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Andrzej Jekaterynczuk**THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR
OF THE RUSSO–UKRAINIAN WAR: SELECTED ASPECTS**

The article presents the role of the religious factor in the 2013–2014 Euromaidan Revolution and in the undeclared Russian-Ukrainian war which has continued since 2014. Drawing on the results of sociological surveys, the author offers the picture of the religious situation in Ukraine prior to 2013 and after the outbreak of the conflict with Russia, and observes certain correlations between the religious factor and the dynamics of change of geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians.

Key words: Russian-Ukrainian war, Euromaidan, religion, identity, Russia's space.

Скатеринчук А.**РЕЛІГІЙНИЙ ЧИННИК У РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ
ВІЙНІ: ВИБРАНІ АСПЕКТИ**

У статті проаналізовано значення релігійного чинника під час подій Євромайдану 2013–2014 рр. і непроголошеної російсько-української війни. Автор, спираючись на соціологічні дослідження, описує релігійну ситуацію в Україні до 2013 р. і після вибуху конфлікту з Росією та намагається показати залежність між релігійним чинником і динамікою змін геополітичних орієнтацій українців.

Ключові слова: російсько-українська війна, Євромайдан, релігія, ідентичність, російський мір.

Екатеринчук А.**РЕЛИГИОЗНЫЙ ФАКТОР В РОССИЙСКО-УКРАИНСКОЙ
ВОЙНЕ: ИЗБРАННЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ**

В статье проанализировано значение религиозного фактора во время событий Евромайдана 2013–2014 гг. и непровозглашенной российско-украинской войны. Автор, опираясь на социологические исследования, описывает религиозную ситуацию в Украине до 2013 г. и после начала конфликта с Россией и пытается показать зависимость

между религиозным фактором и динамикой изменений геополитических ориентаций украинцев.

Ключевые слова: российско-украинская война, Евромайдан, религия, идентичность, русский мир.

The present article aims to discuss the impact of the religious factor on geopolitical orientations and, to a certain extent, ethnic identity of the citizens of independent Ukraine. The issue under consideration is particularly topical in the context of the Euromaidan Revolution (2013–2014, also known as the Revolution of Dignity) and the undeclared Russo–Ukrainian war which has continued since 2014. In the conflict, the Russian side appeals to the concept of *russkii mir* (русский мир, the Russian world), with Russian Orthodoxy as its essential component [22]. Apart from all other consequences, the Revolution of Dignity and Russian aggression on Ukraine have been a challenge to all Churches in Ukraine. Indeed, while they all have to find themselves in the new social and political situation, the problem is particularly difficult in the case of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (part of the Moscow Patriarchate). In the circumstances of war, geopolitical orientations adopted by institutional religious actors and social reactions to such choices are particularly important. Observations presented below are based mainly on the results of sociological surveys and refer to selected aspects of the problem.

The issue of relations between religious and national factors attracted considerable academic interest, particularly in sociology, in the early 1990s. This attention came as a result of a relatively recent religious revival observed almost worldwide, casting doubt on modernist theories assuming a gradual decline of religiosity as a result of socio-economic development.

The importance of the religious factor is stressed by Samuel Huntington in his theory of the ‘clash of civilisations’ [4, p. 571]. In turn, the Polish sociologist Włodzimierz Pawluczuk observes that ‘[a]utonomy of religion in relation to ethnos and politics is an invention of Western civilisation and is to be found nowhere else’ [7, p. 126]. Consequently, the location of Ukraine on the border between Western and Eastern civilisation begs the question of the impact of the fact on differentiation in the sphere of identity among the population of the country.

Analysing relations between nation-making processes, religion and identity in Europe, the Polish sociologist Grzegorz Babiński notes that in the case of nations formed on the basis of existing states, to which

they could relate, the link between religion and national identity generally was not particularly strong. Political boundaries gradually filled with the content of national culture and the so-called national *sacrum*. In the process, the religious dimension integrating the community eventually became redundant or was used only occasionally. On the other hand, religion was to play a far greater role in the processes of building national identity of those nations which had an ambition to build their own states in the future [2, p. 198].

Anthony D. Smith observes that ‘nationalism is much more than a political ideology; it is also a form of culture and “religion”’ [9, p. 36]. In a similar vein, the sociologist and political scientist Radosław Zenderowski explains that ‘the historical and contemporary role of religion in the formation of identities of particular Central-Eastern European nations and the place of religious identities in the hierarchy of identities of the population make it possible to identify them as an important distinctive element of this part of the continent, which defines its regional character to a far greater extent (and which appears to be much more stable) than political or economic factors’ [13, p. 20].

Pawluczuk considers religion to be one of the elements which, apart from social ideologies and national movements, consolidate societies most strongly [6, p. 288]. Religious factors can enhance or hamper nation-making processes, and religious conflicts can strengthen or weaken ethnic communities. Sometimes, religious or denominational differences form the basis of new ethnic and national communities.

It should be emphasised that membership in a particular ethnic or national community does not always need to entail a considerable level of religious involvement, a phenomenon Zenderowski refers to as a ‘religion without God’ [13, p. 120]. According to the author, relations between religion and nationalism in Western Europe were quite different than those in the Central-Eastern part of the continent. The most important element was that in the West religion became entirely subordinated to nationalism, and consequently cannot provide strong emotional bonds or influence political changes; influence in the sphere of emotions shifted to political power which has become a kind of ‘political religion’ [13, pp. 55–56].

Mutual relations between religion and national identity greatly depend on whether the ethnic community under consideration is mono- or multi-denominational. In a historical perspective, the religious factor turned out to be a very significant element of constructing national identity in mono-denominational ethnic and linguistic communities [13,

p. 112], as can be observed in the case of Poles and Russians. Not only did their religious identity become part of their ethnic identity [12, p. 131], but also manifesting religiosity is interpreted in terms of manifesting ethnic and national identity. On the other hand, the situation of Ukrainians should be approached as a case of multi-denominational ethnic community.

The religious heterogeneity of Ukrainian society stems from historical developments. The western regions, including Galicia (today dominated by followers of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church), are characterised by a different type of religiosity than the rest of the country. The role of the Catholic Church of the Byzantine rite stemmed mainly from the fact that the region had ethnically mixed population. Under the circumstances, religion became a criterion of ethnic self-identification and an important factor in the nation-making process. Indeed, for over a century Greek Catholicism was the basis of national self-identification of Ukrainian population in the region of Galicia. However, it still has no chance of a more considerable expansion eastwards [2, p. 211].

Dominating in the rest of the country, Orthodoxy played a similar role only in the region of Volhynia, where it functioned as a factor of distinction from Roman Catholic Poles, thus stimulating the nation-making process among Ukrainians. This was not the case in other regions which were part of the Russian Empire and, later, the Soviet Union. The analysis of religiosity in the post-Soviet territories cannot overlook the consequences of militant Soviet atheism aiming to suppress any manifestation of religion, both at the individual and institutional level. In Ukraine, the ensuing secularisation of society most deeply affected the regions previously dominated by Orthodoxy.

Today, while most Ukrainians identify themselves with Orthodoxy, the community is divided into a number of rival ecclesiastical organisations, the largest three being the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (part of the Moscow Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Considering that the first two of them have the most extensive institutional structure and the highest membership figures, they are the main focus of the present article.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent Ukraine brought a revival of religion after several decades of anti-religious bans, restrictions and overt repressions. However, this begs the question of the actual impact of the religious factor, or a number of different religious factors, on collective identities of Ukrainian society today.

The most important trends concerning the place of religion in Ukrainian society, the impact of the religious factor on geopolitical orientations and on the sphere of collective identities are most likely related to the dynamics of the institutional development of Churches in independent Ukraine. In addition, however, what also plays a role is a relatively recent process of individualisation of religiosity, which requires an analysis of its forms. In view of these considerations, the present article is devoted to the following issues:

- (1) organisational structure of institutional religious actors and the characteristic features of religiosity of Ukrainian society,
- (2) religious self-identification and its regional patterns,
- (3) the level of trust in religious institutions,
- (4) religious diversity and the geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians,
- (5) institutional religious actors in Ukraine in the context of the conflict with Russia.

Organisational structure of institutional religious actors in Ukraine

Religious situation in Ukraine greatly depends on the shape and form of the ecclesiastical network, which has experienced a period of rapid growth in the two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of restrictions against religion. The dynamics of the process is confirmed by statistical data concerning the number of religious entities (such as parishes) in the country: 1985: 6,262; 1990: 8,753; 1995: 16,934; 2000: 23,543; 2005: 29,881; 2010: 35,184 [23, p. 4]. Considering particular denominations, although the statistics indicate the domination of Orthodoxy (17,974 entities in 2010, 51% of the total), Orthodox communities form the majority only in the centre and east of the country. In terms of their number, none of the three major Orthodox Churches (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (part of the Moscow Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church) has a dominant position in any particular region. While two-thirds of all Orthodox communities belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the highest rate of expansion was recorded for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate. The second largest ecclesiastical network is that of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (3,765 in 2010) [23, p. 5].

The above statistics would seem to suggest that in spite of their institutional growth, the major Churches remain largely regional. Experts from the Razumkov Centre emphasise that while in 2000 almost 43% of all religious entities were those in western Ukraine, the correspond-

ing figure for 2010 was only 34.5%. This indicates a shift of the centre of religious life from the western provinces of the country (20% of the population) over the last decade and a half [23, p. 34].

Religious self-identification of Ukrainians and their religiosity

From the sociological perspective, it is more interesting to consider the self-identification of Ukrainians in terms of their religion, as well as its potential impact on their geopolitical orientations and ethnic identities. Between 2000 and 2014, the proportion of those declaring themselves as believers increased from 58% to 76%, while the figures for respondents hesitating between the replies ‘a believer’ and ‘a non-believer’ fell from 23% to 8%; likewise, the proportion of non-believers declined from 12% to 7%. The majority of the population of the country identify themselves with Orthodoxy (70%), and 7.8% with Greek Catholicism; other replies include those who declare they are ‘simply Christian’ (6.3%), or do not associate themselves with any particular denomination (12.5%) [19, pp. 29–30].

However, it should be noted that identification with a particular denomination does not always involve corresponding religious beliefs, but often stems from identification with a certain socio-cultural (e.g. national) community. In 2014, the highest level of religiosity was recorded in western Ukraine (where 93% of the respondents declared themselves as believers) and in the central regions (82.4%; in 2013–2014 the proportion of believers increased by almost 20%). On the other hand, the east and south of the country displayed the lowest figures (62.5% and 65.9%, respectively) [19, pp. 29–30].

Since Orthodoxy in Ukraine is divided in institutional terms, another important element under consideration is the level of identification with a particular Church. While in 2000–2010, the percentage of those who associated themselves with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) increased from 9.2% to 23.6%, the trend reversed in the following years, as the figures fell to 19.6% in 2013 and 17.4% in 2014. Arguably, the decline stems from the fact that this Church is perceived as pro-Russian, which became a particularly important factor in the context of the Euromaidan Revolution and the subsequent Russian aggression against Ukraine. On the other hand, the proportion of followers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate, perceived as pro-Ukrainian and pro-national, has been steadily rising: from 12.1% in 2000, to 22.4% of the adult population in 2014 [19, p. 31], which for the first time made it the largest Orthodox Church in the country.

It is also interesting to observe the regional pattern of membership in particular Churches after 2013. During the conflict with Russia, the level of identification of the believers with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) in the west of the country fell from 14.4% in 2010 to 12% in 2014, and the corresponding figures for the central regions were 22.2% and 16.4%; the most considerable decline was recorded in the south: from 42.6% in 2010 to 9.8% in 2014. This shift would be difficult to explain only by the fact that Ukraine lost control of the pro-Russian Crimea and part of the Donbas, where the majority of believers belong to this Church (the survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre did not include the Crimea and the part of the Donbas taken over by the so-called separatist forces, actually inspired and controlled by Moscow). Rather, the scale of the decline would suggest that Ukrainian society is unwilling to support the Church which is perceived as pro-Russian. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) recorded a modest growth only in the east of the country, from 21.6% in 2010 to 24.2% in 2014. In the same period, all the regions (including also those Russian-speaking) displayed the rising proportion of believers identifying themselves with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate, perceived as pro-Ukrainian (in the west: from 20.3% to 25.4%; in the centre: from 17.4% to 28%; in the south: from 8.5% to 13.5%; in the east: from 12.5% to 17%) [19, p. 31].

Although recent years have seen a dynamic development of the institutional network of Churches and a growing proportion of those who declare themselves as believers, such statistical data alone cannot support the conclusion that the religious factor has come to play a more significant role in Ukrainian society. What can prove useful in the analysis of the problem is the indicators of the significance of religion in the life of those surveyed.

According to the data provided by the Razumkov Centre, the index of importance of religion as a value in life increased on a five-point scale from 3.37 in 2000 to 3.87 in 2010. However, in the hierarchy of importance of different aspects of life religion was among those at the lower end, with the top of the list as follows (2010): (1) health, (2) relations with the family, (3) the level of prosperity, (4) the chances of receiving what they have earned with their work, (5) peace and order in the country, (6) equal rights and opportunities [23, p. 42].

What also needs to be noted is the regional differentiation: the index of importance of religion as a value in life was the highest in the west (4.31), and the lowest in the east of the country (3.63); the figures for the

centre and the south were at 3.76 and 4.06, respectively. Considering the position on the list of the nineteen categories featuring in the survey of importance of different aspects of life, religion was ranked as follows: number nine in the west, number sixteen in the south, and number seventeen in the east and centre [23, p. 43]. Consequently, the survey results would indicate that despite a high level of declared religiousness and the institutional development of the Churches, in practical terms the actual position of religion as a value is not particularly high.

This observation seems to be confirmed by the figures describing the level of religious practices in Ukraine. Between 2000 and 2010, the proportion of those attending religious services increased from 49% to 59%, with the regional pattern ranging from 85% in the western provinces of the country to 49% in the east. The level of practising believers is the highest among members of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (91%), and the lowest in the case of the category identifying themselves as ‘simply Christian’ (37%) [23, p. 45].

The picture of religiosity of the population becomes clearer in view of replies to the question concerning the frequency of attendance at religious services. As it turns out, about a half of believers (48%) attends them only on religious holidays; the declared weekly attendance is at 17%, and those who attend religious services more often than once a week amount to 4%. Again, the highest proportions were recorded for members of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (weekly attendance: 36%). The corresponding level for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) was at 16%, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate – 12%. In both major Orthodox Churches, most believers (54% and 55%, respectively) attend services only on religious holidays. In addition, Greek Catholics support their Church materially most often [23, pp. 45–46].

The pattern of replies to the question concerning the motivation for attendance in religious services reveals interesting information. For most believers (52%), the principal factor involved is the need of contact with God. Ranked as second was a ‘tribute to the national tradition’. Characteristically, the latter reply was more frequent among Greek Catholics (34.3%) and members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate (32.6%), rather than the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (28.9%), although – as can be seen – the difference was not considerable. Interestingly, this particular reason for attendance was also selected by a large proportion of non-believers (45.5%) and those hesitating between believers and non-believers (50.0%) [23, p. 46]; in

both cases, most of them go to church only on religious holidays. These data, particularly the ones concerning non-believers and those hesitant, provide a good illustration of the point made by Włodzinierz Pawluczuk, who argues that non-believers can nevertheless appreciate the importance of religious identification for national identity [7, pp. 125–126].

The above empirical data leave little doubt that religious or denominational self-identification, or association with a particular Church, cannot be treated as a crucial factor in the formation of other dimensions of collective (including national) identities in Ukrainian society. Some changes in this sphere might occur in the next few years, depending on the dynamics of the conflict with Russia. So far, the domains of religion and ecclesiastical organisations in the country have been prone to political involvement, which resulted in the decline of trust in the hierarchs and religious institutions.

However, the Church as an institution invariably commands relatively the highest level of trust among all social and political institutions in Ukraine, which would seem to suggest that the impact of the religious factor on geopolitical orientations and collective identities is quite considerable. In 2012, almost 73% of those surveyed declared their trust in the Church. Although by December 2012 the proportion had declined to 58.8%, the Church still remains the most trusted institution in the ranking [10].

As mentioned above, Ukraine is a scene of a multilateral religious conflict between the main denominations, with some smaller religious organisations also involved. It could be assumed that all the sides might function as centres stimulating other, non-religious orientations and identities. Consequently, it is worth considering the results of surveys indicating the social perception of the reasons of the conflict, including the role of the national question.

Although between 2000 and 2010 the proportion of respondents who identified the national question as the cause of the inter-church conflict increased to 17.7% (2010), it was ranked as the fourth factor at play, with most of those surveyed convinced of a greater importance of other elements: property issues (34.8%), the Church hierarchy's desire for power (29.5%), and political reasons (23.5%) [23, pp. 60–61].

Surveys also reveal that the standpoint adopted by religious institutions has only a very limited impact on the political views of Ukrainian society, which more readily forms its opinions relying on the press and television. Interest in political comments propagated by the Churches declined from 4.5% in 2000 to 3.4% in 2014. Those more inclined to

consider political opinions of their Church (2014) included the Greek Catholics (7.7%) and members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate (6.0%) [19, p. 39]. Most of the respondents are convinced they form their political opinions independently.

Religious diversity and geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians before the Euromaidan Revolution and the outbreak of the conflict with Russia

Religious diversity in Ukraine might suggest that the religious factor is not without an impact on geopolitical orientations of society. It is important to ascertain how far religious or denominational divides and identities may influence attitudes to the European Union or to the prospects of rapprochement with Russia.

The results of surveys conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine before 2009 confirmed that Ukrainian religious identities were reflected in the assessment of integration with the European Union. The prospect of joining the EU was much closer to those who identified themselves with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church: a very positive opinion was expressed by 75.4%, with the proportion of negative responses at 4.9%, and ‘it’s difficult to say’ at 19.7%. Respondents associating themselves with Orthodoxy were more sceptical, and their views were as follows: rather positive – 42.1%; ‘it’s difficult to say’ – 40.4%; rather negative – 17.4% [24, p. 53].

What also played a role was the ecclesiastical affiliation of the population who saw themselves as Orthodox. The pro-EU option was perceived as ‘rather positive’ by 50.7% of members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate, and 53.8% of those belonging to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church; in the case of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the figure was considerably lower (39.7%), while the percentage of undecided replies was the highest (44.7%) [24, p. 54].

Respondents who saw themselves as Greek Catholics and expressed a positive opinion about integration with the EU, at the same time displayed an unfavourable assessment of the idea of Ukraine’s joining the Russo-Belarusian Union; their replies were as follows: ‘rather negative’: 69.7%; ‘it’s difficult to say’: 20.5%; ‘rather positive’: 9.8%. On the other hand, the prospect would be much more welcome by the Orthodox part of the population: ‘rather negative’: 16.6%; ‘it’s difficult to say’: 20.2%; ‘rather positive’: 63.1%. Considering their ecclesiastical affiliation, the idea was most favoured by members of the Ukrainian Orthodox

Church (Moscow Patriarchate) ('rather positive' at 64%), followed by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate (45.4%), and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (38.5%) [24, pp. 54–55].

Such findings would indicate that support for integration with the European Union was largely dependent on religious identity of different parts of the population. Those associating themselves with Orthodoxy were oriented towards Slavic states, expressed their sympathy to Russia and Belarus, displayed a sense of distance to the West, and more often saw themselves as part of the Orthodox or Byzantine civilisation. Western Ukraine (including Galicia), the region historically oriented towards Western values, and one with a strong position of the Greek Catholic Church, was more inclined to support Ukraine's membership in the EU.

However, it should not be overlooked that Orthodoxy in Ukraine is not homogenous and geopolitical orientations vary across the spectrum of the population associating themselves with this religion. Another factor at play is that such orientations were subject to re-evaluation under the impact of the Euromaidan Revolution and the ensuing Russian aggression. As recorded in 2008 and February 2016 support for the idea of integration with the EU increased (from 44.1% to 55%), and to integration with Russia (the Customs Union) – declined (from 24.3% to 15%; in February 2016, replies 'it's difficult to say' were at 15%) [3]. Regrettably, surveys of geopolitical preferences conducted since 2013 do not consider the issue of correlation between these orientations and religious affiliation of the respondents. Nevertheless, it could be assumed that under the circumstances of the ongoing Russo–Ukrainian war, there are considerable changes of attitude to this question in the part of the population associating themselves with Orthodoxy, including followers of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Orthodox Churches in Ukraine and the conflict with Russia

Although sociological surveys conducted before 2013 indicated that at the time Ukrainian society was characterised by a high level of tolerance, with no reports of serious conflicts fuelled by religious, ethnic or language differences. However, diversity in these spheres is exploited in the Russian propaganda war against Ukraine. The Russian Orthodox Church, and its constituent part, the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, are used in the Kremlin's hybrid warfare conducted with a view to inciting internal conflicts in Ukrainian society. One of the main points of the propaganda discourse concerns the need to protect the rights of the Russian-speaking and Orthodox population allegedly threatened by

‘nationalists’ and ‘Banderites’ who seized power from the legitimate Ukrainian president.

The Russian official discourse has imposed an interpretation of events in Ukraine as a civil war fuelled by separatist tendencies in the eastern provinces of the country. These tendencies, in turn, are alleged to have stemmed from a religious, language and civilizational conflict in Ukraine. For example, in a Christmas interview Moscow Patriarch Kirill stated: ‘For me, Ukraine and Russia is one and the same thing. This is my people there (...). This is what gives me sleepless nights, and this is why I’m sometimes so enthusiastic when I think about the people who demonstrate so much determination and confidence in defending their convictions and their right to remain Orthodox’ [20]. On another occasion, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church observed as follows: ‘Politically, Ukraine is a foreign country, but it has never been the case in the spiritual or historical perspective. We are one people before God, we profess one Orthodox faith (...) Ukraine is an inherent part of Holy Rus’; it is an Orthodox country. Today, we must pray for the people of Rus’ living in Ukraine and ask the Lord to give peace to Ukrainian lands; whatever the circumstances, may He not allow the civil war within the Ukrainian state, or dissent between Ukraine and Russia; may He prevent the plans of those who want to use politics or force to tear Holy Rus’ apart’ [21].

Patriarch Kirill adheres to the view that the war in Ukraine is a religious conflict in which members of the Orthodox population stand up for their rights against the encroachment of the West, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and the followers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate, a non-canonical ecclesiastical organisation. In this way, the Russian Orthodox Church introduces the context of a civilizational conflict between the West and the East, in which the latter is perceived as the *russkii mir* (the Russian world) relying on the myth of a ‘besieged fortress’ [15, p. 8]. While the aim of the Kremlin is to rebuild the Russian empire, the Russian Orthodox Church intends to implement the concept of Holy Rus’ under Moscow’s leadership. Indeed, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’ emphasises that Ukraine is part of the canonical territory of his Church, and that Ukrainians should not be regarded as a separate nation.

Such attitude of Patriarch Kirill puts the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) headed by Metropolitan Onufrii in a very difficult position. During the Maidan Revolution, all the Churches in Ukraine (including the Ukrainian Orthodox Church) defended the protesters.

However, following the occupation of the Crimea and the outbreak of war in parts of the Donbas, Metropolitan Onufrii faced criticism over his controversial public comments, in which – in line with the Russian propaganda – he referred to Ukraine as a buffer zone between the West and the East, and to volunteers and Russian soldiers fighting against Ukraine in the Donbas as ‘members of volunteer forces’ (ополченці, *opolchentsy*) [17]. However, it seems that some members of the Orthodox hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine hesitate at present between the idea of Holy Rus’ and loyalty to their own nation.

Interestingly, pro-Moscow orientation is also shared by the hierarchy, clergy and a considerable proportion of members of Orthodox Churches in other countries, for example in Poland, where the Orthodox Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius, in close cooperation with the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, organised humanitarian relief aid for the people of the Donbas. However, the transport was sent via Russia rather than Ukraine. Coordinated with the assistance of persons of Russian origin (permanent residents in Poland) sympathetic to the cause of the so-called separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the action was extensively exploited by the Russian propaganda machine [5][8].

In the situation of conflict with Russia, an ambiguous attitude of the Orthodox hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine on the one hand, and firm support for the Kiev authorities from the Kiev Patriarchate and the Greek Catholic Church on the other, found their expression in the results of a survey on attitudes to church leaders conducted by Rating Group Ukraine in June 2015. In a new trend, Kiev Patriarch Filaret was ranked as the most trusted (40%); the second position of Pope Francis (35%) could be a surprise in a predominantly Orthodox society. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Moscow Patriarch Kirill (39%) and Metropolitan Onufrii (25%) became the most mistrusted church leaders [1]. These results, in conjunction with the fact that, as observed above, in 2014 the percentage of the followers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate was for the first time higher than those associating themselves with the Moscow Patriarchate (which has a more extensive organisational network), could be the harbinger of a power shift between the two largest institutional religious actors in Ukraine. The increasing support for the Kiev Patriarchate is certainly a challenge to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), which has to find a way not to lose members under the circumstances of a war with Russia.

Conclusions

The above analysis of survey results provides a basis for certain conclusions concerning the nature of religiosity in Ukraine and the impact of the religious factor on collective identities and geopolitical orientations of society. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of religious organisations and an increasing level of religiosity [18, p. 56], which in fact has become one of the highest in Europe, as can be confirmed by international surveys. In the global poll on religion and atheism released by WIN-Gallup International in 2012, the value of religiosity index for Ukraine was at 71, higher than in the case of not only such countries as Bulgaria, Lithuania and Spain, but also Russia (55) [11, p. 9]. Given that in post-Soviet Ukraine religious identity is an entirely new phenomenon, it should be stressed that there are considerable discrepancies between the declared and actual religiosity [16, pp. 44–45].

As regards characteristics of Ukrainian religiosity, it should be observed that although Ukraine is a Christian country, with the majority of the population identifying themselves as Orthodox (the two major Orthodox Churches have a similar number of followers), believers without a specific denominational affiliation form a considerable proportion of society. With the exception of those associating themselves with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the general level of involvement in religious practices is not particularly high. What also needs to be noted is the regional differentiation, with a number of indicators revealing a higher level of religiosity in the west of the country. Indeed, Maksym Parashchevin observes that ‘[t]he west is ahead of the east as regards the diversity of elements of religiosity; it is (...) a leader of the religious community of Ukraine, and this is true even considering only the Orthodox believers, without the Greek Catholics, who generally demonstrate a very high level of religiosity’ [18, p. 67].

Although the Church commands relatively the highest level of trust among social institutions in Ukraine, it seems rather unlikely to play a decisive role in society, which is more inclined to form political opinions without considering the standpoint of ecclesiastical institutions. In fact, the Church is often perceived as a tool in the hands of politicians rather than a moral authority.

Considering the above analysis of the empirical material, it is difficult to formulate firm conclusions explaining the impact of the religious factor on the formation of particular ethnic identities. Although particular ecclesiastical jurisdictions generally have come to be regarded as supporters of particular civilizational or national projects, the respon-

dents were more inclined to attribute the causes of inter-denominational conflicts in Ukraine to factors other than nationality issues. However, it can be observed that before 2010 there was a certain degree of correlation between religious identities in Ukrainian society and different geopolitical and civilizational orientations. In order to confirm whether the pattern continues after 2013–2014, it would be necessary to conduct new surveys taking the religious factor into consideration.

In conclusion, despite indicators suggesting an increasing role of the religious factor in Ukrainian society, it does not function as a distinctive element conditioning the process of forming particular identities in the period of transformation. It is quite unlikely that in the near future the institution of the Church could become an integrative factor in Ukraine, as observed in mono-religious and mono-denominational societies. The fundamental problem seems to be that of a rift within Orthodoxy and politicisation of its ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Indeed, it is quite difficult to predict a positive scenario involving the integrative function of the Church, given that for an entire new generation the problem of this division has become a fact of reality rather than a temporary anomaly. Also, the canonical isolation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate discredits Ukrainian national values in the perception of a considerable proportion of society. Consequently, it could be expected that the situation will be detrimental to Ukrainian national culture and identity.

The correlation between the religious factor and different types of identities in Ukrainian society might increase as a result of the Russian aggression in 2014. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (part of Moscow Patriarchate) is the only major ecclesiastical organisation in the country unable to take a clear stand on the conflict. The hierarchy and the clergy are divided over the issue: some adopt a patriotic stance, others opt for loyalty to Moscow and accept its interpretation of the conflict in the Donbas as a civil war. As a result of this hesitation, in 2014 and 2015 between sixty and seventy parishes changed their affiliation and became part of the Kiev Patriarchate. Although it would be difficult to qualify this as a mass phenomenon, the fact indicates an emerging trend, considering that there was not a single parish to have made the opposite decision.

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