

UDC 355.4(470:477)“2022/...”:27-67
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.26.275209

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Bibliographic Description of the Article: Palinchak, M. & Bokoch, V. (2023). Religious Factor in the Current Russia-Ukraine War. *Skhidnoievropeyskyi istorychnyi visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 26, 164–173. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.26.275209

RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN THE CURRENT RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to present the study results of the impact of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine on the religious and ecclesiastical sphere. The scientific novelty. The processes taking place in a religious and church life, and the peculiarities of the activity of churches and religious organizations in Ukraine during the war have been analysed. The reaction of the international religious community to the Russian military invasion of Ukraine has been highlighted. Forms of spiritual support and material assistance to Ukraine in its struggle against the Russian occupiers by various domestic and foreign religious communities have been shown. The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism, system-formation, scientific character, the author's objectivity, and the use of general scientific (analysis, synthesis, generalization), special and historical (historical systemic, historical typological, etc.) methods. The Conclusion. Under the conditions of the Russian military invasion of the territory of Ukraine, the religious and ecclesiastical sphere has been significantly affected. Russia's aggression has caused dramatic changes in the religious environment and has provoked significant opposition from believers, clergy and religious organizations of various denominations. Currently, there are several trends in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere in Ukraine: condemnation of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine by religious organizations; providing various spiritual and material assistance to churches, religious communities, defenders of Ukraine, victims and refugees; support of*

Ukraine's struggle against the Russian invaders by foreign religious organizations; deterioration of relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; intensification of the process of changing the jurisdiction of Orthodox communities and exacerbation of contradictions in the Orthodox environment. The problems in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere that emerged during the war will be finally resolved after Ukraine's victory over the Russian invaders.

Key words: Russian-Ukrainian war; church, state, Ukraine, state-church relations

РЕЛІГІЙНИЙ ФАКТОР У СУЧАСНІЙ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ВІЙНІ

Анотація. Мета статті – представити результати дослідження впливу російської військової агресії в Україну на релігійно-церковну сферу. **Наукова новизна.** Аналізуються процеси, що відбуваються у релігійно-церковному житті, особливості діяльності церков та релігійних організацій в Україні під час війни. Висвітлюється реакція міжнародного релігійного співтовариства на російське військове вторгнення в Україну. Показуються форми духовної підтримки та матеріальної допомоги Україні у її боротьбі проти російських окупантів різними вітчизняними і зарубіжними релігійними спільнотами. **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на принципах історизму, системності, науковості, авторської об'єктивності, а також на використанні загальнонаукових (аналіз, синтез, узагальнення) та спеціально-історичних (історико-системний, історико-типологічний) методів. **Висновки.** В умовах російського військового вторгнення на територію України релігійно-церковна сфера зазнала відчутного впливу. Російська агресія спричинила у релігійному середовищі суттєві зміни та викликала значний спротив віруючих, духовенства та релігійних організацій різних конфесій. Нині у релігійно-церковній сфері України проглядається кілька тенденцій: засудження релігійними організаціями російського військового вторгнення в Україну; надання церквами, релігійними спільнотами різноманітної духовної та матеріальної допомоги захисникам України, потерпілим та біженцям; підтримка України зарубіжними релігійними організаціями у її боротьбі з російськими окупантами; ускладнення відносин між Московським патріархатом та Українською православною церквою; активізація процесу зміни юрисдикції православними громадами та загострення суперечностей у православному середовищі. Породжені під час війни проблеми у релігійно-церковній сфері остаточно будуть розв'язуватися після перемоги України над російськими загарбниками.

Ключові слова: російсько-українська війна, церква, держава, Україна, державно-церковні відносини.

The Problem Statement. The full-scale Russian military aggression against Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, has affected various aspects of public life: political, economic, military, spiritual, cultural and the others. It has also caused significant changes in a religious and church life.

From the first days of the war, churches and religious organizations of various denominations in Ukraine called on their followers to stand up for their homeland, its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and pray for victory. Many of their supporters found themselves directly in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, serving as chaplains or becoming volunteers. Temples, monasteries, houses of worship, and other places of worship often became places of refuge from enemy shelling and bombing, and shelters for refugees and internally displaced people.

The Analysis of Sources and Recent Research. The influence of the religious factor on the current Russian-Ukrainian war has not yet been researched in the historical and political sciences. Some aspects of the historical origins of the religious and church problems of Ukraine under the conditions of the current Russian-Ukrainian war were analysed in the articles of M. Haliv (Haliv, 2018), O. Buravskiy and M. Kozlovets (Buravskiy & Kozlovets, 2021), Yu. Danylets and V. Mischanyn (Danylets & Mischanyn, 2022), M. Palinchak and V. Bokoch

(Palinchak & Bokoch, 2021). The political, ideological, propaganda prerequisites of the current Russian-Ukrainian war are elucidated in the works of V. Lipkan and P. Artymyshyn (Lipkan & Artymyshyn, 2022), V. Ilnytskyi, V. Starka, M. Haliv (Ilnytskyi, Starka & Haliv, 2022).

The purpose of the article is to present the study results of the impact of Russian military aggression in Ukraine on the religious and ecclesiastical sphere.

The Results of the Research. The Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations have adopted a number of statements and appeals to domestic and foreign authorities and international organizations. These statements raise issues of peace in Ukraine, the supply of new weapons to the Ukrainian army, the introduction of a no-fly zone over Ukraine, infrastructure, organization of humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of civilians, especially women and children, from the occupied territories and settlements affected by hostilities or under siege, exchange of prisoners of war, unity of the Ukrainians to repel the Russian aggressor, preventing the Belarusian army from participating in the war against Ukraine, etc. One of the statements of the Council is devoted to exposing and condemning the genocide of the Ukrainian people committed by the Russian troops in Kyiv region (Terminove zvernennia VRTsiRO, 2022; Rada Tserkov, 2022a; Rada Tserkov, 2022b; Rada Tserkov, 2022c; Zaiava z pryvodu obstriliv, 2022; Zvernennia z pryvodu obminu polonenymy, 2022; Zvernennia VRTsiRO, 2022; Zaiava VRTsiRO, 2022).

During hostilities, the Russian invaders caused significant damage to temples, monasteries and other religious buildings, among other structures. During the first month of the war, 59 church buildings of various denominations, including architectural monuments of the past centuries, were destroyed or damaged (Vid pochatku viyny, 2022). Among them are the Holy Assumption Sviatohorsk Lavra in Donetsk region, the Assumption Cathedral in Kharkiv, and other churches and religious buildings in various regions of Ukraine. The Russian troops often placed weapons and firing positions directly in places of worship in temporarily occupied cities and villages.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine and its primate, Metropolitan Epiphanius, has taken an uncompromising position on the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. This church has been under threat in the occupied territories, as the Russian troops attacked it from the first days of the invasion of Ukraine. They destroyed its temples, searched, threatened, kidnapped and even killed the priests. Metropolitan Epiphanius became the target of the Russian saboteurs. Despite this, the hierarchs, clergy and believers of this church constantly prayed for the victory of Ukraine, and provided spiritual and material assistance to all who needed it.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine sees signs of genocide in the mass killings of civilians by Russian troops. At the same time, the murder of the Russian occupiers in order to defend the homeland is not considered a sin according to the primate of the church, Metropolitan Epiphanius.

During the fierce battles for Kyiv, Metropolitan Epiphanius presented the city with an icon of Michael the Archangel, who is considered its patron and protector.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine has demanded that sanctions be imposed by foreign countries on the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church for inciting and supporting the war.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has also taken a patriotic stance in the Russia-Ukraine war. Its leader, Archbishop Sviatoslav, is especially active. His daily war video appeals and prayers for peace in Ukraine, meetings with the military of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, trips to parishes in the settlements of the regions directly adjacent to the war zone

and visits of wounded defenders of Ukraine are important. He calls on the whole world to stand together with Ukraine in the fight against the Russian aggressor. Similar actions are being taken by the local Greek Catholic clergy. Chaplains of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church provide pastoral care for servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The defenders of Ukraine are also spiritually and materially supported by Protestant, Muslim, Jewish and other religious organizations. Ukrainian Baptist religious communities provide significant assistance to refugees and victims of the Russian aggression. Thus, Lviv coordination centre of the Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine sent more than fifty 20-ton trucks of humanitarian aid. The initiative to raise funds for the purchase of quadcopters and bulletproof vests for the Armed Forces of Ukraine was launched by the Church of Christians of the Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals). The Seventh-day Adventist Church also helps internally displaced people from war-torn regions. In particular, its charity ADRA, in close cooperation with foreign missions, distributes humanitarian aid, arranges shelters for refugees and provides them with food and basic necessities. (Ponad piatdesiat, 2022; The Church of Christians, 2022; Adventysty, 2022).

The Ukrainian Muslims are actively opposing the Russian aggression. Among those defending Ukraine are the Tatars, the Crimean Tatars, the Chechens and other Muslims. Sheikh Said Ismagilov, mufti of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine “Ummah”, became imam-chaplain of the Kyiv Territorial Defense Battalion. “I will support the defenders of Ukraine as much as possible. And I am absolutely sure that we will win,” he said. In Kyiv, Muslim believers established a volunteer centre “Wings of Victory”, which provides comprehensive assistance to the military and civilian population (Yak muftii Ukrayiny stav kapelanom, 2022). Despite the hostilities, President of Ukraine V. Zelensky congratulated the Ukrainian Muslims on the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

The Russian military aggression against Ukraine was condemned not only by the Ukrainian churches and religious organizations, but also by the world religious community. Thus, the World Council of Churches, Pope Francis, hierarchs of Alexandria, Georgia, Romania, Poland, Finland and other Orthodox churches, and some foreign parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church opposed the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew met with refugees from Ukraine during his visit to Poland and provided them with spiritual support.

A joint statement on the Russian attack on Ukraine was issued by the Conference of European Churches, which unites Orthodox, Old Catholic and Protestant religious organizations in European countries, and the Council of Bishops’ Conferences of Europe, which brings together Catholic bishops. It condemns Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and expresses its gratitude to religious communities, state and local authorities, NGOs and residents of the countries that provide assistance to the Ukrainian refugees. In addition, the Council of Bishops’ Conferences of Europe invited each Catholic episcopate to serve a liturgy for peace in Ukraine.

In front of the Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, representatives of various denominations such as the Christians, the Muslims, and the Jews called on Patriarch Kirill to take effective measures to end the war in Ukraine.

Prayers were offered for the victims of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine in the Cathedral of St. Andrew Memorial Ukrainian Orthodox Church in South Bound Brook, the USA. Prayers for the people of Mariupol were made by Orthodox Greeks. Ecumenical prayer for the Ukrainian people was conducted by religious figures of the German city of Munich.

Many foreign religious organizations did not only pray and express their condolences to the Ukrainians, but also provided humanitarian aid to victims of the Russian military aggression. Thus, the Polish Catholic religious charity Caritas Poland raised over 85 million zlotykh for Ukraine and provided a significant amount of other material assistance (“Karitas Polshchi”, 2022).

The Vatican is distinguished by a variety of activities aimed at resolving the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Calling Russia’s war against Ukraine “barbaric”, Pope Francis made an urgent appeal to end the war. He initiated a series of events in addition to prayers, aiming to achieve peace. On the second day of the war, contrary to the existing diplomatic protocol, he visited the Russian embassy in the Vatican, where he expressed his concern about Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine. In addition, he launched a day of prayer for Ukraine, supported the creation of humanitarian corridors to help refugees, provided material support to victims of the Russian military aggression, and offered mediation in peace talks. Pope Francis stated his readiness to do everything possible to end the war in Ukraine. Despite the danger of travelling to a war-torn country, he announced his intention to visit Ukraine.

Unlike the Ukrainian and foreign religious communities that have supported and assisted Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church, which is in close alliance with the Kremlin and an integral part of the “Russian world”, has taken a diametrically opposed position in the Russia-Ukraine war. Its leader, Patriarch Kirill, actually blessed the military invasion of Ukraine. He also rejected the offer of the World Council of Churches to assume mediation in the settlement of the military conflict. Thus, according to the leader of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Metropolitan Epiphanius, “Kirill Gundyayev has made his choice in favour of the cause of the Antichrist” (Epifaniy zaiavyv, 2022).

Following Patriarch Kirill, Russian aggression against Ukraine was supported and justified by hierarchs and priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as by representatives of other religious communities in Russia.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which was under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, has found itself in a rather difficult situation. The fact that 98 % of the Ukrainians consider Russia a hostile country (Zhmerenetskyi, 2022) could not help but affect the attitude of believers to both the Moscow Patriarchate and its subordinate, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Despite the fact that UOC is under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, its leader Metropolitan Onufriy condemned Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, expressed support for the Ukrainian state and its army, called on Vladimir Putin to end the war immediately and urged his supporters to intensify prayers for peace (Mytropolyt, 2022).

It is clear that under the conditions of nationwide resistance of the Ukrainians to the Russian invaders, Metropolitan Onufriy could not have done otherwise. However, he did not take the opportunity to state this at the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, of which he remains a permanent member. Instead, he declined the meeting.

It is quite natural that during the Russia-Ukraine war, the question of further relations with the Moscow Patriarchate has become quite acute for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Due to Patriarch Kirill’s support of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, many clergymen of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church stopped mentioning his name during services (Nasha pastva, 2022). Moreover, they have expressed the idea of a complete severance of relations with the Moscow Patriarchate, which was supported by 63 percent of Ukrainians (Zahalnonatsionalne opytuvannia, 2022). At the same time, some believers and some eparchies of the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church were raising the issue not of only its withdrawal from the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, but also of UOC's acquisition of autocephaly. According to Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, "the instinct of self-preservation of the UOC-MP leadership as an institution should prompt it to get out of this critical, historically predetermined situation by convening the Council (possibly online) and making the statement on withdrawal from the ROC (the Moscow Patriarchate). Then history and Ukrainian society will put everything in its place" (Yak kolys Kompartiyu, 2022).

Under the pressure of circumstances in the socio-political and religious-ecclesiastical life of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church held a church council. It publicly expressed its disagreement with Patriarch Kirill's assessment of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, as well as declared the UOC independence and autonomy.

However, it is not easy for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to gain full independence from the Moscow Patriarchate as the MP will never agree to weaken its influence on Orthodox Ukrainians and will constantly block this process. In the event of a unilateral severance of relations with the MP, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will face significant difficulties in its further recognition by the world Orthodox community.

In addition, there is no common position on this issue within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. According to opinion polls, 13 percent of UOC the believers are ardent supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate, who do not want to break off relations with the Russian church and seek unity with it (Zahalnonatsionalne opytuvannia, 2022). Therefore, some parishes, districts and eparchies of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which do not intend to sever ties with the Moscow Patriarchate, might want to come under the Russian Orthodox Church direct jurisdiction. Some of them are raising the issue of coming under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church believers who do not wish to remain under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate have no choice but to become canonically subordinate to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine which has the status of a local church confirmed by the tomos of autocephaly of the Local Church of Ukraine. The Synod of this church and its Primate, Metropolitan Epiphanius, has called on bishops, clergy, monasteries and religious communities to sever ties with the Moscow Patriarchate and stand on the path of unity with the Ukrainian Church. Currently, the process of changing the jurisdiction of Orthodox religious communities is underway. Since the beginning of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, several hundred parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in various regions of the country have already announced their intention to change their canonical subordination and join the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. This will lead to the weakening of the position of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and a strengthening of the position of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

During the war, a discussion broke out in the religious community as to the future of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine. Bills for a complete ban on the MP and nationalization of its property were introduced in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine motivated by the fact that the MP's existence on Ukrainian territory poses a threat to Ukraine's national security. At the same time, religious communities, monasteries and theological educational institutions of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have been given the opportunity to change their jurisdiction in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine (Proekt Zakonu, 2022a; Proekt Zakonu, 2022b).

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has reacted sharply to these bills, seeing them as an attempt to "brazenly and cynically" ban its activities. According to its representatives, the adoption of these laws will lead to violations of international human rights instruments

and the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine on freedom of conscience and religion. Instead of serving the “protection of national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine”, their adoption will lead to “split of Ukrainian society and weakening of the state”, division of the country on religious grounds and incitement to religious hatred. Initiation of these legislative acts is considered by them as “hostile sabotage against Ukraine” (Zayava Yurydychnoho viddilu UPTs, 2022).

In our opinion, the current socio-political situation is the most appropriate for the final decision on the future of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine. According to the well-known Ukrainian theologian O. Sahan, “the time has come to radically resolve the issue of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine”. (Likvidovuyetsia naynadiynisha ahentura voroha, 2022).

The subordination of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Moscow Patriarchate is totally harmful to it and distracts the flock from it en masse. With its many years of pro-Russian position and activity, the Moscow Patriarchate has long compromised itself in the eyes of a large number of Ukrainians.

It is noteworthy that not only Ukrainian but also some foreign Orthodox communities are severing relations with the Moscow Patriarchate. Thus, the Orthodox parish in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, was one of the first to stop mentioning the name of Kirill during the liturgy, to sever ties with the Russian Orthodox Church and to come under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Under the conditions of the Russia-Ukraine war, the institute of military chaplaincy has been working powerfully and fully. Military chaplains of various denominations provide pastoral care and spiritual service to the military, and instill faith in the victory of the Ukrainian army. Due to the peculiarities of the situation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and its affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate, some politicians, servicemen, and religious organizations raise the issue of not admitting MP priests to the chaplaincy service.

It should be noted that during the Russia-Ukraine war, there has been a tendency for increasing individuals’ religiosity among ordinary citizens of Ukraine due to psychological reasons, such as the deaths of relatives and friends, fear, grief, and suffering caused by the war.

The Conclusion. Under the conditions of the Russian military invasion of the territory of Ukraine, the religious and ecclesiastical sphere has been significantly affected. Russia’s aggression has caused dramatic changes in the religious environment and has provoked significant opposition of believers, clergy and religious organizations of various denominations.

Currently, there are several trends in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere in Ukraine:

- condemnation of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine by religious organizations;
- providing various spiritual and material assistance to churches, religious communities, defenders of Ukraine, victims and refugees;
- support of Ukraine’s struggle against the Russian invaders by foreign religious organizations;
- deterioration of relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church;
- intensification of the process of changing the jurisdiction of Orthodox communities and exacerbation of contradictions in the Orthodox environment.

The problems in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere that emerged during the war will be finally resolved after Ukraine’s victory over the Russian invaders.

Acknowledgement. We express sincere gratitude to all members of the editorial board for consultations provided during the preparation of the article for publishing.

Funding. The author did not receive any financial support for the research, authorship and / or publication of this article.

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The article was received October 13, 2022.

Article recommended for publishing 22/02/2023.