

## THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLITOLOGY

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### POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF THE ORTHODOXY JURISDICTIONAL DIVISION IN UKRAINE IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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**Abstract.** The events of recent years in Ukraine testify to the growing importance of religious and political factors in Ukrainian society, which requires a rethinking of the phenomena and processes associated with them. For young Ukraine, the formation of an autocephalous church is a matter of national security, establishing the reference point of national self-identification, the prestige of the state in the international arena, and most importantly, the possibility of consolidating citizens into a single, largest confession in the country. The purpose of the article is to highlight the problems of political influence in a European scale on the process of total division of the branches of Ukrainian Orthodoxy into different jurisdictions. The evolution of political processes during the formation of the autocephalous system is revealed. It has been established that the future unification of Ukrainian Orthodoxy will contribute to the consolidation of Ukrainian society. This is the key task of the state, the church and all civil institutions in conditions of open war on the part of the aggressor. It has been proven that the reason for the evolution of state and political processes in Europe is the lack of clear regulation of the procedure for declaring a new autocephalous church, which deepened the division of churches in Ukraine.

**Key words:** determinants, President, political institution, state power, autocephaly, Orthodox Church.

**Introduction.** The question of establishing a mechanism for legal regulation of the formation of a new local autocephalous church had consistently faced the European Orthodox community. It was particularly relevant in the second half of the 19th – 20th century when the majority of recognized Orthodox churches in Europe gained their independence. Due to geopolitical, military, and state transformations in the 20th century, a number of states in Europe sought to have their independent church. Political processes in the Balkan countries inevitably influenced the church life. Despite the established principle of separating the church from the state and mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, each of the newly declared states raised the issue of church autocephaly.

However, the process of acquiring church independence did not happen automatically. After 1991, Ukraine did not gain ecclesiastical independence. The centuries-old influence of the Russian Church Empire left its mark on the religious life of the unformed Ukrainian society. The issue of religious self-identification sharply manifested itself in the development of a new democratic Ukraine. Over the years of independence, Ukraine has not achieved interfaith peace and the cessation of conflicts on

religious grounds. Our country is one of the largest Orthodox states in the world, the granting of the long-awaited Tomos to the Ukrainian Church is seen as a historic and canonical justice. Therefore, the issue of declaring autocephaly was a strategic task for the entire Ukrainian nation. Currently, it is one of the most pressing issues for the European community. All state institutions of Ukraine have been involved in the formation of legislation and state ideology in the religious sphere with the aim of declaring and future approval of its independent church. To some extent, all Orthodox churches, and even the Vatican, have participated in discussions on the Ukrainian church situation.

**The objective of the article** is to examine political processes in the religious sphere of the contemporary Europe and focus on state-church interaction within the context of Ukrainian realities. Significant religious processes of the early 21st century (the Pan-Orthodox Council in Crete, the formation of two new autocephalous churches, the Arab Spring, the transformation of Hagia Sophia into a mosque) unfolded depending on corresponding geopolitical and political processes. Recent military and political events in Ukraine are significantly influenced by Russia's open military aggression. The religious component has emerged as an important element of propaganda/justification for this war. The division of Ukrainian Orthodoxy into different jurisdictions today is a significant conflict-generating factor in Ukrainian society. The presence of several Christian churches identifying themselves with the ancient Kyiv Metropolis does not contribute to the consolidation of a society already divided by war. Therefore, since religious processes in modern Ukraine are influenced by the politics and geopolitical processes of contemporary Europe, the objective of the research aims to study the dependence of religious processes on political factors.

**Research Methods.** Lack of a developed methodology, and significant scientific and political interest lead to the emergence of new theories and systems of state-church interaction. Development of innovative approaches in foreign and domestic scientific literature regarding potential directions for harmonization and tolerance in the relations between state and religious institutions. This stimulates the need for studying and systematizing existing methodological works and developing of the new ones. It is characteristic, in our view, to categorize the methods of the researched topic into groups that allow for a comprehensive understanding of the subject of state religious policy and autocephalous issues: general scientific, specialized, and interdisciplinary.

**Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.** The current state of scientific development on the chosen topic is ambiguous. On one hand, there is a significant amount of public statements, speeches, and official letters from hierarchs and theologians of various Local Churches, but most of them have a polemical or political character. On the other hand, there has been a noticeable increase in public interest in the question of unity/division of Orthodox Churches in the face of civilization challenges. This surge in interest is undoubtedly connected with the recognition of the autocephalous church, namely the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), in the diptych.

Today, the work of the prominent advocate for the independence of the Ukrainian Church, Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko), "Ukrainian Church: the Path to Autocephaly," stands out as a significant contribution, providing a deep insight into the realization of different concepts of autocephaly for the Ukrainian Church in the 20th century (Oleksandr (Drabynko), 2018). Also noteworthy are the contributions of Archimandrite, Doctor of Sciences Kyrylo Hovorun (Hovorun, 2019), on the jurisdiction of Ukrainian Orthodoxy and the possibilities of canonical establishment of the Local Church, as well as M. Herhelyuk's work on the canonical and ecclesiological foundations of the autocephalous organization of churches in World Orthodoxy (Herhelyuk, 2014). The work of Viktor Yelensky, the head of the State Service for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience, "Religion After Communism," revealing the European context of interconfessional relations in Ukraine, is also crucial for research.

Several renowned Ukrainian philosophers and religious scholars, such as V. Yelensky, S. Zdyoruk, A. Kolodny, P. Kraliuk, O. Sahan, L. Filipovych, Yu. Chornomorets, have addressed the issue of

the division of Ukrainian Orthodoxy and political influence on these processes. They unanimously advocate for the necessity of granting independence to the Ukrainian Church. Scholars also argue that the establishment of a young Ukrainian state, the development of civil society, and the cessation of war are impossible without an autocephalous church organization.

The opinions and statements of leading Ukrainian hierarchs, including Patriarch Filaret, Metropolitans Epiphanius, Onuphrius, and Makary, as well as Blessed Sviatoslav (Shevchuk), remain relevant. The works of Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko), Archbishop Yevstratiy (Zorya), and other hierarchs from various church jurisdictions who regularly make statements and issue official documents in various media outlets are essential for further exploration. Regarding hierarchs of Local Churches, most of the heads and prominent theologians have already expressed their views on the Ukrainian question. This includes Patriarch Bartholomew, Patriarch Kirill, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), Archbishop Daniel (Exarch in Ukraine), and other global church leaders.

**Results and Discussion.** During the existence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, two opposing camps of Local Churches have formed, each holding divergent views on the Ukrainian issue. Additionally, one of the essential tasks of our research is the political analysis of the key provisions forming the idea of an independent Ukrainian Church in the 21st century and predicting variations in global interactions at the Pan-Orthodox Council.

The initial years of Ukraine's independence are characterized by the "religious revival process," accompanied by the restoration of religious tradition, its further development, and the acquisition of new features and characteristics. The configuration of Ukraine's religious network today is linked to the political processes in Europe, which has been divided into two religious macro-regions: "The rift between civilizations, separating the West from Orthodoxy, runs straight through its center for several centuries" (Hovorun, 2016: 284).

In 1991, according to canonical norms, all necessary conditions were established for proclaiming the independence of the Ukrainian Church within the existence of the ancient Kyiv Metropolis. The Church gained significant prospects for institutionalization and further development.

Over the years of state independence, Ukrainian society periodically raised the issue of autocephaly. On January 6, 2019, the Ukrainian Church officially received a historic document laying the foundation for the formation of a new civic society. Moreover, this became an integral element in affirming statehood and raising Ukraine's authority on the international stage. It became especially relevant during the military confrontation with Russia and the annexation of Crimea, all three branches of Orthodoxy, especially the UOC MP, had a significant impetus to separate from Moscow but did not utilize it (Tunick, 2022: 287). Today, the independence of the new Ukrainian Church is already a formed element of Ukrainian life and historical objectivity. Simultaneously, jurisdictional division in world Orthodoxy continues.

For a long time in Ukraine, several Orthodox Churches functioned, similar in essence but different in form. Therefore, studying the history of the division of Orthodox Churches in Ukraine into different jurisdictions will help understand the political component of such a situation, contributing to the unification of all Orthodox believers and branches around the recognized Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Undoubtedly, the reception of the Tomos and the declaration of its existence were extremely important, but achieving full recognition without the majority of Ukrainian parishes joining the new church structure will be challenging.

For a deeper understanding of the problem of jurisdictional division in modern Orthodoxy in Ukraine, it is necessary to analyze the political context of the formation of each of the three main churches. It is worth noting that there are other, less numerous Orthodox formations in Ukraine, such as the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Independent Apostolic Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Patriarch Kulik, and several others. However, together they constitute not even 0.1% of the total number of Ukrainian parishes or exist nominally as parishes of their founder. Therefore, the study will focus only on the UAOC, UOC MP, and UOC KP.

The first Orthodox confession in Ukraine was the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, formed at the All-Ukrainian Orthodox Council in Kyiv in 1921 (Stan, 2007: 152). The main challenge faced by the participants of the founding Council was the ordination of the first hierarchs of the newly established church. The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) refused to bless the consecration of the newly elected Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine, the well-known religious and public figure, and advocate for independence, Fr. Vasyl Lypkivsky. Therefore, the Council decided independently, without the episcopate, citing the practice of the early centuries of the Alexandrian Church, to consecrate its first hierarch (Sahan, 2004: 207). Subsequent ordinations of clergy were conducted in the traditional manner (two or three bishops consecrating the new one).

The Council itself acknowledged and recognized the fact that the peculiarities of the first consecration were due to political circumstances. However, this became a major obstacle to the recognition of the UAOC by world Orthodoxy. Additionally, Metropolitan Mykhailo (Yermakov), the exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine, vehemently opposed the newly formed church structure. Overall, the UAOC in the 20th century underwent a complex path of formation, failing to gain recognition in the Orthodox world. During the Soviet era, the authorities tightly controlled its activities. The period of church divisions in the 1920s-30s did not contribute to its formation and institutionalization, with some clergy returning to the ROC. Failing to gain global recognition, many clergy members emigrated. Thus, the UAOC in the 20th century did not solidify as a monolithic structure. In 1936, after the arrest of Metropolitan Ivan Pavlovsky and several bishops, the UAOC ceased its activities (Sahan, 2004: 328).

The revival of the UAOC is associated with 1989 when the corresponding committee was formed in Kyiv on February 16. In the Councils in Lviv and Kyiv, a new Patriarch of Kyiv and All Ukraine, Mstislav (Skrypnyk), was elected (Papkova, 2011: 142). The Soviet authorities opposed the revival of the UAOC, considering this process part of the ideological-political struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence. After Ukraine gained independence, pressure on the UAOC significantly diminished, and the revived structure began extensive institutionalization throughout Ukraine. However, its struggle for Orthodox recognition was not successful. Moscow resisted the separation of the independent church, since the number of parishes in Ukraine is half of the total number of parishes of the entire Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, Russia's imperial ambitions, embodied in the ideas of the "Third Rome" and the "Russian world," could not allow the detachment of any former republic, even spiritually. This could trigger a chain reaction, as Moldova, Estonia, and Belarus consistently raised the issue of forming independent church jurisdictions during waves of national revival and state independence. The church was officially registered by the relevant state authorities in 1995. As of January 1, 2018, 1167 parishes of the UAOC were registered in Ukraine, 101 of which were no longer active (Hovorun, 2019: 361).

The largest Orthodox structure in Ukraine is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is in unity with the Moscow Patriarchate. Its historical path begins with the All-Russian Orthodox Council in 1918, when autonomy was granted in canonical union with the ROC. Later, in 1922, Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow confirmed this status. However, during the Soviet period, the leadership of the ROC pretended that no autonomy existed (Lucian, 2008: 430). The church in Ukraine existed as the exarchate of the ROC, and for 60 years, no council of Ukrainian bishops was convened to elect its primate. Exarchs were appointed in Moscow from among ethnic Russians. For the first time in 1968, a Ukrainian, Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko), assumed this position.

The Ukrainian Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate canonically included dioceses with parishes and monasteries located in the territory of the Ukrainian SSR. "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" was the official name, and the title of the exarch was Metropolitan of Kyiv and Galicia, Patriarchal Exarch of All Ukraine. This is where the name "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" first appeared, with the Synod of the exarchate being the highest legislative, executive, and judicial authority within the canons and the

Statute of the ROC. The Synod of the exarchate was fully independent on the territory of Ukraine, although it was accountable to the Holy Synod of the ROC (Politics, 1994: 182).

During the extraordinary Hierarchical Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) on October 25-27, 1990, the question of expanding the autonomy and self-governance of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) was discussed. A special commission, chaired by Metropolitan Juvenal of Krutitsy and Kolomna, investigated the Ukrainian church situation. A decision was made to grant the UOC autonomy with broad rights. The Council formulated the "Definition of the UOC," stating, "The UOC is granted independence and autonomy in its administration. The head of the UOC is elected by the Ukrainian episcopate and blessed by the Moscow Patriarch. The Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine, as the head of the UOC, is a permanent member of the ROC Holy Synod." In the same year, Moscow Patriarch Alexy II presented Metropolitan Filaret with a certificate of independence. Additionally, Alexy II sent an official letter to the Minister of Justice of Ukraine, V. Onopenko, stating that the UOC is independent in its administration, and the ROC does not claim all movable and immovable church property in independent Ukraine, as it automatically transfers to the UOC. There is no administrative or financial accountability to the Moscow Patriarchy (Papkova, 2011: 208).

At the time of receiving autonomous status, the UOC had 20 dioceses, 29 monasteries (including the Kyiv-Pechersk and Pochayiv Lavras), the Odessa Seminary (later joined by the Kyiv and Volyn Seminaries, and in 1992, the Kyiv Theological Academy), and 5031 religious communities. The number of UOC bishops was 20 ruling, one vicar, and one honorary archpastor (Sahan, 2004: 721). This powerful network of parishes, the largest in Ukraine, was formed and registered because during the "pre-perestroika" times, only the Ukrainian Exarchate of the ROC (of which the UOC became the successor) and the association of evangelical Christians-Baptists of Ukraine, a part of the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, were legally active in the country.

In the years of Ukraine's independence, the UOC of the Moscow Patriarchate had several opportunities to gain autocephaly, but the pro-Russian faction of bishops always blocked the issue. Ukrainian hierarchs' synods repeatedly decided on the "inappropriateness of raising the issue of achieving autocephaly in the near future." A similar decision was approved at the Council on July 28, 2000. Even without gaining full independence, on January 1, 2018, the UOC remained the largest religious organization in Ukraine with 12,064 active parishes (Hovorun, 2019: 261).

After the issuance of the Tomos for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and its structural organization, mass transitions from the Moscow Patriarchate, as announced, did not occur. The state registration authority in a new statistical report at the beginning of 2021 indicates that the UOC of the Moscow Patriarchate remains the dominant Orthodox confession: 12,406 of its parishes are registered, while the OCU, after the unification, has 7,188 communities.

The youngest among the Orthodox confessions in Ukraine is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP). Its ideological leader was Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko). After the proclamation of Ukraine's independence, autocephalous sentiments actively spread in the Orthodox environment. At that time, Metropolitan Filaret (UOC-MP) advocated for the full autocephaly of the Kyiv Metropolis. However, Russia made every effort to keep Kyiv in its own church sphere. There was immense pressure on the pro-Ukrainian hierarchy. The Council of the ROC forced Filaret to promise to renounce the metropolitan cathedra. The Kharkiv Council took place without the participation of Metropolitan Filaret, leading to the election of a new head of the UOC-MP – Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan). In response to these actions, on June 25-26, 1992, in Kyiv, a unifying council of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) and a portion of the UOC-MP loyal to Metropolitan Filaret took place. The new church structure was named the UOC-KP.

It is an unusual situation when the majority of the indigenous episcopate remains in a "foreign" hierarchical church, while a small part forms a new autocephalous structure. This is exactly what happened in 1992 when Ukrainian bishops at the Council requested not to recognize the already

proclaimed autocephaly in the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) but only to declare it. Perhaps, this was a major strategic mistake in the historical movement and struggle for church independence (Hovorun, 2019: 297).

Patriarch Mstislav (Skrypnyk), who headed the recently revived Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), was elected as the leader. After Mstislav's death in 1993, the UAOC separated again, and Patriarch Dimitri (Yarema) became its leader. In 1993 – 1995, Patriarch Volodymyr (Romaniuk) led the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP). It was he who revived the idea of Kyiv-centricity of the Slavic lands, emphasizing that "Kyiv is the second Jerusalem." Since 1995, Patriarch Filaret has led the UOC-KP. An important innovative moment in global Orthodoxy is Filaret's initiation of the so-called "parallel diptych." Due to his contacts with global Orthodox leaders, the newly elected Kyiv Patriarch initiated Eucharistic communion with other global churches that lacked worldwide recognition, such as the oppositional church of Bulgaria, the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Montenegrin Church, and other church formations seeking independence and global recognition. As of January 1, 2018, there were 4807 active communities (Ishchuk, 2020: 21).

Therefore, since 1995, three officially registered and active confessions have been formed throughout Ukraine: UOC-MP, UOC-KP, and UAOC. UAOC and UOC-KP are ideologically close, as their service is based on the idea of Kyiv-centricity and general Orthodox recognition. At the same time, numerous unifying councils and commissions of these two churches, which were constantly "acting," did not take place until the creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). It is worth noting that even the UOC-MP, during the period of independence, several times formed a commission for dialogue with UAOC and UOC-KP, but no progress was made.

An important feature of the polyconfessionality of religious organizations in Ukraine is their consolidation into institutional associations of interreligious and interconfessional character. Such associations have been formed in Ukraine from 1991 to 2015, and there were about ten of them. They include Orthodox churches of various jurisdictions, as well as all Christian denominations. These associations are formed to reflect the consolidated position and defend the common interests of their members in the field of interreligious and interconfessional relations, as well as in the relations between the state and religious organizations (Herhelyuk, 2014: 85).

Both the pro-Ukrainian UAOC and UOC-KP have gone through a long path of unification. Numerous unifying councils and meetings gave hope for further unity. One of the recent examples is the document on the formation of the Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the summer of 2015. This document was never implemented, but it indicated the regular discussion of the process of unifying church structures.

Therefore, the formation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine has always been the main vector of the movement to unite branches of Ukrainian Orthodoxy around the idea of autocephaly and merger for the proclamation of the Local Church. Thus, the recognition of this process by the Ecumenical Patriarch is a logical completion of the important task of Ukraine's independence as a whole.

As for the newly formed Orthodox Church in Ukraine, its institutionalization is still ongoing. The process of establishing it as a legal entity has just begun. The final name of the confession is not yet determined, as its leaders call it either the "Orthodox Church of Ukraine" or allow for (OC in Ukraine). In the Tomos signed by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the name "Holy Church of Ukraine" is used. Moreover, in the places of the UOC-KP and UAOC dioceses, there are no unifying meetings of the clergy, joint divine services of the clergy of defunct churches.

The important step towards reconciliation and, at the same time, a testimony of openness to dialogue is the formation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine at the meeting of the Holy Synod on December 5, 2019. The Commission on Inter-Christian Relations (Herhelyuk, 2014: 104) plays a significant role in this process. Similar commissions were previously established under the auspices of the UOC-MP, UAOC, and UOC-KP, but they did not demonstrate constructive activities. Therefore, it is crucial for

the newly formed institution to work for the benefit of the reconciliation of Ukrainian churches. This can only be achieved through tolerance and dialogue. If the Commission's activities go beyond formal existence, then real results, necessary for the peace and consolidation of our society, can be discussed.

Today, leading scholars, including Yu. Chornomoretz, argue that the religious factor will become a crucial link in uniting the entire Ukrainian society. Nationalistic slogans often appeal to some and irritate others, as the large territory of Ukraine has been divided among different, sometimes conflicting empires for a long time. Therefore, religious prayers addressed to the Almighty God, who has no partisan affiliation, do not provoke human resistance (Hovorun, 2016: 290). Moreover, the Church currently enjoys the highest level of trust in the population, being present in all cities and villages of Ukraine and predominantly fulfilling a constructive and peacekeeping function. The elimination of political confrontation between Ukrainian-oriented churches will be the basis for the locality of the newly formed Ukrainian Church. Most scholars, public figures, and the government leadership are convinced of significant transformations in the UOC-MP in the future. Today, we observe the first transitions and re-registration of community statutes. This process will gain momentum in the near future, contributing to the rapid establishment of the newly formed OCU on the world stage.

The new Local Ukrainian Church arose due to a series of objective historical circumstances. One of them is the restoration of historical justice, which the Ukrainian people have sought since the time of Bohdan Khmelnytsky. This idea gained new impetus after 1991 in the waves of national revival. The path to self-assertion and religious self-identification of the Ukrainian nation as a world Orthodox people inevitably lies through the establishment of its own church. The current Ukrainian authorities and personally President P. Poroshenko played a fundamental role in the creation of the OCU. In addition, the Ecumenical Patriarch was the main ideologist of the process.

The state played a key role in the formation of the new autocephalous church in Ukraine. In previous sections, we addressed the issue of state-church relations and political influence on the process of autocephaly. Ukraine was no exception. The active position of the country's leadership and personally President P. Poroshenko led to the initiation of the granting of the Tomos to the Ukrainian Church by the Ecumenical Patriarch. One of the first official documents was the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on June 16, 2016, to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, requesting recognition of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, assistance in overcoming internal divisions among Ukrainian Orthodox, and declaring the act of 1686 invalid, by which the Kyiv Orthodox Metropolis effectively came under the control of the Moscow Patriarch (Sanderson, 2005: 173).

During the years 2016–2019, a series of meetings and several official documents were adopted, including the "Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, Ecumenical Patriarch, regarding the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine" and "On the support of the President of Ukraine's appeal to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for the granting of the Tomos of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine." Without the involvement of the state on the international political stage, the signing of the Tomos could have been delayed indefinitely. Furthermore, the government continues to contribute to the strengthening of the authority of the new church, as evidenced by official delegations and visits of Ukrainian officials to the heads of Local Churches. One of the recent visits was the visit of Prime Minister D. Shmyhal to the Georgian Patriarch Ilia II, which took place on June 3, 2021, at the hierarch's residence. In these and similar meetings, the main issue is raised – the swift recognition by the Local Churches of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and its inclusion in the general diptych. This issue is primarily about affirming the identity of the Ukrainian nation, its full independence, and, ultimately, international prestige. Therefore, today the Ukrainian state has played a significant role in the formation of an independent Ukrainian church, which directly affects national security and the integrity of our territory.

The events in eastern Ukraine only exacerbated the "patriarchal confrontation." The Russian Orthodox Church, represented in Ukraine by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow

Patriarchate, shapes the worldviews of millions of Ukrainians. Ideas of the "Russian world" and the "Triune Rus" are openly propagated from the pulpit. Leading domestic scholars (V. Yelensky, A. Kolodny, L. Filipovich, Yu. Chornomoretz) unanimously assert that the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine contributed to the war in the country's east. Often, the activities of clergy in the eastern region carry an overtly destructive element and hinder the resolution of the conflict.

In reality, the hybrid war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine began before 2014. Its history goes back to 1991 when Moscow actively began to resist the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which declared the necessity of autocephaly (Rudych, 2002: 307). Over the years of independence, coinciding with the tenure of Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), the Ukrainian Church repeatedly expressed a desire to be independent, but these aspirations were immediately suppressed. This was already a covert war, opposition to everything Ukrainian and national. Open military aggression occurred during the annexation of Crimea, but a conscious part of the Ukrainian hierarchy within the UOC-MP felt pressure much earlier.

Today, in renewed Ukraine, an active process of forming civil society is taking place. The Church plays a significant role in this process. In the conditions of new realities, the Church actively contributes to the process of spiritual and national revival, expanding the scope of its social service. An unbiased analysis of the religious situation in Ukraine indicates that with goodwill from the churches and political will from the state authorities, negative trends in church-religious processes can be overcome. The Church in Ukraine will play its inherent role as a powerful institution of civil society. In the new stage of social development associated with the formation of civil society and the rule of law, there is a need to develop and implement new conceptual principles of state-church relations.

**Conclusions.** The formation of the doctrinal-canonical order of Christianity occurred amid a fierce struggle for leadership (evidently also for influence) between the ancient sees – the Roman, Alexandrian, Antiochian, and Constantinopolitan. However, today, the geopolitical dimension and global circumstances have shifted the confrontation vector to Moscow-Constantinople. Two opposing camps of Local Churches have gradually formed, each pursuing its own church policy.

Considering the above, the newly proclaimed and already independent Ukrainian Church has significant potential. This is a historical challenge: can it unite society, be attractive to the youth, or will internal hierarchical infighting and the "struggle for spheres of influence" that have prevented unity and independence for centuries fade into the background? Time will tell, but today, more than ever, the Kyiv Church has gained significant trust in the eyes of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Today, it is necessary to unite for the sake of future recognition of the Ukrainian status by other Local Churches. The consolidated Kyiv Metropolis can become the largest national Orthodox Church in the world, significantly changing the balance in the structure of World Orthodoxy. This is the main reason for the resistance of the Russian Orthodox Church and some Local Churches to the Ukrainian unification.

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