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Missions of the Russian Orthodox Church as a Tool of Diplomacy: from History to the Present

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Abstract

The aim of the article was to determine the role of the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church in the context of its historical-political development. The methodological basis of the study meant a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach using systemic, civilizational, historical-chronological and structural-functional methods, as well as the method of comparative analysis and institutional approach. The results obtained allow us to conclude that, in the modern world, the Russian Orthodox Church has been noted for its active participation in missionary activity, which has also set itself the goal of spreading the ideas of the 'Slavic' or 'Russian world' among the peoples of Asia and Africa. The spiritual values preached through the missionary work of the Russian Orthodox Church, taking into account its contribution to the Russian state and culture, are gradually becoming the basis for popularizing the Russian national idea, which is dialectically positioning itself as the main civilizational vector of the international policies of the Russian Federation. Thus, the Russian Orthodox Church has a rather strong influence on the formation of the image of the Russian Federation in the eyes of the world community, this is so, in part, due to its spiritual missions.

Keywords: Russian Orthodox Church; Russian Federation; religion and politics; missionary work; Orthodox mission.

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Misiones de la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa como herramienta de la diplomacia: de la historia al presente

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo fue determinar el papel de la actividad misionera de la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa en el contexto de su desarrollo histórico-político. La base metodológica del estudio significó un enfoque interdisciplinario integral que utiliza métodos sistémicos, civilizacionales, histórico-cronológicos y estructural-funcionales, así como también el método de análisis comparativo y el enfoque institucional. Los resultados obtenidos permiten concluir que, en el mundo moderno, la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa se ha destacado por su participación activa en la actividad misionera, que se ha fijado además el objetivo de difundir las ideas del ‘mundo eslavo’ o ‘ruso’ entre los pueblos de Asia y África. Los valores espirituales predicados a través de la obra misional de la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa, teniendo en cuenta su contribución al Estado y la cultura rusa, se están convirtiendo gradualmente en la base para popularizar la idea nacional rusa, que se está posicionando dialécticamente en el principal vector civilizatorio de las políticas internacionales de la Federación Rusa. De modo que, la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa tiene una influencia bastante fuerte en la formación de la imagen de la Federación Rusa a los ojos de la comunidad mundial, esto es así, en parte, debido a sus misiones espirituales.

Palabras clave: Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa; Federación Rusa; religión y política; obra misional; misión ortodoxa.

Introduction

Globalization and geopolitics require key players in international politics to expand the use of foreign policy tools. Despite global trends towards the secularization of modern society, the religious factor continues to play an important role in it, increasing its influence. This is because of the increasing importance of cultural factors in shaping world politics due to the emergence of a certain ideological vacuum after the crisis of communism.

If during the Cold War the world was divided into ideological groups, now other values are coming to the fore: the historical past of peoples, religions, languages, belonging to certain cultural groups, nations, and civilizations. Thus, the religious factor in the former ‘oasis of communism’ – the Russian Federation, acquired a new breath, which was lost after the arrival of the Bolsheviks. The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), as the religion of the majority, began to play not only an important religious,

cultural and spiritual role in the life of the Russian state, but also a political role.

To achieve its own foreign policy goals, many of which are intertwined with state ones, the ROC uses a variety of tools. Among the latter, Orthodox missions play an important role as a means of promoting the geopolitical projects of the 'Orthodox world' and the 'Russian world'. Thus, missions, to a certain extent, contribute to implementing of the geopolitical plans of the state. For example, the missions of the ROC, despite the specificity of their functions and declared independence, are forced to take on a certain burden in the work of the mechanism of foreign state activity.

In turn, the government of the Russian Federation supports these institutions at the state level. There are indirect forms of state influence on programs carried out by religious organizations abroad, relying on which the Russian Federation implements its pragmatic line outside the country. It should be emphasized that most often this is precisely the indirect impact in the form of tax benefits to missions, protection under the slogan of the right to freedom of conscience of the interests of specific missionaries or projects carried out by them, pressure on the legislative institutions of the country through international human rights and religious organizations in order to change objectionable legal acts, etc. At the same time, the effectiveness of such an impact is determined by the real political and economic potential of the state.

1. Research Objectives

Noting the strengthening of the role of religious missions in modern international politics, the authors are convinced that the Russian Orthodox Church is also actively restoring the religious and political role in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Thus, *the purpose of the study* is to determine the role of the missionary activity of the ROC in the context of its development.

Based on the goal, the following tasks need to be solved:

- to determine the features of the genesis and development of the Russian Orthodox Church missionary activity;
- to characterize the main areas of activity of the Russian Orthodox Church missionaries in the Russian Empire era;
- to consider the current state of the Russian Orthodox Church missionary work;
- to identify the political aspects of the Orthodox missionaries' activities.

At the same time, the *object of the study* is the Russian Orthodox Church missionary activity, both in the past and in the present.

2. Methodology of the research

Since the topic is historical and political science in nature, when writing the article, the authors were guided by an interdisciplinary approach, using both general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, concretization, generalization) and traditional methods of historical analysis (historical-typological, comparative-historical, historical-functional), and the political science tools (comparative analysis, theory of political systems, structural-functional, etc.).

The fundamental principles of the study were historicism, scientific character and objectivity.

Thus, the historical method made it possible to consider the stages of evolution of the Orthodox mission in the Russian Empire, and the chronological approach made it possible to fix the sequence of evolution of Orthodox missions in a time continuum; the structural-functional method made it possible to study the Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission in the complex of its fundamental principles; system analysis made it possible to approach the subject of research in a complex and multidimensional way, and to establish the relationship and interdependence of the studied phenomena. An important place is occupied by the institutional approach, since the Russian Orthodox Church is seen as a single institution, and the mission is its element.

The use of this methodological tools made it possible to fully and objectively to solve this problem.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The historical tradition of using Orthodox missions in the diplomatic activity of the Russian Empire

The history of missionary service gives us a good opportunity to trace the formation of this type of activity, and to compare the characteristics of missions that existed in different periods of social development. Thanks to the missionary activity of the ROC, Orthodoxy has established itself among many tribes and peoples living in its modern canonical territory.

Until 1917, this organization carried out its external mission among the non-Christian peoples of the Russian Empire in Siberia and the Far

East, and outside the empire, in particular, in Japan, China, Korea, North America, and Palestine. Most of the missions originated as diplomatic missions of Russia, which we will try to consider using the example of some ecclesiastical missions.

The creation of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China was caused by the needs of the Russian state in the development of relations with the countries of the Far East. Officially, the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China was founded by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1713. The first chairman of the Beijing Mission (1713-1717) was a Ukrainian (a native of Chernihiv), a graduate of the Kyiv Theological Academy, Archimandrite Ilarion (Lezhaiskiy) (1657-1717) (Pan, 2000; Medvedev, 2000).

The legal basis for the existence of an Orthodox mission in China (its location, status, composition, content) was recorded in the Kyakhta (1727) and Tientsin treaties (1858).

In 1864 the Mission was divided into ecclesiastical and diplomatic. Until 1858, the Mission was maintained at the expense of the Qing and Russian states. After the conclusion of the Tientsin Treaty, funds were released only from Russia (Shubina, 1998).

The functions of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing were as follows: 1) religious propaganda (the activities of the mission to spread Orthodoxy in China), 2) diplomatic (the mission played the role of an unofficial Russian diplomatic representation in China), 3) research (with the activities of members of the mission great successes in Russian sinology are connected).

From 1744 to 1864, the missionaries carried out instructions from the Collegium of Foreign Affairs (since 1819, the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). All instructions, appointments, and transfers in the mission were carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informing the Synod of its activities. The duties of the Russian resident in China were performed by the head of the mission, archimandrite.

All members of the Mission (persons of the clergy, students, doctor, painter) were to collect political, trade, economic and military information about China. Special hopes were placed on the doctor and the painter:

Thanks to their work, the Mission can provide various services and favours to Chinese dignitaries and other persons that we need, and mutually expect services from them (Shubina, 2010: 190).

The methods of obtaining information were different and were of a constant and objective nature: through acquaintance with influential people and officials of the Tribunal, through bribery or intelligence under the guise of spreading Orthodoxy.

Of particular note are the activities of such missionaries as Avvakum (Chestnoy), Guriy (Karpov), Palladiy (Kafarov), Polikarp (Tugarinov) and diplomats: K.G. Krymskiy, A.A. Tatarinov. Returning to Russia, the former missionaries served as interpreters for the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

When in the middle of the XIX century England, France and the United States sent their residents to China, then Russia did the same in 1860. And then the question arose about the division of the spiritual and diplomatic functions of the mission.

From 1864, the Mission was engaged exclusively in ecclesiastical affairs and gradually ceased to play a political role, although Russian ambassadors and diplomats continued to use the Mission's connections in China (Trygub, 2015).

The mission was closed in 1954, five years after the Chinese Revolution. At present, the Russian Federation Embassy in China is located on the territory of the Mission.

In 1794, the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in America was established. The reasons for its emergence were the active development of merchants and crafts in Alaska. In 1784, Grigoriy Shelekhov, founder of the famous Russian-American Company, landed on Kodiak Island, on the southern coast of Alaska in the Gulf of Alaska. One of Shelekhov's ideas was the spread of Christianity among the natives of the newly discovered lands.

He built a church on Kodiak Island, founded a school and personally baptized many Aleuts. Subsequently, together with his companion I. Golikov, he sent a petition to Empress Catherine II and the Holy Synod to send missionaries to this region. The petition was granted, and a mission of eight monks headed by Archimandrite Ioasaph (Bolotov) arrived on Kodiak Island on September 24, 1794 (Grigoriev, 1988).

During the first two years of their activity, the missionaries baptized 12,000 natives and built several chapels. In 1867 Russia sold Alaska to the United States. An agreement was reached between the two states on the recognition by the United States of the property and rights of the Russian Orthodox Church in the territory of Alaska. In 1870, the Holy Synod created a separate diocese of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands.

As a result, a separate Orthodox church structure was organized and brought to the threshold of the New World, and after the separation of Alaska from the Russian Empire, it took root there. Over the course of its short history, the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in America managed to expand in Alaska not only the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, but also the influence of the Russian state.

Ecclesiastical Missions of the Russian Orthodox Church were also opened in Korea and Japan in the second half of the 19th century.

After the signing of the Russo-Japanese Treaty of Shimoda on February 7, 1855, Japan opened its doors to Russia. According to the Shimoda Treaty, a consulate was opened in Hokkaido, and Russian ships received the right to enter the ports of Shimoda and Nagasaki. According to the Edos Treaty 1858, a permanent Russian diplomatic mission began to operate in the Japanese capital.

In 1859, the first Russian consul in Japan, I.A. Goshkevich requested the Holy Synod to appoint a new priest to the church in Hakodate (Hokkaido Island). He could be useful not only for his ecclesiastical activities, but also for his scientific work (in addition to missionary work, the priest had to perform reconnaissance and cognitive work – learn the Japanese language, get acquainted with the history and geography of the Japanese islands, understand the mentality of the Japanese, etc.).

Ivan Dmitrievich Kasatkin (1836-1912) was appointed missionary priest, later – Hieromonk Nikolai. On July 2, 1861, he arrived in Hakodate, where in the first years he independently studied the Japanese language, culture and life of the Japanese and dealt with organizational issues for the opening of the Russian Orthodox Church. To 1870, the Orthodox community numbered more than 4,000 people, and by 1912 – about 33 thousand people and 266 Orthodox communities.

On January 14, 1870, the Russian Orthodox Church decided to form the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission. In 1872, the headquarters of the mission was opened in Tokyo, where the first Episcopal department of the Japanese Orthodox Church was founded eight years later (Yakovlev, 2001).

1890s – early 20th century were the most fruitful years of the Mission's activity. Since 1882, when the seminary's first graduation took place, dozens of well-educated young people have regularly poured into Japanese public life. Many graduates of the seminary later became major translators and laid the foundations of Russian studies in Japan. This was facilitated by the fact that the mission sent the most capable students to continue their education in Russia. Among the most famous are Konishi Masutaro, Nobori Semu and others.

During the Meiji period, the school graduated about a thousand people. Among them were the future professor of St. Petersburg University Yoshibumi Kurono, the writer Goro Amada, the author of the Constitution of 1889 Takusaburo Goro, the mayor of Yokohama Kensuse Ando, the governor of Osaka Nozomu Nakagawa, the Minister of Education Hichisaburo Hirano and many others who influenced all spheres of Japanese culture and, thus, Russian impact on the Japanese government and society increased.

At the beginning of the twentieth century in the seminary at the Ecclesiastical Mission, they began to train military translators, graduating annually from 5 to 10 people.

After the turbulent times of civil confrontation, the political role of the Japanese Ecclesiastical Mission was completely lost, and after 1945 it fell under the control of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR).

No less important for the development of the Far East was the Ecclesiastical Mission in Korea, which was founded by the decree of the Synod of July 2-4, 1897. This Far Eastern country received formal independence from China under the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, and on October 12, 1897, the Korean king Gojong proclaimed himself emperor. With the development of Russian-Korean relations, the need gradually arose to create a church representation at the Russian diplomatic mission in the country.

The task of the mission would include taking care of the Russian Orthodox living on the Korean Peninsula, and missionary preaching among the local population. Founded on the initiative of the Minister of Finance S.Yu. Witte and financed personally by Emperor Nicholas II, the Korean Mission was supposed to ensure the political influence of Russia in the country through missionary and cultural activities.

In the middle of 1899, the first employee of the Ecclesiastical Mission, Hierodeacon Nikolai (Alekseev), settled in Korea. At the beginning of January 1900, head of the Mission Archimandrite Khrisanf (Shchetkovskiy, 2012) arrived in Seoul, appointed by the decree of the Holy Synod of September 7, 1899. On February 17, he consecrated the house church of the Holy Martyr Nicholas the Wonderworker at the Russian embassy, in the envoy's apartment.

The new Mission did not yet have its own premises, and the Russian envoy to Seoul, Aleksandr Pavlov, placed at its disposal the building of the former Russian-Korean bank (Shchetkovskiy, 2012).

As a result, in the first years of the Mission's existence, it developed quite rapidly and successfully. Chief Procurator of the Synod K. Pobedonostsev in his report for 1900 stated with enthusiasm: "The success of the Orthodox mission in Korea can now be considered quite assured... Orthodoxy here can be established and spread..." (Pobedonostsev, 2003: 264).

The further military-political defeats of Russia in the Far East made a cardinal impact on the development of the mission. After the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Russian political influence in Korea was almost completely lost, since in November 1906 this country was forced to recognize a Japanese protectorate over itself, and on August

22, 1910, Korea was completely annexed. From 1906 to 1917, the Russian colony in Seoul was limited to the consulate, Mission staff and about 10-20 merchants (Shkarovskiy, 2009).

The revolutionary events of 1917 and the further loss of ties with Russia greatly complicated the activities of the Korean Ecclesiastical Mission, which eked out a miserable existence. In those difficult conditions, there is no need to talk about any political and religious influence of the Mission, although it became a refuge for many thousands of Russian emigrants in Korea. The Mission finally ceased to exist during the Korean War (1950-1953) (Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Korea, 2019).

The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, which was founded in 1847 and continues to operate to this day, played a great role in strengthening the position of the Russian Empire in the Middle East. In 1847, Emperor Nicholas I approved the foundation of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, headed by Archimandrite Porfiriy (Uspensky). The Mission worked in close cooperation with the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire.

Over time, a number of new Russian institutions were founded in the Holy Land, to which many of the initial functions of the Ecclesiastical Mission were transferred. In 1856, an agency of the 'Russian Society of Shipping and Trade' was established in Jerusalem, which carried out the delivery of pilgrims from Russia. In 1858, the Russian consulate was founded, which took over diplomatic functions. Thus, gradually the interaction between the Russian consulate and the Ecclesiastical Mission was reduced to almost zero. The Mission began to perform an exclusively religious and ecclesiastical function.

In 1914 the First World War interrupted the activities of the Mission. In 1919, after the occupation of Palestine by Great Britain, the Russian monks returned to Jerusalem, but communication with Russia was interrupted and the Mission was deprived of the protection of the State, most of the former sources of material assistance disappeared (Zaitsev and Lukyanov, N.d.; Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, 2015).

Attempts by the Soviet Government and Moscow Patriarch Aleksey I in the second half of the 1940s to revive the former role of the Mission in Jerusalem in order to "increase influence on the Eastern patriarchates" (Shkarovskiy, 1999: 288) was unsuccessful. The reason for this was a sharp drop in the interest of the USSR leadership in the foreign policy actions of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Middle East.

3.2. The Orthodox mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in international relations at the present stage

The fall of the communist regime gave a 'second wind' to the missionary tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, both internal and external missions began to actively develop. According to the definition of the Council of Bishops in 1994 'On the Orthodox Mission in the Modern World', in February 1995 a working group was formed to plan the revival of the Orthodox mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in its canonical territory.

After the development of the concept in December 1995, by decree of the Patriarch and the determination of the Synod, a missionary department was formed, headed by Archbishop Ioann. The tasks of the department were determined by the provisions of the "Concept of the revival of the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church"; in accordance with the main areas of activity in the department, sectors were created: information-analytical, methodological, rehabilitation, apologetic and publishing" (Shkarovskiy, 2018: 84).

The last three decades have also significantly intensified the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church abroad. In many European countries, the number of parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church has increased several times, and in some places these parishes were created for the first time. For example, the presence of the ROC in Portugal, Germany, Japan, China, South Korea, etc. has increased.

The most important task of the missionary strategy is to identify key regions in the country where it is most expedient to conduct activities. It is believed that the idea of key points and zones that allow controlling large areas of space was introduced into geopolitics by military-strategic theories. At the same time, long before its theoretical formulation by geopoliticians, missionaries for many centuries built their work, basing it on a similar principle.

Roland Allen, in his book 'Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?', drawing on the experience of his predecessors, singled out this element as one of the most important in missionary practice. In his opinion, even the Apostle Paul founded his churches in places that were centres of world trade.

These settlements were not only the centres of a certain territory, but geographical points within a circle that outlined even wider areas that: "represented something more than themselves, and peered into wider distances than a provincial town, completely immersed in their petty interests" (Allen, 1993: 35). This rule is recommended to be adopted without hesitation, since it is part of the strategic plan 'attack on the whole country'.

On a global scale, entire countries or regions of the Earth are allocated for the implementation of large-scale missionary projects (Trofimchuk and Svishchev, 2000).

For the Russian Orthodox Church, Orthodox missions can introduce into their civilizational territory international institutions that represent Russian spiritual values. Missionaries not only spread religious views, but also prepare the ground for territorial claims, changes in religious and spiritual values and landmarks of the local community.

The religious factor can be actively used to try to join Russia with territories that have little connection with the center. That is why missionary work, as a phenomenon, for quite a long time was a way not only of church preaching, but also of the development of new territories and their voluntary bringing into the borders of Russia and the Russian Empire (Trygub, 2007: 80-81; Trygub, 2014).

At the same time, some researchers note a close relationship between the political goals of a secular ruler and the activities of the Church. Missionary work, which is a natural cultural and historical phenomenon, is becoming one of the instruments of influence on the political direction of social transformations.

Based on the chosen methods of missionary activity (method of presence, political approach, social evangelism, apologetic, ideological, nationalist approaches, methods of counter-mission and false mission), in parallel with the mission, certain foreign and domestic political goals of the state can be carried out, the effectiveness of achieving which is directly related to the effectiveness of activities missions (Isaev and Isaeva, 2013).

In the realities of the modern world, the most significant goal of the Orthodox mission is the preaching of the Gospel, which should lead not only to the growth of adherents in the missionary territory, but also to the possibility of creating a local church or diocesan unit. The implementation of this goal not only expands the spiritual influence of the ROC, but also pursues political goals. As the modern researcher O. Tserpitskaya points out:

Through the adoption of faith, people increase their desire to know the country where this faith is widespread, to familiarize themselves with its culture and history. Thus, the number of supporters of a particular country (in our case, the Russian Federation) is growing, its Diaspora is being strengthened, and, given modern political traditions, favorable ground is being created for lobbying its interests (Tserpitskaya, 2010: 84).

Achieving the goals and objectives set for the Orthodox mission is achieved by a certain set of methods that are used by missionary institutions.

Methods can be classified as follows (per O. Tserpitskaya):

1. incarnation approach: the use of the local language and the ordination of representatives of the local population;
2. method of presence: arranging one's life among the indigenous (non-Christian) population and influencing it by personal example;
3. political approach: reliance on the support of State Power (it is extremely rare in its pure form);
4. "Social evangelism" ("social evangelization") (Tserpitskaya, 2010: 85).

We are primarily interested in the political approach, which is used both in the domestic and foreign policy of the state. The political approach is usually used in long-term projects of the state and is aimed, as a rule, at strengthening its own influence in a particular territory. In this regard, I would like to give a definition of missionary work from the point of view of the categories of geopolitics of Russian researchers M. Trofimchuk and M. Svishchev: 'Missionary activity is one of the forms of exercising civilizational control over space.

The missionary creates not only a new cult, he changes the mentality of the people' (Trofimchuk and Svishchev, 2000). Thus, missionaries and missions are given an important place in the implementation of the geopolitical plans of states in the direction of spreading their civilizational influence.

If we consider the modern 'geography' of the opening of churches and missions of the Russian Orthodox Church in the world, then, apparently, it is appropriate to talk about the continuation of traditions: in almost every state where the Russian Federation had one or another diplomatic mission or at least foreign policy interest, the Moscow Patriarchate opened its representation, activating the missionary role. It should be noted that almost all foreign institutions of the ROC work according to a single scheme, taking into account the national characteristics of the host countries.

Among the priority regions of Orthodox messianism are Africa, Asian countries, Central and South America, Australia and New Zealand. At the same time, it is necessary to make a reservation that the ROC cooperates in this direction with other Orthodox patriarchates.

Orthodox missionaries achieved the greatest success on the African continent. To date, more than 1,000 churches have been built here and the number of Orthodox is approaching 7 million, of which the vast majority are newly converted indigenous people. For example, in Tanzania alone, over the past six years, 70,000 people have converted to Orthodoxy.

Active actions are being carried out in the vast majority of countries, with the exception of Muslim North Africa, where the preaching of Christianity

is either outright prohibited or severely limited. The strongest communities are in Kenya (where there are already 1 million Orthodox), Tanzania, Uganda, Congo, Cameroon and Madagascar, in some other countries the mission is just beginning. Most of the missionary work is done by local priests.

At the beginning of the XXI century. the territory of the Far East began to return to the sphere of interests of the ROC: Japan, Korea, China, Mongolia. But here, despite the successes of Russian Ecclesiastical Missions at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Orthodox mission faces many difficulties associated with political obstacles from national governments.

Thus, only 15,000 Orthodox people live in the China, but there is not a single priest, since the leadership of the China prevents this. At the same time, missions in Thailand, Taiwan and a number of other territories are operating unhindered (Maksimov, 2013).

Although the number of converts here is not as huge as in Africa, it is the countries of Asia that are now becoming the region where the Orthodox mission is developing more and more intensively, which is also connected with Russia's geopolitical interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Orthodoxy is actively strengthening its position in Central America right now. Orthodox churches appeared in Haiti, Cuba, the Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and other States. The most striking event took place in Guatemala, where in 2009 a denomination of 200,000 people joined Orthodoxy (Maksimov, 2013). At the same time, there is almost no Orthodox mission in South America.

Some missions of the Russian Orthodox Church (in this case, we are talking about the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem) also take over some of the diplomatic functions – protecting the interests of citizens of the Russian Federation who come to Israel as pilgrims. The territory of the mission often acts as a shelter, and a consulate, and a spiritual center.

Providing assistance to those citizens of Russia who have difficulties with the official representations of Russia (delay in documents, for example), spiritual representations take on part of the consular functions, without requiring, and importantly, funds from the state budget, since their financing is carried out mainly through donations from believers.

Thus, all of the above shows that the missions and missionaries of the Russian Orthodox Church play a certain role in the external relations of the Russian Federation and can contribute to the conduct of Russia's foreign policy and take care of the stay of a part of Russian citizens abroad.

Conclusions

The foregoing creates a general picture of the development of the Orthodox missionary work of the Russian Orthodox Church in the world and allows us to trace the transformation of the main areas of activity of missions: from caring for pilgrims and performing diplomatic functions (during the heyday of the imperial era) to the struggle for the geopolitical influence of Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian Federation.

Summing up the historical development of the Orthodox missions of the ROC, it can be stated that during their historical development, the Spiritual missions of the ROC performed several tasks of both a religious and political nature, namely: 1) spreading Orthodoxy to other peoples; 2) expansion of the influence of the Russian state; 3) performance of direct diplomatic functions (protection of Russian citizens, representation of Russia's interests, intelligence, etc.). Thus, spiritual missions played a certain, and sometimes very noticeable role in the development of international relations between the Russian Empire and the Russian Orthodox Church.

In the modern world, the ROC has been noted for its active involvement in missionary activity, which has set itself the goal of spreading the ideas of the 'Slavic' or 'Russian World' among the peoples of Asia and Africa. The countries of Western civilization – the European and American continents, where the religious and political role of Russian Orthodoxy has acquired more complex forms and is carried out through foreign diocesan structures and representations – did not stay away from the missionary activities of the Russian Orthodox Church (Trygub *et al.*, 2022).

The spiritual values preached through the missionary work of the Russian Orthodox Church, taking into account its contribution to Russian statehood and culture, are gradually becoming the basis for popularizing the Russian national idea, which is becoming the main civilizational vector of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Orthodox Church has a fairly strong influence on the formation of the image of the Russian Federation in the eyes of the world community and to a large extent, due to its Ecclesiastical missions.

One of the options for missionary activity is a political approach (relying on state power), but it is not the best, because it makes the church dependent on state policy and hinders the realization of the church's own interests in the international arena. Therefore, today the most successful approach to missionary activity (the use of the local language and the dedication of the local population) seems to us to be the most successful, leaving room for implementing certain state goals – social work (especially in 'hot spots'), the formation of a positive image of Russia abroad, participation in the geopolitical projects of the Pan-Slavic World.

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