encounters between monks in Jerusalem, the fifteenth-century Russian merchant Afanassie Nikitin's stay in Ethiopia, and Peter the Great's failed attempts to establish a permanent Russian presence in the Horn of Africa.[15] But contacts intensified only in the late nineteenth century, against the backdrop of pan-Orthodoxy. From the beginning, these contacts were based on a mix of religious and geopolitical interests. The monk Porfirij Uspensky, whom the Holy Synod had sent to Jerusalem in the 1850s on a secret service mission

[12] Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999); Yurij Slezkine, "Savage Christians or Unorthodox Russians? The Missionary Dilemma in Siberia," in Galya Diment, ed., *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 15–31.

[13] Vovchenko, "Modernizing Orthodoxy," 298.

[14] A. Burnakin, *O sudbakh slavianofilstva* (Petrograd: Otečestvennaja Tip., 1916), 11–14, quoted in Vovchenko, "Modernizing Orthodoxy," 315.

[15] Allison Blakely, "African Imprints on Russia: An Historical Overview," in Maxim Matusevich, ed., *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007, 37–59).

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to strengthen Russian influence in the Middle East, recommended the two countries collaborate. Ethiopians, he believed, "were qualified for the friendship of Russia by virtue of their long history, their distinguished culture and religion, their unified political status, and above all their struggle with the Mohammedans."[16] Uspensky's writings on a possible Russian role in Ethiopia[17] found interest more within the Russian military than with theologians. His plans for Ethiopia laid the foundation for a Russian fascination with Ethiopia in the last years of the Russian Empire, but at the time they were written both the church and the state considered them unrealistic. The Ethiopian Emperor Yohannis IV wrote to the Tsar in the 1870s invoking the Orthodox ties and asking for Russian assistance in his struggle against Ottoman Egypt, but his letters remained unanswered.[18]

Several individual Russian adventurers did go to Ethiopia in the late nineteenth century. The Cossack Nikolai Ashinov, on his first trip in 1885, had received the Ethiopian emperor's permission to build a Russian Orthodox monastery and the colony "New Moscow" in exchange for Russian arms. Four years later, he set off from Odessa, cheered by an enthusiastic crowd of twenty thousand spectators, and sailed to the Eritrean port of Massawa. The Italian colonial administration forbade the settler families from disembarking there, so Ashinov landed instead at Sagallou in Djibouti, where he was received by a group of Ethiopian monks and melodramatically laid Ethiopia at the feet of Tsar Alexander III. This first Russian settlement in Africa was short-lived: French authorities soon rounded up the group and deported them back to Russia, where patriotic Russians celebrated Ashinov's "feat," but authorities denied any official involvement.

A second Russian mission, in 1889, was smaller in scale, but this time official. The Metropolitan of Kiev sent a delegation to Ethiopia that included

[16] Edward Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa before World War II* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1974), 10–12.

[17] Konstantin (Porfirij) Uspenskij, *Vostok christianskij: Bogosluzhenie abissincev* (Kiev, Izdatel'stvo Kievskoj duchovnoj akademii, 1869); *Abissincy, ich tserkov' i religioznye obryady* (Kiev, Izdatel'stvo Kievskoj duchovnoj akademii, 1866).

[18] The Italian fascist army destroyed most of Ethiopian political archives in the 1930s; documentation on earlier periods is accordingly scant. The section here is based on the following, mostly older, scholarly assessments: Andrej Khrenkov, *Rossisko-efiopskie otnoshenija v XIX–nachale XXv* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo RAN, 1998); Patrick Joseph Rollins, Russia's Ethiopian Adventure 1888–1905 (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1967); Czeslaw Jésman, *The Russians in Ethiopia: An Essay in Futility* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958); Richard Seltzer, *The Name of Hero* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1981) (a novel based on the life on Bulatovich); Carlo Zaghi, *I Russi in Etiopia* (Napoli: Guida Editori, 1972); Petr Krasnov, *Kazaki v Abissinii: Dnevnik nachal'nika konvoja Rossiskoj Imperatorskoj Missii v Abissinii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Zacharov 2013 [1898]); Ju. Elec, *Imperator Menelik i vojna ego s Italiej: Po dokumentam i pokhodnym dnevnikam* (Sankt-Peterburg: N. S. Leont'eva, 1898); F. Volgin, *V strane chernykh khristian* (Sankt-Peterburg: Tip P. P. Sojkina, 1895); Nicolai Ascinoff, *La Spedizione Ascinoff nel Mar Rosso* (Roma: Min. Esteri, 1887); Vasilij Bolotov, "Neskolko stranits iz tserkovnoj istorii Efiopii: K voprosu o soedinenii abissin s pravoslavnoj tserkovju," *Khristianskoe Chtienie* 3–4 (1888): 450–69.

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the Russian diplomat Viktor Mashkov, who offered the Tsar's military aid to the new emperor, Menelik II. Mashkov hoped to gain a concession for a Russian harbor in the Red Sea. He went again to Ethiopia in 1891, officially with a "geographical mission," but also with a boatload of weapons for the Ethiopian struggle against Italy. As it had throughout Russian history, the Russian Orthodox Church followed suit and sent a mission led by Alexander Eliseev and the priest Pater Efrem, with the goal of exploring possibilities of collaboration or even a "re"-unification of the churches. Menelik II, the founder of modern Ethiopia, showed no interest at all in these ecclesiastical issues and was only concerned with gaining support against imperialist Italy.

In Eliseev's entourage was another adventurer, the Kuban Cossack Nikolaj Leontev, who upon return catalyzed Russian interest in Ethiopia. With no official mission to do so, he brought back to Russia an Ethiopian diplomatic delegation and presented them to the Tsar. He publicized the riches and ostensible possibilities of Ethiopia, sought settlers and investors, and promoted his vision of a globally engaged Russia to merchants and religious leaders in the Russian capital. Leontev's goals were to establish a mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ethiopia and to help the local elite defend itself against Italian colonialism. He returned to Africa with another large quantity of rifles, but arrived just after the Ethiopians had beaten the Italians at Adwa. Together with a Russian Red Cross mission that same year to treat those wounded in battle, Russian weapons and military advisors strengthened the Ethiopian army and contributed to a massive enlargement of the empire in the following years. Leontev himself, now calling himself "Count Abbay" ("of the Blue Nile"), stayed at the Ethiopian court, where he annoyed the staff and the emperor with his disrespectful behavior. It was probably to get rid of Leontev that Menelik made him governor of the southwestern provinces and later, because of his continuous, unauthorized military campaigns there, expelled him from the country entirely.

Several other Russian officers and scientists went to Ethiopia on semi-official missions around 1900, some of them dubious adventurers, some serious scientists, others pious Christians. Ethiopia had both "spiritual appeal and strategic value"[19] for imperial Russia, and this mix of religious and military aspects was often evident in individuals who went there: The Russian officer Evgenij Senigov stayed in Ethiopia and became a painter of African landscapes. With the Russian Red Cross mission was Alexander Bulatovich, a high-ranking army officer, who became a monk and, under the name of Ieroskhimonokh Antonij, founded the heretic *imiaslavie* movement. He tried to establish a Russian Orthodox monastery on an island in Lake Khoroshal to be financed by

[19] Maxim Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe: Ideology and Pragmatism in Nigerian-Soviet Relations, 1960–1991* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2003), 16–18.

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Russian public charity, but failed to secure a definitive promise of a concession for a plot of land and eventually moved to Mount Athos in Greece.

Other visitors stayed, and the Armenian architecture of the newly founded Ethiopian imperial capital Addis Abeba reminds visitors to this day of the immigration from the Caucasus, as does Addis' oldest pharmacy, founded by the Georgian Paul Merab (Petre Merabishvili) in 1910. The Cossack Alexej Suchkov, dispatched to Ethiopia from 1903 to 1907, back in Russia kept longing for Africa and returned in 1909. He brought animals to the Moscow Zoo and other memorabilia to his native Novocherkassk. A huge collection of Ethiopian artefacts was brought to Russia by these and other travelers around 1900 and spurred a fascination with Africa among the broader population (it survives to this day in the St. Petersburg Kunstkammer). Nikolaj Gumilev, a celebrated poet and father of the future Eurasianist mastermind Lev Gumilev, traveled to Ethiopia twice and wrote gushing, exoticist poems about Africa. In this context, the myth was created that the national poet Alexander Pushkin had Ethiopian roots, while in fact his great grandfather Hannibal had come as a slave boy from the southern shores of Lake Chad and been gifted to the Tsar by the Ottoman Sultan.[20]

Emperor Menelik II, judging from what the scant sources on this period allow us to reconstruct, harbored less romantic feelings about the Russians. He needed modern technology and knowledge to preserve Ethiopian independence, and he liked Russia for other pragmatic reasons: as a source of weapons, because Russia seemed not to partake in the European conquest of Africa, and because Russia was an absolute monarchy. When he decided to send young Ethiopians abroad to study, he therefore thought Russia more suitable than republican France, and the first batch of students arrived in St. Petersburg shortly before the century's turn. Among them was Takla Hawariat, who, after many years as a student of military science and engineering in Russia, became Ethiopia's minister of finance, drafted Ethiopia's first constitution, and spoke for the country before the League of Nations after the Italian aggression of the 1930s.[21]

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE SOVIET STATE

Remnants of this sense of solidarity with Ethiopia, and more broadly anti-Western and anti-materialist Orthodox traditions, survived the Russian Revolution. The Soviet Union was the only major power to support Ethiopia in the League of Nations during Mussolini's 1935 invasion, and it presented itself to a domestic audience as Ethiopia's selfless, anti-imperialist ally in the 1936 feature film *Abyssinia*. But the presence of many Russian white émigrés as

[20] Catherine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, Nicole Svobodny, and Ludmilla Trigos, *Under the Sky of My Africa: Alexander Pushkin and Blackness* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006).
[21] Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855–1991* (London: James Currey, 2001), 106.

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influential advisors at the court in Addis impaired closer contacts for the time being, and diplomatic relations were only established in 1943. Most Russians, after the cataclysms of world war, revolution, civil war, and Stalinist state terror, had much else to worry about. The Russian Orthodox Church was entirely traumatized after the mass murders of priests and mass destruction of churches. Patriarch Tikhon had been arrested. The movement of the *obnovlentsy* ("Renewers" or "Living Church"), referring to attempts to accommodate socialism and Christianity from the late nineteenth century, had filled the gaps in church ranks since 1922, but though it soon degenerated into an organ assisting the Soviet state in destroying the church, its own representatives, too, were overrun by a new wave of anti-religious terror in the 1930s. It did not help that church representatives no longer spoke out publically against communist rule.[22] By the end of the decade, the centuries-old Russian Orthodox Church was almost eliminated from Russian territory, and ironically, it was another war that saved its very existence.[23]

When the Red Army invaded large parts of Eastern Europe after the 1939 agreement with Hitler, a sticks and carrots approach was used to suppress any resistance from the local populations. The sticks were massive terror campaigns, mass murder, and deportation; the carrot was the toleration of the Orthodox churches. The remaining Russian Orthodox clergy in the Soviet Union was now used to incorporate different Orthodox churches into the Russian church. This ensured Soviet control over Orthodox church-goers in the newly annexed territories in Eastern Europe, from Estonia to Eastern Poland to Moldova. The Russian church was given an even greater role when the Wehrmacht attacked the Soviet Union just under two years later. To mobilize a devastated Russian population against the attacking enemy, Stalin successfully employed patriotic (rather than Communist) rhetoric and made church representatives call on the faithful to rise to the fatherland's defense. Many churches, and also the Moscow Theological Academy, were allowed to re-open. In September 1943, Stalin summoned Metropolitan Sergij and two of his surviving bishops to the Kremlin and ordered them to reorganize the structure of the Russian Orthodox Church. To control the activities of the church, a "Council for Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church under the Soviet Government" was founded under the leadership of a high-ranking member of the secret services.[24]

[22] Metropolitan Sergij told *Izvestia* in a February 1930 interview, "As before, there is no persecution of believers in the USSR … only against actions against the government."

[23] Mikhail Shkarovskij, *Obnovlencheskoe dvizhenie v Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi XX veka* (Sankt-Peterburg: Nestor, 1999); Edward Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy and Revolution, 1905–1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

[24] Mikhail Shkarovskij, *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov' pri Staline i Khrushcheve: Gosudarstvenno-tserkovnye otnoshenija v SSSR v 1939–1964 godakh* (Moskva: Krutintskoe Patriarshee podvor'e, 1999), 195–216.

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To some degree, the Moscow Patriarchate was also allowed to resume contacts with Christians abroad, fulfilling a diplomatic task for the Soviet state under attack. Church dignitaries were sent on several visits abroad, to Bulgaria, Iran, Palestine, Egypt, and Antioch. From the church's perspective, these trips were to renew and strengthen ties among Orthodox ecclesiastical communities. For Stalin, this continuation of Russia's role as protector of Orthodox Christians was a geopolitical asset, a foot in the door to these countries. After the war, the autocephalous church in Poland and the Ukrainian Unified Church, whose forty-six bishops were all arrested, were forcefully incorporated within the Russian church.[25] Mortal ideological enemies though they were, the Soviet state and the Russian Orthodox Church now shared common interests: the Kremlin needed the church to exert Soviet authority on the ground in its new and reconquered Eastern European territories. The church could pursue what it considered a reintegration of temporarily separated brothers-in-the-faith. In Western Ukraine, this was in fact an attempt to destroy a regional church and reorient its adherents away from Rome toward Moscow.[26]

In 1946, a Department for External Affairs was established within the Patriarchate of Moscow. It oversaw the exploitation of the church as an instrument of Soviet foreign propaganda and provided an additional permanent diplomatic channel to countries with Orthodox populations, primarily the future NATO member Greece and Middle Eastern countries, all in the midst of civil wars with geopolitical relevance. In a May 1946 speech, the former general secretary of the Comintern, Georgi Dimitrov, mapped out plans to turn Moscow, the supposed ancient Third Rome and now capital of world communism, into a kind of Orthodox Vatican. During the celebration of the millennial anniversary of St. John at the Bulgarian Rila Monastery, Dimitrov explained to believers the framework within which the church could continue to exist in a communist society, and presented the Russian Orthodox Church as a role model that they should emulate.[27] The leaders of the Russian and Bulgarian Orthodoxy dutifully submitted to this Stalinization of their churches. As proof of their loyalty to Stalin, they offered their international contacts to the service of the state and immediately condemned the foundation of the ecumenical WCC when they were told to do so in 1948. Yet outside the reach of the Red Army, no churches showed particular interest in a communist-led Orthodox Vatican, presumably because they were all-too-aware of the Soviet anti-religious massacres of the 1920s.

[25] Paul Anderson, "The Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia," *Foreign Affairs* 2 (1961): 299–311.
[26] Shkarovskij, *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja*, 284; Gerd Stricker, *Religion in Russland: Darstellung und Daten zu Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1993).
[27] Momchil Metodiev, *Between Faith and Compromise: The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Communist State (1944–1989)* (Sofia: Institute for Studies of the Recent Past/Ciela, 2010).

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After Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet leadership changed tactics. The new party boss, Nikita Khrushchev, ended the extreme isolationism of the Soviet Union and reached out to many countries of the emerging Non-Aligned Movement. The closest links were initially established with countries with significant Orthodox populations, underlining once more the tenacity of religion-inspired visions of world order: Yugoslavia (with its Serbian Orthodox elite), India (with its small but influential Syrian Orthodox minority), Syria and Egypt (with large Oriental/Coptic Orthodox minorities), and later also the Palestinian Liberation Organization (dominated by Orthodox Christians in its early days). Within the USSR under Khrushchev, a renewed anti-religion campaign harassed believers of all denominations in the 1950s and 1960s, but less so the church's upper institutional hierarchy. The leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church, in preemptive obedience, now even occasionally repressed dissenting voices from within its own ranks. Internationally, the Soviet state used the Orthodox Church as an element of Soviet foreign policy. In Eastern Europe, Orthodoxy was to diminish the influence of the Catholic Church. In Third World countries, contacts between the clergies were used to gain influence in national politics.[28]

The Patriarchate's Department for External Affairs was essentially a dependency of the KGB and a mouthpiece for the Kremlin's "struggle for peace," which justified every political turn and military invasion of the Soviet Union throughout its existence.[29] In the late 1950s, Alexej Ridiger, later to be the first post-Soviet patriarch, was approached by the secret services and, according to several sources, was prepared for international tasks.[30] In line with a new Soviet foreign policy that sought alliances with non-communist countries outside the West, and membership in international organizations, the stance toward the WCC changed. When ordered to do so by state authorities, the Russian Orthodox Church dutifully first sent an observer, Vitaly Borovoy, to Geneva in 1959, and two years later joined the WCC as a full-fledged member. Being represented in this international religious organization was a two-edged sword for the Russian Orthodox Church: fulfilling a role in Soviet foreign policy helped ensure the church's survival in an anti-clerical totalitarian state. The ensuing international contacts also gave Russian priests access to modern theological literature, from which they had been barred for decades. Yet the Russian church representatives paid a political price for

[28] Beljakova, "Kontrolle," 116.

[29] Stricker, *Religion in Russland*, 97.

[30] Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (Eastbourne: Gardners Books, 2000); "Russian Patriarch 'was KGB spy': James Meek in Tallinn on a Secret Document that May Prove Alexy II's Role as a Soviet Agent," *Guardian*, 12 Feb. 1999. It should be noted that all consecrated bishops in the USSR had to have some form of working relationship with the secret police, and the extent of Ridiger's collaboration with the KGB remains a disputed issue.

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these contacts, and for the rest of the Cold War period they greatly helped to stifle ecumenical movement criticisms of communist states.[31]

THE SOVIET UNION AND ETHIOPIA UNDER HAILE SELASSIE

Moscow's stance toward Ethiopia in the 1950s and 1960s reflected a broader trend in Soviet Third World policies after Stalin. Non-Western heads of state were now seen as potential anti-imperialist allies, irrespective of their political orientation. The absolute monarch Haile Selassie had declared himself sacral and a direct descendent of Solomon. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church officially owned roughly one-third of the land in Ethiopia and showed little interest in the physical wellbeing of its dirt-poor followers. None of this kept the Soviets from maintaining amicable relations with the old Russian partner at the Horn of Africa. They invited Haile Selassie to pay a much-publicized visit to the USSR in 1956, decorated him with one of the highest Soviet military honors, the order of Suvorov, arranged cultural exchanges, and granted credit to the enormous sum of 400 million roubles.[32] Sovinformbjuro, the Soviet international propaganda agency, began broadcasting a Radio Moscow program in Amharic and sent translated Russian literature to the Horn of Africa. Soviet teachers established a polytechnical college in Bahar Dar and Soviet engineers built an oil refinery in Assab.[33]

In these respects, Ethiopia received somewhat similar treatment with regard to Soviet development aid as did many other African countries in the 1960s, albeit more generous. What made Ethiopia special, however, was the Russian imperial tradition of good relations with its Orthodox elite, its common religion-based anti-Westernism and anti-materialism, and its similar understanding of the role of the church toward the state based on claims about the Byzantine caesaropapist tradition. As the Ethiopian Patriarch Tewophilos declared in 1969, "There is no state without the church and no church without the state. In Ethiopia church and state are one and the same."[34] The Soviet state thus involved the Orthodox churches in its relations with Ethiopia more than it did elsewhere in the Third World. Tewophilos was invited to the Soviet Union in 1959, and high-ranking Russian Orthodox delegations were sent to Ethiopia in 1959, 1962, 1966, and 1969. The WCC, which the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had belonged to since its foundation in 1948, offered a platform through which Russian and Ethiopian clergy could communicate directly.

[31] Hedwig Richter, "Der Protestantismus und das linksrevolutionäre Pathos," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 3 (2010): 408–36, 417.

[32] "Reform Breeze Stirs in Ethiopia: Swirls about Selassie's Palace," *New York Times*, 11 Aug. 1961.

[33] Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 228.

[34] Shkarovskij, *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja*, 309; Ovind Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: A Study of Church and Politics with Special Reference to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, 1974–1985* (Stavanger: Misjonshogskolens Forlag, 1996), 33.

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Most of this communication was about ecclesiastical questions: there were attempts to reach a rapprochement of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches toward a common communion, a movement that dated back to the late nineteenth century and was revived at a series of international conferences in Aarhus, Bristol, and Geneva in the 1960s. On these occasions, representatives of the Russian and Ethiopian Orthodox churches also arranged for Ethiopian students to be educated in theology in the USSR. In the aftermath of a January 1971 Central Committee meeting of the WCC in Addis, an unofficial meeting between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches took place at which the Russian representatives met Haile Selassie and a number of Ethiopian bishops. In 1974, the Russian Patriarch Pimen visited Ethiopia in order, according to *Izvestia*, "to promote a further strengthening of friendly relations between Ethiopia and the Soviet Union."[35]

The invitation of students to the USSR was directly organized and financed by the Russian Orthodox Church. The Leningrad Metropolitan Nikodim (Rozov), a close collaborator with the KGB and later president of the WCC, had initiated this program after his visit to Ethiopia. Former Ethiopian students of theology remember that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, during the later reign of Haile Selassie, sent some twenty-five of them to study in the motherland of scientific socialism in two seminars in Leningrad and in Zagorsk (which are today again called "St. Petersburg" and "Sergiyev Posad"). For the Russian church, independently inviting the African students was also a way to show their support for Soviet foreign policy, thus ensuring the continued existence of its endangered seminaries and academies. These students recalled that there was no visible involvement of either the Soviet or the Ethiopian state in the selections for and funding of this program. One remembered that during his time in the Soviet Union there was "no political indoctrination at all," and he described his experiences with Soviet authorities and citizens as "utterly positive." Returning to Ethiopia seems to have been no problem either; the student pursued a successful career in the church administration there. Many of the other students also found success back home, among them Aba Habte Selassie, who after his return from Leningrad became head of the foreign relations department of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.[36]

MIRRORING RUSSIA: THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE COMMUNIST DERGUE REGIME

Haile Selassie, the former Ras Tafari, the King of Kings of Ethiopia, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, was brought down by a mass revolt in 1974. He had ignored yet another massive famine in the country, in

[35] Shkarovskij, *Obnovlencheskoe*, 317; *Izvestia*, 26 Jan. 1974.
[36] Author's interview with Abune Timotios, Dean of Theological College Holy Trinity, student of theology in the Soviet Union from 1966 to 1974, Addis Abeba, 11 July 2014.

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which two hundred thousand Ethiopians perished. Urban elites and students, many of whom had returned from Europe and the United States with Marxist ideas, took to the streets. Then the military took over gradually. A Provisional Military Administrative Council, the Dergue, assumed full power in September, led by Tafari Benti, an Orthodox believer, initially supported by the United States.[37] Similar to events in Russia after the February 1917 ousting of the Tsar, the new rulers, a multifarious bunch that included liberals, pious conservatives, and revolutionary Communists, announced wide-ranging land reforms, the separation of church and state, and changes in the personnel of the church leadership. Patriarch Tewophilos protested loudly against the appointment of new priests, many of whom felt a calling for the church to take a more active role in addressing social problems. Some held theology degrees from the Eastern Bloc, and some of them were responsible for restructuring the church after the revolution. There was conflict between old clerical elites and beneficiary reformers, similar to that between Tikhon and the "*obnovlentsy*" in Russia half a century earlier.

The WCC immediately sent an observer to Ethiopia, who spoke with the patriarch and leading clergymen. He noted that four clerics had been arrested for tax fraud, and he was concerned about "a faction within the military, mostly air force and engineering units, with leftist sympathies … who openly advocate radical steps against the churches, following the lines in socialist countries." But overall, he "got the impression that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is ready for an honest and, if necessary, radical assessment of its situation," and he added: "I heard no complaints, no self-pity and no signs of panic."[38]

The Soviets did not participate at all in this early phase of the Ethiopian Revolution, and initially were reluctant to get involved. Tellingly, the first contact between the Dergue and the Kremlin was through a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Addis.[39] Only when the leftist radicals around General Mengistu Haile Mariam indeed purged their way to power, and increasingly used a language that sounded familiar to Soviet Marxists, were ties strengthened. In early 1975, a group of Dergue members arrived in the Soviet Union for political training, but Moscow still held a very cautious stance and recommended constraint. Nonetheless, by the time Mengistu established his absolute power within the Dergue in 1977 he had the full backing of the Eastern Bloc.[40] Within the Soviet Union, these new connections with the Horn of Africa revived the old Russian fascination with Ethiopia. Travelogues and republications of old travel reports from the late imperial era refreshed this

[37] Zewde, *History of Modern Ethiopia*, 228–35.

[38] Konrad Raiser, "Report on a Visit to Ethiopia," 13–20 Oct. 1974, World Council of Churches Archives in Geneva, P 848, General Secretariat, Dr. K. Raiser, Ethiopia.

[39] Pankhurst, *Ethiopians*, 230.

[40] Girma Ghebresillasie, *Kalter Krieg am Horn von Afrika: Regional-Konflikte. Äthiopien und Somalia im Spannungsfeld der Supermächte 1945–1991* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 1999), 156–86.

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romantic anti-Western tradition.[41] Geopolitically, though, the Soviets faced a problem: in exchange for the long-desired harbor in the Red Sea, they had been giving massive military support to Ethiopia's rival in the Horn of Africa, Somalia.

While some Russians revived their old sense of anti-Western, pan-Orthodox solidarity with Ethiopia, the new communist rulers in Addis took inspiration from Soviet religious policies after the October Revolution: Mäsqal ("Cross") Square became Revolution Square; state schools replaced the subject "Morals," traditionally taught by Orthodox priests, with lessons in Marxism-Leninism. Soon, bookshops across Ethiopia were full of translations of Georgij Plekhanov's anti-religious writings. A government directive demanded "action to be undertaken in the campaign against Christian churches." The persecution of religion did not reach the cataclysmic level of 1920s Russia, but in Ethiopia, too, monasteries and houses of worship were turned into museums, religious literature and church possessions confiscated, and believers harassed. Regular church-goers were identified and threatened with withdrawal of their food ration permits and jobs. Those with strong religious attachments were targeted for "special treatment."[42]

Patriarch Tewophilos was arrested in February 1976, accused of embezzlement, and replaced with Aba Melaku (as Abuna Takla Haymanot), an uneducated but socially reform-oriented and popular monk from the countryside. "The present Patriarch of the Eastern Ethiopian Orthodox Church comes from the oppressed class," declared the Dergue, "His educational background is limited. He can therefore be skillfully manipulated to become an unwitting instrument for the anti-religious campaign. He has already declared in one sermon that Christ himself had propagated socialism. He should be encouraged to elaborate and spread this theme. Priests and church workers who can be counted to spread the illusion of compatibility between Christianity and Communism should be carefully selected and placed as close to the Patriarch as possible."[43]

[41] Vera Luknickaja, *Pust' budet zemlja: Povest' o puteshestvennike* (Moskva: A. V. Eliseev, 1985) (about the Eliseev mission); Isidor Katsnelson, ed., *Leonid Artamonov: Cherez Efiopiju k beregam Belogo Nila* (Moskva: Nauka, 1979) (about another Russian explorer in Ethiopia); I. Katsnelson and G. I. Terekhova, *Po neizvedannym zemlyam Efiopii* (Moskva: Nauka, 1975) (about Bulatovich's journey).

[42] The document in the WCC's holdings contains a translator's note to this effect: "The Amharic word used literally means 'hit them,' which may also be taken as a euphemism for liquidation." Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, Ministry of Information & National Guidance, "The Anti-Revolutionary Nature of Religion," transl. from a government directive to all political cadres, in Amharic, n.d., WCC Archives, 42.4.023, General Secretariat. There has been some dispute over the authenticity of this document, which was smuggled out of the country and translated by Abune Matthias (= Matewos), archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, and from 2013 patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but the regime's actions only confirmed what was announced in it.

[43] Ibid.

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The fronts of the Cold War were blurred when the WCC leadership, including representatives of the Russian church, began investigating the old patriarch's whereabouts, and even involved Fidel Castro, who was said to have a degree of influence on Mengistu, in their campaign to release Tewophilos.[44] The Russian church, in protest, paused its student scholarship program, but to no avail. Tewophilos was executed together with hundreds of members of the old imperial Ethiopian elite. Arrests and even murders of Christians were now the order of the day. The notorious Provincial Governor Ali Mossa, a Dergue member who executed thousands, even declared that all Christians had to be annihilated before the revolution could succeed. Bishop Samuel, the young head of the religious advisory group in the early Dergue period, who had a theology degree from Bulgaria, was found shot, as was the archbishop of Ziway and Hayc and many other clerics.[45] Mengistu publically supported many of these crimes and, referring explicitly to the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, called them a necessary "Red Terror" against the "White Terror." And just as during the Soviet Union in the 1930s, this terror finally reached the leaders themselves, most of whom were murdered on orders of Mengistu. They included Tafari Benti and the popular Colonel Atnafu Abate, whose fate is reminiscent of Sergej Kirov's in the Soviet 1930s.

INSPIRATION FROM MOSCOW? ORTHODOX CHURCH AND COMMUNIST STATE IN THE OGADEN WAR

While power strategies and church-state relations in post-revolutionary Ethiopia are reminiscent of many similar developments in post-revolutionary Russia, the Soviet Union had no influence on the course of events in the mid-1970s. The Kremlin signed a secret agreement with Mengistu in May 1977, but did little to interfere in the chaotic situation. Things changed with the Ogaden War, which shows again a striking parallel to Russian history, and this time the Soviets did take part. The Dergue had been under fierce attack from opposition movements in Tigray, Eritrea, and Ogaden and was on the verge of collapse, when Somali forces, equipped with Soviet weapons, attacked Ethiopia in the summer of 1977 seeking to fulfil their irredentist dreams of a Greater Somalia.[46]

The Kremlin, after unsuccessful attempts at establishing a ceasefire, thrust aside its qualms about violence and chaos in Ethiopia and decided to abandon Somalia and give grand-scale military aid to what it believed was a congenial country on its way to Soviet-style socialism. With the help of some one

[44] Philipp Potter, letter to Fidel Castro, 13 Oct. 1978, WCC Archives, 42.3.003, General Secretariat.

[45] Festnahmen im Gottesdienst, "Christenverfolgung in Äthiopien: Mengistu setzt weiter auf Terror/Auch Piloten erschossen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 Jan. 1979: 3.

[46] Ghebresillasie, *Kalter Krieg*, 156–86.

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thousand Soviet advisors, roughly US$1 billion worth of weapons deployed in an air bridge (one of the biggest ever, and a source of enormous pride among Soviet elites), 11,600 Cuban troops and six thousand advisors, and a battalion from South Yemen, the Ethiopian army managed to fight back the invaders. The geostrategic arguments of realist vintage cannot alone explain this Soviet changing of sides, since Ethiopia had nothing to offer that Somalia was not already providing for the Kremlin, such as access to military facilities and, most importantly, the Red Sea harbor. A religion-based vision of world order, the old Russian Orthodox sense of solidarity and cultural affinity with Ethiopia, contributed to the Soviet reconsideration. General Lieutenant Petr Chaplygin, chief Soviet military advisor to Mengistu, recalled: "We were given three tasks: save the socialist revolution, save the integrity of the state, and: save the traditional [i.e., Orthodoxy-based] friendship between our countries."[47] For the Soviet Union, the successful military intervention, their biggest since the Korean War, was proof that it still had friends in the Third World who were developing toward socialism. It ended détente with the United States, but, as Odd Arne Westad put it in his seminal study of the Global Cold War, it "established the Soviet Union as a real global power."[48]

In the years that followed, Communist Bloc countries made massive investments in Ethiopia. East German secret service advisors and North Korean military trainers were sent. An official Soviet-Ethiopian friendship treaty was signed in 1978, and a number of large-scale development projects were implemented with Soviet assistance in the fields of industry, education, and agriculture, among them an irrigation project in Gambella. Big industrial enterprises and electricity-generating capacities were constructed, one example being the largest Ethiopian hydropower plant in Melka Wakena. Geological surveys were conducted which discovered various mineral deposits. Over twenty thousand Ethiopians studied in the USSR, and now the theology students, too, had to endure weekly sessions of political indoctrination, as recalled by one who nonetheless genuinely enjoyed his five-year stay: "It was like a holiday!"[49]

Perhaps the most striking parallel between modern Russia and Ethiopia was the nature of state-church relations in Ethiopia after the Somali invasion. The Dergue regime had already been threatened by various internal oppositions and regional separatists, and it desperately needed strategies for how to hold together the country and its own rule over it. It was from Ethiopia's old distant friend Russia that Mengistu took inspiration: "Lenin's and Stalin's

[47] Andrej Federov (author) and Sergej Krajnev (director), *Ruka Moskvy v Afrike*, documentary film, B. C. Grafika prodakšn, Russia, 2014.

[48] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 251–53; quote 279.

[49] Author's interview with an Ethiopian Orthodox theologian and student in Zagorsk from 1981–1986, Addis Abeba, 10 July 2014.

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examples," according to the anthropologist Donald Donham, "offered a narrative of how to weld together (or so it seemed in 1976) disparate ethnic groups into a unitary state defined by the boundaries of a previous conquest—by Russians in the Soviet Union and by Amhara and Tigreans in Ethiopia."[50] This national narrative, in Russia as in Ethiopia, and no matter how diametrically opposed to the regime's ideology, included the Orthodox churches. Just as Stalin had after the German attack, a threatened Mengistu ended the terror within the country and sought to consolidate all national forces against the invading enemy, and he saw the mass mobilization potential of the Orthodox church. Like Stalin, Mengistu cemented his role as dictator by appropriating Christian Orthodox culture.[51] And just like the Russian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian one saw a chance not only to survive but also to retain its influence over potentially separatist movements within the church. Eritrea, with its own autocephalous tradition dating back to Italian colonization, was for the Ethiopian church in some respects what western Ukraine was for the Russians: an apostate region that could be fully reincorporated into the church by collaborating with the communist-imperialist state.

It is quite likely that the Soviet leaders, who had been trying to exert a moderating influence on the Dergue regime from the beginning, suggested this strategy to Mengistu, and that the Russian Orthodox Church suggested its brothers in the faith in Ethiopia comply with the communist state. There is no explicit archival evidence for such influence being exerted, but several allegations by high-ranking Dergue members, and the numerous meetings between Ethiopian and Russian priests at the time, support this assumption: the first contacts between revolutionary Ethiopia and the Soviet Union were established in the wake of a visit by Russian priests to Addis. Ethiopian priests went to the USSR not only for education but also for politically staged meetings of international religious leaders for world peace, and they readily complied with the function they were given by the Soviet state. At one such event in Moscow in June and July of 1977, the representative of the Ethiopian church emphatically declared to the world public that freedom of religion did exist in Soviet Union.[52] The new patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Takla Haymanot, went to Moscow in May the next year and dismissed all oppositional forces in his church as supporters of the ancient regime. At an interreligious seminar in the Africa Hall that same year, 1978, the patriarch approved a nine-point declaration that expressed support for the government and particularly for the war against Somalia and

[50] Donald L. Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 130.
[51] Ibid., 143.
[52] Robert Patman, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: The Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 209.

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the struggle with guerrilla movements in the north of the country.[53] An observer from the WCC commented: "Obviously, the Patriarch has found his own way which has been strongly influenced by his origin (monch [*sic*] of the people) and on the other hand by his stay in Russia and Poland."[54]

In 1979, during the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan (carried out with rhetorical support from the Russian Orthodox Church), the Ethiopian government installed Qes Salomon Gabra Selassie in the central administration of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The enthusiastic supporter of the Dergue, who had studied theology at the Leningrad Academy from 1967 to 1970, publicly compared the Soviet Union's implementation of socialism to eschatological conditions described in biblical passages, and, like so many Orthodox clerics in Russia and Ethiopia, denied there had been any persecution of believers. The church thus readily set forth on this new course of cooperation, led by men in contact with the Moscow patriarchate, which had existed under rather similar circumstances for many years. Just as had members of the Russian clergy in the extremely violent, early years of the Soviet Union, the Ethiopian church authorities staunchly defended the communist government's policies and actions. As in the Soviet Union, there was some resistance against this official stance from individual lower-level clergy. But these outliers were immediately subjected to "revolutionary justice"—that is, they were murdered—during the initial political fervor. In more moderate later periods they were sent to rehabilitation camps by the state and excommunicated by the church, as happened to Gleb Yakunin in the Soviet Union and to Abuna Matewos, archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem.[55]

Just after the revolution, the leftist group within the Dergue had declared,

> Guided by the experience of the trail-blazers of socialism, particularly that of the Soviet Union—socialism's venerable father—the struggle for a new society has reached a new plateu [*sic*] and has assumed a new urgency. It behooves us therefore to identify our class enemies and those who are likely to sow obstacles on the path of progress of our revolution and deal with them appropriately.… It is therefore necessary to start forthwith agitational work for eradicating the legacy of religion.… On their part, Ethiopia's revolutionary leaders are convinced of the urgency and the timeliness of such a campaign. To that end they are now prepared to open discussions with senior Soviet party officials.…

These senior Soviet party officials probably suggested a more pragmatic approach, an idea the Dergue did not seem averse to as they continued in the same document: "Priests, monks, and other religious workers should be

[53] Steven Kaplan, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church," in Lucian Leustean, ed., *Eastern Christianity and the Cold War, 1945–1991* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 299–313, 306.

[54] WCC memo, W. Schmidt to K. Raiser, "Brief Account of My Visit to Ethiopia," 8 Dec. 1978, WCC archive, P 848, General Secretariat, Dr. K. Raiser, Ethiopia.

[55] Shkarovskij, *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja*, 333; Haile Larebo, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church," in Pedro Ramet, ed., *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 375–99, quote 396.

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manipulated not only to be accommodative of the revolution but, where it is feasible, should be used to further the revolution's objective. One way of doing that is to bring from friendly countries political cadres to pose as clergy from their respective churches in order to give Ethiopian priests and monks subtle indoctrination. Books and pamphlets in Amharic produced by the same sources could similarly be used to the same end."[56] Under the influence of Soviet and Russian Orthodox advice, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, like the Russian one, was subdued to the interests of the communist state.[57]

The WCC kept sending observers to Ethiopia, and they had to acknowledge that many Ethiopian priests who earlier had worked with the Geneva Council had turned into propagandists of the Dergue regime, among them the former leader of the Orthodox Mission, Abebe Yigzaw, who was now an avid pro-Dergue publicists. Some of these observers were reminded of the collaborating *obnovlentsy* in post-revolutionary Russia. Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, of the Syrian Orthodox Church in India, reported from Ethiopia in March 1978: "Strangely enough, in a secular socialist Ethiopia, on all major public ceremonial occasions the patriarch and the head of the Muslim community appear on either side of the head of the state, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. The government still appoints the chief administrator of the church."[58] A delegate from the Roman Catholic Church (which is not officially a member of the WCC, but has the status of an observer), was horrified by Qes Solomon's role in Ethiopia: "What is at stake is our faith and the freedom of faith. Our brother from the Orthodox Church revealed an extraordinary flexibility. Before, Ge'ez was the holy language of the church, then came Amharic, and now he gives us the impression that Russian will soon be canonized."[59]

Like the Russian one, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, by the end of the decade, tried to gain more influence within the WCC, and asked that the Soviet-trained Solomon Gebre Selassie be accepted as permanent representative of the Ethiopian church in Geneva. At that point, out of the three hundred churches in the WCC, only the Russian and the Constantinopolitan had established such representatives. The Ethiopian church gave up on the plan when General Secretary Philipp Potter told them they would have to finance any such mission themselves.[60] During the 1980s complaints piled up about the WCC's lack

[56] The reference is to the Russian Orthodox and other Eastern Orthodox churches in Eastern European countries. Provisional Military Government, "Anti-Revolutionary Nature of Religion."

[57] Persoon, *Spirituality*, 199.

[58] Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregores of Delhi, report on a visit to Ethiopia, Mar. 1978, WCC Archives, 42.3.003, General Secretariat.

[59] Ovind Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: A Study of Church and Politics with Special Reference to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus 1974–1985* (Stavanger: Misjonshogskolens forlag, 1996), 206.

[60] Head office of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to Philipp Potter, WCC, 5 Feb. 1979; Potter's answer to Abba Takla Haymanot, 8 Mar. 1979; both in WCC Archives, 42.4.023, General Secretariat.

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of action regarding the church's role in Communist Ethiopia. The representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, George Tsetsis, warned against collaboration between Moscow and Addis Abeba through the WCC: "Ecclesiastically speaking, Moscow has nothing to do in the African continent.… Unless some of the Ethiopian '*apprentis sorciers*' do not care about any ecclesiastical ethos and see the 'Orthodox' presence only in political terms. In which case I have serious concerns as to whether the WCC should let itself to be trapped in such political games."[61] Letters from exiled Ethiopian priests remained unanswered: Abebaw Yigzaw, the Ethiopian government's appointed secretary of the church in Addis Abeba and a member of the WCC's Central Committee, successfully blocked every discussion of these matters in Geneva.[62]

The Russian and Ethiopian Orthodox churches continued to submit to the demands of their communist states until the end of authoritarian Leninist rule. In the late 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged the persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union and allowed a revival of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has remained as anti-Western and anti-liberal, and supportive of every foreign policy of the Russian government, as before. In Ethiopia, Takla Haymanot, who had occasionally opposed Dergue policies publicly, died in 1988 under mysterious circumstances and on bad terms with the regime. But his successor Abuna Merkorios, who had close contacts with the Dergue during the worst phase of the Red Terror in the Gondar province, actually intensified the church's policy of collaboration with the state, until he was ousted after the Mengistu regime fell in 1991, at which point he fled to the United States.

CONCLUSION

In both Russia and Ethiopia, the modern state has been intrinsically intertwined with Orthodoxy. On the one hand, the Orthodox churches were subjugated to the demands of their respective states, regardless of changing governments and their ideological orientations. Yet, while Orthodoxy was coopted by the state, it did not lose its efficacy altogether: anti-Western and anti-materialist traditions of Orthodoxy impinged on political decision-making in St. Petersburg/Moscow as much as in Addis Abeba, and they created a sense of belonging among elites of both countries. Religious traditions and religion-based identities still shaped world-views and thus influenced domestic and foreign politics in modern Russia/the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Since the late nineteenth century the Orthodox elites had been the carriers of nationalist sentiments in

[61] George Tsetsis, memo to WCC, 15 Feb. 1980, WCC Archives, 42.3.003, General Secretariat.
[62] Abba Behane Selassie (London), letter to WCC General Secretary Emilio Castro, 7 Nov. 1986, WCC Archive, 42.41.13, Personal Files Todor Sabev, Correspondence with Oriental Orthodox Churches.

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both multiethnic empires. On the basis of this sense of common Orthodox identity, which from a theological perspective was largely artificially constructed, Russia cultivated a friendship with Ethiopia during imperial times. The Russian clergy and many believers developed a fascination for and sense of solidarity with those they saw as their Orthodox brothers in the faith. In Soviet times, the normative ideology changed with communism but the special relation with Ethiopia continued. As did the Tsars before them, the Soviets gave military aid to Ethiopia and sent it technical advisors. The education of Ethiopian students in Russia began at the turn of the century and reached its apex in the Soviet Union's last decade. Russian and Ethiopian theologians maintained direct contacts throughout the communist period. Like the bond between church and state in each country, that between the two countries outlived successive geopolitical and ideological constellations, displaying the longevity of religion-inspired visions of global order.

In contrast to the Catholic and Protestant churches in Eastern Europe and the Horn of Africa, the Orthodox churches in the Soviet Union and Ethiopia never became active opponents of repressive political authorities. Instead, the Orthodox clergy acted in a spirit of statehood and patriotism, and often proved a reliable partner for both countries' communist regimes, especially regarding their foreign policies. The Russian Orthodox Church and the secular Soviet state, ideological mortal enemies in the years after the revolution, from the 1940s found an agreement based on common interests: the ruling Communist Party needed the church to mobilize and control the population both within the USSR and in occupied territories. The church acquiesced to these demands in order to save its own existence and also to reintegrate autocephalous churches in Eastern Europe into the Russian church. To some degree, the Russian Orthodox Church even acted autonomously in its international relations, such as in its scholarship program for foreign students at Soviet seminaries, which was initiated, financed, and finally discontinued by the church, not the Soviet state.

This arrangement between the Orthodox church and the communist state inspired church-state relations in communist Ethiopia, where similarly, after a period of open hostility, the church kowtowed to the new men in power and thereby defended some of its own interests. This transfer of ideas occurred through regular exchanges between the Russian and Ethiopian churches and via Ethiopian students who studied in the USSR and subsequently joined the higher ranks of church administration. In no other Soviet "satellite state" did one find such parallels and influences via churches. Communist states never systematically used the Catholic Church in Poland, Mozambique, or Cuba, or Islam in Yemen or North Africa, or for that matter Buddhism in Vietnam. In the case of Ethiopia, the relationship between the communist leadership and the Soviet Union was shaped not only by the ideology of state socialism,

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but also by Orthodox traditions and a sense of cultural affinity based on a common religious heritage.

Orthodoxy submitted to the demands of communist states due to several factors: longer than the Catholic and Protestant churches, the Orthodox churches kept to their tradition of deference to state authority, and conceptions of an independent social role for the church remained comparatively underdeveloped in the twentieth century. The lack of an outside point of reference and source of support, such as the Vatican for the Catholics, only exacerbated the defenselessness of Orthodox churches in confrontation with their states, and thus their willingness to cooperate in the face of relentless persecution. But there were also certain parallels between Orthodoxy and Leninism that facilitated the transition of practitioners from one faith to the other, or at least their loyalty to the communist state. As the Ethiopianist Christopher Clapham has argued, Orthodox believers were used to declarations in an esoteric language that they were expected to follow, not to understand, and they had grown accustomed to accepting that those initiated into this "science" should have a special role.[63] The revolutionary vanguard that took over the role of the clergy, in Russia in the 1920s and Ethiopia in the 1970s, had to change the content but not the form of their annunciations. In both places, the communists wreaked havoc with many traditions, but they also successfully claimed legitimacy by referring to the deep-rooted anti-Western and anti-liberal resentments of Orthodoxy.

Orthodox internationalism in Russian-Ethiopian relations thus showcases the impacts of religious traditions on political decision making. A historiographical, *longue durée* perspective on church-state cross-relations in modern Ethiopia and Russia elucidates the longevity of religion-inspired visions of world order. Orthodox internationalism also points to forms of non-Western global entanglement that are often overlooked in the scholarship on globalization. There was a transnational moment in the emergence of Russian nationalism and anti-Westernism, and it fed into Soviet anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, and anti-liberalism. International contacts, based on a sense of common religious identity, shaped the Russian cultural horizon as early as the late nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, the Soviet as well as Soviet-inspired radically secular regimes used the immense power and transnational links of institutionalized religion to mobilize and control populations within and beyond their own societies.

The increasing interconnectedness of the modern world, from its very beginning, encompassed not only Western parts of the world but also alternative globalizing trends, many of them based on religious traditions. Orthodox Internationalism is only one of many of these non-Western and sometimes

[63] Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 96.

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explicitly anti-Western globalizing trajectories, but one that remains relevant in early twenty-first-century geopolitics. As Russia has reemerged as an imperial power under Vladimir Putin, it has re-enforced its ties with Serbia, Bulgaria, and Cyprus. In the Southern European debt crisis, the only country that Moscow offered substantial financial aid to was Greece. And with its military interference in Syria, Russia has cemented its renewed great power status. Many factors have contributed to the making of Russian foreign policy in each of these cases. But that all of these countries are home to large Orthodox groups suggests that religion-inspired visions of world order remain relevant in twenty-first-century international relations.

Abstract: Russia and Ethiopia, both multiethnic empires with traditionally orthodox Christian ruling elites, from the nineteenth century developed a special relationship that outlived changing geopolitical and ideological constellations. Russians were fascinated with what they saw as exotic brothers in the faith, and Ethiopians took advantage of Russian help and were inspired by various features of modern Russian statecraft. This article examines contacts and interactions between the elites of these two distant countries, and the changing relations between authoritarian states and Orthodox churches from the age of European imperialism to the end of the Cold War. It argues that religio-ethnic identities and institutionalized religion have grounded tenacious visions of global political order. Orthodoxy was the spiritual basis of an early anti-Western type of globalization, and was subsequently coopted by states with radically secular ideologies as an effective means of mass mobilization and control.

Key words: Russia, Ethiopia, Orthodoxy, Soviet Union, globalization, religion, international relations

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