



## Patron Saint of the Russian Navy?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Besides allowing President Putin to possibly remain in office until 2036, the recent referendum to amend the Russian constitution also makes specific reference to Russians' "faith in God." While the amended constitution still recognizes religious diversity, it appears that the Orthodox religious faith has not only assumed the status as "first among equals" with regard to other denominations, but that it is becoming an increasingly important component in how the Kremlin leadership views the world. The propensity between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the military has also become increasingly prominent (see "Bond Between Russian Religion and Military," *OE Watch*, August 2020). The accompanying excerpts illustrate both the depth of this cooperation and growing resentment among other Russian believers in uniform.

The first excerpt from the liberal weekly *Novaya Gazeta* describes how "the Ministry of Defense... in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church," has been transporting around the country the human remains of arguably Russia's most famous naval officer (and now canonized saint), Admiral Fyodor Ushakov. According to the article, "the admiral [relics] made a round of the ships that were to participate in the parade on the occasion of the Navy Day on 26 July." The article also asserts that "many servicemen have come to worship the relics of the holy warrior Fyodor Ushakov in different cities," citing a source which claims that "the remains of the admiral 'help the military in important duty operations.'"

The second excerpt comes from the leading independent Muslim news outlet in Russian, *Голос Ислама (Voice of Islam)* and also examines the recent veneration of Admiral Ushakov's remains during the Navy Day parade. As might be expected, the article expresses indignation that "the entire ceremony, from beginning to end, was given precisely the religious character of one and only confession - the ROC. Therefore, naval sailors of the army of a secular state with a multi-religious population marched with crosses and banners,

attended a church service in the Orthodox Church and came to kiss these remains as church relics." The article concludes by angrily asserting that Russia is no longer a "secular democratic state" but rather "the Orthodox State of Russia and Crimea with the armed forces of the crusaders."

Even though Russia remains multi-denominational, as the largest religious organization in the country, the ROC has often had close relations with the Kremlin leadership. Whether this "symphony" stems from genuine faith or political legitimization remains a matter of debate, but this same proximity may cause problems if it extends to how the Kremlin runs its military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Portrait of Admiral Ushakov by P. Bajanov.

Source: <https://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:AdmFFUshakoffByBazhanoff-e.jpg>, Public Domain

***“According to the constitution of Russia, revised by Putin, isn’t religion separated from the state, and are not all religious confessions equal to each other?”***



## Continued: Patron Saint of the Russian Navy?

**Source:** Irina Tumakova, “Военно-морские мощи (Naval power),” *Novaya Gazeta*, 29 July 2020. <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2020/07/27/86424-voenno-morskie-moschi>

*...Admiral Ushakov arrived by plane Il-76 at a military transport airfield in Pushkin, a suburb of St. Petersburg, on July 21.... the admiral made a round of the ships that were to participate in the parade on the occasion of the Navy Day on 26 July. The great naval commander of the 18-19th centuries was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in 2001....*

*...The organizer of the movement of the remains of Admiral Ushakov, extracted from the grave, was the Main Command of the Navy. For several years now, the Ministry of Defense has been transporting them around the country in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church....*

*...Admiral Fyodor Ushakov is known to us as an outstanding naval commander, who did not lose a single battle, the founder of the Russian tactical naval school, a hero of the Russian-Turkish wars.... Many servicemen come to worship the relics of the holy warrior Fyodor Ushakov in different cities. According to the Vera portal, the remains of the admiral “help the military in important operations on duty,” it is necessary to apply to them, “in order to strengthen the fortitude, will and at the crucial moment to be able to make the right decision.”*

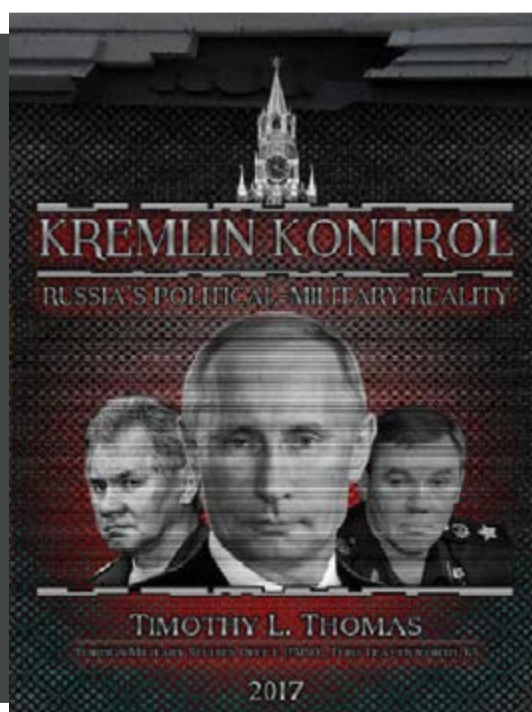
**Source:** Ikramutdin Khan, “ВМФ России устроил поклонение церковным мощам (Russian Navy staged worship of church relics),” *Голос Ислама (Voice of Islam)*, 29 July 2020. <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=39027>

*Another event of religious life in Russia, which is now being discussed, is the campaign to transport the remains of Russian Admiral Fyodor Ushakov around the country and worship them by the Orthodox.... However, the problem is that this entire campaign was timed to coincide with the Day of the Russian Navy (26 July) and was carried out under its auspices.*

*...The entire ceremony, from and to, was given precisely the religious character of one and only confession - the ROC. Therefore, naval sailors of the army of a secular state with a multi-religious population marched with crosses and banners, then stood a church service in the Orthodox Church and came to kiss these remains as church relics....*

*However, according to the constitution of Russia, revised by Putin, isn't religion separated from the state, and are not all religious confessions equal to each other? So why, then, the ceremonies of the army, in which Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and Christians of other nominations, who do not recognize such rituals, serve, are given the character of a religious rite of a single confession - the ROC?*

*However, from the moment the Orthodox Church opened the “Main Church of the Russian Armed Forces,” this question becomes rhetorical. The secular and ecclesiastical authorities of Putin's Russia, and further, the more they make it clear that de facto it is not a secular democratic state of the Russian Federation, as it is described in its constitution, but the Orthodox State of Russia and Crimea with the armed forces of the crusaders.*



**In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov instituted sweeping changes that have reorganized the country's security forces and reestablished the nation's military prowess. This study, *Kremlin Kontrol*, aims to describe how control over the security services and the military have hastened those changes.**

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>