

## Sacralization of War

### The War in Ukraine and its Religious Legitimation

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In 1990, the CSCE states signed the “Charter for a New Europe” in Paris, which spoke of a new “era of democracy, peace and unity.” “The age of confrontation and division in Europe has come to an end. We declare that our future relationship will be based on respect and cooperation,” says the Charter.

Almost 35 years after it was signed, this declaration appears in a new light. Contrary to what is expressed in the Charter, there are many indications that instead of peace and unity, a new era of confrontation and division of Europe is emerging, in which conflicts of the past that were thought to have been overcome are being continued. No other conflict has influenced and changed Europe’s recent history and its social and political conditions to such an extent as the war in Ukraine, which originated in Russia.

Against this backdrop, a special issue of the journal is planned in which scholars from various disciplines will analyze key ideological elements of this war. The focus will be on religious aspects that are used to legitimize the war.

On the Russian side, a close connection in terms of content and personnel between leading representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate on the one hand and state actors on the other is characteristic. Statements by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) describe the invasion and occupation of parts of Ukrainian territory as a “holy war” or a “fight against the Antichrist.” For their part, secular state authorities use religious language to legitimize acts of war. Religiously charged concepts such as the concept of a “Russian World” (*Russkij Mir*), a “Triune Russian Nation” or “Holy Rus” have become central elements of the war discourse on both the church and state side. Some see the Moscow Patriarchate as the driving force behind the war, while others see the church actors solely as compliant henchmen of the state. The question is therefore which strategies of religious legitimization are used in detail: Where do the concepts come from? What do they look like on closer inspection? Who are the key players here? Who are the actual addressees? These and other related questions will be explored in this issue.

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