

National Research University Higher School of Economics

As a manuscript

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**DIFFERENTIATION MECHANISMS OF POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF RUSSIAN
ORTHODOX BELIEVERS**

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION
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Statement of research problem and literature review

In the broad field of electoral theories, the approach to study of religion and politics has changed quite a lot over the past few decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, the traditional cleavages introduced by Lipset and Rokkan¹ have been a subject of scientific interest. Religion was perceived as one of the most influential factors in the formation of political preferences. Modern sociological theories² argue that classical cleavages are weak or even lost its influence because of modern influential divisions. The role of religion, in this regard, fades into the background. Researchers are increasingly mentioning religion as the historical context of emerging political attitudes.³ More popular explanations from the field of rational choice and economic voting⁴ suggest treating religion as a factor of individual decision. Such theories challenge the possibility of choice when it comes to the decision of the religious voters. The debate about the role of religion is reinforced by the fact that supporters of both traditions⁵ find empirical evidence for their theories. Moreover, some researchers predict a religious revival.⁶

Researchers in the sociology of religion indicate a general problem of such studies: in an attempt to find an explanation for political preferences, electoral theories do not work with the

¹ Lipset S.M., Rokkan S. Party systems and voter alignments: Cross-national perspectives. – N.Y.; Toronto: The Free Press, 1967. – 61 p.

² Inglehart R. The silent revolution: Changing values and political styles among Western publics. – Princeton University Press, 2015.; Kriesi H. The transformation of cleavage politics The 1997 Stein Rokkan lecture //European journal of political research. – 1998. – Vol. 33. – №. 2. – P. 165-185.; Hooghe L., Marks G. Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage //Journal of European public policy. – 2018. – Vol. 25. – №. 1. – P. 109-135.

³ Legee D. C., Kellstedt L. A. Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics. – Routledge, 2016.; Broughton D., ten Napel H. M. T. D. (ed.). Religion and mass electoral behaviour in Europe. – London : Routledge, 2000. – Vol. 19.

⁴ Fiorina M. P. Economic retrospective voting in American national elections: A micro-analysis //American Journal of political science. – 1978. – P. 426-443.; Lewis-Beck M. S., Stegmaier M. Economic determinants of electoral outcomes //Annual review of political science. – 2000. – Vol. 3. – №. 1. – P. 183-219.

⁵ Van der Brug W., B. Hobolt S., De Vreese C. H. Religion and party choice in Europe //West European Politics. – 2009. – Vol. 32. – №. 6. – P. 1266-1283.; Knutsen O. Religious denomination and party choice in Western Europe: A comparative longitudinal study from eight countries, 1970–97 //International Political Science Review. – 2004. – Vol. 25. – №. 1. – P. 97-128.; McTague J. M., Layman G. C. Religion, parties, and voting behavior: A political explanation of religious influence. – 2009.; Goldberg A. C. The evolution of cleavage voting in four Western countries: Structural, behavioural or political dealignment? //European journal of political research. – 2020. – Vol. 59. – №. 1. – P. 68-90.; Campbell J. E., Dettrey B. J., Yin H. The theory of conditional retrospective voting: Does the presidential record matter less in open-seat elections? //The Journal of Politics. – 2010. – Vol. 72. – №. 4. – P. 1083-1095.; Lewis-Beck M. S., Ratto M. C. Economic voting in Latin America: A general model //Electoral Studies. – 2013. – Vol. 32. – №. 3. – P. 489-493.; DeCanio S. Religion and nineteenth-century voting behavior: a new look at some old data //The Journal of Politics. – 2007. – Vol. 69. – №. 2. – P. 339-350.

⁶ Norris P., Inglehart R. Sacred and secular: Religion and politics worldwide. – Cambridge University Press, 2011.; Knutsen O. Religious Denomination and Party Choice in Western Europe: A Comparative Longitudinal Study from Eight Countries, 1970-97 // International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique. – 2004. – Vol. 25. – No 1. P. 97-128.

"nature" of religion.⁷ Religion is a phenomenon of consciousness. It defines value orientations and the worldview, proposes and forms norms of behavior, explains political institutions, formulates expectations about the future. The religiosity of voters to some degree should assume both a collective and an individual component. The most common scheme of operationalization involves combinations of individual aspects of religiosity: *belonging*, *behaving*, and *believing*.

Belonging provides a common social context in which people associate their faith with political issues.⁸ Since the core of religious tradition is long—established norms and values, they provide a common support for the formation of political attitudes.⁹ In addition, the clergy are able to actualize certain political problems and related values, thereby influencing the choice of parishioners.¹⁰ Religious *practices* strengthen the identified mechanisms. Practices form solidarity and strengthen ties between believers within the community. The more an individual is involved in the church community, the more she/he is committed to values, and the more likely she/he is a subject to internal influence and external influence.¹¹ Beliefs are the content side of religiosity,¹² beliefs form the basis of the worldview. The way in which specific religious beliefs are experienced by people determines their attitude to political issues.¹³

In the Russian case, this discussion is fed by the substantial gap between church affiliation and religious practice: according to various surveys, between 63% and 71% of the country's

⁷ Olson L. R., Warber A. L. *Belonging, behaving, and believing: Assessing the role of religion on presidential approval* //Political research quarterly. – 2008. – Vol. 61. – №. 2. – P. 192-204.; Smith L. E., Walker L. D. *Belonging, believing, and group behavior: Religiosity and voting in American presidential elections* //Political Research Quarterly. – 2013. – Vol. 66. – №. 2. – P. 399-413.; Layman G. *The great divide: Religious and cultural conflict in American party politics*. – Columbia University Press, 2001.; Legee D. C., Kellstedt L. A. *Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics*. – Routledge, 2016.; Putnam R. D., Campbell D. E. *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. – Simon and Schuster, 2012.

⁸ Green J. C., Green J. C. *The faith factor: How religion influences American elections*. – Praeger, 2007.

⁹ Green J. C., Guth J. L. *From lambs to sheep: Denominational change and political behavior* //Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics. – 1993. – P. 100-117.; Guth J. L. et al. *Faith and the environment: Religious beliefs and attitudes on environmental policy* //American Journal of Political Science. – 1995. – P. 364-382.; Kellstedt L. A., Smidt C. E. *Doctrinal beliefs and political behavior: Views of the Bible* //Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics. – 1993. – P. 177-198.

¹⁰ Holman M. R., Shockley K. *Messages from above: Conflict and convergence of messages to the Catholic voter from the Catholic Church hierarchy* //Politics and Religion. – 2017. – Vol. 10. – №. 4. – P. 840-861.; Smith A. E. *Democratic talk in church: religion and political socialization in the context of urban inequality* //World Development. – 2017. – Vol. 99. – P. 441-451.

¹¹ Djupe P. A., Gilbert C. P. *The political influence of churches*. – Cambridge University Press, 2008.

¹² Stark R. *Gods, rituals, and the moral order* //Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. – 2001. – Vol. 40. – №. 4. – P. 619-636.

¹³ Nicolet S., Tresch A. *Changing religiosity, changing politics? The influence of “belonging” and “believing” on political attitudes in Switzerland* //Politics and Religion. – 2009. – Vol. 2. – №. 1. – P. 76-99.; Wuthnow R. *The struggle for America's soul: Evangelicals, liberals, and secularism*. – Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989.; Driskell R., Embry E., Lyon L. *Faith and politics: The influence of religious beliefs on political participation* //Social Science Quarterly. – 2008. – Vol. 89. – №. 2. – P. 294-314.

believers belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, but only 6–14% regularly practise the faith.¹⁴ The studies have developed two analytical approaches: a broad interpretation of religiosity through self-identification and differentiation of a group of Orthodox based on levels of religiosity to identify church-oriented religiosity.¹⁵ Both approaches pointing to a shift from Orthodox affiliation to national and ethnic identity or loyalty to the state,¹⁶ and the corresponding erosion of religious beliefs and practices.¹⁷ In other words, the analytical model linking religiosity and political attitudes of Russians insists that religious motives of choice cannot be observed in isolation from secular; religious belonging is not a significant aspect, instead, religious beliefs and communal practices purportedly play a crucial role.¹⁸

Scholars conventionally connect variations in the political attitudes of believers with levels of religiosity. However, a number of contradictory conclusions are found. Some scholars argue that Orthodoxy affects the attitudes of believers,¹⁹ while others indicate no difference between the political views of Orthodox Christians, believers of other denominations, and atheists.²⁰ An individual's level of religiosity seems to correlate both with growing loyalty to the regime²¹ and

¹⁴ Belief in the supernatural. Levada Center. URL: <https://www.levada.ru/2020/10/28/vera-v-sverhestestvennoe/> (access date 22.10.2022) (In Russ); Religion and national identity in Central and Eastern Europe. Pew Research Center. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/05/CEUP-Overview-Russian-FOR-WEB.pdf> (access date 22.10.2022) (In Russ).

¹⁵ Markin K. Between belief and unbelief: non-practicing Orthodox Christians in the context of the Russian sociology of religion // *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. – 2018. – №. 2 (144). – P. 274-290. (In Russ).

¹⁶ Filatov S., Lukin R. Statistics of Russian Religiosity: The Magic of Numbers and Ambiguous Reality // *Russia and the Muslim World*. – 2005. – №. 10. – P. 42-53. (In Russ); Kaariainen K., Furman D. Religiosity in Russia at the Turn of the XX–XXI Centuries (The Final Part) // *Social Sciences and Contemporary World*. – 2007. – №. 2. – P. 78-95. (In Russ); Religion and national identity in Central and Eastern Europe. Pew Research Center. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/05/CEUP-Overview-Russian-FOR-WEB.pdf> (access date 22.10.2022) (In Russ).

¹⁷ Zorkaia N. Orthodoxy in the Irreligious Society // *Vestnik Obshchestvennogo Mneniia. Dannye. Analiz. Diskussii*. – 2009. – №. 2. – P. 65-84. (In Russ); Karpov V., Lisovskaya E., Barry D. Ethnodoxy: How popular ideologies fuse religious and ethnic identities // *Journal for the scientific Study of Religion*. – 2012. – Vol. 51. – №. 4. – P. 638-655.

¹⁸ For more details see: Karpich Y. The Political choice of Orthodox believers in Russia: strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research // *Russian Sociological Review*. – 2021. – Vol. 20. – №. 2. – P. 48-69.

¹⁹ Kulkova A. Religiosity and Political Participation: The Role of Politics in Russian Religious Communities // *HSE Working Papers. Series WP14 "Political Theory and Political Analysis."* – 2015. – №. 2. (In Russ); Mchedlova M., Kofanova E., Shevchenko A. Orthodoxy and Loyalty: From Social Tension to the Choice Between the Government and the Church // *Rossiia Reformiruiushhaiasia*. – 2020. – №. 18. – P. 264-298. (In Russ).

²⁰ Lokosov V., Sinelina Y. The Interrelation of Religious and Political Orientations of Orthodox Believers // *Religiia v samosoznanii naroda (religioznyj faktor v identifikatsionnykh protsessakh)*. M. – 2008. – P. 135-158. (In Russ); Marsh C. Russian Orthodox Christians and their orientation toward Church and state // *Journal of Church and State*. – 2005. – Vol. 47. – №. 3. – P. 545-561.; Marsh C. Orthodox Christianity, Civil Society, and Russian Democracy // *Demokratizatsiya*. – 2005. – Vol. 13. – №. 3.; Mchedlova M., Kofanova E. Russia in Anticipation of Changes: Religious Factor and Socio-Political Preferences // *RUDN Journal of Political Science* – 2020. – Vol. 22. – №. 1. – P. 7-21. (In Russ).

²¹ Lokosov V., Sinelina Y. The Interrelation of Religious and Political Orientations of Orthodox Believers // *Religiia v samosoznanii naroda (religioznyj faktor v identifikatsionnykh protsessakh)*. M. – 2008. – P. 135-158. (In Russ)

with support for opposition parties.²² Religious participation promotes political participation,²³ but other studies have found that non-participation is widespread among the most religious members of a religious community.²⁴

Probably, the reason for such contradictions is the lack of a meaningful interpretation of the relations between variables considered in causal logic (limitations related to data interpretation, context, and ecological fallacy).²⁵ The design of the study, aimed at identifying strict empirical patterns, allows us to formulate the necessary and sufficient conditions for the appearance of a "result" (or a dependent variable), can link "religious" and "political" variables, but cannot explain why these link exist. Convincing explanations, in addition to searching for patterns, need to reveal the forces that produce these patterns.²⁶ This states the key *problem* for my research. From this perspective, I aim to fill in the gaps in academic knowledge related to interpretation of the motives of voting by Orthodox Russians. Without denying the results of the other studies, the strategy of my research allows to establish the logic of the choice and determine what role religiosity plays in the set of motives. The research findings make it possible to complement previous studies with an understanding of *how* religiosity is linked to political choice, and *what underlies* the patterns known from previous studies.

Most studies of religion and politics in Russia rely on narrow and specific quantitative measurements.²⁷ Such a research design reveals patterns of political choice but obscures the mechanisms by which religiosity affects the choice and does not *explain* the revealed patterns.²⁸

²² Bogachev M. Church Attendance and Political Preferences of Orthodox Believers: A Quantitative Analysis // Researches in Religious Studies. – 2016. – №. 13. – P. 8-76. (In Russ).

²³ Kulkova A. Religiosity and Political Participation: The Role of Politics in Russian Religious Communities // HSE Working Papers. Series WP14 "Political Theory and Political Analysis." – 2015. – №. 2. (In Russ); Mchedlova M., Kofanova E., Shevchenko A. Orthodoxy and Loyalty: From Social Tension to the Choice Between the Government and the Church // Rossiia Reformiruiushhaiasia. – 2020. – №. 18. – P. 264-298. (In Russ).

²⁴ Bogachev M. Church Attendance and Political Preferences of Orthodox Believers: A Quantitative Analysis // Researches in Religious Studies. – 2016. – №. 13. – P. 8-76. (In Russ).

²⁵ Tilly C., Goodin R. E. It depends //The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis. – 2006. – P. 3-32.; Tilly C. Mechanisms in political processes //Annual review of political science. – 2001. – Vol. 4. – №. 1. – P. 21-41.; Barker D. C., Hurwitz J., Nelson T. L. Of crusades and culture wars: "Messianic" militarism and political conflict in the United States //The Journal of Politics. – 2008. – T. 70. – №. 2. – C. 307-322.; Hedström P., Swedberg R. (ed.). Social mechanisms: An analytical approach to social theory. – Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998. – Vol. 19.

²⁶ Tilly C., Goodin R. E. It depends //The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis. – 2006. – P. 13-14.

²⁷ Prutskova E., Markin K. B. Typology of Orthodox Russians: The Problem of Constructing a Generalized Religiosity Indicator // Sociological Studies. – 2017. – №. 8. – P. 95-105. (In Russ); Прудкова Е. Operationalization of the concept of "religiosity" in empirical research // State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide. – 2012. – №. 2 (30). – P. 268-293. (In Russ); Ackert M., Prutskova E., Zabaev I. Validation of the short forms of centrality of religiosity scale in Russia //Religions. – 2020. – Vol. 11. – №. 11. – P. 577.

²⁸ Barker D. C., Hurwitz J., Nelson T. L. Of crusades and culture wars: "Messianic" militarism and political conflict in the United States //The Journal of Politics. – 2008. – Vol. 70. – №. 2. – P. 307-322.; Driskell R., Embry E., Lyon L. Faith and politics: The influence of religious beliefs on political participation //Social Science Quarterly. – 2008. – Vol. 89. – №. 2. – P. 294-314.

Such methodologies assume a direct causal relationship: religiosity determines political attitudes. This thesis may be incorrect since the political context is likely to determine the "popularity" of religion and, accordingly, affects the religiosity of voters. Second, scholars typically only employ measures of religious behaviour, tending to overlook or underestimate the role of the beliefs that underlie this behaviour—even though beliefs are more important for believers than behaviour.²⁹ As a result, the explanations remain hypothetical.

Since United Russia became the dominant party in the 2000s, political choice has been restricted to three alternatives. Following Hirschman's³⁰ approach, I refer to these as Loyalty, Voice, and Exit. Yet scholars do not have a clear idea of how Russian voters make this choice. While many factors are considered significant for voting,³¹ researchers most often analyse voting as a rational, economic choice,³² or in the logic of cleavages,³³ which leaves no scope for assessing the significance of attitudes and beliefs.

In order to find explanations for the connections between religiosity and the political attitudes of Orthodox Russians, I conducted a study in the logic of the search for social mechanisms. According to the approach of Tilly: «*Mechanism-based accounts select salient features of episodes, or significant differences among episodes, and explain them by identifying within those episodes robust mechanisms of relatively general scope*».³⁴ The design of the study is aimed to account for the context, the specifics of Russian religiosity and the political system. Following the recommendations of researchers working within this approach, I conducted research that consistently combines qualitative and quantitative methods.³⁵ The first stage is

²⁹ Driskell R., Embry E., Lyon L. Faith and politics: The influence of religious beliefs on political participation //Social Science Quarterly. – 2008. – Vol. 89. – №. 2. – P. 294-314.; Stark R. Gods, rituals, and the moral order //Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. – 2001. – Vol. 40. – №. 4. – P. 619-636.

³⁰ Hirschman A. O. "Exit, voice, and loyalty": Further reflections and a survey of recent contributions //Social Science Information. – 1974. – Vol. 13. – №. 1. – P. 7-26.

³¹ Hale H. E., Colton T. J. Who Defects? Unpacking a Defection Cascade from Russia's Dominant Party 2008–12 //American Political Science Review. – 2017. – Vol. 111. – №. 2. – P. 322-337.; Frye T., Yakovlev A. Elections and property rights: a natural experiment from Russia //Comparative Political Studies. – 2016. – Vol. 49. – №. 4. – P. 499-528.

³² Turovsky R, Gaivoronsky Y. Economic Influence on Electoral Behavior in Russia: Is "Contract" between Power and Society Working? //Politeia. – 2017. – №. 3 (86). – P. 42-61.; Shcherbak A. N. et al. Fridge vs. Tv: economic voting in the 2016 duma elections in Russia // Bulletin of Perm University. Political Science. – 2017. – №. 3. – P. 137-155. (In Russ); Treisman D. The politics of intergovernmental transfers in post-Soviet Russia //British journal of political science. – 1996. – Vol. 26. – №. 3. – P. 299-335.

³³ Korgunyuk Yu. Presidential elections in post-soviet Russia through lenses of cleavage theory //Politeia. – 2018. – №. 4 (91). – P. 32-69. (In Russ); Rimsky V. Social cleavages and political parties in Russia //Political science. – 2004. – №. 4. – P. 152-172. (In Russ); Korgunyuk Yu. Proportional system elections as a mass public opinion poll //Political science. – 2017. – №. 1. – P. 90-119. (In Russ); Akhremenko A. S. Structuring of the electoral space in Russian regions (Factor analysis of the parliamentary elections of 1995-2003) //Polis. – 2005. – №. 2. – P. 26-40. (In Russ).

³⁴ Tilly C., Goodin R. E. It depends //The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis. – 2006. – P. 12

³⁵ McAdam D., Tarrow S., Tilly C. Methods for measuring mechanisms of contention //Qualitative sociology. – 2008. – Vol. 31. – №. 4. – P. 307-331.

aimed at identifying logical connections between certain aspects of individual religiosity and specific political attitudes. At the second stage, I try to confirm or refute the findings and assess the significance of religiosity for the voting decision. The purpose of method integration is not to identify general laws that can be applied to all cases of political choice, but to fill in the missing stage of existing research, to find a set of common mechanisms that organize the political attitudes of believers in a specific religious and political context. The focus on mechanisms allows me to make mid-level generalizations about ordered models of political choice. The transition from specific to general patterns allows for contextual specificity at both local (for the selected case) and larger-scale (for the country) levels.³⁶

The explanatory mechanism in the study includes two aspects of religiosity: *beliefs* and *practices* of interaction within a religious community. Identification with Orthodoxy (belonging) is the criterion for inclusion in the sample, but due to weak ties with the religious community, this aspect of religiosity is taken out of the explanatory model. The role of religious beliefs and practices is assessed in relation to secular (civil) beliefs and practices. A similar scheme of analysis is proposed by Stark and Glock.³⁷ They argue that religious participation must be measured in terms of the proportion of the total social activity of the believer. In other words, political attitudes are associated with combinations of both religious and secular beliefs and practices. For example, work for public organisations, repeated experience of participation in elections, and communication with members of a religious community and a priest may all affect political choice. At the same time, the choice is personal and individual evaluation is based on a set of beliefs in what is right, important, etc.; such beliefs can emerge from secular morality just as much as from religious norms.

Research question: What combinations of beliefs and practices are associated with the political attitudes of Orthodox Russians?

The question is related to the research strategy. The study touches on discussions about the procedure of explanation. In this aspect, I rely on the approach proposed by Tilly and coauthors,³⁸

³⁶ Mische A. Cross-talk in movements: Reconceiving the culture-network link //Social movements and networks: Relational approaches to collective action. – 2003. – P. 258-80.

³⁷ Stark R., Glock C. Y. American piety: The nature of religious commitment. – Univ of California Press, 1968. – Vol. 1.

³⁸ Tilly C., Goodin R. E. It depends //The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis. – 2006. – P. 3-32.; Tilly C. Processes and mechanisms of democratization //Sociological Theory. – 2000. – Vol. 18. – №. 1. – P. 1-16.; Tilly C. Mechanisms in political processes //Annual review of political science. – 2001. – Vol. 4. – №. 1. – P. 21-41.; McAdam D., Tarrow S., Tilly C. Dynamics of contention //Social Movement Studies. – 2003. – Vol. 2. – №. 1. –

who associate the validity of explanations with the analysis of *social mechanisms*. Tilly stressed that studies focused on patterns, among other things, should determine the mechanisms that generate these patterns (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 narrows the scope of the analysis to changes in political attitudes depending on the level of religiosity within the general group of Orthodox believers. Chapter 2 reveals the specifics of Russian religiosity and introduces an explanatory model of variations in the political choice of believers. The answer to this question allows me to formulate typical combinations of beliefs and practices that explain the political choice of the Orthodox believers and assess the significance of components of the mechanism.

To determine the role of religiosity in the political choice, I formulate an **additional research question**: How is religiosity linked to the political attitudes of Orthodox Russians?

Goal and Aims

Major goal of the study is to identify combinations of secular and religious beliefs and practices that leads the differentiation of political attitudes of Orthodox Russians.

Research *aims*:

1. To specify the conceptualization and operationalization of the basic concepts of religiosity and political attitudes in relation to the study of the Russian case;
2. To construct a model for analyzing the Russian case in order to take into account the features of Russian religiosity and the political system;
3. To identify the typical logic of the political choice of Orthodox believers of different levels of religiosity;
4. To assess the significance of the identified beliefs and practices for making a decision on voting;
5. To determine the role of religiosity in the political choice of Orthodox Russians.

Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

This study assumes that the political choice of Orthodox believers is rationally motivated. Religiosity is integrated into the motivation system, offering a specific way to rationalize

P. 99-102.; Tilly C. The politics of collective violence. – Cambridge University Press, 2003.; Tilly C., Tarrow S. G. Contentious politics. – Oxford University Press, 2015.

reality.³⁹ As a result of the coordination of political and religious values,⁴⁰ a believer forms a worldview that allows him to make political decisions.

The possibility to explain political choice is built on the study of *social mechanisms*;⁴¹ it is assumed that the model of analysis has an analytical value if the researcher focuses on the result of the mechanism, and priority in the study is given to the forces generating the result. Political attitudes incline the believer to a political choice. How does this happen? Following the logic of bounded rationality and economic voting,⁴² Political choice is a way of solving a problem that a voter sees subjectively evaluating the political situation.⁴³ Beliefs help to interpret reality and give meaning to individual perception; make other people's actions significant for political choice. Practices and norms offer ways to cope with a problem or avoid it, providing a final solution.

The political choice of Russians is determined by two forks: to express loyalty to the authorities or not; to vote against the current regime or not to participate in the elections (*Loyalty, Voice, and Exit*).⁴⁴

According to the theory of Almond and Verba,⁴⁵ attitudes that incline to the choice, are measured in relation to four classes of objects: evaluation of the political system, inputs, and outputs, one's own participation in politics; beliefs can be expressed in the format of knowledge about the functioning of political objects, emotional attitude to objects and its evaluation. Religious beliefs are determined by direct reference to religion, either to quotations from sacred texts or to the texts themselves. If people vote, subjectively evaluating the political situation, then a positive evaluation of behavior of politicians leads to a vote in support of the current government, a negative evaluation leads to a vote against.⁴⁶ Participation depends on a person's

³⁹ Weber M. Basic Sociological Terms//Russian Sociological Review. – 2008. – Vol. 7. – №. 2. – P. 89-127. (In Russ); Stark R., Bainbridge W. S. A theory of religion. – Lang, 1987. – Vol. 2.; Stark R., Iannaccone L. R., Finke R. Religion, science, and rationality //The American Economic Review. – 1996. – Vol. 86. – №. 2. – P. 433-437.

⁴⁰ Festinger L. A theory of cognitive dissonance. – Stanford university press, 1962. – Vol. 2.

⁴¹ Demetriou C. Processual comparative sociology: Building on the approach of Charles Tilly //Sociological Theory. – 2012. – Vol. 30. – №. 1. – P. 51-65.; Tilly C., Goodin R. E. It depends //The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis. – 2006. – P. 3-32.

⁴² Fiorina M. P. Economic retrospective voting in American national elections: A micro-analysis //American Journal of political science. – 1978. – P. 426-443.; Lewis-Beck M. S., Lockerbie B. Economics, votes, protests: Western European cases //Comparative Political Studies. – 1989. – Vol. 22. – №. 2. – P. 155-177.

⁴³ Fiorina M. P. Economic retrospective voting in American national elections: A micro-analysis //American Journal of political science. – 1978. – P. 426-443.; Lewis-Beck M. S., Lockerbie B. Economics, votes, protests: Western European cases //Comparative Political Studies. – 1989. – Vol. 22. – №. 2. – P. 155-177.

⁴⁴ Hirschman A. O. "Exit, voice, and loyalty": Further reflections and a survey of recent contributions //Social Science Information. – 1974. – Vol. 13. – №. 1. – P. 7-26.

⁴⁵ Almond G. A., Verba S. The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations. – Princeton university press, 2015.

⁴⁶ Fiorina M. P. Economic retrospective voting in American national elections: A micro-analysis //American Journal of political science. – 1978. – P. 426-443.

subjective perception of their ability (or the ability of their group) to influence political affairs.⁴⁷ A voter who does not see change as possible or does not believe that the authorities are responsible for people's successes and failures will not participate in elections.

I use the basic indicator of church attendance to differentiate levels of religiosity, while communal practices⁴⁸ are included in the explanatory mechanism. To measure communal involvement, I examine the extent to which a person is involved in interaction with other members of the religious community.⁴⁹ Given that communal practices are not very common among believers, they should be regarded as an addition to beliefs. However, for the 6–14% of believers actively involved in church life, practices play a bigger role.

To work with context (a necessary element of explanation in the logic of mechanisms) I choose the case of the Lipetsk region. The selection principle assumes that the case is specific in terms of religiosity, and in terms of the political situation. This increases the likelihood of covering a larger number of actors and basic mechanisms, which entails additional meanings and relationships between the units of analysis.⁵⁰ Previous research on data from the 2003, 2007, and 2011 legislative elections confirms that loyalty declined over time among the most religious groups of Orthodox believers, but voice and exit increased.⁵¹ This research also suggests that the Central Black Earth regions are distinct due to the significance of the religious factor in loyal voting (in the 2011 and 2012 elections).⁵² Moreover, Lipetsk Oblast is a part of the Central Black Earth regions; 71% of people in the region are Orthodox believers, which is one of the highest proportions in the country; according to certain measures (trust in the Church, observance of prescriptions and praying, the importance of religion in life and the desire to deepen faith), the region stands out significantly against the background of average values.⁵³ At the same time, statistics⁵⁴ show high voter turnout and support for United Russia, as well as historically high support for the Communist Party. In other words, although the high proportion of Orthodox

⁴⁷ Niemi R. G., Craig S. C., Mattei F. Measuring internal political efficacy in the 1988 National Election Study // *The American Political Science Review*. – 1991. – P. 1407-1413.

⁴⁸ Stark R., Glock C. Y. *American piety: The nature of religious commitment*. – Univ of California Press, 1968. – T. 1.

⁴⁹ Stark R., Glock C. Y. *American piety: The nature of religious commitment*. – Univ of California Press, 1968. – Vol. 1.

⁵⁰ Flyvbjerg B. Five misunderstandings about case-study research // *Qualitative inquiry*. – 2006. – T. 12. – №. 2. – С. 219-245.

⁵¹ Bogachev M. Church Attendance and Political Preferences of Orthodox Believers: A Quantitative Analysis // *Researches in Religious Studies*. – 2016. – №. 13. – P. 8-76. (In Russ).

⁵² Ukhvatova M. Religion and Electoral Behavior in Russia: Regional Dimension // *Bulletin of Perm University. Political Science*. – 2017. – №. 4. – P. 26-48. (In Russ).

⁵³ Atlas of Religions and Nationalities of Russia. Research service "SREDA". URL: <http://sreda.org/arena> (access date 22.10.2022).

⁵⁴ Voting results; see. URL: <http://www.cikrf.ru/> (access date 22.10.2022).

believers would suggest that voice and exit are popular choices,⁵⁵ this is not the case in Lipetsk Oblast. Such a contradiction calls into doubt the claim that a high level of religiosity has a certain impact on political choices.

After completing the work on the case, I formulate hypotheses about the general logic of political choice and the role of religiosity in voting decisions. The test of hypothesis on country-level data allows me to generalize findings and compensates for the limitations of working with a single case (first, control over factors external to the case selection criteria).

Data and Methods

The study is based on mixed method approach with consistent use of qualitative and quantitative data.⁵⁶ The advantage of this approach is the possibility of obtaining conclusions by collecting information from specific groups and developing ways to assess the reliability of the results obtained based on primary data. The approach allows me to find a compromise between in-depth study of specific groups/contexts and the possibility of generalization. I have collected a set of arguments of believers about their decision; the next task is to determine the extent to which similar explanations can manifest themselves in a wider group.

At the first stage, 90 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Orthodox residents of the Lipetsk region (2019–2021). The general set of interviews is divided into three subsamples by levels of religiosity (frequency of church attendance — from "do not attend" to "once a year or less"; from "several times a year" to "once a month"; "several times a month" and more often). Different strategies were used to contact the respondents: a subsample of the most religious was formed by using the snowball method (church communities); the rest of the respondents were either approached on the street and near churches and asked to participate in the study, or the agreements were reached through social networks. The socio-demographic profile of respondents, in general, corresponds to the profile of Orthodox Russians.⁵⁷ The results

⁵⁵ I regard the choice of alternatives to United Russia (first of all, the Communist Party) as a protest vote. For more information about the evolution of the party's position, see: Korgunyuk Y.G. Electoral Cleavages and Voting Motives // *Politeia*. – 2011. – №. 2 (61). – P. 85-117. (In Russ); Korgunyuk Y.G. Elections by a Proportional System as a Mass Public Opinion Poll // *Political Science*. – 2017. – №. 1. – P. 90-119 (In Russ). After the reform of the pension system, the Communist Party began to represent not only its traditional electorate, but a protest-minded. See: Budraitkis I.B. Pension Reform and Resistance in Russia: Lessons From the Movement that Failed to Happen // *Sociology of Power*. – 2018. – Vol. 30. – №. 4. – P. 69-105. (In Russ).

⁵⁶ Fetters M. D., Curry L. A., Creswell J. W. Achieving integration in mixed methods designs—principles and practices // *Health services research*. – 2013. – Vol. 48. – №. 6pt2. – P. 2134-2156.

⁵⁷ The age of the respondents varies from 19 to 80 years. The older groups (45-59 years and 60 years and older) are represented by a large number of believers, most of them women. See. VTSIOM, 2022. URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/velikii-post-2022> (дата доступа 22.10.2022).

of the interview were analyzed using the method of thematic coding. The principles of coding were based on the methodology of grounded theory.⁵⁸

The data of the second stage were obtained through an online survey (March 2021, N 2768). The codes and categories identified in interview data formed the basis of the survey questions. The sample is stratified by levels of religiosity. A binary logistic regression model is used to test hypotheses; the model best corresponds to the structure of the political choice in Russia.⁵⁹ The model was verified and tested by a test for the random data omissions and the normality of distribution; different variants of the dependent variable are used in model modifications; a model of multinomial logistic regression is constructed.

Research Hypotheses

The first set of hypotheses is formulated regarding the role of secular beliefs in political choice. On the one hand, hypotheses is based on the results of interviews, on the other — meet theoretical expectations and fit into the logic of economic voting.⁶⁰ A retrospective evaluation of the actions of politicians allows believers to make assumptions about the future. The subject of the assessment is personal economic well-being in conjunction with the trust in the authorities. Testing the hypothesis will allow me to substantiate the conclusion about the key role of political beliefs in the voting decision and confirm the theses of previous studies (first of all, about the request for the effectiveness of the work of politicians and its connection with the feeling of care on the part of the state⁶¹) I assume that the evaluation works "both ways": a negative evaluation increases the chances of choosing a Vote and Exit, a positive evaluation increases the chances of choosing Loyalty.

H1.1: A negative evaluation of the actions of politicians increases the likelihood of protest voting and non-participation in elections among Orthodox Russians.

H1.2: A negative evaluation of the actions of politicians reduces the likelihood of a loyal vote among Orthodox Russians.

⁵⁸ Glaser B. G. Basics of grounded theory analysis: Emergence vs forcing. – Sociology press, 1992.; Strauss A. L. Qualitative analysis for social scientists. – Cambridge university press, 1987.

⁵⁹ Lewis-Beck M. S., Ratto M. C. Economic voting in Latin America: A general model //Electoral Studies. – 2013. – Vol. 32. – №. 3. – P. 489-493.; Lewis-Beck M. S., Stegmaier M. The economic vote in transitional democracies //Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties. – 2008. – Vol. 18. – №. 3. – P. 303-323.

⁶⁰ Fiorina M. P. Economic retrospective voting in American national elections: A micro-analysis //American Journal of political science. – 1978. – P. 426-443.

⁶¹ Shestopal E. Psychological swings in mass political mentality of Russian citizens before presidential elections of 2018 //Bulletin of Tomsk State University. Philosophy. Sociology. Political Science. – 2018. – №. 41. – P. 203-220. (In Russ).

Testing the second hypothesis allows me to confirm the assumption that the role of practices (political activity) is limited to the political participation. Lack of voting experience can become a blocking factor for participation. This will prove the secondary importance of practices in comparison with beliefs.

H2: The experience of voting increases the likelihood of participation in elections among Orthodox Russians.

The last hypothesis is formulated regarding the role of religiosity in the political choice of the Orthodox. The results of the interview suggest that the effect of religious beliefs does not play a decisive role in the choice. At the same time, according to the theoretical framework religious beliefs should play a big role in the group of the most religious believers. The hypothesis reflects the result of the qualitative stage of the study and is based on the literature.⁶² To test the assumption, I compare the effects of evaluating the actions of politicians with humility, which can potentially contribute to Loyalty and Exit,⁶³ and with the priority of spiritual life, which is potentially significant for Exit.⁶⁴

H3: The influence of religious beliefs will be less significant than political beliefs, even among the most religious believers

Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on Russians who identify themselves with Orthodoxy. The model of the analysis of the Russian case assumes that identification with Orthodoxy determines a common set of shared beliefs and practices. This emphasizes the commonality of the group at the level of the context in which people associate faith with political issues.⁶⁵ Hence there are two important

⁶² Chesnokova V. A Narrow Path: Churching Process of Russia's Population at the End of XX Century. – Moscow: Academic Project., 2009.

⁶³ Lokosov V., Sinelina Y. The Interrelation of Religious and Political Orientations of Orthodox Believers // *Religiia v samosoznanii naroda (religioznyj faktor v identifikatsionnykh protsessakh)*. M. – 2008. – P. 135-158. (In Russ); Bogachev M. Church Attendance and Political Preferences of Orthodox Believers: A Quantitative Analysis // *Researches in Religious Studies*. – 2016. – №. 13. – P. 8-76. (In Russ).

⁶⁴ Chesnokova V. A Narrow Path: Churching Process of Russia's Population at the End of XX Century. – Moscow: Academic Project., 2009; Bogachev M. Church Attendance and Political Preferences of Orthodox Believers: A Quantitative Analysis // *Researches in Religious Studies*. – 2016. – №. 13. – P. 8-76. (In Russ).

⁶⁵ Green J. C., Green J. C. The faith factor: How religion influences American elections. – Praeger, 2007.; Green J. C., Guth J. L. From lambs to sheep: Denominational change and political behavior // *Rediscovering the religious*

limitations. Firstly, external variables (primarily socio-demographic) are not considered as alternative explanations. For example, the age of believers is not regarded as an alternative explanation of political choice, since it is expected that believers, regardless of age, may share a common set of beliefs and practices. Secondly, groups of believers divided by the level of religiosity cannot share fundamentally different values and norms of behavior. I do not analyze other worldview groups and do not make comparisons between groups.

The study is not aimed at clarifying the criteria for levels of religiosity. I use a standard indicator of church attendance; groups according to the level of religiosity are divided analytically based on collected interviews and subsequent coding.

The identified patterns do not imply that the explanations they entail are the only and exclusive alternatives.⁶⁶ However, my data provide initial support for linkages between religion and politics, which could be further developed with larger and more representative samples. Moreover, the research is not aimed at confirming or refuting the results of previous studies, that reveal patterns between aspects of religiosity and political attitudes. Instead, I analyze the mechanisms linking religious and political "variables", which allows to explain *how* believers make their choice.

Contribution to the Discussion of the Problem in Existing Literature

Those findings have broad implications for both electoral studies in Russia and studies of Orthodox religion. First, the application of mix-method approach removes the limitations of quantitative research. Interview data make it possible to analyse the respondents' logic of choice, thereby explaining existing voting patterns. Survey data provides an opportunity to generalize conclusions. In a broader context, obviously, these findings may not be valid.

Second, the individual-level analysis shows how political attitudes are combined with religious and political beliefs. Political choices are made on the basis of secular beliefs; religious beliefs can only adjust an existing choice. Such findings expand the understanding of the relationship between political attitudes and the Orthodox religion. They resolve the dispute between researchers who support the idea of a direct transfer of religious values to political life and those who argue that religion does not motivate decisions in the field of politics.

factor in American politics. – 1993. – P. 100-117.; Guth J. L. et al. Faith and the environment: Religious beliefs and attitudes on environmental policy //American Journal of Political Science. – 1995. – P. 364-382.; Kellstedt L. A., Smidt C. E. Doctrinal beliefs and political behavior: Views of the Bible //Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics. – 1993. – P. 177-198.

⁶⁶ McAdam D., Tarrow S., Tilly C. Methods for measuring mechanisms of contention //Qualitative sociology. – 2008. – Vol. 31. – №. 4. – P. 307-331.

Third, the research is embedded in the discussion about the rationality of Russian voters, considering religiosity in the context of subjective evaluation. The evaluations of Orthodox believers are distorted due to the general problem of low interest in politics in Russia and a vague idea of the work of the political system. However, the combination of political and religious beliefs allows believers to respond to the care of the state and formulate the main request in the criteria of respect for power and moral behavior of politicians.

Fourth, much of the research on religion and politics overlooks the role of beliefs. My analysis confirms that religious beliefs are connected with all the alternatives to the political choice of believers.

Fifth, I specify the type of religious practices that contribute to the choice. There is a well-known relationship between the frequency of church attendance and indicators of political participation and party choice. Being a marker of the strength of religiosity, the frequency of church attendance cannot explain the change in political attitudes. I show that the explanation should be based on the nature of interaction within the religious community.

A final observation on religiosity as a significant factor in political choice in the regions of the Central Black Earth zone: the example of the Lipetsk Oblast does not confirm the mutual dependence of a greater level of religiosity and a special inclination towards political loyalty. Instead, the effect of religiosity extends to all political choices (Voice, Loyalty, and Exit).

Statements to be Defended

1. The political beliefs of Orthodox believers play a crucial role in decision on voting. My analysis suggests that beliefs are more deeply linked to political choices than practices. Beliefs shape the evaluation of politicians and respect for authority; practices are linked to political participation only and have no independent effect. Religious beliefs and communal practices have an additional significance, correcting the existing choice.

2. The religious component of beliefs and practices changes depending on a level of religiosity. Even though the groups of most and least religious believers are located on different ends of the scale of religiosity, their choice is motivated by a similar combination of low evaluation of politicians and distrust of the authorities are combined with beliefs that require politicians to act morally. The role of religiosity in the middle group is reduced to the connection between communal practices and political participation: the experience of secular/religious activism and repetitive voting practices turns participation in elections into a habit. For most religious believers, however, communal practices have a different effect: they create conflict with secular practices, forcing believers to choose between religious and secular activities.

3. The belief in the necessity of humility is significant for the political choice of the most religious believers and middle-level believers. At the same time, there was no clear confirmation that this belief is religiously motivated belief.

Approbation of Results

List of publications (in Russian):

1. Karpich Y. The influence of religiosity on the political choice of Orthodox believers in Russia: the case of Lipetsk oblast // Bulletin of Perm University. Political Science. 2020. Vol. 14. №. 4. P. 85-97.
2. Karpich Y. The Political choice of Orthodox believers in Russia: strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research // Russian Sociological Review. 2021. Vol. 20. №. 2. P. 48-69.
3. Karpich Y. Orthodoxy and conservatism: political attitudes of religious Russians // Politeia. 2023. № 1. P. 141-160.

Conferences:

1. Studies of Religion: Past, Present, future, 01.04.2019, PSTSU; Report: Mechanisms of influence of religiosity on the political views of Orthodox believers.
2. Vectors of the Development of modern Russia, 18.04.2019, MSSSES; Report: Religiosity and political behavior: the role of providential beliefs.
3. «"Soviet spirituality": The Phenomenon and Its Research Possibilities», 10.06.2021 г., Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia; Доклад: Political choice of Orthodox believers in Russia: the influence of religiosity on the conservative political attitudes.

Research seminars:

4. Seminar for young scientists of the Laboratory of Regional History of Russia, 13.11.20, HSE; Report: The Political choice of Orthodox believers in Russia. Example of the Lipetsk region.

Analysis of Data and Findings

The first chapter of the study is devoted to the substantiation of the theoretical connection between religion and politics, which is inherent in electoral research. The first question discussed in the study is related to the procedure of explanation. In section 1.1, I substantiate the study of social mechanisms. Studies aimed at identifying patterns should, among other things, determine

the mechanisms that generate these patterns. However, Tilly⁶⁷ draws attention to the fact that researchers usually overlook this stage.⁶⁸ Critics of Tilly's⁶⁹ methodological approach claim that he failed to observe rigor in the analytical framework. To solve this problem, I use the model,⁷⁰ which allows to solve the problem of ambiguous interpretation of the mechanism. The analytical model will gain analytical significance if the emphasis is placed on the result of the mechanism. By defining Y in the "X → Y" model, the researcher determines the priority for studying the forces generating Y. The researcher admits that it is not possible to provide an exhaustive set of all the forces influencing the result, and it assumes that factors that go beyond the established set of mechanisms contribute to the fastest achievement of results. This opens an opportunity to identify and study mechanisms in a wide range of contexts. To prove that social mechanisms can be revealed in empirical data McAdam, Tilly, Tarrow⁷¹ offer an overview of methods that allow to identify mechanisms. My research conforms to the principles outlined: the "success" of studying the mechanisms and the reliability of the results is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Next, I raise the question of the place of religiosity in electoral research and present a discussion on how researchers explain the political preferences of religious voters. Due to the fact that the choice of religion is often considered as the result of rational choice,⁷² I assume that the study of its role in political choice can be analyzed within the framework of rational choice

⁶⁷ Tilly C., Goodin R. E. It depends //The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis. – 2006. – P. 3-32.; Tilly C. Processes and mechanisms of democratization //Sociological Theory. – 2000. – Vol. 18. – №. 1. – P. 1-16.; Tilly C. Mechanisms in political processes //Annual review of political science. – 2001. – Vol. 4. – №. 1. – P. 21-41.; McAdam D., Tarrow S., Tilly C. Dynamics of contention //Social Movement Studies. – 2003. – Vol. 2. – №. 1. – P. 99-102.; Tilly C. The politics of collective violence. – Cambridge University Press, 2003.; Tilly C., Tarrow S. G. Contentious politics. – Oxford University Press, 2015.

⁶⁸ See: Hedström P., Swedberg R. (ed.). Social mechanisms: An analytical approach to social theory. – Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998. – Vol. 19.

⁶⁹ Norkus Z. Mechanisms as miracle makers? The rise and inconsistencies of the “mechanismic approach” in social science and history //History and theory. – 2005. – Vol. 44. – №. 3. – P. 348-372.; Gerring J. Causal mechanisms: Yes, but... //Comparative political studies. – 2010. – Vol. 43. – №. 11. – P. 1499-1526.; Norkus Z. Troubles with mechanisms: Problems of the 'mechanistic turn' in historical sociology and social history //Journal of the Philosophy of History. – 2007. – Vol. 1. – №. 2. – P. 160-200.; Opp K. D. Explanations by mechanisms in the social sciences. Problems, advantages and alternatives //Mind & society. – 2005. – Vol. 4. – №. 2. – P. 163-178.; Koopmans R. A failed revolution-but a worthy cause //Mobilization. – 2003. – Vol. 8. – №. 1. – P. 116-119.; Tarrow, S. Confessions of a recovering structuralist //Mobilization. – 2003. – Vol. 8. – №. 8. – P. 134-141.; Oliver P. Mechanisms of Contention //Mobilization – 2003. – Vol. 8. – №. 1. – P. 122-129.; Rucht, D. Overcoming the Classical Model //Mobilization. – 2003. – №. 8. – P. 112-116.; Hedstrom, P., and R. Swedberg. 1998. Social mechanisms: An analytical approach to social theory. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

⁷⁰ Demetriou C. Processual comparative sociology: Building on the approach of Charles Tilly //Sociological Theory. – 2012. – Vol. 30. – №. 1. – P. 51-65.

⁷¹ McAdam D., Tarrow S., Tilly C. Methods for measuring mechanisms of contention //Qualitative sociology. – 2008. – Vol. 31. – №. 4. – P. 307-331.

⁷² Stark R., Bainbridge W. S. A theory of religion. – Lang, 1987. – Vol. 2.

Stark R., Iannaccone L. R., Finke R. Religion, science, and rationality //The American Economic Review. – 1996. – Vol. 86. – №. 2. – P. 433-437.

theories;⁷³ specifically, I focus on retrospective economic voting⁷⁴ and the subjectivity of voter choices.⁷⁵ The "rationality" of choices may depend on a number of cognitive distortions.⁷⁶ Religiosity can be the cause of distortions. Along with other sources for evaluation, religiosity is a mixture of information and predispositions.⁷⁷ Accordingly, it can affect the perception and filtering of available information.⁷⁸

Section 1.3 provides an overview of empirical studies on economic voting in the Russian context and discusses possible reasons for the distortion of evaluations. Researchers discover the significance of both statistical indicators⁷⁹ and factors of subjective perception of the economic situation.⁸⁰ It is assumed that voters exchange loyalty for economic growth and an increase in the level of well-being.⁸¹ A certain difficulty in assessing government policy and the political situation is created by low interest in politics and vague knowledge about political decisions.⁸²

⁷³ Downs A. et al. *An economic theory of democracy*. – Harper & Row New York, 1957.; Fiorina M. P. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* – Yale University Press, 1981; Lewis-Beck M. S., Lockerbie B. *Economics, votes, protests: Western European cases //Comparative Political Studies*. – 1989. – Vol. 22. – №. 2. – P. 155-177.

⁷⁴ Fiorina M. P. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* – Yale University Press, 1981; Lewis-Beck M. S., Lockerbie B. *Economics, votes, protests: Western European cases //Comparative Political Studies*. – 1989. – Vol. 22. – №. 2. – P. 155-177.

⁷⁵ Converse P. E. *The nature of belief systems in mass publics (1964) //Critical review*. – 2006. – Vol. 18. – №. 1-3. – P. 1-74.; Caplan B. *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies-New Edition*. – Princeton University Press, 2011.; Page B. I., Shapiro R. Y. *The rational public: Fifty years of trends in Americans' policy preferences*. – University of Chicago Press, 2010.

⁷⁶ Redelmeier D. A., Kahneman D. *Patients' memories of painful medical treatments: Real-time and retrospective evaluations of two minimally invasive procedures //pain*. – 1996. – Vol. 66. – №. 1. – P. 3-8.; Kahneman D. et al. (ed.). *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases*. – Cambridge university press, 1982.

⁷⁷ Zaller J. R. et al. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. – Cambridge university press, 1992.

⁷⁸ Calfano B. R., Djupe P. A. *God talk: Religious cues and electoral support //Political Research Quarterly*. – 2009. – Vol. 62. – №. 2. – P. 329-339.; McDermott M. L. *Religious stereotyping and voter support for evangelical candidates //Political Research Quarterly*. – 2009. – Vol. 62. – №. 2. – P. 340-354.; Jelen T. G. et al. *The political effects of the born-again phenomenon //Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics*. – 1993. – P. 199-215.

⁷⁹ Turovsky R. F., Gaivoronsky Yu. O. *The influence of economics on electoral behavior in Russia: does the "contract" of the government and society work? //Politeia*. – 2017. – №. 3 (86). – P. 42-61. (In Russ); Mau V., Kochetkova O., Zhavoronkov S. *Economic factors of electoral behavior (The experience of Russia in 1995-1996) //Moscow: IEPP*. – 2001. – Vol. 136. (In Russ); Panov P., Ross C. *Explanatory factors for electoral turnout in the Russian Federation: The regional dimension //Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*. – 2016. – Vol. 24. – №. 3. – P. 351-370.

⁸⁰ Shcherbak A. N. et al. *Refrigerator VS. TV? Economic voting in the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation in 2016 //Bulletin of Perm University. Series: Political Science*. – 2017. – No. 3. – pp. 137-155. (In Russ); Kamalov E. A., Panarin E. D. *National pride and subjective well-being of Russians //Monitoring public opinion: economic and social changes*. – 2020. – №. 1 (155). – Pp. 177-205. (In Russ).

⁸¹ Turovsky R., Gaivoronsky Y. *Economic Influence on Electoral Behavior in Russia: Is "Contract" between Power and Society Working? //Politeia*. – 2017. – №. 3 (86). – P. 42-61.; Shcherbak A. N. et al. *Fridge vs. Tv: economic voting in the 2016 duma elections in Russia // Bulletin of Perm University. Political Science*. – 2017. – №. 3. – P. 137-155. (In Russ).

⁸² Gulevich O. et al. *How do social beliefs affect political action motivation? The cases of Russia and Ukraine //Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*. – 2017. – Vol. 20. – №. 3. – P. 382-395.; Shestopal E. B., Vagina V. V., Pass P. S. *New trends in the perception of power by Russian citizens //Politeia*. – 2019. – №. 4 (95). – Pp. 67-86. (In Russ).

At the same time, social and political beliefs allow voters to respond to the "state care" and expect effective and moral actions from politicians.⁸³

The second chapter discusses approaches to the conceptualization of religiosity and strategies for its measurement. Section 2.1 presents two research traditions. Analysts who take the first approach focus on the social-collective aspect of religiosity.⁸⁴ They make two major assumptions: first, that social processes shape political attitudes and patterns of political participation; and second, that individual choice is mediated by belonging to a religious community and practices of religious participation. Participation in church activities facilitates social skills and turns participation into habits, which "spill over" into politics.⁸⁵

Analysts of the second school, meanwhile, argue that a full understanding of the phenomenon requires looking at the cognitive level. Religious activity may allow an individual to gain certain skills and self-confidence, but it is not sufficient to explain participation in other areas of social life, such as politics.⁸⁶ For political participation, they contend, believers must have a predisposition at the individual level.⁸⁷ Smith and Walker indicate that religious beliefs may play this role.⁸⁸ The results of the dispute are the appearance of a model that combines affiliation, practices and beliefs.⁸⁹

Section 2.2 discusses the specifics of Russian religiosity, analyzes the results of empirical studies on Russian case. In the Russian case, this discussion is fed by the substantial gap between church affiliation and religious practice: according to various surveys, between 63% and 71% of the country's believers belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, but only 6–14% regularly

⁸³ Shestopal E. B. Shifts in the mass political consciousness of Russia before the presidential elections of 2018 //Bulletin of Tomsk State University. Philosophy. Sociology. Political science. – 2018. – No. 41. – pp. 203-220. (In Russ); Shestopal E. B. The influence of the psychological state of Russian society on public policy //Political science. – 2022. – No. 3. – pp. 181-202. (In Russ).

⁸⁴ Djupe P. A., Gilbert C. P. The political influence of churches. – Cambridge University Press, 2008.

⁸⁵ Peterson S. A. Church participation and political participation: The spillover effect //American Politics Quarterly. – 1992. – Vol. 20. – №. 1. – P. 123-139.

⁸⁶ Djupe P. A., Gilbert C. P. The resourceful believer: Generating civic skills in church //The Journal of Politics. – 2006. – Vol. 68. – №. 1. – P. 116-127.

⁸⁷ Djupe P. A., Grant J. T. Religious institutions and political participation in America //Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. – 2001. – Vol. 40. – №. 2. – P. 303-314.; Schwadel P. Individual, congregational, and denominational effects on church members' civic participation //Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. – 2005. – Vol. 44. – №. 2. – P. 159-171.

⁸⁸ Smith L. E., Walker L. D. Belonging, believing, and group behavior: Religiosity and voting in American presidential elections //Political Research Quarterly. – 2013. – Vol. 66. – №. 2. – P. 399-413.

⁸⁹ Olson L. R., Warber A. L. Belonging, behaving, and believing: Assessing the role of religion on presidential approval //Political research quarterly. – 2008. – Vol. 61. – №. 2. – P. 192-204.; Smith L. E., Walker L. D. Belonging, believing, and group behavior: Religiosity and voting in American presidential elections //Political Research Quarterly. – 2013. – Vol. 66. – №. 2. – P. 399-413.; Layman G. The great divide: Religious and cultural conflict in American party politics. – Columbia University Press, 2001.; Legee D. C., Kellstedt L. A. Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics. – Routledge, 2016.; Putnam R. D., Campbell D. E. American grace: How religion divides and unites us. – Simon and Schuster, 2012.

practise the faith.⁹⁰ Scholars explain this phenomenon by pointing to a shift from Orthodox affiliation to national and ethnic identity or loyalty to the state,⁹¹ and the corresponding erosion of religious beliefs and practices.⁹² In other words, the analytical model for explaining political choice in Russia insists that religious motives of choice cannot be observed in isolation from secular; religious belonging is not a significant aspect, instead, religious beliefs and communal practices purportedly play a crucial role.

Scholars conventionally connect variations in the political attitudes of believers with levels of religiosity. However, they come to a number of contradictory findings. Some scholars argue that Orthodoxy affects the attitudes of believers,⁹³ while others indicate no difference between the political views of Orthodox Christians, believers of other denominations, and atheists.⁹⁴ An individual's level of religiosity seems to correlate both with growing loyalty to the regime⁹⁵ and with support for opposition parties.⁹⁶ Religious participation promotes political participation,⁹⁷ but other studies have found that non-participation is widespread among the most religious members of a religious community.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Belief in the supernatural. Levada Center. URL: <https://www.levada.ru/2020/10/28/vera-v-sverhestestvennoe/> (access date 22.10.2022) (In Russ); Religion and national identity in Central and Eastern Europe. Pew Research Center. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/05/CEUP-Overview-Russian-FOR-WEB.pdf> (access date 22.10.2022) (In Russ).

⁹¹ Filatov S., Lukin R. Statistics of Russian Religiosity: The Magic of Numbers and Ambiguous Reality // Russia and the Muslim World. – 2005. – №. 10. – P. 42-53. (In Russ Kaariainen K., Furman D. Religiosity in Russia at the Turn of the XX–XXI Centuries (The Final Part) // Social Sciences and Contemporary World. – 2007. – №. 2. – P. 78-95. (In Russ); Religion and national identity in Central and Eastern Europe. Pew Research Center. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/05/CEUP-Overview-Russian-FOR-WEB.pdf> (access date 22.10.2022) (In Russ).

⁹² Zorkaia N. Orthodoxy in the Irreligious Society // Vestnik Obshhestvennogo Mneniia. Dannye. Analiz. Diskussii. – 2009. – №. 2. – P. 65-84. (In Russ); Karpov V., Lisovskaya E., Barry D. Ethnodoxy: How popular ideologies fuse religious and ethnic identities // Journal for the scientific Study of Religion. – 2012. – Vol. 51. – №. 4. – P. 638-655.

⁹³ Kulkova A. Religiosity and Political Participation: The Role of Politics in Russian Religious Communities // HSE Working Papers. Series WP14 “Political Theory and Political Analysis.”. – 2015. – №. 2. (In Russ); Mchedlova M., Kofanova E., Shevchenko A. Orthodoxy and Loyalty: From Social Tension to the Choice Between the Government and the Church // Rossiia Reformiruiushhaiasia. – 2020. – №. 18. – P. 264-298. (In Russ).

⁹⁴ Lokosov V., Sinelina Y. The Interrelation of Religious and Political Orientations of Orthodox Believers // Religiia v samosoznanii naroda (religioznyj faktor v identifikatsionnykh protsessakh). M. – 2008. – P. 135-158. (In Russ); Marsh C. Russian Orthodox Christians and their orientation toward Church and state // Journal of Church and State. – 2005. – Vol. 47. – №. 3. – P. 545-561.; Marsh C. Orthodox Christianity, Civil Society, and Russian Democracy // Demokratizatsiya. – 2005. – Vol. 13. – №. 3.; Mchedlova M., Kofanova E. Russia in Anticipation of Changes: Religious Factor and Socio-Political Preferences // RUDN Journal of Political Science – 2020. – Vol. 22. – №. 1. – P. 7-21. (In Russ).

⁹⁵ Interrelation of religious and political orientations of Orthodox Russians

⁹⁶ Bogachev M. Church Attendance and Political Preferences of Orthodox Believers: A Quantitative Analysis // Researches in Religious Studies. – 2016. – №. 13. – P. 8-76. (In Russ).

⁹⁷ Kulkova A. Religiosity and Political Participation: The Role of Politics in Russian Religious Communities // HSE Working Papers. Series WP14 “Political Theory and Political Analysis.”. – 2015. – №. 2. (In Russ); Mchedlova M., Kofanova E., Shevchenko A. Orthodoxy and Loyalty: From Social Tension to the Choice Between the Government and the Church // Rossiia Reformiruiushhaiasia. – 2020. – №. 18. – P. 264-298. (In Russ).

⁹⁸ Bogachev M. Church Attendance and Political Preferences of Orthodox Believers: A Quantitative Analysis // Researches in Religious Studies. – 2016. – №. 13. – P. 8-76. (In Russ).

To address the problems identified in the study, I propose an analytical model (Section 2.2.2), that is based on the assumption that the political choice of Orthodox believers is determined by a combination of religious and non-religious beliefs and practices. Political attitudes incline the believer to a political choice. Political choice is a way of solving a problem that a voter sees subjectively evaluating the political situation. Beliefs help to interpret reality and give meaning to individual perception; make other people's actions significant for political choice. Practices and norms offer ways to cope with a problem or avoid it, providing a final solution. The political choice of Russians is determined by two forks: to express loyalty to the authorities or not; to vote against the current regime or not to participate in the elections. Following Hirschman's⁹⁹ approach, I refer to these as *Loyalty*, *Voice*, and *Exit*.

In the third chapter, I present the results of an empirical study. Section 3.1 is devoted to the qualitative stage of the study. The purpose of the first stage is to identify the typical logic of the political choice of believers and to determine which combinations of beliefs and practices lead to a certain choice. The results of the analysis of 90 interviews collected in the Lipetsk region in 2019-2021 allow me to draw the following conclusions. Seven beliefs emerged from the analysis of the interviews. Four of these beliefs were about politicians: politicians must act morally; the country must be governed by a strong leader; politicians can change for the better; and there is no power but of God. The other three were beliefs about oneself: the need for humility; the insignificance of worldly problems; and everything is in the hands of God (providentialism). At the same time, political beliefs are strongly associated with political choice: evaluating the actions of politicians combines an assessment of their own economic well-being and respect for the authorities/politicians. Negative evaluation incline respondents to protest voting or non—participation in elections, positive leads to loyalty to the authorities. Repeated practices (both religious and political) are associated with participation in elections; therefore, they have no independent effect on political choice.

Religious beliefs and communal practices have an additional significance, correcting the existing choice. The religious component of beliefs and practices changes depending on a respondent's level of religiosity. Even though the groups of most and least religious believers are located on different ends of the scale of religiosity, their conservative choice is motivated by a similar combination of distrust in the authorities and/or a sense of their own inability to influence politics with religious beliefs that require politicians to act morally. These groups differ in terms of the strength of these beliefs (the morality of the most religious is stronger than any

⁹⁹ Hirschman A. O. "Exit, voice, and loyalty": Further reflections and a survey of recent contributions //Social Science Information. – 1974. – Vol. 13. – №. 1. – P. 7-26.

other beliefs in the group) and in terms of their level of interest in politics (the most religious prioritise spiritual life). The role of religiosity in the middle group is reduced to the connection between communal practices and political participation: the experience of secular/religious activism and repetitive voting practices turns participation in elections into a habit. For most religious believers, however, communal practices have a different effect: they create conflict with secular practices, forcing believers to choose between religious and secular activities.

Based on those findings, I formulate hypotheses about the logic of the political choice of believers and the role of religiosity in the decision to vote. A description of the hypothesis test procedure and its results are presented in Section 3.2. The survey-data analyzed using binominal logit regression. The first set of hypotheses (H1.1 and H1.2) has been partially confirmed. The evaluation of the actions of politicians, indeed, determines the choice between loyal and protest voting, but does not contribute to non-participation. The probable explanation is related to the motives for participation. The lack of voting experience, low internal efficacy, and low interest in politics does not raise the question of the need to evaluate politicians/the political situation. The hypothesis (H2) about the influence of voting practices on political participation is fully confirmed. Taken together, these patterns prove two key theses of the study: the logic of the political choice of Orthodox voters is subordinated to the principles of economic voting and bounded rationality; political beliefs determine electoral preferences when the role of practices is limited to participation.

The hypothesis (H3) about the secondary role of religiosity is also partially confirmed. The priority of spiritual life does not stop believers from participating in politics (even the most religious of them), which testifies in favor of the thesis voiced by several respondents of the qualitative stage — religious beliefs are not used to evaluate political problems. At the same time, the need for humility affects loyal voting. Moreover, the belief is significant both in the most religious group and in the middle group. To explain this phenomenon, one should remember the limitation of the method. We cannot be sure that the respondent interprets humility in the context of religiosity. In other words, the need for humility, in this case, can be dictated by both religious and secular beliefs. The fact that the significance of the predictor was manifested in the group of a middle level indicates, rather, the secular nature of the belief (at least for this group); no religious beliefs were found in the interview that line up with the logic of the middle group choice. Not denying the possible religious origin of the belief, the question of the role of humility needs to be clarified in further research.