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## ПРАВОСЛАВНЫЕ ЦЕРКВИ В УКРАИНЕ ДО И ПОСЛЕ ЕВРОМАЙДАНОВСКОЙ РЕВОЛЮЦИИ

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Основное внимание в процессе анализа религиозной жизни Украины до и после «революции достоинства» 2014 г. уделено православным церквям как наиболее многочисленным и влиятельным в Украине. Аргументируется, что начиная с 2014 г. существенно возросло давление на Украинскую православную церковь Московского патриархата со стороны средств массовой информации, а также властей в целях формирования ее имиджа как «радикального иного». Одновременно большая поддержка оказывалась Киевскому патриархату и Украинской автокефальной православной церкви. Тем не менее Украинская православная церковь Московского патриархата смогла удержать положение наиболее многочисленной деноминации, сохраняя уверенное присутствие во всех регионах Украины. Однако попытки маргинализации этой церкви еще более разделили украинское общество, нивелируя перспективы примирения.

**Ключевые слова:** православные церкви; религия, Московский патриархат; Киевский патриархат; автокефалия; Украина.

## ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN UKRAINE BEFORE AND AFTER THE EUROMAIDAN REVOLUTION

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I discuss the religious life in Ukraine before and after the 2014 «revolution of dignity». The main focus of the article is on the Orthodox churches, as the most numerous and influential in Ukraine. I argue that since 2014 the pressure on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) has intensified substantially, with a purpose of creating from this church an image of the «radical other». The pressure was going along several lines: mass-media discussions, actions of authorities and the attempts to make changes in the relevant legislation. At the same time, the Church of Kiev Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church were receiving more support. However, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) has kept its status of the most numerous denomination, holding its firm presence in most Ukrainian regions. The attempts to marginalize this church have further divided Ukrainian society, blurring the prospects for reconciliation.

**Keywords:** Orthodox churches; religion; Moscow Patriarchate; Kiev Patriarchate; autocephaly; Ukraine.

### Introduction

The violent events in Ukraine that took place in February 2014 are now becoming the remnants of the past, attracting more academic analysis and, quite often, various political speculations. After the Euro-maidan protests, which resulted in the death of more than one hundred people in Kiev and the ousting of

President Yanukovich, the Ukrainian political, economic and social landscape was changing violently and rapidly. Obviously, these changes could not bypass religion, since Churches continue to be important and influential actors in the life of Ukraine. This is especially true in view of the fact that Maidan was not only

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a political event, but also the event having some religious connotations. Cyril Hovorun claims that Maidan «explained itself in religious terms and articulated its demands through religious symbols. More importantly and less obviously, it created a new matrix of relationship between the churches and society in Ukraine» [1].

These new relationships between Churches and society in Ukraine have remained the subject of various interpretations, often of the incompatible character. Arguably, many things have changed for Churches in Ukraine after the Euromaidan Revolution, especially for the dominant confessions. These changes will form the main focus of analysis in this article. I shall

consider the following issues: the attitudes of authorities and mass-media towards churches, attempts for the legislative modifications and inter-confessional (inter-jurisdictional) relations. As a starting point, I take the year 2013, as the last one before the «revolution of dignity». My focus is on the Orthodox churches, as the most numerous and influential in Ukraine. In general, assessing the post-Maidan developments for Ukrainian churches, I follow the concept of securitising identities, including securitising of religion, as developed by Matti Jutila [2] and the concepts of the «other» and «radical other», described by Stuart Croft [3].

### The starting point: how the religious life looked like in 2013

It would be naive to idealise the religious life and relationships between religions and authorities in Ukraine before the Euromaidan. However, it would be equally wrong to demonise it. In 2013, there was a degree of stability in the church – state relations and inter-confessional relations, although, to an extent, it looked as a frozen conflict, the «defrosting» of which could occur in case of some favourable circumstances arising. Indeed, the fragmentation and schism in Ukrainian Orthodoxy continued, without any realistic prospects for overcoming. Initially, this fragmentation was provoked by the actions of some church hierarchs and priests (where the then Metropolitan Filaret Denisenko played a prominent role) and the authorities (especially President Kravchuk) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when two Orthodox churches – Autocephalous (UAOC) and of Kiev Patriarchate (UOC KP) – were established in Ukraine. The establishment of these churches was dictated by political rather than religious needs; to an extent, it was a reflection of the growing Ukrainian nationalism and the desire to somehow privatise the Orthodox Church, placing it at the disposal of nationalist leaders. It is therefore not surprising that these churches have mainly attracted people for whom politics and ideology were often more important than the faith itself. Both UAOC and UOC KP<sup>1</sup> have

further proved their links with Ukrainian nationalism, even in spite of the fact that nationalism has often been condemned in the Orthodoxy [4; 5].

Since its foundation in Ukraine the UAOC and UOC KP have strived for the legalisation of their status among other Orthodox churches in the world. However, these attempts have not been successful. The international Orthodox community has recognised the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – the one in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate – as the only canonical Orthodox Church in Ukraine, i. e. the only Ukrainian Church legitimately representing Orthodoxy in Ukraine. The non-canonical Orthodox churches, lacking the recognition of the world Orthodox churches, kept their state recognition in Ukraine and were often supported by authorities, including at least two presidents – Kravchuk and Yushenko. The Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate was the largest non-canonical church, the second largest one was the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church<sup>2</sup>. There were also some smaller groups (such as UAOC (renewed)), which separated from the non-canonical churches, but their size and significance were negligible. The statistical information for that period for all three Orthodox churches recorded the following figures (table 1).

Table 1

Religious statistics for Ukraine – Orthodox (as of January 2014)

Churches (jurisdictions)	Number of parishes (religious organisations)	Number of priests	Number of monasteries/monks and nuns
UOC MP	11 465	10 456	224/4118 <sup>3</sup>
UOC KP	4661	3132	60/188
UAOC	1185	706	12/13

Note. Developed on the basis of: <https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr2014/55893/> (date of access: 01.05.2020); <http://news.church.ua/2014/01/05/zvit-keruyuchogo-spravami-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-za-2013-rik/> (date of access: 02.05.2020).

<sup>1</sup>UAOC renewed its functioning in Ukraine in 1989; UOC KP was established in 1992.

<sup>2</sup>In December 2018, KP and UAOC merged, establishing a new church structure – Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). However, up to now the status of the OCU has not been settled, since it obtained recognition only from three Orthodox churches out of 15.

<sup>3</sup>This data is for the late 2015, as indicated in the UOC report.

Overall, in 2013 there was a clear dominance of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (UOC MP): more than 66 % of all parishes belonged to this church. This domination was especially visible in the number of priests (73 % of all Orthodox priests belonging to the UOC MP) and the number of monks and nuns (more than 95 % of them were in the UOC MP). However, one needs to note an important sociological dilemma: in 2013 the number of those who claimed (as indicated in the «Razumkov Centre» research) their belonging to the churches of Moscow and Kiev Patriarchate was roughly equal: 27.7 and 25.9 % respectively<sup>4</sup>. These numbers look quite contradictory to the number of parishes and, especially, the number of priests. Indeed, with almost equal number of faithful, as seen in the «Razumkov Centre» sociological polls, it is plausible to expect the same equal number of parishes and priests who have to take care of their faithful. However, the number of parishes in Kiev Patriarchate is substantially smaller than the number of parishes in Moscow Patriarchate; at the same time, the observers have not

noticed that the parishes of Kiev Patriarchate are more crowded than the parishes of the UOC (even the opposite is often true). It is likely that the substantial, more than threefold difference in the number of priests is a testimony to the fact that the polls were recording answers of the people who are not regular parishioners of these churches. These issues will be further discussed in this article.

One more important feature of the pre-Maidan developments was the fact that, after the bitter conflicts in the late 1980s – early 1990s<sup>5</sup>, the inter-confessional relations in Ukraine entered into a more stable phase. They could hardly be called as truly friendly; however, the cases of open conflicts were rare and, as Nikolai Danilevich stated, in the last years of the life of Metropolitan Vladimir (Sabodan), who died in 2014, «we spoke about the dialogue and possible meetings», because «people were calm and the situation in the country was calm» [6]. This calmness and cooperation faded away after Maidan had changed the power in Ukraine and turned its development into a different direction.

### The main changes: trends and developments

During the Maidan events, the UOC KP and UAOC, as well as Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), were showing their clear support to protesters, both in declarations and actions. For the UOC, the issue was much more delicate, since the faithful of this jurisdiction were on the both sides of the conflict – both among those who actively supported the protests, and among those who fiercely opposed the change of power in Ukraine and did not approve the growing nationalist

sentiments. However, since the protesters emerged as the winners, it is not surprising that for the UOC MP the post-Maidan authorities in Ukraine were creating less favourable circumstances for the development, compared to what had been before 2014. In my opinion, it makes sense to group our analysis along the following lines: the information campaigns/attitudes from mass-media, legislative trends and inter-jurisdictional relations.

### The information campaigns

In principle, the Ukrainian mass-media has never been sympathetic towards the UOC, but this degree of antipathy varied. The first strong negativity against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was revealed in the early 1990s, when the non-canonical churches as well as the Greek Catholics were actively forming their new structures in Ukraine. Indeed, as Metropolitan Antonyi (Pakanich), chancellor of the UOC admitted, comparing the present-day situation with the events which occurred more than 25 years ago, «there was something similar in the 1990s: churches were captured, priests were thrown out, believers were persecuted». But the difference was also observed: even in the 1990s, which began the years of the post-Soviet ordeal for the UOC, «there was no such an amount of lies against the church, which we have observed now»<sup>6</sup>. As can be seen from the opi-

nion of Metropolitan Antonyi, the information attacks against the UOC have climbed to unprecedented levels.

In fact, what has been happening in Ukraine since 2014 in relation to the UOC was the creation of what Croft described as the «other» or even «radical other» [3]. The UOC has always been a part of Ukrainian society, embracing people of different political and ideological views. Two Ukrainian presidents – Kuchma and Yanukovich supported UOC; while Kravchuk and Yushchenko were extending their support to the Kiev Patriarchate. However, the deliberate construction of an image of an enemy, as radicalized as it is portrayed today, has never occurred in the history of independent Ukraine. The accusations, made against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, have been persistent, strong and radical, involving current relations between

<sup>4</sup>Особливості релігійного і церковно-релігійного самовизначення українських громадян: тенденції 2010–2018 рр. URL: [http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2018\\_Religiya.pdf](http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2018_Religiya.pdf) (дата звернення: 05.05.2020).

<sup>5</sup>There were conflicts in Western Ukraine between Orthodox and Greek Catholics, when the latter forcibly captured a number of Orthodox Churches, often with the help of local authorities. Also, the establishment of Kiev Patriarchate was marked by a number of conflicting events, involving representatives of UAOC and authorities.

<sup>6</sup>Митрополит Антоній: Агрессия сегодня действительно происходит. И ее очень много. В нас с вами. URL: <http://pravlife.org/content/mitropolit-antoniy-agressiya-segodnya-deystvitelno-proishodit-i-ee-ochen-mnogo-v-nas-s-vam> (дата обращения: 06.05.2020).

Ukraine and Russia, the military conflict in the Donbas and the developments around Crimea. In fact, these accusations have been extremely political, with the use of language which can often be regarded as hate speech and with speculations which are not only hard to prove but are also hard to believe. The church is accused of being a fifth column in Ukraine, of acting in a manner not compatible with the interests of the state and Ukrainian people. It is depicted as a «Kremlin organization» that initiated (or contributed to the beginning of) the war in Ukraine, which aims to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty and acts against the independent Ukrainian state. The actions of the church are often interpreted in the worst possible manner; sometimes «facts» are simply invented, in order to prove the statements that would have looked implausible otherwise. According to Oleg Denisov, negative information about the UOC has been on the rise: since 2015 there were about 700 negative and intimidating publications in various mass-media<sup>7</sup>. Pavel Rudiakov is convinced that the information campaign against the UOC is a planned attack against the unity of Ukrainian Orthodoxy<sup>8</sup>. According to the «Public Advocacy» NGO, «dissent and disagreement with the pattern, imposed on society by radical and nationalist organizations, are

subject to persecutions»<sup>9</sup>. In this context, the reasoning of Archbishop Kliment Vecheria, head of the UOC information department, is quite understandable: «For the whole period of the existence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the independent Ukraine, I could not remember the time when mass-media (especially those which are supported by the state) were loyal towards the UOC. In general, mass media have been focused on the creation of certain bad rep jackets and intrigues, thus raising their ratings on the confrontation. Therefore the UOC became a convenient victim, the object for manipulations. It happened in the past, but now it has gained a tougher character. I can say for sure that one of the central TV channels, such as “1+1” regularly publishes information about the church life and 99 percent of this information is false»<sup>10</sup>.

In most cases, the lies remain unpunished; and even the apologies from those who distribute the hate and lies are rare. The constraining mechanisms that somehow worked before 2014, were largely abandoned after the «revolution of dignity», which paved the way for certain ideological clichés in relation to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This ideological justification is also conveniently used for more radical actions, such as the intimidation from authorities<sup>11</sup> and the spread of violence.

### The legislative trends

It is likely that one of the reasons for the increasing information attacks against the UOC was the intention to create appropriate conditions for the changes in legislation, to constrain the activities of the church and to allow non-canonical groups to continue seizing of the church's property. In terms of the legislative trends, the post-Maidan developments were characterised by the attempts to promote three important legislative acts that concerned directly the rights and freedoms of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The first one was on the activities of religious organisations the centres of which are located within the «aggressor state» (the bill 4511). The second one (4128) was dealing with the jurisdictional transfers. The third bill (5309) required from religious organisations whose centres are within the «aggressor state» to include in their name the full title of the organisation/centre they belong to.

The bill 4511 was tabled in April 2016, but after several years of debates and discussions, it was eventually recalled in August 2019. The process of consideration of

this bill reflected the political goals of its supporters, directed against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. It aimed at the constraining of the leadership of religious organisations, the centres of which are located in the Russian Federation, deemed by the Ukrainian Parliament – Verkhovna Rada – as the «aggressor state». The core of the bill was to ensure that the appointment of the leadership of such religious organisations is agreed with the authorities. Thus, the bill was undermining the basic principles of religious freedom, effectively subordinating religious organisations to the substantial control of the state. Certainly, it was directed in the first instance against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate. UOC MP was accused of doing work against Ukraine and the interests of Ukraine. Oleg Medunitsa, member of parliament, one of the authors of this bill, expressed the following opinion: «Some church communities whose governing bodies are located in the country that is de-facto at war with Ukraine are engaged in subversive work and the agitation against Ukraine. They

<sup>7</sup>Юрист рассказал об аспектах информационной кампании против УПЦ. URL: <https://golos.ua/i/590663> (дата обращения: 07.05.2020).

<sup>8</sup>Против УПЦ ведется целенаправленная кампания с целью развала, – политолог. URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/52672-protiv-upc-s-celyju-razvala-vedetsya-celenapravlenaja-kampanija--politolog> (дата обращения: 07.05.2020).

<sup>9</sup>On violations of the rights of the Union of Orthodox Journalists (Ukraine) in relation to their professional activities. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/024/14/PDF/G1802414.pdf?OpenElement> (date of access: 02.05.2020).

<sup>10</sup>This quotation is from the author's interview with archbishop Kliment Vecheria, head of the Information Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The interview was conducted in Kiev, on 23 May, 2016.

<sup>11</sup>Some intimidating statements against the UOC came from public officials. For instance, Zorian Shkiriak, an advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs, called Metropolitan Pavel – a leading figure in the UOC, Abbot of Pecherskaya Lavra in Kiev, the «rat of Putin and Gundiaev» and «Moscow vampire» [7].



call this FSB operation, this Putin's operation against Ukraine as «fratricidal war» [8].

One can see that the argumentation was in line with the constructing of «radical other»: the church communities that dared to express different viewpoint on what was happening in Ukraine were accused of «subversive work». In fact, in the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) some accusations against Moscow Patriarchate were also articulated. In a statement, made in February 2018 by Viktor Kononenko, deputy chief of SBU, it was emphasised that the Russian special services act «with the purpose of destabilising our state from within and discrediting our state in the eyes of the world community». Kononenko specified that Russia wanted to create inter-religious conflicts in Ukraine and was planning to use the «available arsenal of religious and church-affiliated organisations»<sup>12</sup>. He emphasised that these organisations are linked to the Moscow Patriarchate.

Regarding the second bill (4128) it was drafted mainly with a purpose to make easier interference into the life of the UOC parishes. Indeed, it was stipulated by this bill that people who amorphaously and unilaterally identify themselves with a particular community, would be allowed to vote at the meetings, making decisions for a community. Such a self-identification, had it happened, would have allowed to forcibly transfer a number of UOC parishes into Kiev Patriarchate or other jurisdictions. Indeed, in a number of villa-

ges / small towns of the Ukrainian western regions, local inhabitants (who may not even attend the Church) are hostile towards the Moscow Patriarchate; therefore they can easily vote in favour of the «transfer» of the UOC parish into a different jurisdiction. The very fact that these people are not formal members of the UOC parish and never attend its services will be disregarded, according to the bill's 4128 rulings. Finally, the bill 5309 is aimed at the changing of the UOC's name – the church would be required to drop the word «Ukrainian» and to register under the new name – «Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine».

After the political necessity arose, bills 5309 and 4128 were passed through the parliament – in December 2018 and January 2019 respectively. However, their practical implementation is under question, especially in view of the fact that, after President Poroshenko lost elections, there is no comparable political power to promote such legislation. As of March 2020, the bill 5309 is disputed in the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. The bill 4128 is in force, but in a milder form, allowing only for the church (not the territorial) community to make a decision about the church jurisdictional belonging. However, there are reports mainly from the western regions of Ukraine that the decisions are taken not by the church, but by territorial communities, often involving people who are not regular church-goers and who at times belong to other, non-Orthodox denominations.

### Inter-jurisdictional conflicts

The post-Maidan developments were characterised by the increasing numbers of inter-church tensions, somewhat returning the situation to what had been in Ukraine in the late 1980s – early 1990s. From 2014 to 2018 there were around 50 cases of illegal and violent seizures of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's buildings [9]. In most cases, this occurred in western regions of Ukraine, where the local authorities have for long supported the non-canonical churches and the UGCC.

The conflict situations have often been inspired by the actions of non-canonical churches (or their followers and supporters), by the unwillingness of local authorities to take a fair stance and, at times, by the unwillingness to follow the court decisions. In some cases, representatives of non-canonical jurisdictions created obstacles for the services of the priests from the UOC. For example, some inhabitants of the village Kamenitsa (Duben district of Rovno region) did not allow the priest of the UOC to conduct memorial service at the local cemetery. His car was stopped on the road, with the threats that it would be pushed into the river. Somewhat paradoxically, the representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate, instead of providing adequate

explanation, simply called it a «planned provocation for the new picture in the Russian media». Most probably, these events resulted from the growing intolerance towards the canonical Orthodox Church, inspired by the media campaigns. The actions of non-canonical churches have been reinforced by the actions of Greek Catholics who also tried to capture buildings of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Such cases were recorded in the Ivano-Frankovsk region in western Ukraine<sup>13</sup>.

It is notable that in most cases the attempts to seize churches have been explained by political motives, by the attempts to manifest that everyone or everything somehow associated with the Moscow Patriarchate is alien to Ukraine and Ukrainian people. For instance, the refusal to call the events in Donbas a «Russian aggression» and the use of more neutral terms (such as civil war) can be used as a pre-text for accusing in «anti-Ukrainian behaviour». The political accusations have been articulated not only by the representatives of some nationalist organisations; even high-level representatives of non-canonical churches were at times making harsh political assessments. For example, Metropolitan Mikhail (Zinkevich) of Kiev Patriarchate<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>BBC Monitoring (23 February 2018). Moscow-controlled church said used to «destabilize Ukraine». Access from University of Warsaw Library Electronic Database.

<sup>13</sup>Доклад митрополита Киевского и всея Украины Онуфрия на Архиерейском соборе Русской православной церкви (29 ноября – 2 декабря 2017 года). URL: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5074040.html> (дата обращения: 03.05.2020).

<sup>14</sup>Zinkevich is currently Metropolitan in OCU.

claimed that every candle bought in the Orthodox parish of Moscow Patriarchate is a «bullet into Ukrainian soldier»<sup>15</sup>. Certainly, such accusations as well as the attempts to make churches the tool for certain political actions have only escalated tensions, leaving the greater feeling of alienation and enmity. Unfortu-

nately, the attempts for reconciliation were few, if any; moreover, an active involvement of UOC KP and UAOC into the Poroshenko-led project of getting autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodoxy has further distanced the hierarchs and clergy (as well as the faithful) of canonical and non-canonical churches.

### The autocephalic attempt

The year 2018 was also marked by the fierce attempts of Ukrainian authorities, led by the then President Petro Poroshenko, to get autocephaly for the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. In April 2018 Poroshenko sent his formal request to Istanbul, asking for the assistance of the Constantinople Patriarch Bartholomeos in this issue. Although Ukraine was widely regarded as a canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate, Constantinople decided to intervene, in spite of the protests from the UOC, which raised its voice against the Presidential-backed push towards autocephaly and unilateral interference from Istanbul in Ukrainian religious life [10].

Though, as a result of merger of the Kiev Patriarchate and UAOC, a new church structure – the Orthodox Church of Ukraine – was established in Kiev in December 2018 and was officially recognized as an independent (autocephalous) Orthodox Church by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in January 2019, its current status has remained unclear. Indeed, the OCU failed to get recognition from 12 (out of 15) Orthodox churches, that is absolutely necessary to enter into formal communion with the Orthodox world. Following the establishment of OCU, some radical nationalist groups threatened the UOC and attempted to seize some churches; and at times the local authorities were

involved in actions against UOC parishes<sup>16</sup>. According to the report, issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, after the founding of the OCU some religious communities decided to join this new church; however, «in a few cases the transfers were not voluntary and were initiated by state or local authorities or even representatives of extreme right-wing groups, who were not members of those religious communities». It was emphasized in the report, that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights «documented incidents that could be perceived as acts of intimidation against members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate», including SBU's initiating of criminal investigation in several regions of Ukraine (against the UOC) and «searches in the premises of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and places of residence of clergymen»<sup>17</sup>. In fact, even the representatives of four Orthodox Patriarchates, who assembled in Cyprus in April 2019, admitted, in the words of the OCU's Metropolitan Alexander (Drabinko) that the process of granting autocephaly was «a little bit conflicting». Arguably, this process brought neither reconciliation, nor unification for the Orthodox Ukrainians, deeply divided by conflicts and misunderstanding [11].

### Impact for the churches

Although the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has often been the subject for various criticism and attacks, and was at times depicted as an «enemy» of Ukraine and Ukrainian statehood, the real outcome for the UOC after these five

years of intimidation was not as bad as one might expect. The latest available statistics (before the merger of KP and UAOC) demonstrate that the UOC continues to keep the leading role in the Ukrainian religious life (table 2).

Table 2

Religious statistics for Ukraine – Orthodox (as of January 2018)

Churches (jurisdictions)	Number of parishes (religious organizations)	Number of priests	Number of monasteries/monks and nuns
UOC <sup>18</sup> MP	12 069	12 283	251/4412
UOC KP	5167	3640	62/216
UAOC	1167	693	12/15

Note. Developed on the basis of: [https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr\\_2018/70440/](https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr_2018/70440/) (date of access: 04.05.2020); <http://news.church.ua/2017/12/27/zvit-keruyuchogo-spravami-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-za-2017-rik/> (date of access: 04.05.2020).

<sup>15</sup>Купленные свечи у Московского патриархата становятся патронами для убийства, – митрополит УПЦ КП. URL: [https://24tv.ua/ru/kazhdaja\\_kuplennaja\\_svecha\\_u\\_moskovskogo\\_patriarhata\\_stanovitsja\\_patronami\\_dlja\\_ubijstva\\_n635143](https://24tv.ua/ru/kazhdaja_kuplennaja_svecha_u_moskovskogo_patriarhata_stanovitsja_patronami_dlja_ubijstva_n635143) (дата обращения: 03.05.2020).

<sup>16</sup>Выгоняют священников, опечатывают храмы. Как после Томоса начали «отжимать» церкви УПЦ МП. URL: <https://strana.ua/news/181016-kak-otbirajut-khramy-upts-posle-tomosa-ob-avtokefalii.html> (дата обращения: 03.05.2020).

<sup>17</sup>Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. 16 November 2018 to 15 February 2019. URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/ReportUkraine16Nov2018-15Feb2019.pdf> (date of access: 04.05.2020).

<sup>18</sup>The data for the UOC MP is for the end of 2017.

Thus, the share of the parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church continues to keep the substantial majority: slightly more than 66 % of all Orthodox parishes are in this church. As for the priests, the share of the priests in the canonical church is slightly more than 70 %. Monks and nuns maintain their undisputable loyalty to the UOC: only around 5 % of them chose to be in the Kiev Patriarchate or the UAOC, therefore it is pertinent to claim that the most devout Christians, the spiritual and intellectual elites of Orthodoxy have remained in the canonical church and refused to change sides. The statistics are very clear and reflect an overwhelming domination of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church<sup>19</sup>.

However, someone might be interested in the contradictory (on the surface) outcomes of some sociological polls, reflecting loyalties to different jurisdictions. Indeed, in 2018, according to the «Razumkov Centre» only 12.8 % of the respondents stated that they belong to the UOC; while 28.7 % of the respondents claimed their affiliation with the Kiev Patriarchate. Among those who regard themselves Orthodox, more than 42 % (42.6) belong to the Kiev Patriarchate, while the number of the faithful of the UOC is equal to 19.1 %. The data, derived from the sociological polls, is in sharp contradiction with the church statistics and, in fact, shows some substantial domination of the Kiev Patriarchate. However, it seems to me that this data cannot be taken as a representative one, for the following reasons.

First, those who participated in the polls included all Orthodox, irrespective of their degree of religiosity. Indeed, the number of Orthodox who attend church not that often – only for the religious feasts or even once a year – is more than 50 %. For these people, the jurisdictional differences are of no importance and, in fact, they often do not properly understand these differences. Therefore, their belonging to any Patriar-

chate might be a reflection of their cultural, political or ideological preferences, but not of their well-defined religious choice.

Second, if the followers of the Kiev Patriarchate have really dominated in such a substantial proportion, it would inevitably affect the number of parishes and priests. However, these numbers for the UOC, UOC KP and UOAC have remained relatively stable in the last few years, with only minor fluctuations. The very fact that the number of priests in the UOC is almost three times greater than in the Kiev Patriarchate is reflective of the fact that more people need priests from the UOC than from the Kiev Patriarchate. Otherwise, it would be senseless to ordain such number of priests, including for the reasons of financial constraints. Archimandrite Alipiy Svetlichny from Kiev has offered the following explanation of the above-mentioned contradictions: «We have to see if the people attend Church and what they understand under Kiev Patriarchate. I have encountered cases when people told me that their children were baptized in the Kiev Patriarchate. When I try to get more detailed information, it turns out that in fact they were baptized in the UOC. People are just not interested in this theme: they assume that if they live in Kiev then they are from the Kiev Patriarchate»<sup>20</sup>.

Finally, one needs to note that some sociological services provide substantially different figures. For instance, «Ukrainian Sociology Service» in a poll, conducted in September 2016, identified that 39.4 % of the respondents belong to the UOC, while the belonging to the Kiev Patriarchate was declared by the 25.3 % of the respondents. It is worth noting that this poll included Crimea and the territories in Lugansk and Donetsk regions, not currently controlled by the Ukrainian government<sup>21</sup>.

### Concluding remarks

The following observations can be made, regarding the role and position of Orthodox Churches in Ukraine after the Euromaidan Revolution. First, there are clear legislative trends to constrain the activities of the Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate. One cannot claim that these were fully successful, but the Church was just one step from being put under the strict control of the state authorities, similar to the one that existed in the Communist regime. For a pluralistic democracy, to which Ukraine claims to belong to, this is out of normality, since an influential religious group is under the serious threat to be constrained in its rights.

Although some justify these actions by the «state of the war» with Russia, this justification appears to be thin. Indeed, Ukraine has never officially admitted that it is at war with Russian Federation – both countries keep diplomatic, economic and political ties. Second, one needs to realize that the equalizing of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with the Russian state is misleading: the church is autonomous, governed by the Synod in Kiev and is in no way part of the Russian political or state system, nor the promulgator of the Russian foreign policy. Different attitudes towards Russia, its political system and its policies do co-exist among the faithful of the UOC<sup>22</sup>,

<sup>19</sup>As of March 2020 there is no reliable statistics for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Metropolitan Epiphaniy (Dumenko), head of OCU, said that the Church has «around 7000 parishes».

<sup>20</sup>This quotation is from the author's interview with archimandrite Alipiy Svetlichny, rector of the Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Kiev. The interview was conducted in Kiev, on 21 May 2016.

<sup>21</sup>Вопрос веры. Украинцы и религия – соцопрос. URL: <https://rian.com.ua/analytics/20161124/1018999887.html> (дата обращения: 05.05.2020).

<sup>22</sup>For instance, metropolitan Augustin, chief chaplain of the UOC, said that he «blesses our army to defend our homeland». Archbishop Kliment (Vecheria) stated that the UOC «has nothing to do with the “Russian World” concept» [12; 13].

but this is acceptable in a democratic society and should not be used as a pre-text for sanctions or punishment.

Third, the intimidation campaign, carried out against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, further divides Ukrainian society, creating tensions and the emotional hatred towards the «radical other». As a result, some militant groups have attempted to capture the most important monastery of the church – Pecherskaya Lavra in Kiev. Since the UOC remains (and will remain) the most numerous church in Ukraine, it is clear that the continuation of the negative information campaigns will further destabilise Ukrainian society. It is very easy (and a bit naive) to attribute all possible divisions and destabilisations in Ukraine to the «interference of Russian agents» or «the hand of Moscow»; however, there is no evidence that Moscow backs the anti-UOC campaign in Ukraine. Therefore, the divisions remain the responsibility of the Ukrainian nationalists and those who follow their path either on the official or non-official levels.

In spite of all pressure and intimidation campaigns after 2014, the UOC is on the rise, with the increasing numbers of parishes and priests. The role of the newly-established Orthodox Church of Ukraine (which has largely replaced UAOC and Kiev Patriarchate<sup>23</sup>), even in the circumstances of its support from the Ukrainian authorities, continues to be more political than religious, with the articulation of political and ideological criticism against the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox churches. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, despite its efforts, did not manage to infiltrate substantially in the central, southern and eastern regions of Ukraine, remaining the denomination of Western Ukrainians. In fact, the only church which unites Ukrainians from both the East and the West, the South and the North is the UOC; therefore, the attempts to make this church a part of the «radical other» might be catastrophic for the Ukrainian state and its further development.

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<sup>23</sup>Kiev Patriarchate continues to exist as a separate denomination, although majority of its clergy joined the OCU.



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