

RUSSIA AT THE CROSSROADS: UNDERSTANDING SECULARISM AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE RUSSIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Religion has been recognized as a very crucial weapon in the 21st century. In the era of liberalization and democracy where secularism as the concept has been a topic of discussion and debate, the pivotal role of religion in influencing the political structures cannot be overlooked. The post-1990 period has been a remarkable phase in the history of Russia, it offered a space for freedom and equality for the religions to grow and flourish in a multicultural society. The revival of religion in the context of the secular notion in Russia presents a very unique model of separation between politics and religion. Despite declaring itself as a secular country, Russian political system can be witnessed strongly getting influenced by Russian Orthodox Church. Such model of secularism defies the basic ethic of separation of politics and religion. Thus, the role of religion in Russia offers not only an understanding of religion to a specific context of multi-religious societies but its predominance in International relations and politics as an influencing weapon.

KEYWORDS: *Religion, Politics, Secularism, Russian Orthodox Church, State, International Relations*