

Baguia, J. A. (2023). *Preaching war and peace: discourses of the Orthodox patriarchs of Kyiv and Moscow on Facebook during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine*. Abstract from Lisbon Winter School for the Study of Communication, Lisbon, Portugal.

While the past is riddled with accounts of what many historians call wars of religion, adherents of individual creeds usually count peace among the goals or priorities of their affiliation. Within Christianity, theologians have varying viewpoints about war, ranging from pacifism to theories of a just war. In the Anglophone world, journalistic coverage of the religious aspects of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has focused on the strained relationship since the start of the war between Pope Francis of the Catholic Church and Metropolitan Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow of the Orthodox Church of Russia. Meanwhile, Kirill and the Orthodox Patriarch of Ukraine, Metropolitan Epiphanius I, more directly affected by the war, have been interrogating it and calling for peace across various media platforms. Their stream of pronouncements, though largely underreported on mainstream media, appear not only on the official websites of their patriarchates but also on their personal social media accounts and are thereby prominently situated at the meeting of the evangelistic and the propagandistic. Scholarship has emerged about the religious undertones of the war but the two Orthodox patriarchs' use of social media to publicly reflect on the conflict has not yet been studied. This contrasts with a wealth of scholarship about non leading religious adherents' use of social media in other contexts such as legitimizing populist national political leadership (De Arruda et al., 2022), opposing a national regime of armed aggression (Makangali et al., 2020), or spreading religious misinformation amid a pandemic (Alimardani & Elswah, 2020). In this paper, I use qualitative content and critical discourse analyses of a selection of the two Orthodox patriarchs' Facebook posts during the Russian Ukrainian war to compare their public theologies of and reflections on war and peace. The samples under consideration will be taken from <https://www.facebook.com/epifaniy> (Epiphanius I) and from <https://www.facebook.com/PatriarhKirill> (Kirill) and will include posted texts and photographs or other illustrations. How do they represent the war in their Facebook communications? How do they respectively portray Ukrainians and Russians? How do they propose a path to peace? Given the influence of the two spiritual heads on tens of thousands who follow them on Facebook as well as on their congregations, and their standing as sources for news reports on the war, this study will shed light on the phenomenon of mediatized religionist behavior as both spiritual service and religious propaganda. Results will be of use in media practice, especially among those who are committed to solutions journalism or peace journalism. The findings will also elucidate the mutations that religious reflection undergoes in the context of virtual communication in time of conflict, and lastly, contribute to the ongoing rethinking of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of propaganda (Hyzen, 2021).