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Viktor Yelenskyi

*National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv*

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# "THEN WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?" SECURITIZING OF RELIGION IN UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN CONFLICT

By Viktor Yelenskyi

**Viktor Yelenskyi**, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, is a 2021 Fulbright Researcher at the Catholic University of America and Chief Researcher at Kuras Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Kyiv. Previously he worked as a researcher at the Institute of Sociology and Institute of Philosophy, edited the Ukrainian Journal for Religious Studies, *Lyudina i Svit*, headed the Kyiv Bureau of Radio Liberty, taught at Ukrainian Catholic University and Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine, and served as an Adviser to the Prime Minister of Ukraine, and, from 2014-2019, was a member of the Ukrainian Parliament. He has authored many books, articles, and essays on religious freedom, religion and politics, and global religious trends. E-mail: vloz2603@gmail.com

## Abstract

With the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, religion has shifted from a sphere of great importance in inter-state relations to the national security domain, where the sides in the conflict perceive religion as potentially posing the utmost threat and have resorted to extraordinary measures to securitize it. The author argues that at the core of the Ukrainian securitizing move was the struggle for the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which allowed weakening Russia's influence not only on the Orthodox milieu but also on Ukrainian society as a whole. Russia, viewing the loss of control over Ukraine as a danger to its national security, applied a wide range of extreme means in its attempts to torpedo Ukrainian autocephaly. Whereas in the Ukrainian case, the actor of securitization, unable to convince its audience of the need for stricter legislation and greater police control, took the route of expanding the rights and liberties of religious associations hoping to gain its loyalty. The Russian securitizing move abroad (namely, in Ukraine) was accompanied by a domestic assault on religious freedom and the defeat of hotbeds of religious dissent.

**Keywords:** Religion and Security, Russian-Ukrainian Conflict, Autocephaly

## Introduction

During the decade, the relationship between religion and security has gained growing scholarly attention.<sup>1</sup> It has become increasingly apparent that "deseccularization of the world"<sup>2</sup> was not necessarily something that lies in the sphere of individual encounters with the sacred, within the realm of mass moral upgrading, and search for meaning or existential concerns. The tragedy of September 11, 2001, highlighted that it would become difficult furthermore to associate religion with benevolence, self-sacrifice, and unequivocal commitment to human dignity only. People in the different corners of the globe were becoming accustomed not only to taking off their shoes in airports, to the ubiquitous surveillance cameras, metal detectors, and barbed wire in the center of European capitals but to a most militant religious rhetoric and unprecedentedly frequent references to religious symbols, texts, and images not experienced for a long time. The problem of the securitization of religion, previously faintly observable in the general body of securitization studies, has been steadily gaining more and more deserved space for itself in the academic output. It simply could not be otherwise, since religion has become a matter of securitization not only of the authoritarian and hybrid political regimes, but also of the Western democracies.

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<sup>1</sup> Casey Lucius. "Religion and the National Security Strategy," *Journal of Church and State*, 2012. Vol. 55. No. 1, 50–70; Wellman, Jr., James K. and Clark B. Lombardi (eds.), *Religion and Human Security: A Global Perspective*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Giorgio Shani. *Religion, Identity and Human Security* (Studies in Religion and Politics, Vol. 14, London, New York: Routledge, 2014); Mona Kanwal Sheikh, "The Religious Challenge to Securitisation Theory", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 2014, Vol. 43 (1), 252– 272; Kathrin Lenz-Raymann. *Securitization of Islam: A Vicious Circle. Counter-Terrorism and Freedom of Religion in Central Asia*. (Verlag, Bielefeld, 2014); Robert M. Bosco. *Securing the Sacred: Religion, National Security, and the Western State*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Martha Brill Olcott, "Freedom of Religion, Tolerance, and Security in Central Asia", *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 2017. Vol.15. No. 3, 24-34; Richard Q. Turcsányi, Maryna Vorotnyuk. *Theorizing Security in the Eastern European Neighborhood: Issues and Approaches*. (Bratislava-Kyiv: Vistka, 2018); Joseph Prud'homme, "Security, Religion, and Political Culture: A Defense of Weak Disestablishment," *Religions*. 2019. Vol. 10. No. 88, 1-42; Egdūnas Račius. *Islam in Post-communist Eastern Europe: Between Churchification and Securitization*. (Brill, 2020); Denys Shestopalets, "Church as an Existential Threat: The Securitization of Religion in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine." *Journal of Church and State*, 2020. Vol. 62 No. 4, 713–739.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Berger (ed.) *The Deseccularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center and Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

After September 11, 2001, the Western democracies have undertaken more or less vigorous steps to prevent threats emanating from religion or those organizations and individuals who were wearing a religious mask to hide their real goals. Within a couple of years, the new security regime emerged in the United States and some essential changes designed for an effective response to current and future threats were introduced in the national legal system by lawmakers in Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, France, and Italy.<sup>3</sup> With all this going on, many policymakers and commentators called governments to use all necessary means to not allow terrorists and religious extremists to take advantage of what could be regarded as a vulnerability of the Western democracies, namely their openness, liberal legislative regime, democratic procedures, sensitivity to human rights, and human dignity. Debates over the securitization of religion have been fueled by the refugee crisis in Europe where religion appears as radically ambiguous, causing both social cohesion and social conflict, in a paradoxical way calls Europeans for fortification of Europe and for its de-fortification.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, these debates became even more intense after 2014, when alongside with illegal annexation of Crimea and effective occupation of the part of Ukraine's Donbas, Russia launched its large-scale "war of remembrance." History, especially the history of the Second World War, became an issue of national security and a tool for asserting Russia's position on the international arena as fundamental, rather than the rotten, mean-spirited West, which has always been jealous of Russian greatness.<sup>5</sup> If in the West, with increasing distance from the time of the WWII historical narrative of "Never Again,"

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<sup>3</sup> Agustín Motilla. "Security and Religious Radicalization. Securitization of Islam in Europe," *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale*. 2018. No1, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ulrich Schmedel and Graeme Smith (eds). *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> As President Putin puts it, "In all times, the same thing happened: once Russia grew stronger, they found pretexts to hamper its development. As one of our emperors (Alexander III – VYe) said, "everyone is afraid of our vastness". – "Putin Claims Russia Would 'Knock Out the Teeth' Of Any Foreign Aggressor" May 21, 2021. <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-putin-knock-teeth-foreign-aggressors/31266259.html>. Accessed 06/01/2021.

which more and more steadily affirmed itself as a warning to nations against the horrors of the most terrible war in human history, Putin's Russia has shaped its narrative as "We can do it again!"<sup>6</sup> The Russian-Western war of remembrance culminated with the European Parliament's Resolution of September 19, 2019, which stated that "the Nazi and communist regimes carried out mass murders, genocide, and deportations and caused a loss of life and freedom in the 20th century on a scale unseen in human history" and condemned Russian state "propaganda [that continues] to whitewash communist crimes and glorify the Soviet totalitarian regime."<sup>7</sup>

Russia has explicitly securitized the sphere of historical memory by creating a staff to "combat the falsification of history and the rehabilitation of Nazism," including through criminal law measures, as well as by introducing criminal and administrative penalties "for falsifying history."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Russian courts have convicted, among others, persons who criticized the WWII-time military leadership of the USSR or who recalled on social media about the joint invasion of Poland by the Soviet Union and Germany in September 1939.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, in 2020, within the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, a special section to combat falsification of history was created.<sup>10</sup>

For the purposes here pursued, it is important to note that the Russian historical narrative denied the right to the existence of an independent Ukrainian vision of its own history by definition. Episodes of the joint history of the

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, in 2020 President Putin has publicly endorsed this slogan, see, "Путин рассказал об отношении к лозунгу «Можем повторить»" *Известия*. 10 марта 2020 [Putin told about his attitude towards the slogan "We can do it again."] <https://iz.ru/985100/2020-03-10/putin-rasskazal-ob-otnoshenii-k-lozungu-mozhem-povtorit>. Accessed 06/01/2021.

<sup>7</sup> *Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html) Accessed 06/01/2021.

<sup>8</sup> "В России создан штаб по борьбе с фальсификацией истории и реабилитацией нацизма." [The Office for Combating the Falsification of History and the Rehabilitation of Nazism was established in Russia] September 16, 2020. <https://iz.ru/1061269/2020-09-16/v-rossii-sozdan-shtab-po-borbe-s-falsifikatsiei-istorii-i-reabilitatsiei-natsizma>. Accessed 06/01/2021.

<sup>9</sup> "Как в России судят за «фальсификацию истории»: доклад «Агоры»." May 10, 2018. [How is Put on Trial in Russia for "Falsifying History": Agora Report.] <https://meduza.io/feature/2018/05/10/kak-v-rossii-sudyat-za-falsifikatsiyu-istorii-doklad-agory>. Accessed 06/01/2021.

<sup>10</sup> "Бастрыкин создал специальный отдел для борьбы с фальсификацией истории." September 10, 2020. [Bastrykin created a special section to combat falsification of history.] <https://www.rbc.ru/society/10/09/2020/5f5a49f89a79479246b62ea4>. Accessed 06/01/2021.

Russian and Ukrainian peoples, which Ukrainian historians interpreted differently than the dominant Russian narrative, were declared "falsification of history" by the Russian officials. As a member of Russian State Duma and of the Presidential Commission of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests Sergei Markov stated, "...[W]e know that the main struggle is in Ukraine, 50 percent of this work [of promotion the Russian historic narrative outside Russia – V.Ye.] is in Ukraine. A large-scale project is underway there to entrench Ukraine as Russia's eternal enemy."<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the securitization of the Russian historical narrative, the criminalization of its distortion, or even the public questioning of it, meant that the Ukrainian historical narrative was outlawed, at least in Russia.

After all, Russia completely securitized Ukraine when Russian President Putin declared its very existence outside the Russian orbit (if not even within the Russian state itself) as something completely unacceptable, and Ukrainian nation-building as a weapon of mass destruction, ruining Russia.<sup>12</sup>

The article, which observers in the West and in Russia<sup>13</sup> itself unanimously saw as setting the stage for war,<sup>14</sup> if not directly declaring war on Ukraine,<sup>15</sup> has become the quintessential expression of the 20-years-long

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<sup>11</sup> "Противодействие попыткам фальсификации истории в ущерб интересам России Научно-практическая конференция МГИМО (У) МИД России. Стенограммы выступлений." *К правде – через историю*. (2009, Том XIII), 75. ["Countering Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests. Scientific and Practical Conference at MSIIR (University) at MFA of Russia. Transcripts of speeches". To Truth through History]. <https://histrf.ru/uploads/media/default/0001/26/ce03bfc4bba89d5663f26edf09011f54ec3c5ed8.pdf>. Accessed 06/01/2021.

<sup>12</sup> Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181> Accessed 07/22/2021.

<sup>13</sup> "Русские и будущая Украина. Александр Шипков анализирует статью Владимира Путина: Президент говорит от имени и росссов, и новороссов, и малороссов" [Russians and the Future Ukraine. Alexander Shchipkov analyzes Vladimir Putin's article: President speaks on behalf of Russians, Novorossians, and Little Russians], <https://vrns.ru/news/russkie-i-budushchaya-ukraina-v-svoey-state-vladimir-putin-govorit-ot-imeni-i-rossov-i-novorossov-i-/>. Accessed 07/22/2021

<sup>14</sup> Anders Aslund. "Putin's Dangerous Ukraine Narrative," <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/putin-denial-of-ukrainian-independence-could-lead-to-war-by-anders-aslund-2021-07>. Accessed 07/22/2021.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Dickinson. "Putin's new Ukraine essay reveals imperial ambitions," <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-new-ukraine-essay-reflects-imperial-ambitions/>. Leonid Bershidsky. "Why Ukraine Lives Rent-Free in Putin's Head."

Russian ruler's views on Soviet and European history and the world order,<sup>16</sup> as well as a de facto ultimatum to the West.

In turn, after the Russian invasion, Ukraine has implemented a massive process of de-communization, which was evidently aimed not only at rupturing the Soviet past but also at distancing itself as far as possible from Russia. In 2016 alone, 51,493 streets and 987 cities and villages whose names were associated with the Soviet era were renamed, and 1,320 Lenin monuments and 1,069 monuments to other communist figures were removed.<sup>17</sup> In addition, symbols of the Soviet era were prohibited.

At the same time, the themes of the 20th century's Ukrainian liberation movement, the intended Famine (*Holodomor*) of 1932-1933, Ukraine's role in World War II, and the medieval history all became the subject of the most real Ukrainian-Russian war of remembrance.<sup>18</sup> It is quite noticeable that the so-called "de-communization package" (adopted in 2015 Laws on the commemoration of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War; on the condemnation of the Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and a ban on the propaganda of their symbols, on the status and commemoration of the fighters for the independence of Ukraine in the 20th century; and on granting access to the archives of the repressive institutions of the Communist totalitarian regimes) were presented as a security issue.<sup>19</sup>

Religion, and primarily Eastern Orthodoxy, has been too sensitive a nerve in the Russian-Ukrainian relations and therefore has not had the slightest chance of not being at the center of securitization efforts by both Russia, which since

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<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-07-15/why-ukraine-lives-rent-free-in-vladimir-putin-s-head>. Accessed 07/22/2021.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Russell Mead, "Why Putin Still Covets Ukraine," *Wall Street Journal*, July 19, 2021. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/valdimir-putin-article-historical-unity-ukraine-russia-11626724284>.

<sup>17</sup> "De-communization reform: 25 districts and 987 populated areas in Ukraine renamed in 2016." December 27, 2016. <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-society/2147127-decommunization-reform-25-districts-and-987-populated-areas-in-ukraine-renamed-in-2016.html>. Accessed 06/01/2021.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, Iryna Yushko, "Historians at War: History, Politics and Memory in Ukraine," *Contemporary European History*, 2018. Vol.27. No. 1, 112–124.

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Yuliya Yurchuk, "Memory politics in contemporary Ukraine: Reflections from the postcolonial perspective," *Memory Studies*, 2019. Vol. 12. No.6, 699-720.

2014 clearly has aimed at dismantling Ukrainian sovereignty, and Ukraine, seeking to preserve and strengthen its statehood.

In many scholarly writings examining specific cases of interaction between state and religious actors, where the latter are reasonably or unfoundedly seen by the former as a threat to the foundations of statehood, national security, life, health, and civil rights of the citizens, contributors increasingly applied the theory of securitization. That is, scholars examine their cases in the framework of a discursive process, when a particular issue is recognized by the state, the elites, society, in a word, by the “actor of securitization” as one that poses an exceptional threat to national security, collective identity, and the very existence of the nation, requiring extraordinary measures aimed at eradicating this threat. Thus, an issue that is normally located in the regular political domain is shifted into the realm of high-security concern, where the state of emergency, increased governmental control, and security considerations unequivocally dominate over and suppressed less significant (in eyes of the securitization actor) concerns.

In this article, I intend to examine the dynamics of the “securitization move” of religion in Russian-Ukrainian relations, namely, how religion shifted from being “merely” the meaningful social issue, the significant component of the state-building, and the new identities’ searching to a key securitization matter. I also aim to reveal the profound dissimilarities in the securitization strategies of Ukraine and Russia concerning religion and the (in)compatibility of these strategies with the international law in the freedom of religion and belief sphere.

### **Post-Soviet Church-State Politics: the Russian Trajectory**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the states that emerged on its ruins implemented laws that dismantled the system of violence against the conscience of their citizens and resolutely promoted religious freedom. The laws on



freedom of conscience passed by the Parliaments of Russia and Ukraine on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, although not perfect from the legal standpoint, were in accordance with the international law and marked a definite breakthrough in the field of human rights.

However, while Ukrainian legislation on freedom of conscience underwent minimal changes during the first quarter-century of its existence, in Russia the very conceptual framework of religious freedom and state-church relations has been changed radically over this time. Already in 1997, despite international criticism and protests from religious minorities and under pressure from the ROC, Russian nationalists, and neo-imperialists (which in the overwhelming majority of cases were the same), the State Duma passed Federal Law No. 125 "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations."<sup>20</sup> The new law maintained the discriminatory division of Russia's religious community, established the 15-years' probation period for a "religious group" to acquire all the rights of "religious organizations" (meanwhile they could not publish literature, own mass media organizations, perform church-related work in state schools, prisons, hospitals or orphanages, set up religious schools or professional organizations, or invite foreign preachers) and in whole represented, as Lawrence Uzzell from Keston College evaluated it, on a hot-footing "the most sweeping legislative rollback of human rights since the birth of post-Soviet Russia."<sup>21</sup>

Since 1997, Federal Law No. 125 has been amended almost annually while overwhelming numbers of all amendments have worsened the situation with freedom of religion and belief in Russia. These amendments included, and were not limited to, the prohibition of religious groups from having connections

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<sup>20</sup> Федеральный закон "О свободе совести и о религиозных объединениях" от 26.09.1997 N 125-ФЗ. [Federal Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" of September 26, 1997] <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/11523>. Accessed 06/02/2021.

<sup>21</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "Irking U.S., Yeltsin Signs Law Protecting Orthodox Church." *The New York Times*. Sept. 27, 1997. <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/09/27/world/irking-us-yeltsin-signs-law-protecting-orthodox-church.html>. Accessed 06/02/2021.

with persons suspected of financing terrorism, as well as foreign citizens and stateless persons, whose stay in Russia were recognized as undesirable (such persons were also prohibited from being leaders or members of religious organizations in Russia); freezing the funds of organizations and individuals about whom there were information implicating their involvement in terrorist activities (even when there were no legal ground to include them on the List of Terrorists and Extremists operated by the Financing Monitoring Service; and the mandatory recertification of the persons educated abroad, that is, priests and employees of religious organizations who have received spiritual education abroad should pass mandatory recertification and re-education in Russia.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, the so-called “Yarovaya package” (law introduced by members of the Russian State Duma Irina Yarovaya, Aleksei Pushkov, and Nadezhda Gerasimova together with senator Victor Ozerov in 2016) essentially banned the missionary activity of all religious organizations except for the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (hereafter ROC).<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, in 2017, Jehovah’s Witnesses have been banned in Russia as an extremist organization. Leaders and members of Jehovah’s Witnesses’ communities can be fined and punished criminally for professing their religion. In May 2021, 61 Jehovah’s Witnesses faithful were behind bars for practicing their faith,<sup>24</sup> hundreds have been convicted of criminal “extremism” for engaging in Jehovah’s Witnesses’ activities or were suspects in such cases.

Criminal persecution also continued against other religious and belief organizations, including the Muslim communities, the Church of the Last Testament, the Church of Scientology, and the Church of the Flying Macaroni Monster. Common phenomena have included police and Russian Guard raids

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<sup>22</sup> Olga Sibireva, “New Restrictions in the Russian Religious Law: What Should Believers Expect?” <https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2020/12/23/new-restrictions-in-the-russian-religious-law/>. Accessed 06/02/2021.

<sup>23</sup> “Mission Unacceptable: How the Yarovaya Law is Taking Effect in Russia” <https://missioneurasia.org/articles/mission-unacceptable-how-the-yarovaya-law-is-taking-effect/>. Accessed 06/02/2021.

<sup>24</sup> *Jehovah Whiteness currently in prison. Russia. May 2021.* [file:///E:/%D1%83%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%B8/1013159\\_E\\_cnt\\_1.pdf](file:///E:/%D1%83%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%B8/1013159_E_cnt_1.pdf). Accessed 06/02/2021.

on houses of worship and disruption of services; fines for "illegal missionary activities" and punishment of missionaries; deportations of non-Russian religious activists outside the country; pressure on Protestant educational institutions and revocation of their licenses; closures and even demolitions of Protestant prayer buildings on far-fetched pretexts. As for the homes and property of Jehovah's Witnesses, they were confiscated and put up for auction.<sup>25</sup>

In the occupied territories, Russia has adopted even harsher repressive practices in suppressing religious freedom. Visiting Ukraine in December 2017, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom confirmed that in Russian-occupied Crimea, the Russian authorities continued to kidnap, torture, and imprison Crimean Tatar Muslims at will, while Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine continued to hold expropriated church buildings and intimidate religious communities.<sup>26</sup>

As a result of Vladimir Putin's internal religious policy, hotbeds of possible opposition or even just strong public disagreement with the ruling regime have been defeated and, in some cases, completely destroyed. The core elements of the Russian state's policy in the religious sphere have also included consistent, year after year, increasingly harsh restrictions on freedom of conscience, factual bans of the dissemination of religious beliefs, denial of equality of religious organizations before the law, and discrimination against religious minorities, especially when the ROC considers them as an alleged threat to itself. In the search for additional mechanisms to consolidate society and turn the country into a "besieged fortress" which, in the words of President Putin's favorite Emperor Alexander III (reigned 1881-94) has only two allies: its army and its navy, "alien religions" become an "existential threat" and are subject to securitization. It is important to note, that the securitizing actor (in

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<sup>25</sup> Olga Sibireva, "Freedom of Religion or Belief in Russia: Restrictions and Challenges in 2020." <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/religion/publications/2021/05/d44152/>. Accessed 06/02/2021.

<sup>26</sup> Annual Report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. (Washington DC, April 2018), 72.. <https://www.uscirtf.gov/sites/default/files/2018USCIRFAR.pdf>. Accessed 06/02/2021.

this case, the Russian authorities) has managed to convince the audience (in this case, Russian society) that the object should be securitized and the securitizing actor could take extraordinary measures. At least the prohibition in Russia of the accused extremism of Jehovah's Witnesses (despite their well-known pacifism and non-violent stance) was supported by 79% of all Russians who knew about the ban.<sup>27</sup>

The domestic securitization of religion in Russia has been carried out hand in hand with the securitization of religion abroad, as will be discussed below.

It is worth noting here, however, that the state favoritism toward the ROC has led, as has happened repeatedly in the church-state history, to the deepest dependence of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Russian state in the entire post-Soviet period. As a result, the ROC found itself unprepared not only to independently respond to external challenges but also to solve internal crises without the help of the state.<sup>28</sup>

As a matter of fact, the ROC exchanged its independence and separateness from the state for the right to conceal its income and expenditures from society, for unconditional support from the authorities in all property disputes, for the right to a near-monopoly presence in the public sphere, and for crucial help in suppressing its rivals.

### **The Ukrainian Trajectory: From Religious Diversity to Religious Pluralism**

While Russia experienced a rapid increase in the state control over religious organizations, the scope of that control expanded, religious minorities became increasingly punished, and the space for religious freedom rapidly

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<sup>27</sup> “Большинство россиян поддержали запрет «Свидетелей Иеговы».” [Majority of Russians Have Supported the Jehovah's Witnesses' Ban.] <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/13/07/2017/596650c09a79477e58e67e98>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

<sup>28</sup> See, among many others, Oliver Carroll, “Russian dissident priest who refused to stop services during pandemic seizes monastery by force”, *Independent*. June 18, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-cult-leader-priest-stop-services-coronavirus-a9571301.html>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

diminished, Ukraine saw an intense struggle between centers of religious power. None of these centers could claim to represent even a quarter of the country's adult population, and each of the major actors in the religious scene gained the support of "its own" political elites and certain segments of society. Religious diversity gradually developed into religious pluralism, that is, the main actors of the religious scene accepted (albeit sometimes less than willingly) the reality. Yet, the reality was that none of them could dominate nationwide and would have to consider the interests of their rivals. Religious minorities became part of this interdenominational consensus, and not only the Jewish and Muslim religious associations, but also Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, and Reformed Christians took their rightful place in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, where all decisions since 1996 have been taken exclusively by consensus. From time to time, the Ukrainian authorities have attempted to exploit religious pluralism for their own purposes by playing on the contradictions between the main actors in the country's religious scene. However, players themselves have learned not only to resist manipulation but to formulate their own agenda on the most pressing issues and to advocate it consensually in the national arena.

This balance, which was undoubtedly reinforced by the country's political pluralism and fierce political struggle, often all against all, contributed both to a respectable level of religious freedom and to the failure of all attempts to tighten government control over the religious sphere. A fairly striking example of Ukrainian religious pluralism was the religious affiliations of the four Ukrainian highest officials in 2014-2019. During this time, the President of Ukraine was Eastern Orthodox (Petro Poroshenko), the Prime Minister was a Jew (Volodymyr Groisman, 2016-19), and the Speaker of the Parliament was Greek

Catholic (Andriy Parubiy) while the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council was Baptist (Oleksandr Turchynov).<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, Ukrainian authorities, in due time terrified by the Orthodox-Greek-Catholic and inter-Orthodox conflicts, which reached their most violent phase in the first half of the 1990s, became convinced that, first, Ukraine's pluralistic religious market could withstand serious internal crises and, second, that attempts to reshape it to meet the political agenda of one administration or another proved to be highly problematic. In particular, when pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014 in office) managed to change the Constitution of the country, the election law, to imprison the opposition leaders, to deliver a strong blow at the Ukrainian parliamentarians, and to subordinate the Constitutional Court and the court system as a whole, tried to re-shape Ukrainian religious space to suit his political interest and wishes of Moscow Patriarchate, he lost. A pluralistic religious culture and Ukrainian denominationalism appeared to be stronger and less vulnerable to the then growing authoritarianism than was the fragile Ukrainian democracy.

### **Religion in Ukrainian-Russian Relations during 1991-2014**

At the same time, religion has never disappeared from the agenda of "Great" Ukrainian politics. It has always served as a clear identifier in the "friend-or-foe" system, influenced electoral behavior, and played its own role in the Ukrainian Orange Revolutions of 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity of 2013-2014.

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<sup>29</sup> The author of this paper happened to participate in an academic discussion in Moscow (in 2006, that is, in much more liberal times than today), where a Pentecostal bishop mentioned that Baptist Oleksandr Turchynov was appointed to the position of the Head of Ukraine Security Service. After such a mention he asked a high-ranking official who speculated over the equal access of Russian citizens to public office regardless of their religious affiliation, to name just one Protestant who occupied any kind of important governmental position in Russia. To the laughter of participants a lady named the offspring of the Lutheran Baltic German noble family, Nikolai Bunge, who served in Imperial Russia as the Finance Minister and Chairman of the Council of Ministers as long ago as in 1881-95.

Furthermore, since the beginning of Ukraine's independence, the religious issue has been one of the most sensitive ones in Russian-Ukrainian relations. The system of local autocephalous churches, which in modern times were aligned with political boundaries, made the subordination of the Orthodox flock in the newly created Ukrainian state to the Russian Orthodox Church ambiguous in the eyes of much of the Ukrainian elite. The non-recognition of the right to independence of the Orthodox Church within the borders of the sovereign state was seen by this part of the elite as an indirect, but still expressive rejection of Ukrainian statehood.

Attitudes toward the independence of the Orthodox Church divided believers in Ukraine as long ago as the late 1980s, and at the beginning of 1990, there were already three Orthodox churches in the country. One of these, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate (hereafter UOC MP) was recognized by the Local Orthodox churches as being a part of the Russian Orthodox Church (hereafter ROC or Moscow Patriarchate). The other two, namely the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (hereafter UOC KP) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), self-proclaimed themselves autocephalous, that is, independent but were not recognized by world Orthodoxy.<sup>30</sup> Although by the end of the 1990s, the conflict between these Churches no longer threatened the foundations of civil peace in the country as it might have been at the turn of 1980-90, it was a visible scar on the nation's body, testifying the existence of still irreconcilable identities and collective memories.

The unrecognized churches claimed that they had not apostatized from the Orthodox faith, but could not remain subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. These churches (as well as wider Ukrainian society) were perplexed as to why the Ukrainian nation could not have its own Autocephalous

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<sup>30</sup> For the complex peripetia of the Ukrainian Orthodox milieu's development, see in details among the latest in, Nicholas E. Denisenko. *The Orthodox Church in Ukraine. The Century of Separation*. (DeKalb, IL: NIU Press, 2018).

Church similar to other nations with own statehood where Eastern Orthodoxy was the religion of the majority, namely Greeks, Georgians, Russians, Serbs, Bulgarians, and Romanians.<sup>31</sup> The UOC MP insisted that the "schismatics" must repentantly return to the UOC MP and only after that would it be possible to talk about an autocephalous church for Ukraine.<sup>32</sup>

The attempts of the first Ukrainian President, Leonid Kravchuk (1991-1994), to secure the support from Russian President Boris Yeltsin to recognize the autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church by the Moscow Patriarchate failed. Also unsuccessful were the repeated appeals with the same request by the second Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma (1994-2004) to his Russian counterparts, Presidents Yeltsin and Putin, as well as to Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow. Moreover, the insistence on the church issue by Leonid Kuchma, who at the beginning of his presidential tenure was considered a pro-Russian politician and by the end was perceived in Moscow as almost an ardent Ukrainian nationalist, has strained Russian-Ukrainian relations. This became particularly evident during the preparations for Pope John Paul II's visit to Ukraine (2001), which was carried out despite the Moscow Patriarchate's emphatic protests and the strenuous resistance of Russian diplomacy.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> According to a leaked transcript of the discussion between Patriarch Bartholomew and Patriarch Kirill (2018), the former argued his rejection to consider Ukrainian autocephaly that Russians and Ukrainians were a single people. "Taking sides in the Orthodox Church's battles over Russia and Ukraine: Turbulent priests" in *The Economist*. September 9, 2019. However, Patriarch Kirill insisted on this argument openly as well, stating that "...Kyiv is the Southern capital of Russian Orthodoxy. Sometimes examples of other countries are cited for us as cases: there is [an] Autocephalous Church in [the] Czech [Republic] and Slovakia. There is [an] Autocephalous Church in Albania. But the Czech [Republic] and Slovakia never have been a Jerusalem and Constantinople for anybody. And Tirana never served as a Jerusalem and Constantinople for anybody as well. Whereas Kyiv is our Jerusalem and our Constantinople; this is the heart of our life!" "Патриарх Кирилл: призывы к автокефалии основаны исключительно на политических аргументах" [Patriarch Kirill: Calls toward Autocephaly based upon purely political arguments.] <http://rusk.ru/svod.php?date=2009-07-30>.

<sup>32</sup> Among the mountains of such claims see, for example, "Розкольники завжди можуть покаятися і повернутися в канонічну Церкву — митрополит Ловчанський Гавриїл" [Schismatics can always return to the canonical Church – Metropolitan of Lovchany Gabriel]. <https://news.church.ua/2017/02/16/rozkolniki-zavzhdi-mozhut-pokayatisya-i-povernutisya-v-kanonichnu-cerkvu-bolgarskij-mitropolit-gavrijil-video/>; Чи можливо оправдати гріх церковного розколу? [Can the sin of schism be justified?] <http://orthodox-kr.org.ua/ru/home/publik/nevozmogno-opravdat-raskol>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

<sup>33</sup> "This issue [of the Pope's visit to Ukraine] was raised in a frank form by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov during his recent meeting with John Paul II at the Vatican". See, "В Москве выражают озабоченность в связи с подготовкой визита папы римского на Украину". March 30, 2001. [Moscow



The religious issue became even more acute in Russian-Ukrainian relations under the third Ukrainian president, Viktor Yushchenko (2004-2009). He was obsessed with the idea of a Unified Local Orthodox Church in Ukraine, viewed it as an extremely important part of strengthening Ukrainian sovereignty and the forging of the Ukrainian nation, and devoted substantial time and energy to this matter, sometimes even at the expense of serious political processes that would have changed the configuration of power in the country. It was very clearly demonstrated on January 12, 2007, when Viktor Yushchenko preferred to discuss with the highest clergy of the Kyiv Patriarchate the possibility of creating a joint theological commission with the UOC MP with his presence in Parliament, where Yushchenko's opponents overrode the presidential veto on the Law on the Cabinet of Ministers, which turned the Ukrainian president into something like a Queen of England.

But in any case, Viktor Yushchenko approached the goal of freeing the Ukrainian church from Moscow ecclesiastical dependence more so than all his predecessors. His negotiations with the Ecumenical Patriarch culminated in a state-level-rank visit of the Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Kyiv (2008) where the latter outlined the preconditions of the returning of Kyiv Orthodox Metropolitane after the 322-years long break back to the jurisdiction of Constantinople.

Bartholomew's plan included the annulment of the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate over the Kyiv Metropolis, its return under the omophorion of Constantinople; the merger of the UOC KP and UAOC; the renunciation of his patriarchal dignity by UOC KP's Primate Patriarch Filaret, who then looked too toxic figure in the eyes of Constantinople and whose 1997 Moscow anathema had not yet been challenged and remained valid; and the election of three candidates for the Kyiv See by the Ukrainian bishops, of whom

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Expresses Concern about Preparations for Pope's Visit to Ukraine] <http://www.interfaxreligion.ru/dialog/?act=archive&div=9475>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

Bartholomew would have to choose the Metropolitan of Kyiv. This scheme proved to be unworkable because of the position of Patriarch Filaret, who categorically refused to give up his power in the UOC KP, which is, to be fair, greatly indebted to him for its very existence. Although Patriarch Filaret formally justified his refusal by his desire to achieve full-fledged autocephaly rather than the status of the Church's province within the Ecumenical (Constantinople) Patriarchate,<sup>34</sup> it became clear that Filaret would not accept any ecclesial structure in which he would not assume the leading role.

Understandably, the Russian Church and Russian State made every effort to prevent the implementation of Constantinople's plan. In an interview with Moscow, *'Kommersant-Vlast'* weekly, an unnamed Russian diplomat admitted that preventing the Kyiv Metropolity from leaving the Moscow Patriarchate was considered in Kremlin as one of the primary goals of Russian foreign policy.<sup>35</sup>

However, the year 2008 greatly frightened Moscow. Patriarch Bartholomew found himself under the scrutiny of the Russian state. Russian diplomacy, intelligence, and media systematically tried to discredit him in the eyes of the Turkish government and the Orthodox world, to intimidate and corrupt him. No instrument of pressure seemed excessive to the Russian authorities, because, as the head of a sector of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies aptly noted in 2013, "...[A]t any moment... Patriarch Bartholomew can be referring to the illegality of the 1686 Charter on the transfer of the Kyiv Metropolitan Church to the canonical jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, assert his claims to the governance of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Київська поправка. Патріарх Київський і всієї Руси-України Філарет про Православ'я в сучасному світі та роль у ньому України" [The Kyiv's Correction. Patriarch of Kyiv and All Rus-Ukraine Filaret on Orthodoxy in the Contemporary World and the Role of Ukraine in this World]. *Український тиждень*. 2009. No.10 (71).

<sup>35</sup> See a talk with unnamed Russian diplomat, in Владимир Соловьев, "Конфета по-киевски." ["Kyiv-style candy"] *Коммерсантъ-Власть*. 2010. No.7. (861). 22 февраля.

<sup>36</sup> Владислава Филянова, "Его Святейшество Варфоломей – Константинопольский патриарх и проамериканский политик" [His Holiness Bartholomew: the Patriarch of Constantinople and pro-American Politician], *Проблемы национальной стратегии*. 2013. No1. (16), 190 (189-200)

## Religion as a Subject of Securitization in Russia

It is important to note that almost simultaneously, religion is increasingly perceived as a subject of direct relevance to Russia's national security, its position in the international arena, and the implementation of its foreign policy. At a time when Moscow sharply criticized Viktor Yushchenko for allegedly "interfering into the internal affairs of the church," Vladimir Putin was decisively involved in the unification of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.<sup>37</sup>

Since the early 2000s, Orthodoxy has become, as then Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov stressed, "an integral part of the effort to assert Russia's identity on the world stage;" it has been actively used to mobilize Russian diasporas, "consolidate compatriots," and "to return Russia to its historical role as protector and defender of the Orthodox churches in countries where Orthodox believers are a minority."<sup>38</sup>

In addition, observers suggested that by the end of his first term in office, Vladimir Putin himself had a rather cool attitude toward the ability of the Russian Orthodox Church to become a serious factor in the consolidation of Russian society. On the other hand, he considered it sufficiently desirable and quite possible to intensify the international activities of the Moscow Patriarchate, which willingly accepted the role of a promoter of Russian foreign policy. Moreover, in the 21st century, the Moscow Patriarchate never once expressed a shadow of doubt about the aggressive policy of the Russian state, against even the "fraternal same-creed Orthodox peoples" – Moldovans,

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<sup>37</sup> Олег Недумов, Наталья Меликова. "Путин объединяет православных. Путин встретился с главами двух Русских Церквей и сообщил им, что Церковь едина." [Putin Unites the [Eastern] Orthodox [Believers]. Putin met with the Heads of the Two Russian Churches and Announced that the Church is United]. *Независимая газета*. 2004. 28 мая.

<sup>38</sup> "Выступление министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации И. С. Иванова на VIII Всемирном Русском Народном Соборе. Свято-Троицкая Сергиева Лавра, 3 февраля 2004 года." [Speech by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Igor S. Ivanov at the VIII World Russian People's Sobor. Holy Trinity Sergius Lavra, February 3, 2004] <https://vrms.ru/documents/vystuplenie-ministra-inostrannykh-del-rossiyskoy-federatsii-i-s-ivanova-na-viii-vrms/>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

Georgians, and Ukrainians, while calling the airstrikes of Russian Military Forces in Syria a "holy battle."<sup>39</sup>

The Russian president increasingly directed the Moscow Patriarchate to pursue very precise foreign policy objectives in various corners of the world and more and more perceived Russian Orthodoxy as the antithesis towards the West. Wishing to emphasize what he sees as the profound differences between Eastern and Western Christianity, Vladimir Putin even stated, "...[T]hat [Orthodox Christianity] is much closer to Islam than Catholicism is."<sup>40</sup>

Sometimes the aims of the foreign relations structures of the Moscow Patriarchate have nothing in common with the Church's agenda at all but are entirely identical to the aims of Russian state foreign policy agencies. This is clearly seen in the objectives of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church to European organizations established in 2002. Archpriest Anton Ilyin, deputy head of the Representative Office, described in 2009 the main tasks of his office as follows: first, to create in the European Parliament an "Orthodox international group" comprising Bulgarian, Greek, Cypriot, and Romanian as well as Latvian and Estonian Russian speaking members of the European Parliament; second, to establish strong ties with the largest European Parliament, European Council, and European Commission's political party, the European People's Party (the EPP's orientation on dialogue with the Ecumenical Patriarchate did not satisfy neither the Moscow Patriarchate nor the Russian foreign policy structures); third, to deepen the dialogue between the EPP, the ROC, and the ruling political party "United Russia;" and fourth, to achieve the inclusion of the Russian language into the list of the EU's official languages.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Marc Bennetts, "The Kremlin's Holy Warrior." <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/24/the-kremlins-holy-warrior-chaplin-putin-russia-turkey-syria/>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

<sup>40</sup> "Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia: Putin Says Orthodoxy 'Closer to Islam than Catholicism Is'," <http://windowoneurasia.blogspot.com/2010/12/window-on-eurasia-putin-says-orthodoxy.html>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

<sup>41</sup> Павел Круг. "Православие и оплот секуляризма. Роль восточного христианства в единой Европе будет возрастать, уверен протоиерей Антоний Ильин" [Orthodoxy and the Stronghold of Secularism. The Role of Eastern Christianity in the United Europe will grow, believes Archpriest Anthony Ilyin]. *НГ-религии*. 2009. 6 марта.

The role of Orthodoxy in Russian-Ukrainian relations should, in the view of the Russian side, be determined by the fact that unity of Orthodoxy, as Russian President Vladimir Putin put it, "is one of the few things that have remained united, and we have to preserve this unity for future generations."<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, it was clear to both the Russian and Ukrainian sides that "preservation of unity" as the Russian president understood it, was not the preservation of the inseparability of the dogmatic and canonical structure of the Eastern Orthodoxy's Plentitude, but the perpetuation of the subordination of Orthodoxy in Ukraine to the Moscow governance.

As for the Ukrainian policy of the Moscow Patriarchate, it has been changing with the political winds blowing from the Kremlin. In principle, the ROC's leadership shares the persistent and increasingly articulated view among Russia's political elites that sovereign Ukraine as such is a threat to Russian national security by the very fact of its independent politics. As Head of the blatantly pro-Kremlin think tank Institute for Democracy and Cooperation and a member of the ROC's Inter-Council Presence historian Natalya Narochnitskaya pointed out, "...[B]eing independent, Ukraine inevitably becomes a rival, rather than an unambiguously fraternal and friendlier state for Russia."<sup>43</sup>

However, Patriarch Alexy II personally refrained from blatant invectives against Ukrainian statehood and Ukrainian autocephaly, preferring to leave this mission to other hierarchs or middle-ranking patriarchal officials. The situation changed dramatically with the election of Metropolitan Kirill (Gundyaev) of Smolensk and Kaliningrad as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in 2009. With serious ambitions and an expansive vision for the reorganization of the Church, the newly elected Patriarch believed it was time to realize the long-held

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<sup>42</sup> "Путину и Кучме спели 'Многая Лета'" [(The monks) sang "Many Years" to [Presidents] Putin and Kuchma], <https://www.vesti.ru/article/2332179>. Accessed 06/08/2021.

<sup>43</sup> Н. А. Нарочницкая. "От Балтики до Черного моря. Россия и европейские члены СНГ. Историко-философская ретроспектива и геополитическая перспектива" [From the Baltic to the Black Sea. Russia and the European Members of the CIS. Historical and Philosophical Retrospective and Geopolitical Perspective.] <http://narochnitskaya.com/mezsobornoe-prisutstvie/ot-baltiki-do-chernogo-morya-rossiya-i-evr.html>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

dream of his late mentor, Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov, 1929-79), to turn the Russian Church into a powerful center of foreign and domestic politics and the Moscow Patriarchate into a structure equal in its influence to the Vatican.

Immediately after his election in 2009, Kyrill, the 16th Patriarch of the Moscow and All Rus began to integrate the Moscow Patriarchate's agenda into the Kremlin's geopolitical strategy. In the same year, during his visit to Kyiv, Patriarch urged Ukrainians to reconsider their choice of 1991, to reject European inspirations, and to create together with Russia "a civilizational project of enormous power."<sup>44</sup> Additionally, the Primate outlined four "nos" of his Ukrainian policy: "no" to the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church under any circumstances; "no" to the unification of the divided Orthodox believers in Ukraine; "no" to the departure of Ukrainian Orthodoxy from Moscow; and "no" to the actual, albeit very limited, autonomy of the UOC within the Moscow Patriarchate. Later, Patriarch Kyrill supplemented and developed his vision of the Ukrainian question. He argued that since Russia's historical roots were in present-day Ukraine, Russia simply would not allow Ukraine to leave. Similarly, the Russian Church will not let its Ukrainian part float free, "autocephalous" voyages because Kyiv has been the cradle of Holy Rus.<sup>45</sup>

### **Religion as a Legitimator of Russian Politics toward Ukraine: Mapping the Threat**

With the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the Moscow Patriarchate opened its own anti-Ukrainian front. Patriarch Kyrill's attempt to demonstrate a special position concerning the outbreak of the war and the annexation of Crimea, when the ROC's Primate did not attend the

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<sup>44</sup> See, "Speech of Patriarch Kirill on 'Inter' TV channel". July 28, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSWAeCAi-jk>.

<sup>45</sup> "His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus addressed the participants of the gathering in the Church Assembly Hall of the Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow." <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/11/21/news138722/>. Accessed 06/04/2021 "Russian Orthodox Church to resist attempts to separate Ukrainian Orthodox Church from it - Patriarch Kirill." <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14397>. Accessed on 06/04/2021.

celebrations in the Kremlin, sending the oldest member of the Synod instead, was hardly convincing. One might assume that Putin's idea of aggression against Ukraine in 2014 was not endorsed by Patriarch Kyrill. The invasion did not promise the Russian Church any gains; on the contrary, it greatly complicated the ROC's position in Ukraine. In addition, this war seriously affected the Patriarch's position within the Russian establishment by undermining his influence in Ukraine, which is broadly considered as a notable Patriarchal asset in Russian domestic politics.

That's what happened. Patriarch Kyrill became *persona non grata* in Ukraine. According to opinion polls, the level of confidence towards him among Ukrainians dropped from 44.4% in 2010<sup>46</sup> to 19.1% in 2016,<sup>47</sup> and to 15.7% in 2019.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, the political logic in which the Moscow Patriarchate has been moving in the post-Soviet era has left Patriarch Kyrill no room for any maneuver that could cause even minor tensions with the Russian state. The multifold financial, institutional, and organizational strengthening of the Moscow Patriarchate could not be achieved without reliance on the might of the Russian state, which meant inevitably complying with the state course in all no matter how meaningful might state's endeavors be. Therefore, like liberalism, respect for human rights and human dignity washed out of official discourse

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<sup>46</sup> Дослідження проведене соціологічною службою Центру Разумкова з 18 по 22 листопада 2010 року в усіх регіонах України. Опитано 2001 респондента віком від 18 років. Теоретична похибка вибірки – 2,3%. Архів Українського центру економічних та політичних досліджень ім. О. Разумкова [The Survey was conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Center from 18 to 22 of February 2010 in all regions of Ukraine. 2001 respondents aged 18 years and older were interviewed. The sampling error was 2.3%. Hereafter source is Archive of the Razumkov Center].

<sup>47</sup> “Дослідження проведено соціологічною службою Центру Разумкова з 25 по 30 березня 2016 року в усіх регіонах України за винятком Криму та окупованих територій Донецької та Луганської областей. Опитано 2018 респондента віком від 18 років. Теоретична похибка вибірки – 2,3%”. [The Survey was conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Center from 25 to 30 of March 2016 in all regions of Ukraine excluding Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. 2018 respondents aged 18 years and older were interviewed. The sampling error was 2.3%].

<sup>48</sup> “Дослідження проведено соціологічною службою Центру Разумкова з 4 по 9 жовтня 2019 року в усіх регіонах України за винятком Криму та окупованих територій Донецької та Луганської областей. Опитано 2015 респондентів віком від 18 років. Теоретична похибка вибірки – 2,3%” [The Survey was conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Center from 4 to 9 of October 2019 in all regions of Ukraine excluding Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. 2015 respondents aged 18 years and older were interviewed. The sampling error was 2.3%].

and, conversely, anti-Westernism, militarism, and gun-rattling emerged as mainstream, many of the deeds and statements of hierarchs from the 1990s became just impossible within the next decades. Such as Patriarch Alexy II's speech to the New York rabbis "Your Prophets are Our Prophets" in 1991<sup>49</sup> or his apology to the German people for the fact that the Soviet Army brought to German soil not freedom, but another totalitarianism (1995).<sup>50</sup>

Hence, Patriarch Kyrill and the Moscow Patriarchate led by him have returned fairly soon to the Russian mainstream in all matters concerning aggression against Ukraine. Applauding the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the speaker of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, stated: "At the same time, let us also hope that the mission of Russian warriors to protect the freedom and identity of these people and their very lives will not meet fierce resistance that would lead to large-scale confrontations".<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, in August 2014, Patriarch Kyrill himself attempted to present the military conflict in eastern Ukraine as a religious war aimed at destroying "canonical," that is, Russian Orthodoxy. "With the beginning of hostilities," claimed Patriarch in his address to the Primates of Local Orthodox Churches, "the uniates and schismatics, having been given arms, under the pretext of antiterrorist operations, have begun outright aggression against the clergy of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the east of the country."<sup>52</sup> Further, Patriarch, who had not restrained himself in anti-Ukrainian rhetoric before ("God punishes both those who are in schism and that nation which betrays the Divine commandment of unity and the sacrament of the Eucharist in the name

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<sup>49</sup> "Speech of Patriarch Alexy II in the central synagogue in New York to Jewish rabbis USA November 13, 1991." <https://survincity.com/2011/04/speech-of-patriarch-alex-y-ii-in-the-central/>. Accessed 06/04/2021.

<sup>50</sup> Dimitry Pospelovsky. *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*. (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press. 1998), 394.

<sup>51</sup> "Протоиерей Всеволод Чаплин рассматривает миссию России на Украине как миротворческую." [Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin views Russia's mission in Ukraine as peacekeeping] <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=54620>. Accessed 06/04/2021.

<sup>52</sup> "Address by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches in connection with the situation in Ukraine." <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3704024.html>. Accessed 06/03/2021.



of human dreams and ideals"),<sup>53</sup> claimed that Godlessness has turned into Ukrainian state policy<sup>54</sup> and elevated the dependence of Ukrainian Orthodoxy on Moscow to the level of a religious doctrine.<sup>55</sup>

It is important to recall that the military action unleashed by Russia against Ukraine was completely unexpected by the Ukrainian leadership and the greater majority of Ukrainian society. The two states were bound by dozens of different treaties that invariably emphasized respect for each side's territorial integrity, including the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation that fixed the principle of their strategic partnership (the so-called "Big Treaty"). Russia also signed the 1994 Budapest Memorandum where world nuclear powers provided Ukraine with security assurances against threats or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of this country in exchange for giving up its world's third-large nuclear weapons stockpile.

Numerous opinion polls have consistently shown a quite friendly attitude of Ukrainians toward Russians, and Ukrainian military doctrines did not even consider Russia as a potential adversary. Given the intensity of economic and cultural ties between the two countries, as well as the rather impressive level of mixed marriages in which one spouse was Ukrainian and the other Russian, the military aggression of the Russian Federation came as a shock to many Ukrainians. As Metropolitan Augustine of the UOC MP commented on the subject in 2014, "...[T]he first thing that came to my mind when I heard about the invasion of Russian troops into Crimea was the word "misunderstanding." I

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<sup>53</sup> "Патриарх Кирилл: Причина украинских бед — церковный раскол" [The Cause of Ukrainian Misfortunes is the Church's Schism"] <http://ru.tsn.ua/ukrayina/patriarh-kirill-prichina-ukrainskih-bedtserkovnyi-raskol.html>. Accessed 06/04/2021.

<sup>54</sup> "Безбожие становится государственной идеологией Украины, заявил Патриарх Кирилл (Гундяев), намекнув на необходимость свержения нынешней украинской власти." [Godlessness is becoming the state ideology of Ukraine, Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev) said, hinting at the need to overthrow the current Ukrainian government.] <https://credo.press/160463/>. Accessed 06/04/2021.

<sup>55</sup> "Патриарх Кирилл: РПЦ не допустит отделения Украинской церкви." [Patriarch Kirill: The Russian Orthodox Church will not allow the Ukrainian Church to leave] <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-38048995>. Accessed 06/03/2021.

remember when there was a performance appraisal of Ukrainian generals and officers in 1992, one of the points was: "Will you defend the independence of Ukraine with weapons in your hands if Russia appears as the aggressor?" Then I thought to myself, why this inflammatory question, what is the purpose of embarrassing people because it could never happen? And now twenty-two years have passed, and this issue has emerged. What happened could only be a nightmare, but today it is the actual reality"<sup>56</sup>

However, this was hardly the only instance of that kind among the Moscow Patriarchate's hierarchy in Ukraine. The Moscow Patriarchate-controlled UOC MP leadership has evolved into one of Ukraine's most organized and influential centers among officially functioning for justifying aggression against Ukraine and criticizing its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The hierarchy of the UOC MP not only refused to condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine but also demanded the end of the war only from the Ukrainian government and never addressed appeals for peace to the Russian leadership. The leadership of the UOC MP avoided in every way condemning the clergy who provided various forms of support to the occupying forces of the Russian Federation and pro-Russian separatists in Crimea and Donbas.<sup>57</sup> On May 8, 2015, it became widely known that UOC MP Primate Metropolitan Onufry protesting against ongoing war refused to stand at the Parliamentary ceremonial session during the honoring of the Anti-Terrorism Operation's heroes. At the same time, UOC MP hierarchs had ever protested against the war in Moscow, where they routinely participated in the Councils of Bishops attended by top

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<sup>56</sup> "Глава «военного» отдела УПЦ митрополит Августин благословил украинцев на защиту страны от посягательств российской армии." [Metropolitan Augustine, head of the UOC "Military" Department, blessed Ukrainians for defending the country from the encroachments of the Russian army.] [https://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian\\_news/25096-glava-voennogo-otdela-upc-mitropolit-avgustin-blagoslovil-ukrincev-na-zashhitu-strany-ot-posyagatelstv-rossijskoj-armii.html](https://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/25096-glava-voennogo-otdela-upc-mitropolit-avgustin-blagoslovil-ukrincev-na-zashhitu-strany-ot-posyagatelstv-rossijskoj-armii.html). Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>57</sup> Anthony Perkins, "Of Little Green Men and Long Black Robes: The Role of the Orthodox Church in the Conflict in Ukraine." *21th Annual Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs delivered on November 7, 2017, at the National Liberty Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*. (December 7, 2017); Деркач Тетяна. *Московский патриархат в Украине: анатомия предательства*. (Київ, 2018) [Derkach Tetyana. *Anatomy of Betrayal*]; Riistan Ain, "The Moscow patriarchate and the Conflict in Ukraine." *Estonian Journal of Military Studies*. 2016. Vol. VI: The Crisis in Ukraine and Information Operations of the Russian Federation, 206-232.

officials of the Russian Federation.<sup>58</sup> While Patriarch Kirill has openly participated in the collegium of the Russian Ministry of Defense, the UOC MP hierarchs have managed to combine their “anti-war stance” with their blessing of Russian weaponry<sup>59</sup> and taking the military parade of pro-Russian troops.<sup>60</sup>

The position of the UOC MP caused widespread discontent and criticism in Ukrainian society and led to the conversion of about 70 parishes, where the faithful were particularly outraged by the priests' preaching of a "fratricidal war" and other narratives of the Russian propaganda, to the Kyiv Patriarchate.

### **Securitizing of Religion in Ukraine: Searching a Strategy**

Misuse of religion for undermining Ukrainian statehood, spreading surreptitious moods, and discrediting the armed forces posed a serious threat to Ukraine even against the background of those incredible challenges that Ukraine faced in military, economic, social, humanitarian, and other spheres with the beginning of Russian aggression. Recognizing this, the Ukrainian authorities nevertheless, did not use any reprisals against the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate, nor did they impose any punitive measures that would have restricted the activities of the Church governing bodies, media, and educational institutions. The UOC MP was entitled to all the privileges enjoyed by other churches and religious organizations in Ukraine. Already after the war began, church structures were granted hundreds of hectares of land by the state to establish monasteries and build places of worship. UOC MP's hierarchs and churchmen continued to be invited to public ceremonies and even to be awarded state decorations. Moreover, contrary to Russian narratives of "unprecedented

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<sup>58</sup> Myron Panchuk. “The Crimson Poppy and the Dream of the Upside-Down Church.” *Ukrainian Chicago Magazine*, <http://ukrainianchi.com/crimson-poppy-dream-upside-church/>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>59</sup> The official website of the Simferopol and Crimean Diocese is overflowing with reports of such blessings, see, among many others, <https://crimea-eparhia.ru/21-events/sevastopol-2013/20562-svyashchennik-blagoslovil-voinov-na-ratnyu-sluzhbu>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>60</sup> “Иерархи УПЦ отпраздновали годовщину создания «ДНР» и День победы.” [UOC hierarchs celebrated the anniversary of the "DNR" and Victory Day.] [https://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian\\_news/29131-ierarxi-upc-otprazdnovali-godovshinu-sozdaniya-dnr-i-den-pobedy.html](https://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/29131-ierarxi-upc-otprazdnovali-godovshinu-sozdaniya-dnr-i-den-pobedy.html).

persecution of the canonical Church in Ukraine,"<sup>61</sup> not a single hierarch of the UOC MP has been prosecuted for his activities, even if they were openly called to disrupt of conscription and enlistment of reserve officers, as was the case with Bishop Longin (Zhar) of Bancheny, who openly demanded his parishioners to reject sending their children to the Ukrainian military.<sup>62</sup> The admirer of President Putin and Russian imperialism Metropolitan Agafangel<sup>63</sup> of Odessa did not suffer too much either, even though he should have been the banner of the anti-Ukrainian insurgency in southern Ukraine in the spring of 2014 (and did not become so only for reasons beyond his control).<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, the need to confront threats from the Moscow Patriarchate more firmly and decisively had been increasingly articulated by the large part of the Ukrainian political stratum. The concept of securitization expressed by this stratum was most vividly reflected in the Draft Law "On the special status of religious organizations whose governing centers are located in the state, recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as an aggressor state" (№ 4511 of April 22, 2016),<sup>65</sup> which provided for special restrictions on the activities of such religious institutions. However, the Draft never became law; moreover, it

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<sup>61</sup> See, among many others, statement of the chairman of Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), "РПЦ опасается за судьбу монахов канонической Украинской православной церкви." [ROC fears for fate of monks of canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church.] <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/5995122>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>62</sup> "Episcop ortodox ROMÂN despre războiul din Ucraina: În ce țară s-au băgat americanii, numai vrajbă și sânge au adus. Vor să vadă cum se omoară ortodocșii pentru a le apăra bussines-ul lor VIDEO." [Romanian Orthodox Bishop on the war in Ukraine: What the Americans have brought to the country is only blood and strife. They want Orthodox people to die in order to protect their business] <https://www.activenews.ro/prima-pagina/Episcop-ortodox-ROMAN-despre-razboiul-din-Ucraina-In-ce-tara-s-au-bagat-americanii-numai-vrajba-si-sange-au-adus.-Vor-sa-vada-cum-se-omoara-ortodocsii-pentru-a-le-apara-bussines-ul-lor-VIDEO-66480>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>63</sup> "Россия – Дом Пресвятой Богородицы. Выступление Высокопреосвященнейшего Агафангела, Митрополита Одесского и Измаильского, на VIII Всемирном Русском Народном Соборе." [Russia is the House of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Address by His Eminence Agafangel, Metropolitan of Odessa and Izmail, at the VIIIth World Russian People's Council] <http://www.voskres.ru/articles/agafangel.htm>. Accessed 08/02/2021.

<sup>64</sup> "FrolovLeaks VIII: Православная элегия." [FrolovLeaks VIII: An Orthodox elegy] <https://informnapalm.org/33340-frolovleaks-viii-pravoslavnaya-elegiya/>. Accessed 08/02/2021.

<sup>65</sup> "Проект Закону про особливий статус релігійних організацій, керівні центри яких знаходяться в державі, яка визнана Верховною Радою України державою-агресором." [Draft Law on the Special Status of Religious Organizations with Governing Centers Located in the State Recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as a Aggressor State.] [https://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4\\_1?pf3511=58849](https://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=58849). Accessed 06/05/2021.

was not even put to a vote in the Parliament. The draft law was met with strong criticism from scholars on law and religion, human rights activists, and the Ukrainian ombudsman.<sup>66</sup> Even more importantly, the securitizing actor, who identifies the threat, that is, in this case, a group of members of the Parliament from the ruling majority, failed to convince the public that the measures they proposed would be appropriate to the threat, that these restrictive means would not pose a danger to the situation with the religious freedom as such, and that, so to speak, the remedy would not be worse than the disease itself. The rejection of Draft Law 4511 was essentially a rejection of the securitization strategy, where the main content was to limit the activities of the object of securitization, to reduce the scope of its rights and freedoms, and the main emphasis was placed over the forcible suppression and strengthening of control.

It would be fair to say that the securitization strategy as described above was just impossible for the Ukrainian authorities at the time for several reasons. First, the political opposition to then-President Yanukovich's regime, which came to power as a result of the Revolution of Dignity, repeatedly promised to implement all the requests that churches and religious organizations had been addressed over the years to the country's Parliaments, Presidents, and governments, and at least did not want to equate itself with the oppression of religious freedom.

Secondly, Ukrainians considered religious freedom as an enduring value and mostly agreed that in Ukraine such freedom was real, not declarative, and demonstrated a rather high level of religious tolerance. According to Razumkov Center's opinion polls that have been conducted since 2000, about one-third of all questioned said that "all religions as different paths toward God have right for existence"; from 44 to 47% of respondents supported the view that "any religion that proclaims the ideals of goodness, love, mercy, and does not

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<sup>66</sup> "Сага про «церковні законопроекти»: як це було" [The Saga of Church Laws: How It Was.] [https://risu.ua/saga-pro-cerkovni-zakonoproekti-yak-ce-bulo\\_n84900](https://risu.ua/saga-pro-cerkovni-zakonoproekti-yak-ce-bulo_n84900). Accessed 06/05/2021.

threaten the existence of another person has the right to exist” while less than 7% insisted that only their faith was true.

Thirdly, it would be completely unacceptable for Ukraine to resort to a mirror response not only to the crimes committed against believers and their associations by the chiefs of the created by Russia and initially headed by Russian citizens so-called "Donetsk People Republic" and "Lugansk People Republic," but also to the violations of religious freedom that take place in the illegally annexed Crimea and in Russia itself. Finally, restrictions on religious freedom in a country at war lead the public to reflect upon the question UK's Prime Minister Winston Churchill allegedly posed to the proposal to cut cultural funding during World War II: "Then what are we fighting for?" Although Churchill never said anything of the kind,<sup>67</sup> the question itself has become extremely popular in Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian invasion. It was supposed to remind the Ukrainian people that they could not withstand this invasion at the expense of freedom and human dignity. Especially as in Ukrainian society, first and foremost in intellectual circles, though not exclusively, there is strong anxiety that due to the mobilization against the hybrid war imposed on Ukraine by Russia, the former may begin to inherit Russian authoritarianism, adoration of power, contempt for human rights, chauvinism, and the cult of militarism.

### **Ukrainian Securitizing Move: Attempt of Mixing Mode**

As a result, Ukraine then adopted a strategy to securitize religion, which primarily provided for the empowerment of religious freedom and the rights of religious associations and only secondarily envisioned for the measures in minimizing the destructive influence of the Moscow Patriarchate and its proxy on the country's religious, social, and political life.

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<sup>67</sup> "The Arts: "What are we fighting for?" <https://winstonchurchill.hilldale.edu/the-arts-what-are-we-fighting-for/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

Then, during 2014-2015, the *Verkhovna Rada* and Ukrainian government implemented several important initiatives to increase the scope of religious freedom and expand the rights of religious organizations to pursue decently their mission. The government issued the Regulation on Military Chaplaincy<sup>68</sup> while the Parliament adopted the Law on Prison Chaplaincy.<sup>69</sup> The new Law on Education redefined key parameters of cooperation between the state and faith-based organizations in the sphere of public education.<sup>70</sup>

Two other important developments that brought an end to the inequality before the law of religious organizations as against the secular ones were the state recognition of degrees and diplomas issued by theological educational establishments<sup>71</sup> and the return of theology to universities, which was unthinkable not only in the Soviet era but also in imperial Russia.

Additionally, even during the fiercest fighting, the state found it possible to provide financial benefits to religious organizations while courts re-affirmed the right to alternative (non-military) service for conscientious objectors who

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<sup>68</sup> “Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України №677-р від 2 липня 2014 р. «Про службу військового духовенства (капеланську службу) у Збройних Силах, Національній гвардії, Державній спеціальній службі транспорту та Державній прикордонній службі» [Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 677-г of July 2, 2014”. [On Service of the Military Clergy (Chaplaincy Service) in the Armed Forces, National Guard, State Special Transport Service and State Border Guard Service.] <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/677-2014-%D1%80>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>69</sup> “Закон України «Про внесення змін до деяких законодавчих актів України щодо регулювання діяльності священнослужителів (капеланів) в органах та установах, що належать до сфери управління Державної пенітенціарної служби України» [Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Some Legislative Acts of Ukraine concerning the Regulation of the Clergy (Chaplains) activities in the Bodies and Institutions related to the administrative sphere of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine."] <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/ru/419-19/sp:wide:max15>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>70</sup> “Закон України «Про освіту» [Law of Ukraine “On Education.”] <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/2145-19>; Верховна Рада України ухвалила Закон «Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо заснування релігійними організаціями навчальних закладів» [“Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law "On Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine on the Establishment of Educational Institutions by Religious Organizations”] <https://rada.gov.ua/news/Novyny/110671.html>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>71</sup> “Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України від 19 серпня 2015 р. «Про державне визнання документів про вищу духовну освіту, наукові ступені та вчені звання, виданих закладами вищої духовної освіти», n13 [Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of August 19, 2015. "On state recognition of documents on higher spiritual education, academic degrees and academic titles issued by institutions of higher spiritual education."] <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/652-2015-%D0%BF/paran13#>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

were opposed to serving in the armed forces and/or bearing arms on the grounds of religious principles.<sup>72</sup>

In fact, the only extraordinary, “securitizing” law, which the Ukrainian legislator adopted in the church and state was the 2018 Law that required religious organizations with governing centers in countries designated by law as an aggressor state to indicate in their title the name of this center. In simplest terms, if the center of a religious organization is located in Russia, that religious organization has to publicize that it is part of the Russian religious structure. Although Old Believers and True Orthodox churches also fell under the law, it was clear to everyone that this Law was intended to undermine the position of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine. Considering that a great number of UOC MP’s faithful painfully perceived the reference to their affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate,<sup>73</sup> the authors of the Law hoped that the very mention of Russia would force UOC's flock to change their denominational affiliation and leave the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> “Рішення суду про визнання неправомірною військовою мобілізацію віруючого, який має право на альтернативну службу.” [Decision of the Court on the recognition of unlawful military mobilization of a believer who has the right to alternative service], <https://www.irs.in.ua/ua/rishennya-sudu-pro-viznannya-nepravomirnoyu-viiskovu-mobilizaciyu-viruyuchogo-yakii-maje-pravo-na-alternativnu-sluzhbu>. Accessed 06/05/2021; “Рішення № 80504428, 11.03.2019 Кіровоградський окружний адміністративний суд” [Decision № 80504428, 11.03.2019 Kirovograd District Administrative Court], <https://youcontrol.com.ua/catalog/court-document/80504428/>. Accessed 06/05/2021; “Вищий спецсуд підтвердив право мобілізованих віруючих на альтернативну службу.” [The Supreme Special Court confirmed the right of mobilized believers to alternative service] [https://risu.org.ua/article\\_print.php?id=61062&name=faitn\\_and\\_weapon&lang=ua&](https://risu.org.ua/article_print.php?id=61062&name=faitn_and_weapon&lang=ua&). Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>73</sup> “Закон України «Про внесення зміни до статті 12 Закону України "Про свободу совісті та релігійні організації" щодо назви релігійних організацій (об’єднань), які входять до структури (є частиною) релігійної організації (об’єднання), керівний центр (управління) якої знаходиться за межами України в державі, яка законом визнана такою, що здійснила військову агресію проти України та/або тимчасово окупувала частину території України»” [The Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" regarding the name of religious organizations (associations) that are part of the structure (is part of) a religious organization (association) whose governing center (department) is outside of Ukraine in a State that is recognized by Law to committed a military aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupied part of the territory of Ukraine"] <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2662-19#Text>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>74</sup> “Належність у назві Церкви "Московський Патріархат" вчетверо зменшує кількість її прихильників, - соціолог” [Having "Moscow Patriarchate" in the name of the Church reduces the number of its supporters fourfold – sociologist.] [https://risu.ua/nalezhnist-u-nazvi-cerkvi-moskovskij-patriarhat-vchetvero-zmenshuje-kilkist-yiyi-prihilmnikiv---sociolog\\_n118448](https://risu.ua/nalezhnist-u-nazvi-cerkvi-moskovskij-patriarhat-vchetvero-zmenshuje-kilkist-yiyi-prihilmnikiv---sociolog_n118448). Accessed 06/05/2021.



As was the case in the West with the introduction of exceptional measures aimed at the securitization of religion, the "Renaming Law" in Ukraine also faced serious criticism.<sup>75</sup> Some legal scholars expressed doubt that national security considerations could limit the right of a religious community in a democratic society to freely choose its own title and that this restriction was proportionate to the goal of the Ukrainian state to counter Russian propaganda, which, in the legislator's opinion, was spread by religious associations governed from and controlled by Russia.<sup>76</sup> Experts of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union considered that state restrictions imposed on religious organizations by this law violate freedom of religion in Ukraine, although they did not put forth any arguments to support their statement.<sup>77</sup>

The debate over the "Renaming law" coincided with the release of Policy Guidelines of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) "Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security" (2019).<sup>78</sup> "Guidelines..." gave some arguments to the proponents of the Law. They pointed out that interference in the internal affairs of a religious organization (understandably, that the obligation of renaming was clearly such an interference) had a legitimate purpose, namely to warn society that the rhetoric and practice of this religious organization may be determined by its subordination to a religious center controlled (for which there is abundant evidence) from a country that carries out aggression against Ukraine. Especially since, according to the Constitution of Ukraine, ensuring the information security of Ukraine "shall be

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<sup>75</sup> See, Lorne Dawson and Paul Bramadat. *Religious Radicalization and Securitization in Canada and Beyond*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2014), 8 and others.

<sup>76</sup> Dmytro Vovk. "The Names of Religious Groups and Security-Related Concerns." <https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2019/10/03/the-names-of-religious-groups-and-security-related-concerns>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>77</sup> "УГСПЛ надала КСУ правову позицію щодо конституційності змін ст. 12 ЗУ «Про свободу совісті та релігійні організації» [The UHHR submitted a legal position to the CCU regarding the constitutionality of the Amendments to Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations."] <https://helsinki.org.ua/articles/uhspl-nadala-ksu-pravo-vu-pozytsiyu-schodo-konstytutsijnosti-zmin-st-12-zu-pro-svobodu-sovisti-ta-relihijni-orhanizatsiji/>. Accessed 06/05/2021.

<sup>78</sup> *Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security. Policy Guidance*. (Warsaw: OSCE/ ODIHR, 2019)

the most important function of the State and a matter of concern for all the Ukrainian people.” (Art. 17).

Further, interference in the affairs of a religious organization was prescribed by law and was not arbitrary. The consequences of this Law were predictable and did not contain any other restrictions on the activities of the UOC MP except for the non-admission of its clergy to the Ukrainian military. The limitation seemed as a minimum possible—which is extremely important—and did not appear as a restriction on freedom of conscience for members of this Church. That is, they would not lose any of the opportunities that international law guaranteed them in the sphere of freedom of conscience and belief: to practice their religion or belief, either alone or with others, publicly or privately in teaching, worship, and performance of religious and ritual ceremonies, or to change their religious beliefs.

Also, the law did not discriminate against religious organizations of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine to have, acquire, and dispose of property at their discretion, open educational institutions, and communicate with co-religionists abroad. In short, the religious association could further enjoy all the rights provided by the Ukrainian legislation (what fundamentally distinguished this Law from the Bulgarian Law of 2003, where the ban on having the same name "Bulgarian Orthodox Church" was accompanied for one of the religious organizations, which lost the right to such a name, by deprivation of property. Naturally, in the Bulgarian case the European Court of Human Rights found a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights).<sup>79</sup>

Finally, the title prescribed to the UOC MP by the Law was not pejorative ones that might insult the Church’s leadership. UOC MP bishops did not object when they were identified as hierarchs of the Russian Church (especially while they visited Russia), did not protest against President Putin's ambitions to

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<sup>79</sup> “Case of Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (Metropolitan Inokentiy) and others v. Bulgaria” (2009), <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-90788%22%7D>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

protect "the Russian Church in Ukraine," and they easily accepted their Russian-belonging tutelage in official documents of the Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>80</sup>

In any case, however, the only extraordinary Church-State law was still not put into effect. Firstly, 49 members of the Ukrainian parliament (mostly members of the pro-Russian Opposition Bloc) began to challenge its compliance with the Basic Law in the Constitutional Court,<sup>81</sup> then the Kyiv District Administrative Court de facto blocked implementation of the Law,<sup>82</sup> (Anti-corruption Bureau tapes recorded in the office of the Court's head Pavlo Vovk<sup>83</sup> revealed, among others, that this decision was not fair and unbiased though).<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, after Vladimir Zelensky won the presidential election in 2019, Ukrainian officials publicly questioned the very necessity of implementing the Law.<sup>85</sup>

## **Ukrainian and Russian Securitization Moves Collide: Struggle For and Against Ukrainian Autocephaly**

While the attempt of "restrictive securitization of religion," even if very moderate, wasn't successful, "positive securitization" aimed at recognizing the

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<sup>80</sup> It is noteworthy that members of the Parliament who challenged this Law in the Constitutional Court recognized that the UOC was part of the Russian Church. – See, "Vadim Novynskyi: 'I will personally stand up to defend Lavra.'" [https://lb.ua/news/2018/07/25/403639\\_vadim\\_novynskiy\\_ya\\_lichno\\_vstanu.html](https://lb.ua/news/2018/07/25/403639_vadim_novynskiy_ya_lichno_vstanu.html).

<sup>81</sup> Долженков О.В., Німченко В.І., Новинський В.В. та інші. "Конституційне подання" ["Constitutional Submission"] [http://www.ccu.gov.ua/sites/default/files/3\\_374.pdf](http://www.ccu.gov.ua/sites/default/files/3_374.pdf). Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>82</sup> "Справа про перейменування Київської Митрополії УПЦ: суд вжив заходи забезпечення позову." [The case of renaming the UOC's Kyiv Metropolis: the Court has taken measures to secure the lawsuit], <http://oask.gov.ua/node/3829>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>83</sup> "Ukraine's new anti-corruption bodies lock horns with the deep state over the rotten court" <http://euromaidanpress.com/2020/08/14/ukrainian-anti-corruption-bodies-accuse-scandalous-court-of-seizing-state-power-state-covers-up-the-court/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>84</sup> "«Треба записуватися на благословення до Онуфрія»: як ОАКК ухвалював рішення в інтересах проросійської церкви." [We need arrange appointment for Onufriy's blessing: How DACK has taken decision in the interest of pro-Russian Church.] <https://speckor-info.net/%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B1%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%8F-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>85</sup> "Про закриття храмів у пандемію та перейменування УПЦ (МП). Інтерв'ю з головою Держслужби етнополітики і свободи совісті." [On the Closure of Churches during the Pandemic and the Renaming of UOC. Interview with the Head of the State Service for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience] <https://glavcom.ua/country/society/pro-zakryttya-hramiv-u-pandemiyu-ta-pereymenuvannya-upc-mp-intervyu-z-golovoyu-derzhsluzhbi-etnopolitiki-i-svobodi-sovisti-751971.html>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and thereby reducing the influence of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Orthodox faithful has been welcomed by Ukrainian society with great enthusiasm. The securitization of religion strategy, in which the securitizing actor focuses first and foremost not on the introducing a restrictive regime and crushing the foci of threat by force but on the winning of "hearts and minds" and opposing "good" to "evil" within religion itself, loudly sounded in securitization discourse immediately after 9/11.<sup>86</sup> After the tragedy of September 9, 2001, US think tanks were particularly active in developing models for the strengthening of moderate Islam and its promotion to a dominant position in the Islamic world.<sup>87</sup> The promotion of new faces of Islam, as well as "nascent British Muslim culture," has become an important part of the UK's securitization strategy toward Islam after the attacks on London in July 2005 by UK nationals.<sup>88</sup>

In the Ukrainian version, such "religion building" was invariably seen as the separation of the multimillions Ukrainian Orthodox flock from the influence of Moscow and the establishment in Ukraine of an autocephalous, that is, politically and administratively independent Orthodox Church.

The desire of the Ukrainian political elite to withdraw from ecclesiastical control of Moscow dates back almost to the same time as the re-subordination of the Kyiv Metropolitanate from the Constantinople Church to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686 had happened. The 1710 Constitution written by Hetman (the head of Cossack State between 1648 and 1764) Philip Orlyk proclaimed: "... [A]nd for the even greater weight of the original throne of the Metropolitan

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<sup>86</sup> Rabbi Marc Gopin articulated this idea in a very expressive way, "...We cannot wait for an Islamic Reformation to evolve historically, with a new set of higher institutions and training centers for clerics. We must have it now. ... We need a Marshall plan of religious freedom and pluralism..." Gopin, Marc. This was is about religion, and cannot be won without it." *Sh'ma*. December 2001. <https://www.bjpa.org/search-results/publication/8698>. Accessed 06/06/2021; The 2006 US National Security Strategy introduced the same idea through more discreet vocabulary: "We will continue to support political reforms that empower peaceful Muslims to practice and interpret their faith... Responsible Islamic leaders need to denounce an ideology that distorts and exploits Islam for destructive ends and defiles a proud religion." *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. (2006. March. Washington, DC), 11.

<sup>87</sup> Bosco Robert M. *Securing the Sacred: Religion, National Security, and the Western State*, 104.

<sup>88</sup> Brown Katherine E. "Contesting the Securitization of British Muslims." *Interventions*. Vol.12. No. 2, 171-182.

of Kyiv in Little Russia and more convenient administration of matters spiritual, the Hetman, after the liberation of the Fatherland from the yoke of Moscow should receive in the capital of the Apostolic See of Constantinople the primary authority, so that through the reporting and son obedience to the mentioned Apostolic See of Constantinople, from which... also the authorities would be honored with strength.”<sup>89</sup>

Two centuries later, on January 1, 1919, Directorate (provisional government) of the Ukrainian People’s Republic proclaimed Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine but the short lifetime of this government it was unable to undertake the procedure for the recognition of autocephaly from the Constantinople Patriarchate.

The autocephalous issue, as previously mentioned, was a constant focus of Presidents Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma, and Viktor Yushchenko, but their efforts could not succeed for many reasons at the time. After 2014, however, the situation changed significantly. At least in the sense that the dependence of Ukraine's Orthodox Christians as extremely unfriendly to Ukrainian statehood religious center has been perceived as absolutely abnormal by the Parliamentary majority, the Presidential administration, and the government. On June 16, 2016, *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine appealed to the Patriarch of Constantinople to invalidate the act of 1686 on the accession of the Kyiv Metropolitanate to the Moscow Patriarchate, to facilitate the convening of an All-Ukrainian Unification Council to resolve all disputes between Orthodox denomination in Ukraine with their subsequent unification into a single body and to issue a *Tomos* (Decree) on the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> See, Text of Pilip Orlyk’s *Constitution* at <http://gska2.rada.gov.ua/site/const/istoriya/1710.html>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>90</sup> “Про Звернення Верховної Ради України до Його Всесвятості Варфоломія, Архієпископа Константинополя і Нового Риму, Вселенського Патріарха щодо надання автокефалії Православній Церкві в Україні.” 16 червня 2016 року [On the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, Ecumenical Patriarch, Regarding Granting

The address to the highest appellate judge, which, according to the Canon Law of the Orthodox Church, was the Patriarch of Constantinople, on an exclusively intra-church issue by the legislative body of the state with an established regime of separation of church and state, had an extraordinary character. The deputies fully realized the extraordinary nature of their address and justified it by the "special circumstances," namely, by the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine.<sup>91</sup>

The appeal was sent to Patriarch Bartholomew on the eve of the long-awaited Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church (2016), at which the issue of autocephaly and the modalities of its bestowal were not even scheduled for consideration. However, Archbishop Job (Getcha) of Telmessos, representative of the Patriarch of Constantinople, directly admitted that "...[A]fter the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine appealed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople to establish a canonical autocephalous Church, the request was considered at the last Synod and the Synod decided to bring this issue to the Commission for a serious and thorough study of the issue. So, Constantinople is considering this issue."<sup>92</sup>

Such various events of June 2016 as the above described Ukrainian Parliament's address and the Moscow Patriarchate's last-minute refusal<sup>93</sup> to participate in the Great and Holy Council on Crete marked the point of departure for the final stage of a complex political and diplomatic process that culminated with the proclamation of the Ukrainian autocephaly.

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Autocephaly to Orthodox Church in Ukraine, June 16, 2016.] <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1422-viii#n9>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> "Archbishop Job (Getcha) of Telmessos: "Ukraine is the canonical territory of the Church of Constantinople," [https://risu.ua/en/archbishop-job-getcha-of-telmessos-ukraine-is-the-canonical-territory-of-the-church-of-constantinople\\_n80683](https://risu.ua/en/archbishop-job-getcha-of-telmessos-ukraine-is-the-canonical-territory-of-the-church-of-constantinople_n80683) Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>93</sup> "Русская Православная Церковь настаивает на переносе даты Всеправославного Собора." [The Russian Orthodox Church insists on postponing the date of the Pan-Orthodox Council.] <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/49403/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

The fifth President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, who at first was reluctant, as his Foreign Minister, Pavlo Klimkin, admitted,<sup>94</sup> to engage with religious issues, later became the principal promoter of the autocephalous process in Ukraine. The results of his team's diplomatic efforts came to light on April 17, 2018, when President Poroshenko publicly asked the heads of all parliamentary factions to support his formal request to Patriarch Bartholomew for autocephaly. Two days later, *Verkhovna Rada* adopted a resolution in support of the presidential appeal. Recognizing that his involvement in the Orthodox issue was by no means interference in internal church affairs,<sup>95</sup> President Poroshenko attributed this to the national security concerns and redirected blame on Russia: "I am a strong opponent of state interference in church affairs. Especially when this state is foreign. Especially when it is an aggressor. Especially when there is the announcement of the Ukrainian territory a canonical territory of the church of another state. This is an encroachment on our territorial integrity."<sup>96</sup>

The Ecumenical (Constantinople) Patriarchate was at the center of the process of recognizing the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, as it were in the autocephalous cases for the Orthodox Churches of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, the Moscow Tsardom, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and the Orthodox Church of Czech and Slovakian Lands,<sup>97</sup> as well as in the

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<sup>94</sup> "Клімкін: Те, що Зеленський широко вважає "звільненням Донбасу", – не що інше, як спецоперація Росії." [Klimkin: What Zelensky Sincerely Believes to Be the "Liberation of Donbass" is Nothing Else but a Special Operation by Russia.] <https://gordonua.com/ukr/publications/-klimkin-te-shcho-vy-chuete-pro-pidgotovku-do-normandskoi-zustrichi-navit-ne-verhivka-aysberga-ce-nichogo-vse-yde-po-zakrytyh-kanalah-1478411.html>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>95</sup> Although none of the autocephalous cases in early modern and modern history were accomplished beyond the complex and intense political processes and without the decisive involvement of the respective states, it is worth remembering that Ukraine (as well as Russia) has enshrined the principle of Church-State separation in its Constitution.

<sup>96</sup> "Порошенко каже, що ідею автокефалії УПЦ підтримує світ" [Poroshenko Says That Idea of the Autocephaly Has Worldwide Support], <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2018/05/2/7179314/> Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>97</sup> See, among others, J.A. McGuckin (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*. Vols. I-II, (Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 14-16, 78-93; 264-275; 281-290; 451- 452; 472-482, 559-570.

confirmation of the ancient autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church.<sup>98</sup> With Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who was enthroned on the first among the Eastern Orthodox world's equals Constantinople Throne back in 1991 and holds it longer than any of his 269 predecessors, has met all Ukrainian Presidents without exception. The Patriarch himself constantly emphasized that he followed the development of the religious and political situation in Ukraine with the utmost attention. His vision of the “Ukrainian issue” within the 1990 to the 2010s may be outlined as follows: Constantinople is the Mother Church for Ukraine; the annexation of the Kyiv Metropolitenate by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686 violated canonical rules; inter-Orthodox relations, and conflict among Orthodox denominations in Ukraine were not exclusively an internal matter of the Moscow Patriarchate; Constantinople recognized Moscow’s ecclesiastical authority within the borders outlined for the newly established Moscow Patriarchate by the Charter of the four Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs in 1593 (that is, without the Kyiv Metropolitenate).<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, during 1991-2018 Constantinople recognized on the territory of Ukraine only one Metropolitan of Kyiv—the one who was subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate, but this did not mean that Ecumenical Throne recognized UOC MP as an autonomous entity—Constantinople considered it as just a local assembly of the Russian bishops who performed their ministry in the territory of Ukraine.<sup>100</sup> Finally, in due time, Constantinople

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<sup>98</sup> Zurab Kutateladze, “Key aspects of Georgian Orthodox Church’s autocephaly,” *Volynskiy Blahovisnyk*. 2019. Vol. 7, 139-162.

<sup>99</sup> Sotiropoulos Evagelos, Editor. *The Ecumenical Patriarchate and Ukraine Autocephaly: Historical, Canonical, and Pastoral Perspectives*. (Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in America, 2019).

<sup>100</sup> “Коммюнике о визите Архиепископа Константинополя — Нового Рима и Вселенского Патриарха Варфоломея I в Русскую Православную Церковь по приглашению Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Алексия II.” (Москва: Издание Московской Патриархии, 1993, № 7-8), 3. [Communiqué on the visit of Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I to the Russian Orthodox Church at the invitation of Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia]. Compare with “Відповіді Його Всесвятості патріарха Варфоломія на лист редакторів Церкваріума щодо справжнього канонічного статусу УПЦ МП” [Reply of His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew to Letter of Editors of “Cerkvarium” over the Real Canonical Status of the UOC MP.]

<https://cerkvarium.org/dokumenty/tserkovni/vselenskij-patriarkh-tserkvariumu-ukrajinski-ierarkhi-pid-rosieyu-ne-e-mistsevi-pravlyachi-episkopi>. Accessed 06/06/2021.



entrusted Moscow the guardianship over the Kyiv Metropolitanate's flock but never passed to Moscow the full and indefinite authority over the Metropolitanate itself.

However, Patriarch Bartholomew, who has been very decisive in restoring the Autonomous Orthodox Church in Estonia, in granting the *Tomos* to the Orthodox Church of the Czech and Slovak Lands, in reviving the Albanian Orthodox Church, which was completely crushed by Enver Hoxha's dictatorship, in artful resolving the problems of the Ukrainian Orthodox churches in the USA and Canada, in the settlement of Bulgarian inter-Orthodox crisis and dispute resolution within the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem,<sup>101</sup> slowly proceeded with his final decision on the Ukrainian issue. However, in 2018, several key factors came together that prompted the Patriarch's determination. There was the military aggression unleashed by Russia against Ukraine; the harsh and demonstratively categorical refusal of the Moscow Patriarchate to resolve the Ukrainian issue; readiness, determination, and unanimity of the executive and legislature arms of the Ukrainian government in the period 2014-2019. Additionally, Russia's outright hostility towards the Ecumenical Patriarchate has finally acquired the character of state policy. Attempts from Russian intelligence to link Bartholomew with the organization of the 2016 putsch against Turkish President Erdogan,<sup>102</sup> to disrupt the All Orthodox Council, and to implement Stalin's plans to transfer the center of the Eastern Orthodoxy to Moscow convinced Patriarch Bartholomew of the need to move to the offensive.<sup>103</sup> Obvious U.S. support<sup>104</sup> and Turkey's rather favorable

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<sup>101</sup> See, among others, Athanasiou Stefanos. "The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. A Religious Minority and a Global Player." *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*. 2016. 26 (2), 215-225; Prodromos Yannas. "The Soft Power of the Ecumenical Patriarchate." *Mediterranean Quarterly*. 2009. Vol.20. No.1, 77-94.

<sup>102</sup> Sotiropoulos Evagelos. "How Russia's Information Warfare Targets the Church of Constantinople." <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/01/29/russian-information-war-constantinople/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>103</sup> Масаветас Александрос, "Нещадна російська війна проти Константинополя" [The Merciless Russian War against Constantinople], *Український тиждень*. 23 квітня 2018 р. <https://tyzhden.ua/World/212882>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>104</sup> "Move Towards Ukrainian Autocephaly," <https://ua.usembassy.gov/move-towards-ukrainian-autocephaly/>; "Pompeo tells of U.S. help for Ukraine Church to escape Russian influence,"

than disengaged neutrality on the issue of Ukrainian autocephaly<sup>105</sup> have helped to make this move bolder.

Certainly, none of the isolated rationales alone would explain fully Constantinople's stance on the Ukrainian issue. Generally speaking, as for the money one can dismiss this reason out of hand. Russia's financial capabilities are far greater than those operated by the Ukrainian side. At the same time, not only Russian "Orthodox oligarchs" like Konstantin Malofeev,<sup>106</sup> but also such Ukrainian tycoon as Number Eight in the Ukrainian Forbes list and later UOC MP's protodeacon billionaire Vadim Novinsky,<sup>107</sup> actively played on the Russian side. In any case, a break with Moscow over Ukraine meant inevitable financial losses for the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Moreover, the course of events completely disproved numerous speculations about Bartholomew's perfidy in his Ukrainian policy. The assumptions about expensive property promised to Constantinople by the Ukrainian government in exchange for autocephaly proved to be false, as did the suppositions that after the annulling of Moscow's authority over Kyiv and returning the Kyiv Metropolitanate to the auspice of the Ecumenical Throne, "insidious" Bartholomew would not grant autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine but would leave it under his jurisdiction for an indefinite period.<sup>108</sup>

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<https://www.unian.info/politics/orthodoxy-pompeo-tells-of-u-s-help-for-ocu-to-rid-russia-influence-11275526.html>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>105</sup> "Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that he would do everything possible for Ukraine to have autocephaly", the Ukrainian Presidential commissioner for the Crimean Tatar people Mustafa Dzhemilev said. According to Dzhemilev, he has repeatedly communicated with the Turkish leader regarding the granting of Tomos and autocephaly to Ukraine and explained their importance". – "Эрдоган обещал помочь Украине с автокефалией – Джемилев." [Erdogan promised to help Ukraine with autocephaly – Dzhemilev], <http://old.qha.com.ua/ru/obschestvo/erdogan-obeschal-pomoch-ukraine-s-avtokefaliei-djemilev/195414/>. Accessed 06/07/2021.

See also, "Erdogan receives Greek Orthodox patriarch," <https://www.dailysabah.com/minorities/2018/04/26/erdogan-receives-greek-orthodox-patriarch> Accessed 06/07/2021.

<sup>106</sup> Orysia Lutsevych, "The Long Arm of Russian "Soft" Power," <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/the-long-arm-of-russian-soft-power/>.

<sup>107</sup> UOC Chancellor meets with Serbian Patriarch Porfirije <https://spzh.news/en/news/80024-upravdelami-upc-vstretilsya-s-patriarkhom-serbskim-porfirijem>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Titov, "Orthodox Church: biggest split in a thousand years triggered over Ukraine." *The Conversation*. October 24, 2028.

As Patriarch Bartholomew signaled his willingness to initiate the procedure for granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Moscow Patriarchate resorted to extraordinary measures. During May 2018 alone, the "Minister of Foreign Affairs" of the Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Hilarion (Alphayev) held intensive talks with the Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Georgia, and Romania, with the Archbishop of Cyprus and the Ambassadors of Greece and Bulgaria to Russia.<sup>109</sup>

However, the Russian state appeared as the main actor in preventing Ukrainian autocephaly. Russian diplomacy, intelligence, and their proxy (such as the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society headed by the former chief of the Russian Federal Security Service Sergei Stepashin) launched a powerful, costly, and well-orchestrated counter-autocephalous campaign.<sup>110</sup>

The Russian securitizing move was based on the notion that the withdrawal of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine from Russian dominance constituted a threat to Russian control over Ukraine and thus threatened the Russian national interests. This would explain the methods that Russia used to prevent the recognition of Ukrainian autocephaly. These methods included blackmail, bribery, intimidation, and outright Cold War spying techniques.

On the same day that the *Verkhovna Rada* addressed the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Press Secretary of the Russian President released a statement

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<sup>109</sup> See reports on these meetings, <https://mospat.ru/en/2018/05/09/news159751/>; <https://mospat.ru/en/2018/05/09/news159760/>; <https://mospat.ru/en/2018/06/04/news160640/>; <https://mospat.ru/en/2018/05/19/news160116/>; <https://mospat.ru/en/category/news/decr-chairman/page/7/>; <https://mospat.ru/en/2018/06/01/news160598/>; <https://mospat.ru/en/2018/05/08/news159702/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>110</sup> In this sense it seems paradoxically that in various scholarly analyses of religious dynamics in Ukraine after 2014, the factor of Russia, the war it unleashed against Ukraine, its special subversive measures, including the use of religious actors, appears as a "missing dimension". See, for instance Sergei A. Mudrov. "The Confrontation, Intimidation and New Divisions? A Controversial Path to the Creation of Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Ukraine." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*. Vol. 18, issue 54 (Winter 2019), 62-78. Alexander Ponomariov. "International Implications of Ukrainian Autocephaly (2019–2020)" *Russian Analytical Digest*. No. 252, 8 May 2020, 10-15. Nicolai N. Petro. "The Gospel According to Poroshenko: Politics, Religion, and the New Church of Ukraine." *Yale Journal of International Affairs*. April 2019. <https://www.yalejournal.org/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

from which it became clear that Russia would use every opportunity to stop the Ukrainian move toward autocephaly.<sup>111</sup>

In June 2018, the head of the Russian *Duma's* Committee on the Development of Civil Society, Public and Religious Organizations, Sergei Gavrillov, discussed in Athens prevention of the 'Ukrainian scenario' with the Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Ieronymos, and with the members of GOC's Synod.<sup>112</sup>

The activity of Russian diplomacy and special services in Greece was so brazen that two Russian diplomats were expelled from the country for trying to bribe Greek officials and church figures. Through monetary rewards, they were trying to influence municipalities, metropolitans in the Greek Orthodox hierarchy, and to gain influence in Mount Athos.<sup>113</sup>

In August 2018, the Associated Press has found that the same hackers charged with intervening in the 2016 U.S. presidential election also spent years trying to eavesdrop on Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I. This showed, according to the observer, the high stakes as Kyiv and Moscow wrestle over the religious future of Ukraine.<sup>114</sup>

Moreover, according to the former Minister of National Defense and President of Independent Greeks party Panos Kammenos' statement, Russia blackmailed Greece with Greek territorial integrity on the issue of Ukrainian autocephaly. Politician publicly admitted that he exerted pressure on the Greek Orthodox Church and warned the Primate and the hierarchs telling them if the Church of Greece was the first to recognize the autocephaly of the Ukrainian

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<sup>111</sup> "Kremlin refuses to support creation of independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church, branding it "split." <https://www.unian.info/politics/10087304-kremlin-refuses-to-support-creation-of-independent-ukrainian-orthodox-church-branding-it-split.html>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>112</sup> State Duma committee chairman meets with Primate and Holy Synod members of Greek Orthodox Church <https://mospat.ru/en/news/47398/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>113</sup> Greece decides to expel Russian diplomats // [www.ekathimerini.com/230551/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-decides-to-expel-russian-diplomats](http://www.ekathimerini.com/230551/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-decides-to-expel-russian-diplomats). Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>114</sup> Raphael Satter. "Unholy hackers: Orthodox clergy targeted by Russian spies." <https://apnews.com/article/a84e97376fbf4d698bc7cc8836af3240>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

Church, Russia would terminate the guarantees on non-occupation of any Greek island based on the accords concluded with Russia.<sup>115</sup>

In turn, an uncompromising struggle against Ukrainian autocephaly was launched by pro-Russian political and church circles within Ukraine itself. They blackmailed Ukrainian and world public opinion with an inevitable civil war<sup>116</sup> and a split of world Orthodoxy.<sup>117</sup>

Despite all these efforts, however, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has consistently taken steps to prepare for the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. Finally, the Synod of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople held on October 11, 2018, promulgated the canonical model for the Ecumenical Patriarchate's resolution of the Ukrainian issue. It consisted of abolishing Moscow's and restoring Constantinople's ecclesial jurisdiction over the Kyiv Metropolitane and restoring the Primate of two non-recognized Orthodox entities to their episcopal ministry, as well as restoring Eucharistic communion with their supporters. This meant that from that time until the granting of autocephaly all Orthodox bishops, clergy, and monks would be under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This decision was based on serious church-historical, archaeographical, and canonical research that substantiated the illegitimacy of the actions of the Moscow Patriarchate for the Kyiv Metropolitane.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> "Admission of pressure on Archbishop Ieronymos not to recognize Church of Ukraine." <https://orthodoxtimes.com/admission-of-pressure-on-archbishop-ieronimos-not-to-recognize-church-of-ukraine/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>116</sup> Подгорный Николай. "Сели на раскол. Почему инициатива Порошенко может привести к кровавой религиозной войне на Украине." *Известия*. 20 апреля 2018 [Podgorny, Nicolay. Sit on the split. Why Poroshenko's initiative can lead to bloody religious war in Ukraine.] <https://iz.ru/734220/nikolai-podgorny/seli-na-raskol>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>117</sup> "Цифры и сценарий: Религиозная война на Украине станет следствием автокефалии." [Figures and scenario: The religious war in Ukraine will be a consequence of autocephaly.] [https://tsargrad.tv/articles/cifry-i-scenarij-religioznaja-vojna-na-ukraine-stanet-sledstviem-avtokefalii\\_158238](https://tsargrad.tv/articles/cifry-i-scenarij-religioznaja-vojna-na-ukraine-stanet-sledstviem-avtokefalii_158238); Кармазин Игорь. "Варфоломеевская ночь. Украина на грани религиозной войны. Как Константинопольский патриарх провоцирует кровопролитие в Киеве." *Известия*. 11 сентября 2018. [Karmazin Igor. St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Ukraine on the edge of religious war. How does the Patriarch of Constantinople provoke bloodshed in Kiev.] <https://iz.ru/787533/igor-karmazin/varfolomeevskaia-noch-ukraina-na-grani-religioznoi-voiny>.

<sup>118</sup> *The Ecumenical Throne and the Church of Ukraine: The Documents Speak*. [https://www.uocusa.org/news\\_181003\\_1](https://www.uocusa.org/news_181003_1); Accessed 06/06/2021. See also, Лурье В.М. *Русское православие между Киевом и Москвой. Очерк истории русской православной традиции между XV и XX веками*.

The very next day, President Putin held an operational meeting with members of the Russian Security Council, where the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine was discussed with the ministers of defense, foreign affairs, and the directors of the Federal Security Service and the Foreign Intelligence Service.<sup>119</sup> Three days later, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church severed Eucharistic communion with the Church of Constantinople.

Since the hierarchy of the self-proclaimed Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, unlike the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine, was not recognized within the Eastern Orthodoxy, the Ukrainian authorities were forced to take on an extremely important role in the autocephalous process. The international activities of the unrecognized churches, especially their desire to establish relations with the Local Orthodox Churches, were closely monitored and consistently suppressed by the Moscow Patriarchate. This isolation would have been impossible to break without the vigorous activity of Ukrainian diplomacy.

The authorities, and primarily President Poroshenko, also participated in the Unification Council on December 15, 2018, which proclaimed the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and elected its Primate, Metropolitan Epiphanius (Dumenko). The solemn ceremony of Patriarch Bartholomew's signing of the *Tomos* on granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was held on January 6, 2019, in Istanbul and attracted great interest in the world media.

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(Москва, Три квадрата, 2010). [Lurie V.M. Russian Orthodoxy between Kyiv and Moscow. An Essay on the Russian Orthodox Tradition between 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries]; Ченцова В. Г. “Синодальное решение 1686 г. о Киевской митрополии.” *Древняя Русь. Вопросы медиевистики*. 2017. №2. (68),89-110; [Chentsova V.G. 1686 Synod Decision on Kyiv Metropolis]; Константин Ветошников . “«Передача» Киевской митрополии Московскому патриархату в 1686 году: канонический анализ.” [Konstantin Vetoshnikov. The “Transmission” of Kyiv Mitropolyy to Moscow Patriarchate: The Canonical Analyses], [https://risu.ua/ru/peredacha-kievskoy-mitropolii-moskovskomu-patriarhatu-v-1686-godu-kanonicheskiy-analiz\\_n82716](https://risu.ua/ru/peredacha-kievskoy-mitropolii-moskovskomu-patriarhatu-v-1686-godu-kanonicheskiy-analiz_n82716). Accessed 06/06/2021; Константин Ветошников. “Ответ на аргументы представителей РПЦ о «полной передаче» Москве юрисдикции над Киевской митрополией в 1686 г.” [Konstantin Vetoshnikov. Response to the arguments of representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church about the "full transfer" of jurisdiction over the Kyiv metropolitenate to Moscow in 1686.] <https://credo.press/221236/>. Accessed 06/06/2021; Hovorun Cyril. “The cause of Ukrainian autocephaly.” Elizabeth A. Clark and Dmytro Vovk, eds. *Religion During the Russian- Ukrainian Conflict*. (New York, Routledge, 2020), 180-191.

<sup>119</sup> “Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine in focus of Putin’s meeting with Security Council” <https://tass.com/politics/1025809>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

They described this event as of geopolitical importance<sup>120</sup> and a real victory of Ukraine in its standoff with Russia.

### **Conclusion: What Does the Successful Securitization of Religion Mean?**

The Ukrainian securitizing model has not led to the destruction of the Moscow Patriarchate's structures, neither to the large-scale clashes that had been predicted nor to the intra-Orthodox schism that had seemed inevitable. Instead, two legitimate Orthodox jurisdictions have emerged in Ukraine, namely the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the semi-autonomous Church within the ROC, the competition between which has already revived the religious life. Although in some localities disputes between those faithful of the Moscow Patriarchate who chose to transfer to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and those who decided to remain caused intense tensions, the vast majority of the more than 560 parishes that changed affiliation over the two years (2019-2020) did so quite peacefully.

The recognition of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine by the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, and later by the Greek, Alexandrian, and Cyprus Orthodox Churches, was of great significance for those Orthodox Ukrainians, who for more than a quarter-century, had been cursed as "graceless" and "schismatic." This recognition meant the end of the "monopoly on canonicity," which UOC MP had considered its main, sole, and permanent "competitive advantage" against the unrecognized UOC-KP and UAOC. Although both inside and outside of Ukraine, the bestowal of autocephaly was largely seen as a geopolitical and securitization move, it was an invaluable event to at least 20% of Ukrainians who identified themselves with the newly

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<sup>120</sup> The good example of such a geopolitical approach may be seen in the document prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament, see, Naja Bentzen. *Ukraine: Religion and (geo-)politics. Orthodox split weakens Russia's influence.* (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2019), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)635525](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2019)635525). Accessed 06/06/2021.

recognized Church. Somewhat simplistically, in terms of values, as a result of the securitization move, a fifth of the country's population is no longer experiencing religious inferiority and spiritual abandonment. The sense of confidence and self-sufficiency that has grown among faithful of the Orthodox churches formerly unrecognized in the Orthodox world was also admitted by the Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>121</sup>

The predictions that the newly-recognized Church should have been trapped by the state and become the state church, if not de jure, then de facto,<sup>122</sup> also did not come true. Besides, none of the Local Orthodox Churches have followed the Moscow Patriarchate and broken their Eucharistic communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Moscow Patriarchate's attempts to revise Constantinople's decision on the Ukrainian issue at the pan-Orthodox level have not succeeded.<sup>123</sup>

Russia has also failed to destroy the influence of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the Orthodox world, although the Russian President and Foreign Minister, judging by their extremely aggressive vocabulary toward the Patriarch, count him among the outright enemies of the Russian state.<sup>124</sup>

The Ukrainian securitization move also had no negative impact on religious freedom in the country. Among those surveyed by the Razumkov Center in October 2019, 69% of respondents believed that "there is a complete freedom of conscience and equality of religions before the law in Ukraine"

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<sup>121</sup> "Томос став духовною берлінською стіною для українського православ'я – протоієрей Миколай Данилевич." [Tomos Became a Spiritual Berlin Wall for Ukrainian Orthodoxy - Archpriest Mikolai Danilevych.] <https://apostrophe.ua/ua/article/society/2019-11-28/tomos-stal-duhovnoy-berlinskoj-stenoy-dlya-ukrainskogo-pravoslaviya---protoierey-nikolay-danilevich/29357>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>122</sup> Iannis Carras. "Moscow, Kyiv, Constantinople: what happens after the Ukrainian Church crisis?" *Open Democracy. Russia and Beyond*, 2019. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/moscow-kyiv-constantinople-what-happens-after-ukrainian-church-crisis/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>123</sup> See, "An awkward meeting in cloudy Amman." <https://orthodoxtimes.com/an-awkward-meeting-in-cloudy-amman/>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>124</sup> "Путин о православии в Украине: 'Раскольническая церковь Стамбульского прихода'" [Putin on Orthodoxy in Ukraine: The Schismatic Church of the Istanbul Parish], *BBC Україна*, 20 December 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-russian-46637085>. Accessed 06/06/2021; "Лавров: патриарх Варфоломей по указке США пытается похоронить влияние православия в мире." [Lavrov: Patriarch Bartholomew is trying to bury the influence of Orthodoxy in the world at the behest of the U.S.] <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/10484649>. Accessed 06/06/2021.



(fully agree and rather than disagree) against 19% who disagreed (fully or partially) with this statement.<sup>125</sup> In October 2020, the same statement supported 70.8% of all questioned while objected it 16.9%.<sup>126</sup>

International indexes of religious freedom after 2014 has been determined its level for Ukraine without Crimea (emphasizing that this does not mean the peninsula is not recognized as part of Ukrainian territory), but including the occupied part of Donbas (again, noting that the Ukrainian state cannot be held responsible for severe violations of religious freedom there). Specifically, Pew Research Center's rating of "government restrictions on religion" defined these restrictions for Ukraine as "moderate" and less tangible than in such European countries as Spain, Austria, Greece, Denmark, Romania, Bulgaria, France, and not to mention Belarus and Russia.<sup>127</sup>

The active participation of the state authorities in the autocephalous process was undoubtedly a measure of an emergency nature, to which the state as a securitizing actor resorted by moving the matter of church organization into the sphere of national security. Although some statements by officials during 2018-2019 can be interpreted as directed directly targeted the UOC MP,<sup>128</sup> the object of securitization was still not exactly this Church's entity, but rather the ecclesiastical order which envisaged strong dependence of Ukrainian Orthodox structure from the religious center controlled and directed by the Russian state engaged in the war against Ukraine.

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<sup>125</sup> *Держава і Церква в Україні-2019: підсумки року і перспективи розвитку відносин*. [State and Church in Ukraine-2019: Summary of the Year and Prospects for the Development of Relations] (Київ: Центр Разумкова, 2019), 9.

<sup>126</sup> Дослідження проведено соціологічною службою Центру Разумкова з 1 по 8 жовтня 2020 року в усіх регіонах України за винятком Криму та окупованих територій Донецької та Луганської областей. Опитано 2020 респондентів віком від 18 років. Теоретична похибка вибірки – 2,3%.%”[The Survey was conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Center from 1 to 8 of October 2020 in all regions of Ukraine excluding Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. 2020 respondents aged 18 years and older were interviewed. The sampling error was 2.3%]

<sup>127</sup> *A Closer Look at How Religious Restrictions Have Risen Around the World*. (Washington, DC, Pew Research Center, July 15, 2019), 94-95.

<sup>128</sup> Порошенко до РПЦ: "Додому, в Росію" [Poroshenko to the ROC: [Go] Home, to Russia.] <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-46125758>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

There is no doubt that President Poroshenko himself has repeatedly securitized the autocephaly issue, comparing the struggle for the church's independence to a wartime battlefield.<sup>129</sup> There is also no doubt that he sought to strengthen his popular support ahead of the upcoming 2019 presidential elections and to capitalize the obtained autocephaly into electoral success.

However, Ukrainian efforts to achieve autocephaly for the Orthodox Church in Ukraine can by no means be reduced to Petro Poroshenko's fight for his reelection to a second Presidential term. Such an assumption is categorically contradicted by the longstanding attempts of Ukrainian statesmen and clergy to gain autocephaly, which is deeply rooted in the Ukrainian history's commitment to closing the chapter of ecclesiastical dependence from the ROC,<sup>130</sup> and sufficient support of the Orthodox Church's autocephaly in Ukraine today. Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the "autocephalous efforts" of President Poroshenko himself and his administration would be largely insufficient without the 8th Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada* (2014-2019), where the presidential faction had no more than a third of the vote.<sup>131</sup>

The Ukrainian securitizing move has not been able to perfectly block the religious channels of Russia's destructive influence on Ukraine. However, this move which has created a legitimate ecclesial alternate to the Moscow Patriarchate in terms of the canon law, has substantially limited Russia's ability to play the religious card in its fight against Ukraine, and has not compromised human rights and civil liberties.

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<sup>129</sup> "Порошенко: Томос - це перемога України, можливо, більш важлива, ніж перемога на фронті." [Poroshenko: Tomos is a victory for Ukraine, maybe more important than at the warfront], <https://www.unian.ua/politics/10409259-poroshenko-tomos-ce-peremoga-ukrajini-mozhli-vo-bilsh-vazhli-va-nizh-peremoga-na-fronti.html>. Accessed 06/06/2021.

<sup>130</sup> The philosopher and Minister of Confession in 1918 Ukrainian government Fr. Vasiliï Zen'kovskiy vividly recalled the extent of his surprise by the storming "Ukrainian Church Sea" he had seen on the Kyiv streets: "I came to the conclusion that Church's Ukrainianess was very strong in rural areas, that within the Church's Ukrainianess, there was a strong yearning for expression of its own national character through the means of religious (church) life". - - Зеньковський Василій. *П'ять місяців у власті*. [Zen'kovskiy Vasiliï. *Pyat' mesyatshev u vlasti*. Воспоминанія]. (Москва: Издательство Крутицкого подворья, 1995), 39.

<sup>131</sup> Верховна Рада України VIII скликання: список фракцій [Verkhovna Rada of 8th convocation: List of Factions.] [http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/site2/p\\_deputat\\_list?skl=9](http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/site2/p_deputat_list?skl=9). Accessed 06/06/2021.

Moreover, such a securitizing move was accompanied by the broadening of the rights and freedoms of religious associations and their acquisition of capabilities not previously permitted under existing law (establishment of general educational institutions, recognition of diplomas and degrees of theological colleges, establishment of chaplaincy in the Army and the Penitentiary, and more) In addition, religious organizations even during the most difficult 2014-2015 years received some privileges and financial relief that applied to all religious associations without exception.

At the same time, while acknowledging that there has been a serious increase in knowledge in securitization theory in recent years, it should be recognized that many issues of securitization studies are still at the center of heated debates.<sup>132</sup> In this sense, the question about the success/failure of the Ukrainian securitization of religion remains open. However, this question can be reformulated as follows. Can securitization be considered successful if the object of securitization is no longer a threat for a securitizing actor as a result of the securitization move exercised alongside with brutal suppression of civil rights and liberties while violence and lawlessness did affect not only the object of securitization (by “object” I mean here not just particular entities and individuals, but also historical memory, collective feelings, and group identities)?<sup>133</sup> If the audience that decides whether the securitizing move would be accepted has agreed to extreme measures under the influence of a disinformation campaign and the suppression of freedom of speech and expression? Highly likely that securitizing at all costs and understood as a value-free process, leads to an increase in social, inter-ethnic, and inter-religious tensions (at least, in long run but quite possible in a medium- or even short term

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<sup>132</sup> See, for instance, Clara Eroukhmanoff. “A Critical Contribution to the “Security-Religion” Nexus: Going Beyond the Analytical.” *International Studies Review*. 2016. Vol. 18, 366–378.

<sup>133</sup> See, on a such mode of the securitizing of religion in, Joanne Smith Finley. “The Wang Lixiong prophecy: ‘Palestinization’ in Xinjiang and the consequences of Chinese state securitization of religion.” *Central Asian Survey*. 2019. Vol. 38, No. 1, 81–101.

perspective). Such securitization also limits support for the state not only from the object of securitization (which in most cases is unavoidable) but also from broader social strata and challenges its legitimacy.

The Ukrainian securitization of religion has still not eliminated all threats posed by the weaponization of faith. But it is precisely this securitizing mode that has prevented the country from finding itself in a situation where the question, allegedly raised by Sir Winston Churchill and appeared in the title of this paper, would have sound as a bitter rebuke.

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