

Issues for the USG -

1. The USG does not understand the internal issues of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.
2. For Orthodox Christians, the concept of autocephaly does not equate to the concept of freedom of conscience or religious freedom.
3. The Eastern Orthodox Schism creates a political divide between the USG and essential foreign thought leadership potentially for centuries. The USG needs more major allies in thought leadership regarding the Dignity of the Human Person, not fewer.
4. The USG by showing, demonstrating or hinting at any forms of preference for a particular or particular Orthodox Churches in the Schism is undermining the USG's own goals regarding International Religious Freedom.
5. The USG to be consistent in its position on IRF must demand that the Ukrainian Government treat all Orthodox Christians in Ukraine with the same respect, unbiased protection under the law.
6. Orthodox Churches in NATO allies do not agree with the EP, OCU and stand against the now current situation (Poland, Albania). This division will complicate future operations when the OCU is an active agent through the Ukrainian Government.
7. If the EP is being invited to speak by US State for instance about the environment, ask the Moscow Patriarchate to speak about an issue of equal pertinent and importance. The USG cannot recognize the EP as the "First Among Equals." The position of "First Among Equals" is an internal religious term unique in the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Bartholomew is not credibly regarded that way at this time, by the majority of Eastern Orthodox Christians.
8. USG goals and objectives are not best served by participating in or by unintentional circumstance projecting the image that a proxy war against Russia is being fought through religious means.
9. USG must clearly separate how it characterizes the Russian government, versus the ROC and the Russian people. The USG can do this by illustrating that the disagreements between the USG and the Russian government do not make the ROC or the Russian people USG targets. To build good faith, the USG must make public good faith efforts to honor the Russian people as such. The Russian people have been incredible self- sacrificing allies to the USG and the American people. For instance, the USG can honor Russian WWII dead at Military Cemeteries, or concentration camps such as Dachau in Europe.
10. USG missteps will only aggravate the schism depriving USG of allies in the fight for the Dignity of the Human Person. This at a time when even American companies are compromising the Dignity of the Human Person domestically, and abroad by their assault on personal privacy, and supporting totalitarian governments with surveillance operations.
11. USG should offer encouragement, and logistical support to facilitate the convening of a Pan-Orthodox Synod, without influencing the outcome of such a synod.
12. The USG should appoint a Special Envoy, who is not a member of a jurisdiction of either the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Russian Orthodox Church or the OCU, to work with the Orthodox Churches, thus providing a consistent and appropriate overt USG agent. Thus enabling work on USG goals in mutual interest areas. One example would be to facilitate an internal Orthodox solution to the present schism. A Special Envoy would also provide the continuity of effort and operations necessary to achieve success in other designated Policy Issue areas.

Issues in The Orthodox World

1. Without sound, consistent and transparent intervention, the Schism in the Eastern Orthodox Church will grow. The greater the Schism, the longer it will last. At the present rate, the schism will last decades if not longer. The Schism will adversely impact all areas of cooperation between the countries with majority Orthodox Christian populations in almost every cooperative arena. The Schism will set back development and Human Rights.
2. No other of the 13 Universally recognized Eastern Orthodox Church agrees with what the Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP) has done regarding the Orthodox Church in Ukraine (OCU).
3. Drawing up the unified disapproval of the 13 universally recognized Eastern Orthodox Churches of the EP's handling of the OCU crisis. The Schism has cost the EP credibility and at this time should not be regarded as the sole Spiritual Leader for worldwide Eastern Orthodox Christianity.
4. What may not be transparent to those on the outside of the Orthodox world is that the issues regarding the Schism have to do with internal Orthodox Theology, in particular, ecclesiology.
5. Schisms have happened in the past. Some were resolved, some schisms have not been resolved.
6. Politicizing the Schism moves the Schism as one issue of Religious Freedom into a characterization that will elicit some form of Religious oppression on those on the other side of the politicization.
7. The present schism ultimately helps no one. However, in the short term, it benefits the EP and the OCU.
8. The EP and its subordinate jurisdictions are the major center of gravity for thought, influence and native Orthodox populations in Western countries, but nowhere else. Therefore, a disproportionate influence by these jurisdictions' constitute members is a natural possibility. However, this disproportionate influence is to be avoided when approaching Orthodox issues internationally, particularly in more traditional Orthodox areas.
9. The OCU was given autocephaly in name only. The proper Eastern Orthodox term for what the OCU has now is autonomy.
10. A Pan-Orthodox Synod is not in the best interests of the EP.
11. The Russian Government loses nothing under the present circumstance of the Schism.
12. The MP and the Russian Orthodox people in Ukraine are facing religious persecution by the Ukrainian Government. Contrastingly the USG did not target Moscow Patriarchate communities in the US during the Cold War. The Cold War being a time when the USSR posed an existential threat to the USA. UOC(-MP) is not an existential threat nor a party to one for Ukraine.