



Russian cleric blames fear of 'gay parades' for Putin's attack on Ukraine

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Most of the international community rightly rejects Vladimir Putin's justifications for his brutal attack on Ukraine - that he needs to keep his neighbor to the west out of NATO and that he is seeking to "de-Nazify" the country. In a sermon on Sunday, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church put forth a bizarre new explanation: the war is necessary to save eastern Ukraine from the gays.

Writing in [The Bulwark](#), the Cato Institute's Cathy Young notes that Patriarch Kirill began his clerical career in the Soviet era and long has been a champion of the communist state. In his sermon the patriarch declared: "For eight years, there have been efforts to destroy what exists in Donbas. What exists in the Donbas is a rejection, a principled rejection of the so-called values that are now being offered by those who lay claim to global domination. Today there is a certain test for loyalty to that power, a certain pass into that 'happy' world, the world of excessive consumption, the world of illusory freedom. Do you know what that test is? It's very simple but also horrific: it's a gay parade."

The Russian church leader's remarks fall right in line with comments recently made by the likes of Steve Bannon, [who recently praised Putin on his podcast for not being "woke"](#) and said that "they don't have the Pride flags" in Russia.

Perhaps most ironic about the cleric's remarks is that eastern Donbas isn't exactly a region of tolerance and freedom and, therefore, in need "saving" by Putin's war machine. Freedom House gives it a "freedom rating" of 4 out of 100, ahead of only North Korea, Syria, Tibet, Turkmenistan, and South Sudan.