This book analyzes the ideologies of politicized Orthodox Christianity in today Russia including fundamentalism, pan-Slavism, neo-Eurasianism, Orthodox communism and nationalism. Apart from textual analysis, the volume provides a description of the specific subculture of political Orthodoxy, i.e. its language, symbols, art, mass media, hangouts and dresscode. This study represents the first scholarly examination of these topics. Unlike other publications on the politicization of Orthodoxy, it is focused not on the political ambitions of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), but on political movements ideologically based on their own interpretations of the Orthodox doctrine, often contravening the canonical version. The book demonstrates that the "political Orthodox" or "Orthodox patriots" are a specific branch of believers who frequently do not practice Orthodoxy properly, inventing, instead, their own quasi-Orthodox rituals. The volume shows that the ROC is not responsible for such religious politicization and that the community of the political Orthodox is rather guided by religiously oriented lay intellectuals. The book provides a brief analysis of this intellectual community. Finally, the volume demonstrates that, even in the absence of significant electoral achievements, some religio-political Orthodox movements—namely, fundamentalists and nationalists—have been able to gain public support at the grassroots level. They have been able to infiltrate larger and more moderate political organizations thus contributing to a general "Orthodoxization" of Russian political discourse.

Post-Soviet Political Order asks what is shaping the institutional pattern of the post-Soviet political order, what the new order will be like, what patterns of conflict are emerging, and what can be done about stabilising the region. In considering these questions the contributors converge on four common themes: * the institutional legacy of empire * the social processes unleashed by imperial collapse * patterns of bargaining within and between states to resolve conflicts arising out of the imperial collapse * the impact of the wider international setting on the pattern of post-imperial politics Focusing on the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, the contributors show how strong state institutions are essential if conflict and political instability are to be avoided.

Church-state relations during the Soviet period were much more complex and changeable than is generally assumed. From the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 until the 21st Party Congress in 1961, the Communist regime's attitude toward the Russian Orthodox Church zigzagged from indifference and opportunism to hostility and repression. Drawing from new access to previously closed archives, historian Tatiana Chumachenko has documented the twists and turns and human dramas of church-state relations during these decades. This rich material provides essential background to the post-Soviet Russian government's controversial relationship to the Russian Orthodox Church today.
"Elite-level Soviet politics, privileged access to state secrets, knowledge about machinations inside the Kremlin--such is the environment in which Andrei A. Kovalev lived and worked. In this memoir of his time as a successful diplomat serving in various key capacities and as a member of Mikhail Gorbachev's staff, Kovalev reveals hard truths about his country as only a perceptive witness can do. In Russia's Dead End Kovalev shares his intimate knowledge of political activities behind the scenes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kremlin before and after the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, including the Russia of Vladimir Putin. Kovalev analyzes Soviet efforts to comply with international human-rights obligations, the machinations of the KGB, and the link between corrupt oligarchs and state officials. He documents the fall of the USSR, the post-Soviet explosion of state terrorism and propaganda, and offers a nuanced historical explanation of the roots of Russia's contemporary crisis under Vladimir Putin. This insider’s memoir provides a penetrating analysis of late-Soviet and post-Soviet Russian politics that is pungent, pointed, witty, and accessible. It assesses the current dangerous status of Russian politics and society while illuminating the path to a more just and democratic future"--Provided by publisher.

A vibrant civil society - characterized by the independently organized activity of people as citizens, undirected by state authority - is an essential support for the development of freedom, democracy, and prosperity. Thus it has been one important indicator of the success of post-communist transitions. This volume undertakes a systematic analysis of the development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. An introduction and two historical chapters provide background, followed by chapters that analyze the Russian context and consider the roles of the media, business, organized crime, the church, the village, and the Putin administration in shaping the terrain of public life. Eight case studies then illustrate the range and depth of actual citizen organizations in various national and local community settings, and a concluding chapter weighs the findings and distills comparisons and conclusions.

The post-Soviet years have widely been interpreted as a period of intense moral questioning, debate, and struggle. Despite this claim, few studies have revealed how this moral experience has been lived and articulated by Russians themselves. This book provides an intimate portrait of how five Muscovites have experienced the post-Soviet years as a period of intense refashioning of their moral personhood, and how this process can only be understood at the intersection of their unique personal experiences, a shared Russian/Soviet history, and increasingly influential global discourses and practices. The result is a new approach to understanding everyday moral experience and the processes by which new moral persons are cultivated.

The large and sudden influx of missionaries into the former Soviet Union after seventy years of militant secularism has been controversial, and the widespread occurrence of conversion has led to anxiety about social and national disintegration. Although these concerns have been vigorously discussed in national arenas, social scientists have remained remarkably silent about the subject. This volume’s focus on conversion offers a novel approach to the dislocations of the postsocialist experience. In eight well researched ethnographic accounts the authors analyze a range of missionary encounters as well as aspects of conversion and "anti-conversion" in different parts of the region, thus challenging the problematic idea that religious life after socialism involved a simple “revival” of repressed religious traditions. Instead, they unravel the unexpected twists and turns of religious dynamics, and the processes that have challenged popular ideas about religion and culture. The contributions show how conversion is rooted in the disruptive qualities of the new "capitalist experience” and document its unsettling effects on the individual and social level.

Russian Orthodoxy Resurgent is the first book to fully explore the expansive and ill-understood role that Russia's ancient Christian faith has played in the fall of Soviet Communism and in the rise of Russian nationalism today. John and Carol Garrard tell the story of how the Orthodox Church's moral weight helped defeat the 1991 coup against Gorbachev launched by Communist Party hardliners. The Soviet Union disintegrated, leaving Russians searching for a usable past. The Garrards reveal how Patriarch Aleksy II--a former KGB officer and the man behind the church's successful defeat of the coup--is reconstituting a new national idea in the church's own image. In the new Russia, the former KGB who run the country--Vladimir Putin among them--proclaim the cross, not the hammer and sickle. Meanwhile, a majority of Russians now embrace the Orthodox Faith with unprecedented fervor. The Garrards trace how Aleksy orchestrated this transformation, positioning his church to inherit power once held by the Communist Party and to become the dominant ethos of the military and government. They show how the revived church under Aleksy prevented mass violence during the post-Soviet turmoil, and how Aleksy astutely linked the church with the army and melded Russian patriotism and faith. Russian Orthodoxy Resurgent argues that the West must come to grips with this complex and contradictory resurgence of the Orthodox
Following the end of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church has canonized a great number of Russian saints. Whereas in the first millennium of Russian Christianity (988-1988) the Church recognized merely 300 Russian saints, the number had grown to more than 2,000 by 2006. This book explores the remarkable phenomenon of new Russian martyrdom. It outlines the process of canonization, examines how saints are venerated, and relates all this to the ways in which the Russian state and its people have chosen to remember the Soviet Union and commemorate the victims of its purges. The book includes in-depth case studies of particular saints and examines the diverse ways in which they are venerated.

After more than twenty years since the fall of the USSR, the evangelical movement in post-Soviet society has entered a crucial phase in its historical development. Setting out a transformative vision of mission and theological education, this book makes an important contribution towards the renewal of the church in this fascinating--but deeply troubled--part of the world. After the violent and disruptive events that followed the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity and Freedom in 2013/14, the evangelical movement in post-Soviet society now has an unprecedented opportunity to become a shining example of a "church without walls." Searle and Cherenkov reflect on the political, social, cultural, and intellectual legacy of the Soviet Union and offer bold and innovative proposals on how the church can rediscover its prophetic voice by relinquishing its debilitating dependence on the state and, instead, expressing solidarity with the people in their legitimate aspirations for freedom and democracy. Notwithstanding the pessimism and lament expressed on many pages, the authors conclude on a positive note, predicting that the coming years will witness a flowering of evangelical ecumenism in action as Christian solidarity flourishes and overflows denominational boundaries and parochial interests.

In the post-Soviet period morality became a debatable concept, open to a multitude of expressions and performances. From Russian Orthodoxy to Islam, from shamanism to Protestantism, religions of various kinds provided some of the first possible alternative moral discourses and practices after the end of the Soviet system. This influence remains strong today. Within the Russian context, religion and morality intersect in such social domains as the relief of social suffering, the interpretation of history, the construction and reconstruction of traditions, individual and social health, and business practices. The influence of religion is also apparent in the way in which the Russian Orthodox Church increasingly acts as the moral voice of the government. The wide-ranging topics in this ethnographically based volume show the broad religious influence on both discursive and everyday moralities. The contributors reveal that although religion is a significant aspect of the various assemblages of morality, much like in other parts of the world, religion in postsocialist Russia cannot be separated from the political or economic or transnational institutional aspects of morality.

The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought is an authoritative new reference and interpretive volume detailing the origins, development, and influence of one of the richest aspects of Russian cultural and intellectual life - its religious ideas. After setting the historical background and context, the Handbook follows the leading figures and movements in modern Russian religious thought through a period of immense historical upheavals, including seventy years of officially atheist communist rule and the growth of an exiled diaspora with, e.g., its journal The Way. Therefore the shape of Russian religious thought cannot be separated from long-running debates with nihilism and atheism. Important thinkers such as Losev and Bakhtin had to guard their words in an environment of religious persecution, whilst some views were shaped by prison experiences. Before the Soviet period, Russian national identity was closely linked with religion - linkages which again are being forged in the new Russia. Relevant in this connection are complex relationships with Judaism. In addition to religious thinkers such as Philarct, Chaadaev, Khomiakov, Kireevsky, Soloviev, Florensky, Bulgakov, Berdyaev, Shestov, Frank, Karsavin, and Alexander Men, the Handbook also looks at the role of religion in aesthetics, music, poetry, art, film, and the novelists Dostojevsky and Tolstoy. Ideas, institutions, and movements discussed include the Church academies, Slavophilism and Westernism, theos, the name-glorying (imiaslavie) controversy, the God-seekers and God-builders, Russian religious idealism and liberalism, and the Neopatristic school. Occultism is considered, as is the role of tradition and the influence of Russian religious thought in the West.

This book examines the key 2008 publication of the Russian Orthodox Church on human dignity, freedom, and rights. It considers how the document was formed, charting the development over time of the Russian Orthodox Church's views on human rights. It analyzes the detail of the document, and assesses the practical and political impact inside the Church, at the national level and in the international arena. Overall, it shows how the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church has shifted from outright hostility towards individual human rights
Church Slavonic, one of the world’s historic sacred languages, has experienced a revival in post-Soviet Russia. Blending religious studies and sociolinguistics, this book looks at Church Slavonic in the contemporary period. It uses Slavonic in order to analyse a number of wider topics, including the renewal and factionalism of the Orthodox Church; the transformation of the Russian language; and the debates about protecting the nation from Western cults and culture.

Specialists from Europe and the US investigate the current and changing role of religion in post-communist Russia. Drawing upon Eastern Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic points of view, they examine the Russian religious attitudes, activities and institutions, and explore the ways in which religion will significantly impact emerging social and political questions there. The volume should be of use to scholars of Russian politics, society, and religion and for anyone interested in the emerging culture of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The 2010s saw an introduction of legislative acts about religion, sexuality, and culture in Russia, which caused an uproar of protests. They politicized areas of life commonly perceived as private and expected to be free of the state’s control. As a result, political activism and radical grassroots movements engaged many Russians in controversies about religion and culture and polarized popular opinion in the capitals and regions alike. This volume presents seven case studies which probe into the politics of religion and culture in today’s Russia. The contributions highlight the diversity of Russia’s religious communities and cultural practices by analyzing Hasidic Jewish identities, popular culture sponsored by the Orthodox Church, literary mobilization of the National Bolshevik Party, cinematic narratives of the Chechen wars, militarization of political Orthodoxy, and moral debates caused by opera as well as film productions. The authors draw on a variety of theoretical approaches and methodologies, including opinion surveys, ethnological fieldwork, narrative analysis, Foucault’s conceptualization of biopower, catachrestic politics, and sociological theories of desecularization. The volume’s contributors are Sanna Turoma, Kaarina Aitamurto, Tomi Huttunen, Susan Ikonen, Boris Knorre, Irina Kotkina, Jussi Lassila, Andrey Makarychev, Elena Ostrovskaya, and Mikhail Suslov.

Based on extensive original research at the local level, this book explores the relationship between Russian Orthodoxy and politics in contemporary Russia. It reveals close personal links between politicians at the local, regional and national levels and their counterparts at the equivalent level in the Russian Orthodox Church – priests and monks, bishops and archbishops – who are extensively consulted about political decisions. It outlines a convergence of conservative ideology between politicians and clerics and also highlights that, despite working closely together, there are nevertheless many tensions. The book examines in detail particular areas of cooperation and tension: reform to religious education and a growing emphasis on traditional moral values, the restitution of former church property and the introduction of new festive days. Overall, the book concludes that there is much uncertainty, ambiguity and great local variation.

A fresh look at post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia and at the Soviet historical background that shaped the present.

"There is little written about the Russian Orthodox Church, and precious little by political scientists who use qualitative, critical methods. This book is a welcome contribution and will receive attention from political scientists, anthropologists, and sociologists of religion." ---Catherine Wanner. Associate Professor of History. Anthropology and Religious Studies. Penn State University --Book Jacket.

Church-state relations during the Soviet period were much more complex and changeable than is generally assumed. From the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 until the 21st Party Congress in 1961, the Communist regime’s attitude toward the Russian Orthodox Church zigzagged from indifference and opportunism to hostility and repression. Drawing from new access to previously closed archives, historian Tatiana Chumachenko has documented the twists and turns and human dramas of church-state relations during these decades. This rich material provides essential background to the post-Soviet Russian government’s controversial relationship to the Russian Orthodox Church today.
This book, based on extensive original research in the field, analyses the political, social and cultural implications of the rise of Islam in post-Soviet Russia. Examining in particular the situation in Tatarstan and Dagestan, where there are large Muslim populations, the authors chart the long history of Muslim and orthodox Christian co-existence in Russia, discuss recent moves towards greater autonomy and the assertion of ethnic-religious identities which underlie such moves, and consider the actual practice of Islam at the local level, showing the differences between "official" and "unofficial" Islam, how ceremonies and rituals are actually observed (or not), how Islam is transmitted from one generation to the next, the role of Islamic thought, including that of radical sects, and Islamic views of men and women's different roles. Overall, the book demonstrates how far Islam in Russia has been extensively influenced by the Soviet and Russian multi-ethnic context.

This book examines how Muslims and Christians in Russia use religious variants of the Russian and Tatar languages to sustain, challenge and subvert relations of power.

The Librarian of Congress and author of The Face of Russia takes a close-up look at one of the world's most pressing issues, the turbulent conditions of Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the efforts of Russia to find a post-Soviet identity.

How are Russians coping with the transition from communism to capitalism? How have their lives changed since perestroika? How do they feed their families, educate their children, and try to stay mentally and physically healthy? What has become of Russian literature and the arts, of the Russian Orthodox Church? Written from the viewpoint of a foreigner with the experience and perspective of an insider, by a woman with a keen eye for observation who saw Russia at the grass roots during a fascinating time of transition, this work presents a vivid picture of contemporary Russia that most Americans, including tourists, never see.

When the Bolsheviks set out to build a new world in the wake of the Russian Revolution, they expected religion to die off. Soviet power used a variety of tools—from education to propaganda to terror—to turn its vision of a Communist world without religion into reality. Yet even with its monopoly on ideology and power, the Soviet Communist Party never succeeded in overcoming religion and creating an atheist society. A Sacred Space Is Never Empty presents the first history of Soviet atheism from the 1917 revolution to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Drawing on a wealth of archival material and in-depth interviews with those who were on the front lines of Communist ideological campaigns, Victoria Smolkin argues that to understand the Soviet experiment, we must make sense of Soviet atheism. Smolkin shows how atheism was reimagined as an alternative cosmology with its own set of positive beliefs, practices, and spiritual commitments. Through its engagements with religion, the Soviet leadership realized that removing religion from the "sacred spaces" of Soviet life was not enough. Then, in the final years of the Soviet experiment, Mikhail Gorbachev—in a stunning and unexpected reversal—abandoned atheism and reintroduced religion into Soviet public life. A Sacred Space Is Never Empty explores the meaning of atheism for religious life, for Communist ideology, and for Soviet politics.

A nuclear priesthood has arisen in Russia. From portable churches to the consecration of weapons systems, the Russian Orthodox Church has been integrated into every facet of the armed forces to become a vital part of Russian national security, politics, and identity. This extraordinary intertwining of church and military is nowhere more visible than in the nuclear forces community, where the priesthood has penetrated all levels of command and the Church has positioned itself as a guardian of the state's nuclear potential. Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy considers how, since the Soviet collapse in 1991, the Church has worked its way into the nuclear forces, the most significant wing of one of the world's most powerful military organizations. Dmitry Adamsky describes how the Orthodox faith has merged with Russian national identity as the Church continues to expand its influence on foreign and domestic politics. The Church both legitimizes and influences Moscow's assertive national security strategy in the twenty-first century. This book sheds light on the role of faith in modern militaries and highlights the implications of this phenomenon for international security. Ultimately, Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy interrogates the implications of the confluence of religion and security for other members of the nuclear club, beyond Russia.

Orthodoxy has achieved a large scale revival in Russia following the collapse of Communism. However, paradoxically, although there is a high level of identification with Orthodoxy, there is in fact a low level of church attendance. This book, based on in depth ethnographic fieldwork, explores the social background and moral attitudes of the "little flock" of believers...
Access Free The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: Politics, Culture and Greater Russia (Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series) by John A. Garrard

who actively participate in religious life. It reveals that the complex moral beliefs of the faithful have a disproportionately high impact on Russian society overall; that among the faithful there is a strong emphasis on striving for personal perfection; but that also there are strong collective ideas concerning religious nationalism and the synergy between the secular and the religious.

This book outlines the complexities, contestation, and contradictions in the formal organization and contents of patriotic education in post-Soviet Russia. While the topics of patriotism and patriotic education are highly political and politicized, this study approaches them from a more sociological perspective. It is based on a variety of sources and empirical data, including the indicators and budgets of federal and regional patriotic-education programs and on field research. The book explores in depth all major agents of patriotic education in Russia, such as the government, schools, youth associations, churches, and the film/cartoon industry. It traces the development of governmental patriotic programs in recent decades, discusses how the Soviet past and political traditions influence today’s system of patriotic education, and presents numerous case studies illustrating real-life processes in current patriotic education.

What happens when the Russian Orthodox tradition meets post-Soviet Russia? This is the general question which will be in the focus in this study of the Orthodox discourse in post-Soviet Russian culture. It will be analyzed both in its own right and as a constituent of memory, a conservative or imperialist political attitude and postmodernism. One issue addressed in the debate over the use of Church Slavonic as the liturgical language. Another involves the nature of the canonizations that have taken place in the Orthodox Church in recent years and attempts to canonize the soldier Evgenij Rodionov and Stalin. A third topic is jurodstvo, or holy foolishness, for centuries a special and recurring theme in the Orthodox Church that has re-emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union. A chapter is devoted to Ksenija of Petersburg, a peculiar and much beloved holy fool of that city. A final issue concerns the significance of the Orthodox tradition in recent Russian art and poetry.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union has provided scholars with tremendously rich material for the study of comparative nation building. Not since the decolonization of Africa in the 1960s have so many new states been established in one stroke in one region. The post-Soviet states, moreover, have all the necessary prerequisites for fruitful comparison: a number of similarities, but also significant differences in terms of size, culture, and recent history. In order to survive in the long run, modern states normally must have a population that possesses some sense of unity. Its citizens must adhere to some common values and common allegiance towards the same state institutions and symbols. This does not mean that all inhabitants must necessarily share the same culture, but they should at least regard themselves as members of the same nation. Strategies to foster this kind of common nationhood in a population are usually referred to as 'nation building'. After a decade of post-Soviet nation building certain patterns are emerging, and not always the most obvious ones. Some states seem to manage well against high odds, while others appear to be disintegrating or sinking slowly into oblivion. To a remarkable degree the former Soviet republics have chosen different models for their nation building. This book examines the preconditions for these endeavors, the goals the state leaders are aiming at, and the means they employ to reach them.

Russian Society and the Orthodox Church examines the Russian Orthodox Church’s social and political role and its relationship to civil society in post-Communist Russia. It shows how Orthodox prelates, clergy and laity have shaped Russians’ attitudes towards religious and ideological pluralism, which in turn have influenced the ways in which Russians understand civil society, including those of its features - pluralism and freedom of conscience - that are essential for a functioning democracy. It shows how the official church, including the Moscow Patriarchate, has impeded the development of civil society, while on the other hand the non-official church, including nonconformist clergy and lay activists, has promoted concepts central to civil society.

Post-Soviet Russia. The Wild Wild East. Richard Bryant offers a glimpse at real life behind what remains of the rusting Iron Curtain. At a time when relations between the United States and Russia are once again tense, Richard’s work is a telling portrait of life in modern Moscow. From train journeys across four timezones to airport security inspections, you’ll never look at Russia the same way again.

Russian Orthodoxy Resurgent is the first book to fully explore the expansive and ill-understood role that Russia’s ancient Christian faith has played in the fall of Soviet Communism and in the rise of Russian nationalism today. John and Carol Garrard tell the story of how the Orthodox Church’s moral weight helped defeat the 1991 coup against Gorbachev launched by
Communist Party hardliners. The Soviet Union disintegrated, leaving Russians searching for a usable past. The Garrards reveal how Patriarch Aleksy II—a former KGB officer and the man behind the church’s successful defeat of the coup—is reconstituting a new national idea in the church’s own image. In the new Russia, the former KGB who run the country—Vladimir Putin among them—proclaim the cross, not the hammer and sickle. Meanwhile, a majority of Russians now embrace the Orthodox faith with unprecedented fervor. The Garrards trace how Aleksy orchestrated this transformation, positioning his church to inherit power once held by the Communist Party and to become the dominant ethos of the military and government. They show how the revived church under Aleksy prevented mass violence during the post-Soviet turmoil, and how Aleksy astutely linked the church with the army and melded Russian patriotism and faith. Russian Orthodoxy Resurgent argues that the West must come to grips with this complex and contradictory resurgence of the Orthodox faith, because it is the hidden force behind Russia’s domestic and foreign policies today.

Provides a systematic and accessible overview of church-state relations in the Soviet Union. This text explores the shaping of Soviet religious policy from the death of Stalin until the collapse of communism, and considers the place of religion in the post

This volume explores the relationship between new media and religion, focusing on the digital era’s impact on the Russian Orthodox Church. A believer may now enter a virtual chapel, light a candle through drag-and-drop, send an online prayer request, or worship virtual icons and relics. In recent years, however, Church leaders and public figures have become increasingly skeptical about new media. The internet, some of them argue, breaches Russia’s ‘spiritual sovereignty’ and implants values and ideas alien to Russian culture. This collection examines how Orthodox ecclesiology has been influenced by its new digital environment, such as the intersection of virtual religious life with religious experience in the “real” church, the role of clerics on the Russian Web, and the transformation of the Orthodox notion of sobornost’ (catholicity), asking whether and how Orthodox activity on the internet can be counted as authentic religious practice.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the role of the Russian Orthodox Church as a cultural force in the formation of post Soviet Russian national identity. In order to demonstrate the depth of Russian Orthodoxy's involvement with Russian life, Russian Orthodox political and social programs in the post Soviet era are examined. A brief summary of Orthodox involvement historically in political and social life is presented as a framework for understanding Orthodoxy's role in the post Soviet period, followed by an examination of contemporary church state relations, both political and economic, and a discussion of the evolution of post-Soviet Orthodox social ministry.

In recent years, the Russian Orthodox Church has become a more prominent part of post-Soviet Russia. A number of assumptions exist regarding the Church’s relationship with the Russian state: that the Church has always been dominated by Russia’s secular elites; that the clerics have not sufficiently fought this domination and occasionally failed to act in the Church’s best interest; and that the Church was turned into a Soviet institution during the twentieth century. This book challenges these assumptions. It demonstrates that church-state relations in post-communist Russia can be seen in a much more differentiated way, and that the church is not subservient, very much having its own agenda. Yet at the same time it is sharing the state’s, and Russian society’s nationalist vision. The book analyses the Russian Orthodox Church’s political culture, focusing on the Putin and Medvedev eras from 2000. It examines the upper echelons of the Moscow Patriarchate in relation to the governing elite and to Russian public opinion, explores the role of the church in the formation of state religious policy, and the church’s role within the Russian military. It discusses how the Moscow Patriarchate is asserting itself in former Soviet republics outside Russia, especially in Estonia, Ukraine and Belarus. It concludes by re-emphasising that, although the church often mirrors the Kremlin’s political preferences, it most definitely acts independently.