



Religion, Sacrifice and Military Strategy in Russia

Prof. Dr Dmitry ADAMSKY (University of Oxford)

Dr Joris VAN BLADEL (Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations)



Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to an **evening conference** organised on **Thursday 12 February 2026** from **17:00 until 18:30** by the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies** of the **Royal Higher Institute for Defence** and the **Spiritual Fitness Service** of the **Directorate General of Health & Well-Being**.

Religion has re-emerged as a key factor in global conflicts, influencing identity and political legitimacy. In Russia, the Orthodox Church plays a prominent institutional role in shaping political discourse and military ethos. This church-state entanglement raises questions about genuine influence versus propaganda, its impact on Russia's armed forces and the strategic challenges it poses for Western European defence communities.

Simultaneously, death occupies a central place in Russia's strategic culture, framing it as a sacrifice for the motherland. Historical narratives of mass wartime losses foster doctrines prioritising endurance and attrition over swift victory. This ethos legitimises prolonged conflict, mobilises society and strengthens state authority, thereby embedding mortality as both a moral and operational pillar of Russian military planning.

We are pleased to welcome two leading analysts of Russia's defence policy, Prof. Dr Dmitry Adamsky, Research Fellow at the Strategy, Statecraft and Technology (Changing Character of War) Centre (SST-CCW) at the University of Oxford, as well as Dr Joris Van Bladel, Senior Research Fellow in the 'Europe in the World' programme at Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations, to help us explore the evolving nexus of faith, sacrifice and military force in Russia – and to reflect on how we can respond to this ideological and strategic challenge.

This conference will be held **in English at the conference room at campus Renaissance** (entrance: **rue Hobbema 8/Hobbemastraat 8, 1000 Brussels**) on **Thursday 12 February 2026 at 17:00**. Simultaneous interpretation in Dutch and French will be available on site. Please note that online participation will not be possible.

Kindly register in advance at www.defence-institute.be. **Registration is required by Thursday 5 February 2026 at the latest.**

(Signed)

Baudouin COPPIETERS DE GIBSON, MSc Eng

Rear Admiral

Aide-de-Camp to the King

Director-general

Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Programme:

16:30: Welcome
17:00: Conference and Q&A
18:30 – 19:30: Reception