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**EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY:
FOES OR ALLIES IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD**

(Paper Draft)

The proposed paper discusses the compatibility between Eastern Orthodox Christianity and democracy that obtained special significance for the political and academic elites on both sides of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. While western scholars perceived the collaboration of Orthodox churches with the communist regimes in Eastern Europe as a proof for a thesis that this Christian denomination causes social passivity and lack of democracy, their colleagues from the Eastern Bloc made use of Marx's idea of religion as the opium of the people. The situation remained almost unchanged after the collapse of communism. The present pessimistic attitude to Orthodoxy, however, is nurtured by a different hypothesis suggesting that this religious teaching and practices deviate from western liberal values, particularly from the concepts of human rights and civil society.

At first glance, the slow socio-economic development of Eastern European societies in the last centuries seems to give credit to such a conclusion. A more careful examination of the presented arguments, however, reveals that the accusations against Orthodoxy tend to neglect its theology and ecclesiology and often stem from the shortage of sufficient knowledge on the history of Orthodox churches and societies. As a result, particular characteristics of a specific society from a certain stage of its development are presented as inherited features of Orthodoxy in general. In order to avoid the mentioned weaknesses the proposed paper pays special attention to the difference between the theological and ecclesiological aspects of Orthodoxy. It also shed light on some less studied pages from its history that can contribute to the discussion on the compatibility between Orthodoxy and democracy.

Major Theses

Until recently public opinion was widely influenced by Samuel Huntington's concerns about the ability of Orthodox people to develop stable democratic political systems. In 1993, he promoted the thesis that after the the colapse of communism the Iron Curtain was replaced by a new "cultural division of Europe between Western Christianity, on the one hand, and Orthodox Christianity and Islam, on the other." Three years later, it was further developed in a book. Generally Huntington preserves the previous negative attitude to Orthodox Christianity, but statements about its relationship with democracy lose their consistency when he discusses Byzantium and Greece. His positive approach to them springs from their relations with ancient Greek democracy: Greece is regarded as "the home of Classical

civilization which was an important source of Western civilization,” while Byzantium is appreciated as transmitter of the legacy of ancient democracy to western societies. At the same time, Huntington distorts Orthodox Christianity from its Hellenistic roots when refers to Byzantium as a major reason for the lack of democracy in Orthodox societies or to Greece – as ““an anomaly, the Orthodox outsider in Western civilization.”

In his book Huntington also replaced the term “Slavic-Orthodox civilization”, used in 1993, with “Orthodox civilization”. The latter is defined as “centered in Russia” and separated from Western Christianity by a series of historical and cultural circumstances. Therefore he also calls it “Orthodox Russian civilization.” In this way, he limits the notion of Orthodoxy to its Russian specificity and tends to identify entire Orthodox Christianity with one of its modifications. According to Huntington, there are several criteria that distinguish the Orthodox civilization (not only the Russian) from the Western one: “religion, languages, separation of church and state, rule of law, social pluralism, representative bodies, individualism.” These are the grounds for his conclusions about the limits of Orthodox societies to develop democratic institutions.

Does the Orthodox civilization is really “centered in Russia”? Is Orthodox Christianity a simple function of the imperial ambitions of the Russian and Soviet empires or it is an autonomous phenomenon with its own development and logic? It seems that Huntington’s approach lacks an understanding of Christianity as a religious phenomenon embracing three major denominations – the Orthodox, the Catholic and the Protestant. Otherwise he would not suggest an opposition between “Western” and “Orthodox” Christianity. Moreover, the term “western” blurs important differences between Catholicism and Protestantism with regard to democracy. There are many doubts about the democratic nature of Catholicism, especially in the period before the Second Vatican Council. One may ask: Do the dogmas about the primacy and infallibility of the Roman Pope promote democracy? Which representative bodies in Catholicism enhance democracy? How did the Latin Mass assist the democratization of western societies whose native languages had not been used for spreading the Gospel for centuries? Is it possible to regard the Crusades or the Inquisition as signs of democracy? How did the Catholic Church support individualism and pluralism in society, especially until the 1960s? Is the Catholic canon law identical with the rule of law? What kind of separation of church and state existed in the Catholic world before the French Revolution? At the same time, Protestantism, in most of its existing forms, seems to be closer to democracy. There are much more arguments in favor this younger Christian denomination as a promoter of democracy in the west than Roman Catholicism. Maybe the most significant of them are the believers’ access to the Bible in their native language, the rejection of the hierarchical order of the Catholic Church and the active participation of all believers in church life. In fact most Protestant churches today function as “voluntary religious associations,” considered by Richard Niebuhr as the most advance form of religious institution which corresponds to the principles of democracy. (Berger) In historical terms, however, some Protestant churches were not free of anti-democratic features, e.g. the persecution of witches

or the promotion of Protestant ruler as Church's head, i.e. the so-called *caesaropapism*. In fact, this term was coined in the Northern German principalities after the Reformation and only later used to define the church-state relations in Orthodoxy.

Some of Huntington's observations about the West-East division in Christianity are shared by other analysts as well. With regard to former communist countries in Europe, Alfred Stepan confirms that Roman Catholicism and Protestantism did play "a more powerful role in recent civil-society resistance movements [...] than did Orthodoxy." He, however, avoids any generalization. Alfred Stepan suggests that Orthodoxy's weak resistance to the state is not caused by the core doctrine of this Christian denomination, but rather in its organizational forms different from those of Catholicism and Protestantism. In contrast with Huntington, who accepts the year 1500 as a marker for the border between Orthodox and Western Christianity, Stefan takes into account the entire development of Orthodox Christianity, sharing the same theological doctrines with its western counterpart before the Great Schism. This approach takes into account the fact that the theological doctrine of Orthodoxy has been created mostly in the first millennium, while its ecclesiology has never ceased its development. Unfortunately, the underdeveloped state of the history of the Orthodox Church – general and local, i.e. of its canonical and non-canonical or autocephalous and autonomous branches, deprives scholars from reliable scientific grounds for their analyses in the field of Orthodoxy. The shortage of studies make difficult one to trace out the transformations of the church map of Orthodoxy since the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and to analyze the canonical, political and historical factors behind them. Alfred Stepan also leaves his analysis open for further work by admitting that he does not believe "that Eastern Orthodoxy is an inherently anti-democratic force."

Meanwhile, Stepan's view about the different role of the three main Christian branches in the former communist societies is confirmed by recent studies on the church-state relations there, based on recently open archives. They reveal that the communist persecution of the Catholic Church was motivated by the difficulty to subject its organization that is external to the state, transnational and hierarchical to the totalitarian regimes established in Eastern Europe after World War II. At the same time, the emphasis on individual conscience and international networks of the Protestant churches assisted their survival during the years of militant atheism. They also succeeded in escaping the massive repression experienced by the Catholic clergy in the region thanks to their less developed institutional structure and lack of centralized government. The same is valid for some religious decedent movements, e.g. the Old Believers in the Soviet Union. The case of the Eastern European Orthodox churches is more complicated and is analyzed bellow. In general, however, it was not result of the Orthodox doctrine and teachings, but of the institutional and organizational structure of Orthodox Christianity at national and global level.

Orthodox Church and Representative Democracy

The experts on democracy often point to representative bodies as a major criterion for its existing. At the same time, they take for granted the lack of such institutions in Orthodox Christianity. The rule of Orthodox churches by representative bodies, however, has been and remains their essential feature that distinguishes them from the Roman Catholic Church. The existence of such structures in the church government is required by the so-called principle of *councilarity*. Despite some changes throughout the centuries it has survived until nowadays. Established by the Apostles (Acts 1: 13-26), the principle of *councilarity* presupposes that all clerics, from the priest to the patriarch, have to be elected by the corresponding church community, i.e. laity also takes part in this act. (Vargov) Moreover, according to leading experts in Orthodox canon law, the participation of laity in the election of its clergy, from the parochial priests to the diocesan bishops and church patriarchs, is among the most significant signs of democratic traditions in Orthodox Christianity, inherited from the early Church. (Erickson)

Such elections took place not only in Byzantium, but also in Kiev Rus'. The latter introduced this practice, however, two centuries after its baptism due to the specific conditions – a shortage of clergy and the extremely large dioceses. To solve the problem the Kievan princes appointed bishops, imported from Byzantium or the other Slavic countries. (Kartashev) The practice of elected bishops appeared in Kiev Rus' in the twelfth century but it was interrupted by the Mongolian invasion (1237-1240). It was preserved in two regions: the northern Russian lands, i.e. in Novgorod the Great and Pskov, as well as in the South-West Kiev Metropolitane, established after the split of Kiev Metropolitane in 1458 and included in the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom. Under the Reformation influence, the Orthodox church government in its dioceses was controlled by the so-called Orthodox brotherhoods, while the bishops had to observe their decisions. They were able to reassume their administrative leadership only after the Union of Brest (1596) and the Papal support. (Vargov) Meanwhile, the leaders of the eastern part of the previous Kiev Metropolitane linked its destiny with the Principality of Moscow, laying the grounds of the Patriarchate of Moscow. Due to historical circumstances, and not on theological grounds, laity in Moscovite Russia was expelled from the church government. In this way, its church government there became entirely clerical affair.

The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans destroyed the *councilarity* model in the Balkans as well. The entire Orthodox population in the new Empire, previously organized into a network of autocephalous churches and independent states, was now subordinated to a single Orthodox Church – the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This brought about a centralization of the church government contradictory to canon law and Orthodox ecclesiastical tradition. The new rulers, however, allowed the principle of *councilarity* to be preserved at a parochial level. In this way during the entire Ottoman rule male representatives of laity and priests were able to participate in the local government of their religious community. In 1850, in the so-called Era of Reforms, the Sublime Porte obliged the Patriarchate of Constantinople to restore

the participation of laity at all levels of church government. As a result, the Patriarchate established a mixed council of bishops and lay people as a body for church government. In 1858, it convoked a church-people council, consisting of 7 bishops and 20 elected laymen who represented the capital and major cities in the Empire. They prepared new Church's statutes. On their basis a mixed council of four bishops and eight laymen was set up. One of the bishops functioned as chairman, while the Patriarch of Constantinople was allowed to attend the most important sessions.

Some of the introduced innovations in the church government, however, had no theological grounds – the mandates and the principle of rotation. They were imported from the west together with many of the reforms undertaken in the Ottoman Empire (1839-1876). The council members were allowed to occupy their office two years, but half of them were changed every year. The new lay members were not directly elected. First the local Orthodox communities had to elect their representatives who to be sent to Constantinople. There, on their turn, they had to elect with secret votes the members of the mixed council. Only men with a certain social status were allowed to take part in these elections, but still such democracy was difficult to be discovered in the Catholic Church at that time. The democratic elements in the government of the Patriarchate of Constantinople were also limited by the Sublime Porte without which consent the new members of the council were not able to start their work. (Vargov)

The described model was adopted by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, restored in by the Sultan in 1870 under the name of Exarchate. Its draft statutes were prepared by a temporary commission of 5 bishops and 10 laymen, elected among the leaders of the Bulgarian community in Constantinople. In 1871, they were adopted by a church-people council which included the mentioned temporary council and 35 representatives, additionally elected by the Bulgarian communities in the Ottoman Empire. The most unique feature of this national Church Council was the lay dominance: only 11 deputies were clerics (5 bishops, 2 archimandrites and 4 priests), while the rest were laymen. The Exarchate's Statutes went further than the regulations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. All the offices in the new Bulgarian Church, including that of the Exarch, were elective and had mandates. (Exarchate Statutes, Articles 15-81). The Church government was not authoritarian but was collective work. The executive power in the Church belonged to the Holy Synod, responsible for the spiritual affairs of the Church (Art. 4). At the same time, the secular matters were entrusted to a special council, consisting of 6 laymen who took care of the secular affairs – tax collection, school management, etc. (Art. 6).

Politically, however, the Exarch was responsible before the Sublime Porte as the chief administrator of Orthodox Bulgarians – a feature that was not mentioned in the Statutes, but in the Sultan's Decree for the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate. The Statues also foresaw the church-people council as the major legislative body to have regular meetings every four years (Art. 134). This requirement, however, was not fulfilled due to the lack of consent by the Sublime Porte. At the same time, mixed councils of clergy and laity were

established at the diocese and parish levels to administrate their local affairs. Similar participation of laity in the Orthodox church government can be seen also in Austro-Hungary, which Orthodox Church there – the Karlovtsy Metropolitane, was run by a mixed council of clerics and laymen. Two thirds of its members were lay people, but the bishops did not rotate because their membership was *ex officio*. (Vagrov) An important specificity of this Church's council was that it was under the direct supervision of an official, appointed by the Habsburg Emperor, i.e. quite similar to the Ober-Procurator of Peter the Great.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Balkan nation-states brought about curious development in the lay participation in church government. The lay element in the election of Orthodox bishops was drastically reduced and even suppressed in most Orthodox states. After the Bolshevik revolution, the episcopate of most Orthodox churches removed also the priests from the church government. (Tsankov) At the same time, there is an irony in the fact that the role of laity and priests in the government of Orthodox churches was restored by the communist regimes, established in Eastern Europe after WWII. Under slogan of democratization, they pressed the hierarchy of the Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian Orthodox Churches to increase the part of priests and laity in their main structures. By infiltrating their supporters there, the local communist parties became able to defeat the resistance of the Orthodox episcopate against the establishment of pro-Soviet regimes in the Balkans. The logic behind this enterprise is the fact the bishops were not easy for manipulation due to their life-long offices, while the lay and priest elements in the church government could be controlled and selected outside the Church. Moreover, it made possible to benefit from some tensions between the married priests and celibate bishops typical for Orthodox Christianity. The communist regimes in Yugoslavia and Romania established the so-called unions of "democratic" or "progressive" priests.

The developments in the Orthodox churches under communism reveal the ways in which procedures aimed at securing democracy, especially those linked with the representative bodies, could be used for the consolidation of totalitarian regimes. Therefore, most of the problems in the attitude of Orthodox churches towards democracy and pluralism which we witness today seem to be caused by their current leaderships rather than by theological reasons or Byzantine and Russian legacy. Most of their leading figures are still people promoted and *de facto* appointed by the former communist party-states, despite the democratic appearance of their 'elections' before 1989. Not less disturbing is the recent policy of these churches to limit and even eliminate a true involvement of low rank clergy and laity in the church government. This process of monopolization of power in the Eastern European Orthodox Churches by their episcopate is often defended with the shortage of theological knowledge of the low rank clerics and lay people because of the years of atheism. Despite some credits one should give to such reasoning the quality of a theological education received in atheist states cannot be taken for granted. The silence about the democratic traditions of the Orthodox churches in the past centuries is also question that deserves special attention when the relationship between Orthodoxy and democracy is analyzed.

Orthodoxy and Its Models of Church-State Relations

Most analyses accuse Orthodoxy of *caesaropapism* and thus regard it as an enemy of the separation between church and state. This approach, however, does not take into account that *caesaropapism* is a sixteenth century model, established mostly in Protestant states. It created a new type of ruler – different from those invented in the Orthodox and Catholic part of Europe. *Caesaropapism* allowed the ruler to unite both the political and the church power in his/her state by becoming also the head of the local Church, i.e. the one that represented the majority of their subjects. Such development is unthinkable in Orthodox Europe, where no ruler has ever thought to become the head of the Orthodox Church in his empire or kingdom. The model of church-state relations, established by Peter the Great in the eighteenth century came very close to the philosophy of *caesaropapism* by replacing the institute of the patriarch with that of a Holy Synod, chaired by his appointee – the Ober-Procurator. Still no Russian Emperor went so far to become the head of the local Orthodox Church. Therefore, the use of the term *caesaropapism* is incorrect.

The fact that this term has been utilized many times to signify past and present cases of state intervention in the affairs of the local Orthodox churches, however, has its grounds. Therefore, in order to avoid some misleading effects of such use it will be more appropriate to adopt the formula, suggested by Gilbert Dagron – “eastern *caesaropapism*.” This approach takes into consideration not only events from Orthodoxy’s history, where the state has intervened in church affairs, but also its difference from the original Protestant *caesaropapism*. Among the most significant cases of state intervention is the replacement of Patriarch Ignatius of Constantinople with the famous Photios, conducted by the Byzantine Emperor Michael in 858. Several years later (867), Ignatius was restored while Photios was sent to exile in his turn. Not less dramatic was the case of the Bulgarian Patriarch Ioakim III, thrown from the walls of the capital city of Tarnovo on the order of Tsar Theodore Svetoslav (1300-1321). Still it was only in the fourteenth century, when the Great Church of Constantinople admitted the right of the Byzantine emperor to appoint a patriarch at his own discretion. This behavior, however, should be analyzed in the context of the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans and the relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople with the other Orthodox churches in the region by that time. The history of the Moscow branch of the Kiev Metropolitane from its split in 1469 to the establishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow in 1596 has also episodes of state interventions. Generally, however, the Moscow princes preserved the formal canonical requirements to achieve their aims. In 1568, Ivan the Terrible convoked a church council to condemn Metropolitan Phillip of Moscow before throwing him in the prison. The Russian Patriarch Nikon was removed in a similar way in 1666, but the council which took this decision was also attended by the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch. (Kartashev)

At the same time, one could not neglect the Orthodox Church’s attempts to intervene in the state affairs, e.g. Patriarch Photios I of Constantinople in the ninth century or Patriarch Nikon of Moscow in the seventeenth century. There were also cases when Orthodox church

leaders ruled the state for longer or shorter periods. Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (852-925) was regent of the young Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905-959), while Metropolitan Alexii of Moscow (1353-1378) ruled the Principality of Moscovy during the childhood of the Grand Prince Dmitry II Donskoy (1350-1389). In this respect the most peculiar case is that of the Principality of Zeta. In 1516 the heir to the throne, Prince Georgi Chernoevich, transferred the government of the state to the metropolitan of the local Orthodox Church and until 1851 Montenegro was ruled by its metropolitans. Moreover, their rule exceeded all previous models by elevating the metropolitans of Zeta into commanders-in-chief of their country. Metropolitan Daniil (1697-1735) defeated the Turks in 1712, while Metropolitan Peter I (1781-1830) won another victory over Turks in 1796. (Skurat) Such involvement of Orthodox hierarch in the state government can be found also in the last two centuries: in 1886 Metropolitan Kliment of Tarnovo became Prime-Minister of Bulgaria, while Archbishop Makarios III combined his duties as church head with those of the President of Cyprus between 1960 and 1977.

The other pole in the discussion on the Orthodox model of church-state relations is presented by Orthodox theologians and some scholars of Orthodox background. According to them, there is only one Orthodox model of church-state relations called *symphonia*. In a curious way, they tend to limit the idea of symphony to a kind of secular relationship that concerns a particular church institution, e.g. the Russian, Serbian or another state Orthodox Church, but not the Orthodox Church as God's creation and especially its invisible aspect. According to the Romanian Patriarch Daniel, symphony is "understanding and cooperation between two distinct institutions: *a spiritual one* and *a political one*, which were united by the common social life of Church faithful and the State's citizens." Such an interpretation excludes at least two models of church-state relations adopted by the Orthodox churches. The first was the model established after recognition of Christianity by the Roman Empire and inherited by Byzantium was not between one State and its Church in the contemporary meaning of these terms, but between the only Christian Empire and a union of autocephalous churches existing in it since Christ's times. The fact that the Patriarch of Constantinople had his See in the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire turned him into a major figure in the enthronement of its ruler, but did not give him any administrative rights over the churches of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem or other autocephalous bodies. His jurisdiction was additionally fixed by Canon 28 of the Forth Ecumenical Canon (451) that limited his activities within the dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace. Moreover, a series of canons forbade any activities of a Church's head or a diocesan bishop outside the borders of his territorial jurisdiction.

At the same time, none of the canons observed by the Orthodox churches, i.e. of the first seven ecumenical councils (325-787), took into consideration the state borders as a criterion for establishing or limiting their territorial jurisdiction but referred to the administrative borders between the different provinces within the only Christian Empire, e.g. Canon 17 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council. The second concerns the ancient Orthodox patriarchates –

those of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem which territorial jurisdiction exceeds the borders of the states, where their sees are situated. Finally, the stereotype of Orthodox church-state relations as relationship between one state and its church also neglects both, the theological notion of the Orthodox Church as body of Christ and the ecclesiological one – as a network of fourteen autocephalous Orthodox churches.

The wide spread view of symphony as a harmony between a local Orthodox Church and its state seem to be strongly influenced by two factors: the age of nationalism and the nineteenth century model of confessional state established in Eastern Europe, where the domination of Orthodoxy was constitutionally guaranteed. The contemporary attitude of most traditionally Orthodox societies to symphony is also influenced by memories of the enforced “separation of the church from the state” by the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Therefore, after the end of the Cold War, the old model obtained new attractiveness in their eyes. According to their church leaders, the communist separation of the church from the state was a severe break of the “traditional unity between nation/state and church,” which is not compatible with the principle of symphony. This attitude is also shared by many scholars dealing with religion from secular perspective, but relying mostly on theological works. (Ferrari) Still there are serious reasons to question symphony as the only proper model of church-state relations in Orthodox countries.

Most experts in Byzantine studies consider that the definition of symphony is given by Justinian I in his famous novella of 535. It reads:

The greatest blessings of mankind are the gifts of God which have been granted to us by the mercy on high: the priesthood and the imperial authority. The priesthood ministers to the things divine; the imperial authority is set over, and shows diligence, in things human; but both proceed from the same source, and both adorn the life of man.

This text reveals that symphony is not simply a relationship between institutions, i.e. between church and state, but rather a unity between powers – *sacerdotium* and *imperium*. This diarchal model differs from the Roman Catholic one, developed in Western Europe. When compared the Orthodox model is often defined as cooperative, while the Catholic – as oppositional, because in the second case the Church has presided over the state. Still such an approach, often used by Orthodox theologians, can be misleading because it tends to compare the sixth century Byzantine views on symphony with a Roman-Catholic model, which institutionalization was accomplished after the Great Schism (1054). Moreover, it does not take into consideration the impact of the French revolution (1789) on the Catholic model of church-state relations. Another peculiarity of symphony roots in the idea of Byzantine *basileus* as Christ’s vicar on the earth or as an “external bishop.” As such, he was anointed with priestly power, which the later Holy Roman emperor never had. (Dagron) At the same time, the Byzantine tradition always distinguished the priesthood of *basileos* from the Church institution. Despite his important role in the Christian Empire the former remained outside the Church. Otherwise, it is impossible to explain why the *basileos* needed church councils and patriarch to run the church affairs and did not become the bishop of bishops or a second Pope. (Dagron) At the same time, the Patriarch was not able to implement any of the Church’s

decisions in the public sphere without the *Basileus's* consent, while the Pope became an "ultimate custodian of the Christian faith" in the West, especially after the Great Schism. (Karayanopoulos)

The model of Constantine the Great, however, did not last long. First, it was attacked by the Iconoclast rulers of Byzantium, who promoted the idea of the emperor-priest in the second quarter of the eighth century. The model of church-state in Byzantium was changed again under the Macedonians, a dynasty that ruled Byzantium from the late ninth century to the beginning of the eleventh century. The end of iconoclasm created conditions for the emancipation of the Church from the State in Byzantium which emanated in the principle "to render Caesar's things to the Caesar and God's ones – to God." (Karayanopoulos) As a result, the Macedonian emperors made clear difference between clergy and laity. In his work *On Ceremonies*, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus denounced the iconoclast idea of the "emperor-priest" together with the previous practice emperors to stay in the altar until the communion. (Dagron) This and other episodes of the Byzantine history reveal that symphony did not survive in its original form, established by Constantine the Great in the sixth century. Moreover, this model was also geographically limited within the borders of the Eastern Roman Empire and was never fully implemented in the Orthodox countries. None of the medieval rulers of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia was anointed with the priestly power of the Byzantine *basileus*. They also were not able to achieve his authority over the only Christian empire on the earth laying at the foundation of Byzantine ecclesiology developed in the time of Constantine the Great. They imitated this model, but did not share its philosophy. Therefore, the church-state relations in the Orthodox countries outside Byzantium were more about politics than the original ones created in the cradle of Orthodoxy.

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (1453), Moscovite Russia developed its own unique system of church-state relations where the tsar was associated with Christ himself, while in Byzantium as well as in the West the ritual of unction lacked such identification. As a result, the Russian tsar obtained a sacral status or charisma that distinguished him from all other ordinary people. Moreover, this features brought about a specific attitude of Russian people to those of their tsars whose rule was unjust. The fight against them was justified as a fight against Anti-Christ and not simply as a fight of somebody who does not observe God's and human laws. This feature can be discovered neither in Byzantium and the other Orthodox Balkan Medieval states nor in the West. (Uspensky) Therefore, it will be incorrect to apply this particular Russian type of church-state relations as a common feature of entire Orthodoxy. Moreover, as it happened in Byzantium, this model was not fixed once and forever but experienced various transformations in the next centuries. The Synodal reform of Peter the Great abolished the institute of Moscow Patriarchate and shortened the distance with the church-state model of the Protestant states. In the nineteenth century the Russian Orthodox Church was not able to avoid the influence of nationalism. The Holy Synod became the main supporter of the policy of Russian emperors for the Russification of the western lands, adopted from the Partition of Poland. This process

concerned not only the Orthodox Byelorussians and Ukrainians incorporated in the Russian Empire after the Partitions of Poland but also those of them who belong to the Greek Catholic Church. Between 1839 and 1875 they were united with the Russian Orthodox Church and subjected to its Holy Synod. (Znosko)

Completely different were the relations established between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire. They gave birth to a peculiar model of church-state separation. Since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 all patriarchs of Constantinople have been appointed by the Sultan, who was not even a Christian ruler. By becoming an issue of political expedience, their appointment lost its religious meaning and turned into a secular act. In this way, the Orthodox Church was involved in secular affairs as never before. The Patriarch of Constantinople became the *Millet-bashi* of all Orthodox subjects of the Sultan, i.e. their "lay administrator, obliged to organize law-courts and fiscal services and to give directives on secular politics." (Runciman) Moreover, he was ordered by the Ottoman government to punish the Orthodox recalcitrants who did not pay their state duties with excommunication. This high status allowed the Patriarch of Constantinople to expand his administrative power over canonically independent churches such as those of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem and even to abolish the autocephalous patriarchates of Bulgarians and Serbs in the beginning of the fifteenth century. This development blurred the borders between the secular and the religious within the so called *Rum-Millet*, i.e. the Orthodox community in the Empire.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire brought about the establishment of national states in the Balkans. In parallel, the Patriarchate of Constantinople ceased to function as an Ottoman institution responsible for the civic and religious affairs of the Orthodox subjects of the Sublime Porte, but was replaced by a network of newly established Orthodox churches in Greece (1830), in Serbia (1831), in Romania (1865), in Bulgaria (1870). All these new states adopted constitutions that proclaimed Orthodoxy as dominant religion, while restricting the activities of religious minorities. The latter was justified with an alleged threat of proselytism. The church-state relations in modern Balkan states shared many common features with those in the nineteenth century Russia, i.e. of the only Orthodox state that escape the rule of the infidel Ottomans or heterodox Christian rulers.

The model of dominant Orthodoxy was abolished first in Soviet Russia. After World War II the same happened in the Balkan countries where communist regimes were established. Serbia and Bulgaria adopted the Leninist principle of the separation of the church from the state, while Romania modified it by declaring an autonomous status of the Romanian Patriarchate. Despite some similarities with the French *laïcité* that separates church and state, the communist model has significant differences. Generally, scholars omit the replacement of the conjunction "and" (used in the West) with the preposition "from" introduced by Lenin in 1918 and adopted by almost all people democracies after World War II. The first regards religion as a private affair and despite the bans on its public manifestation does not persecute the citizens because of their religious views or activities. The communist regime, however,

has erased any form of pluralism in the public space, which was then entirely dominated by atheism. It *de facto* suppressed the freedom of religion because the empty declarations for freedom of worship did not save believers and clerics from various forms of persecution.

The recent archival findings shed new light on the traditional view of the Orthodox churches as less persecuted than the other religions because of their collaboration with the new rulers. Their survival seems to be mostly institutional, while their communities were seriously damaged. What communist regimes destroyed was the parish – the nucleus of the religious life. Although the persecution the clergy of the Romanian, Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox churches is registered at smaller scale than that of the Russian one they differ from each other not so much by their size but by their methods. The total anti-religious terror in Bolshevik Russia from the 1920s and the 1930s was replaced with more selective and sophisticated methods after World War II. The repressions over the ordinary Orthodox believers and priests became less important for the communist regimes than those of the hierarchy, which was realized in various ways and usually under legal forms. The Orthodox Church was isolated from society by the adoption of new constitutions that promulgated the separation of the church from the state, the introduction of civic marriage, the exclusion of religious classes from school, etc. The confiscation of property and bank accounts deprived the Orthodox churches from their economic power. Not less important means to suppress the bishops' resistance against the Sovietization of their country were the priests, who looked for greater participation in the church government as well as for better social conditions of life. After World War II the 'unsuitable' Orthodox bishops were not removed by force, but were 'retired' because of health or age reasons or 'died'. In fact, most of them were preserved in their positions, but the real job was done by their vicars – communist appointees. Such measures were difficult to implement to the Catholic Church because the Vatican remained beyond Stalin's grasp. It was not applicable to the non-episcopal Protestant churches and many non-Christians communities with more flexible organizational structures. Later on the communist regimes made use of the Orthodox churches as an additional tool in their nationalist policies, i.e. in the 1980s the Bulgarian Orthodox Church supported the so-called the forceful change of the names of the Bulgarian Turks as heirs of Orthodox Bulgarians converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule. (Gruychev)

This short review of the major historical models of church-state relations reveals the lack of a universal Orthodox model of church-state relations. Moreover, it demonstrates the vitality and ability of the Orthodox churches to adapt to different political and socio-cultural situations. Therefore, the democratization of so-called Orthodox societies does not seem to depend on their religious tradition, but on contrary – this process can penetrate the church life and change the church-state relations. This brings us to the next important issue – the current state of affairs in the Orthodox countries.

Orthodox Societies and Freedom of Religion

A quick review on the religious situation in the most European countries reveals that generally all Constitutions guarantee the freedom of religion, but many omit the principle of separation. At the same time, the European Court's practice reveals more respect to freedom of religion in countries such as the United Kingdom, Norway, Finland, or Holland than in Bulgaria, Latvia, Moldova and Russia where there is constitutional separation of church and state. Therefore, it seems that the historical experience and political culture are of greater importance for the freedom of religion in one or another country than the formal legal principles in its legislation.

When we focus our analysis only on the traditionally Orthodox countries, then we can see that they have more problems with freedom of religion than the non-Orthodox ones. By 2009 the EU membership does not seem to be of crucial significance, e.g. Greece, which has the longest experience among the Orthodox states as EU member has violated Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights – 5 times in the period 1998-2008, while the recent one – Bulgaria has done the same 3 times. The model of church-state relations also does not seem to determine the level of religious freedom: the Greek Constitution defines Orthodoxy as prevailing religion and thus gives many privileges to its Church (Art. 3), while the Bulgarian one promulgates the principle of separation of the religious institutions from the state (Art. 13). In both cases governments use their administrative capacity to give considerable advantages to the local Orthodox Church, while restricting the local religious minorities, e.g. bans on building prayer houses by religious minorities. There are several reasons for such restrictions of religious freedom.

The first one concerns the interaction between Orthodoxy and nationalism. As a rule, the special status of the local Orthodox Church is justified with claims about its historical role for the survival of the corresponding nation. Although such a policy gives more weight to the thesis of an inherited link between Orthodoxy and nationalism, the arguments for it are limited in time and space. They refer to the last two-century development of several Eastern European Orthodox churches, namely the Russian, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian and Georgian. Therefore it is more appropriate to question the reasons for the symbiosis between Orthodoxy and nationalism in these six cases. In fact, it is difficult to find such a phenomenon in the other canonical autocephalous Orthodox churches: the patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople as well as the Cypriot, Albanian, Polish and Czechoslovak churches. It seems that the factors behind the mentioned symbiosis are determined mainly by political, historical or demographic factors than religious.¹ The major argument for such a statement is the rise of an Orthodox ecclesiastical nationalism in Ukraine and the FYR of Macedonia. Both states have recently obtained their political independence,

¹ Seven of the listed Orthodox churches represent religious minorities, while the Cypriot Orthodox Church function in a state divided by ethnic, language and religious border in addition to the formal political one.

but still lack own canonically recognized autocephalous Orthodox churches despite their century long Orthodox tradition and church experience.

The analysis of the relationship between Orthodoxy and nationalism should also take into account the role of language and ethnos in Eastern European Orthodox societies, which is different in the Middle East Orthodox communities united by their Arabic origin. In this respect the Ottoman experience of the Patriarchate of Constantinople could be used as a departure point. Despite the unusual combination of centralized church government with a union of religious and secular duties this religious institution was not able to erase the language, ethnic and cultural differences among the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan. The role of ethnicity could be also traced in the case of the Karlovats Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Empire. Established in 1695 by Serbian clerics and laymen who fled from the Ottoman Empire, it took care of all Orthodox subjects of the Emperor without regard of their ethnic origins and language. After the 1848 revolution, however, the Orthodox Romanians requested their own church organization. In 1863, the Emperor responded with the establishment of the Romanian Metropolis of Banat. It functioned in parallel to the previous "Serbian" metropolines under the jurisdiction of the Karlovats Church. After World War I the former was joined to the Patriarchate of Romania. By laying the foundations of most contemporary Eastern European Orthodox churches the ethnic and language differences facilitated their link with nationalism. Still it seems that the symbiosis between Orthodoxy and nationalism seems to be an outcome of the political developments during the last two centuries rather than of the mentioned cultural factors. The main argument for such a thesis is that Orthodoxy has preserved its teaching and dogmas despite the changes of the map of the Orthodox world and its ecclesiastical structure. If it is so, the link between Orthodoxy and nationalism is not inherited but one that allows further development, which direction depends again on political rather than cultural factors.

The second factor determining the state of religious freedom in Eastern European Orthodox states roots in the lack of such practices in their past. (Berger) All of them had experienced only forms of government dominated by one single worldview: most of the time it was Orthodoxy, although the Orthodox believers in the Balkans and in the Middle East also lived as a religious minority in the Ottoman Empire. The communist regimes in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries did not bring any pluralism, but replaced the monopoly of one worldview with another. To some degree this is also valid for Greece with its military regimes and dominant Orthodoxy and to Cyprus with its close history of conflicts and division. In this way, the societies traditionally belonging to Orthodoxy were not able to develop a sense of respect to the different religions as well as to irreligious beliefs. They know various forms of co-existence with "the other" but their skills for dialogue and tolerance seem to be frozen in the 1940s. Therefore the issue of freedom of religion in these areas seems to be more a question of time, than of the ability of their societies. Such an approach can explain why the post-Cold War governments of traditionally Orthodox countries declare respect to freedom of religion in their constitutions and laws, but maintain religious politics

that remind the interwar period. In this respect, one can expect that the eurointegration of Bulgaria and Romania as well as some other traditionally Orthodox countries will help their societies to develop higher standards of respect of religious freedom.

The judgments of the European Court of Human Rights will be the other important factor because they include almost all the countries in question. Although the high number of cases of the violation of religious freedom, which Greece lost in Strasburg, is a sign for the problems in this sphere, it also means a longer practice in developing the culture of religious tolerance in this country. The Court's judgments forced Greece to make more room for religious pluralism by paying greater respect to the rights of religious minorities. As a result, today there are more guarantees for the right of Greek citizens to choose whether to stay within Orthodoxy or to leave it, e.g. *Kokkinakis v. Greece*. Greece also had to harmonize its laws with the European Convention of Human Rights. It had to amend its law forbidding minority religions to establish their places of worship without the permission of the local bishop. (Evans) At the same time, these improvements are often neglected by the governments of the most former totalitarian states with Orthodox majorities. Such a behavior can be explained with their smaller experience of implementing the European Convention of Human Rights and thus one could expect positive developments in this sphere in the future.

When we approach the European Orthodox countries from the point of view of their close history, however, then we can see some important differences. The governments, established after the collapse of communism in the traditionally Orthodox countries, preserved the principle of church-state separation but became less strict in its observing. This tendency can be observed in two main cases. The first concerns the attitude to religious minorities and was discussed in the previous paragraphs. The second is about recently established minorities within the major religious tradition – Orthodoxy. It is well demonstrated in Moldova and Bulgaria, where the state supports one of the rivaling groups in intra-religious conflicts, e.g. the refusal of the Moldavian state to register the Metropolitanate of Chisinau as a parallel Orthodox body in the same country or the forceful removal of the clergy of the so-called Alternative Synod from its churches and their transfer to the Synod of Patriarch Maxim in Bulgaria. The most peculiar feature of such cases is the use of canon law as an argument to justify the government's support for the so-called canonical Church or leadership. Such a state policy blurs the borders between the secular law and canons and might have negative effects not only on the religious life of one or another community of believers in a given country but also on the international relations of this community and its state.

At the same time, these problems are not provoked by a lack of good will or political games that make use of religion, but by objective reasons as well. One of them is the insufficient experience in doing secular religious policy. The state tradition of the Orthodox countries prepared their political elites only for two models of religious policy: the one of the dominant religion and the other of militant atheism. There is also shortage of scholarly knowledge in the field of Orthodoxy. The only 'experts' there seem to be the theologians,

many of whom, however, have little respect state law. The problem is additionally complicated by the difficult task faced by the former socialist societies – to distinguish the secular from the atheist. In addition the rejection of the communist past is often interpreted as a necessity to restore the interwar order where the Orthodox Church had a dominant position in state and society. The present East European politicians are afraid of demanding the Church to observe secular laws, e.g. to have financial transparency or metropolitans to declare their incomes, because otherwise they could be accused of atheist repressions of religion. This thinking cannot be overcome only by the ECHR's judgments or the political tools of the European Commission. It also requires wide empirical and theoretical research on the history and sociology of Orthodoxy and its churches able to assist the policy-making in this field.