

## Patriarch Kirill's game over Ukraine

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The protests on Kyiv's Maidan which commenced in November 2013, followed by the conflict in Ukraine's eastern regions, have redefined the political and social relations between Russia and Ukraine, and have added complexity to the dependences between the Orthodox Churches operating in the two countries. The Kremlin's policy has put the Russian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate (ROC) in an awkward position. The ROC is Russia's largest religious organisation, which also exercises symbolic sovereignty over Ukraine's most numerous Orthodox community, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP), which since 13 August has had a new leader, Metropolitan Onufry.

The head of the ROC, the Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia, Kirill, has been facing a dilemma as to how he should respond to the Russian government's aggressive policy towards Ukraine. His firm support of the Kremlin's moves in Ukraine, may lose the Russian Church its social influence in this country. This might also catalyse a process within which Ukraine's largest Orthodox Church would gradually become independent of Moscow. On the other hand, if he condemns the Kremlin's policy, this would adversely affect the co-operation between 'the altar and the throne' which has been rapidly developing over the past few years in Russia, and which has offered multiple benefits to the Russian Church.

As a result, Patriarch Kirill has distanced the ROC from the recent developments in Ukraine and has adopted a neutral stance. However, Kirill's choice has aggravated the negative perception of the ROC among the Orthodox community in Ukraine. Given its close relations with the Kremlin, the ROC is increasingly viewed there as an instrument of political struggle and an exponent of the Russian government's interests. The ROC's stance has cast the UOC–MP, which has links with the Russian Church, in an unfavourable light, and has fostered its efforts to become more independent from the Moscow Patriarchate.

Regardless of how the situation evolves, the recent developments in Ukraine have made it clear that the interests of the Russian Church and the Kremlin, which have coincided for years, now come into conflict, mainly due to the disagreement over the methods used. Despite this, the Russian Church is not withdrawing from the cooperation of 'the altar and the throne', and submits itself to the Kremlin's decisions.

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### The Ukrainian Orthodox Church– –Moscow Patriarchate

The Russian Orthodox Church holds symbolic supremacy over the largest structure in Ukrainian Orthodoxy, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP). This is the only Orthodox Church in Ukraine which is recognised as a canonical (legitimate) church by the global Orthodox community. The UOC–MP is institutionally the strongest and the largest Orthodox

Church in Ukraine<sup>1</sup>. Its jurisdiction extends to around 13,000 parishes and between six and nine million members<sup>2</sup>. Ethnic Ukrainians predominate among the bishops and members of this church. It is now headed by Metropolitan Onufry, who was elected new primate of the UOC–MP on 13 August 2014. He had already performed the duties of the head of the church while Metropolitan Volodymyr was still alive<sup>3</sup>. Onufry was viewed from the very beginning as Volodymyr’s most likely successor. He has been viewed as a continuator of his predecessor’s balanced stance, which on the one hand envisaged a deepening of the UOC–MP’s autonomy, while on the other maintaining the canonical links with the Moscow Patriarchate.

The UOC–MP is formally a part of the Moscow Patriarchate and is not an autocephalous church<sup>4</sup>. However, it has extensive autonomy as regards administration and financial issues. This autonomy allows local bishops, who are members of the local synod, to choose the UOC–MP’s head themselves. Moscow has no formal instruments to influence this decision-making process, and it only has to approve of this choice. The bond with Moscow means that the head of the UOC–MP is a permanent member of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, the key collegial body of the Moscow Patriarchate. The links between the two Churches have also include the informal in-

fluence of The Russian Church on some of the Ukrainian bishops, especially representatives of the oldest generation. However, these dependences are losing importance in view of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

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Two opposite tendencies have been apparent within the UOC–MP for years: building closer relations with Russian Orthodoxy vs. becoming more independent from the Moscow Patriarchate, and in the longer run gaining autocephaly and building one national Church in Ukraine. However, the UOC–MP has rejected any unification proposals from the other Ukrainian Churches<sup>5</sup>. As a consequence of the conflict in Ukraine, anti-Russian sentiments and the desire for independence within the Ukrainian Orthodoxy have gained strength.

Given the Kremlin’s aggressive policy towards Ukraine, opinions that the UOC–MP should leave Moscow’s jurisdiction, according to the principle of ‘independent country, independent Church’, have been expressed more frequently among the hierarchs of the Church. Furthermore, those who want Ukraine to develop in a European direction have also started sharing their views in public. One sign of this tendency was the fact that the Holy Synod of the UOC–MP appointed a special commission for dialogue with other Ukrainian Orthodox

<sup>1</sup> In addition to this Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kyiv Patriarchate (which is in conflict with the Moscow Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church operate in Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Data quoted by Metropolitan Antoni in an interview for the Unian-Religions agency, 9 April 2014, <http://orthodoxy.org.ua/data/intervyu-mitropolita-antoniya-unian-religii.html>

This data is estimates. It is difficult to state the current number of Ukrainian church members due to the identity-building processes observed among the Ukrainian public.

<sup>3</sup> Volodymyr, who died on 5 July 2014, was unable to lead the UOC–MP in the last years of his life due to health problems.

<sup>4</sup> Autocephaly means the independence of the local Church from other Churches. This concerns organisational forms, religious customs, liturgy, hierarchy and church judicature and legislation.

<sup>5</sup> For more see T. Olszański, ‘Summary: The Western Borderlands. The place of Eastern Galicia and Volhynia in the Ukrainian state’, OSW Studies, 4 July 2013; <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2013-07-04/summary-western-borderlands-place-eastern-galicia-and-volhynia>

Churches in February this year. The commission will consider the options of unifying the Orthodox Churches of various jurisdictions into one national Church, independent of the Moscow Patriarchate<sup>6</sup>.

The UOC–MP has adopted a critical stance towards Russian policy. The threats that Russian army could officially enter Ukraine have also been sharply criticised, and demands have been made for Patriarch Kirill to intervene in this case. One manifestation of this was a letter from Metropolitan Onufry to the patriarch, containing an appeal to influence the Russian government and prevent bloodshed<sup>7</sup>.

**There have also been cases when whole parishes of the UOC–MP accepted the jurisdiction of the non-canonical Kyiv Patriarchate Church, which is the main ‘competitor’ for the UOC–MP in Ukraine.**

Furthermore, the press secretary of the UOC–MP, Georgi Kovalenko, has announced that by deciding to launch its intervention in Ukraine, the Russian government is violating the Ten Commandments. He has also warned the Russian Orthodox Church leader that if Kirill supports Russian aggression towards Ukraine, the Ukrainian Church will turn its back on him. He has further emphasised that the clergy of the UOC–MP are above all Ukrainian citizens<sup>8</sup>. As the fighting in south-eastern Ukraine escalated, on 9 July Metropolitan Onufry signed an appeal on behalf of the Council of Churches and Religious Organisations of Ukraine, of which he is the chairman, to the Russia-supported rebels

to lay down their weapons and stop the bloodshed. The persecution and discrimination of certain religious groups in the areas controlled by the militants was firmly condemned in this appeal. It was also stated in the appeal that a territorial division of Ukraine would be a sin against God and future generations<sup>9</sup>.

On the other hand, some of the UOC–MP clergy have supported the actions taken by Russia and the separatists, although their number has been falling as the conflict has escalated. The Russian-language media have published announcements made by several UOC–MP clergymen who had escaped to Russia and were criticising the new government in Kyiv from there<sup>10</sup>. Publicity has been given to cases when clergymen from the UOC–MP supported the pro-Russian rebels and blessed the flags of the so-called separatist republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. These incidents have seriously affected the image of the UOC–MP and undermined respect for it among Ukrainian society. As a consequence, some of the Ukrainian public were opposed to the visit by Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, to Kyiv to celebrate the anniversary of the Baptism of Rus<sup>11</sup>. Kirill’s closest aide, Metropolitan Illarion, the chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, was denied entry to Ukraine<sup>12</sup>. There have also been cases when whole parishes of the UOC–MP accepted the jurisdiction of the non-canonical Kyiv Patriarchate Church, which is the main ‘competitor’ for the UOC–MP in Ukraine.

<sup>6</sup> For more see <http://pravoslavie.fm/articles/1460/1376/>, accessed on 16 July 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Metropolitan Onufry to Patriarch Kirill, 1 March 2014, <http://www.pravmir.ru/mitropolit-cher-novickij-Onufryij-prosit-patriarxa-kirilla-ne-dopus-tit-krovoprolitiya-v-ukraine/>

<sup>8</sup> Statement of 2 March 2014, <http://lenta.ru/news/2014/03/02/bulletinabile/>

<sup>9</sup> For more see <http://www.klikovo.ru/db/msg/29295>, accessed on 4 August 2014

<sup>10</sup> For example, *protoiereus* (protopriest) Andrey Novikov, the secretary of the eparchy in Odessa, has talked to the Russian press about prosecutions against the clergy and members of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine. For more see <http://www.rg.ru/2014/04/11/svashennik-site-anons.html> and <http://www.vz.ru/world/2014/4/15/682187.html>, accessed on 14 July 2014.

<sup>11</sup> *Russia Today*, 19 June 2014, <http://russian.rt.com/article/37190> The visit did not take place. The Moscow Patriarchate has denied that such a visit had been planned at all.

<sup>12</sup> Illarion was denied entry to Ukraine on 9 May at Dnipropetrovsk airport.

**The Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC–KP)** is the second largest religious community in the country. It comprises around 4000 parishes and has between four and eight million members. These are approximate estimates. According to most recent surveys, the current number of members of the UOC–KP has increased significantly in connection with the Ukrainian crisis (see the Appendix). The UOC–KP emerged in 1992, when a group of the clergy separated from the UOC–MP and founded their own Church. The UOC–KP has not been granted autocephaly as yet, and still has the status of a non-canonical Church, i.e. it is not recognised as legitimate by the other Orthodox Churches. Since its foundation it has been headed by the Metropolitan of Kyiv, Filaret, who is fostering the idea that the various branches of Ukrainian Orthodoxy should become united into one national Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Clergymen representing this Church held religious services during the protests on the Maidan which began last November, and since the fighting in eastern Ukraine escalated, the UOC–KP has consistently defended the Ukrainian national interest, and claimed that it is necessary to maintain the territorial integrity of Ukraine and to resist Moscow’s imperial aspirations. The UOC–KP’s hierarchs have called upon all other Ukrainian Orthodox Churches to unite their structures in Ukraine and form a national Church together.

### **The Russian Church’s reactions to the Ukrainian crisis**

The Russian Orthodox Church has found itself in a difficult position due to the aggressive policy adopted by the Kremlin towards Ukraine. To minimise the negative impact of this policy on the ROC’s interests in Ukraine, the head of the Russian Church, Patriarch Kirill, has attempted to prevaricate, and has engaged in efforts at diplomacy. Being aware of the complex dependences between the various branches of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Kirill has made cautious and evasive statements while referring to the

Maidan protests and the fighting in eastern Ukraine. He has made attempts to distance the ROC from the Kremlin’s policy and not to take sides in the conflict, and he has appealed for peace. However, he has not officially condemned the Kremlin’s policy; he has not opposed Russia’s possible official military intervention in Ukraine, nor has he protested against the annexation of Crimea.

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Firstly, one of the ROC’s problems is the fact that the members of the Ukrainian Church which it is a part, have found themselves on different sides of the barricades. One part of the UOC–MP’s clergy and congregation members were present on the Maidan, and later criticised the Russian-backed separatists and firmly opposed the entry of Russian troops to Ukraine. On the other hand, publicity has been given to cases where representatives of the clergy and lay members of the UOC–MP criticised the new government in Kyiv and openly backed the separatists. However, as the conflict has escalated, their number has been shrinking. If the ROC came down on one side or another, the divides within the UOC–MP could deepen, and result in some Orthodox Christians leaving the Church linked to Moscow and joining the Churches of other jurisdictions on a mass scale, the first symptoms of which are already visible. Secondly, the stance adopted by the Russian Church on the Ukrainian conflict has been conditioned by its close links with the Kremlin. These links have offered the Church tangible benefits, including prestige and funding. However, the price the ROC has to pay for this is its subordination to the Russian government. If the ROC were to adopt an independent and

critical stance with regard to the Kremlin, this would mean breaking the rules of the deal between 'the altar and the throne', and the ROC is not ready to make this move.

**During the ceremony commemorating Saint Sergius of Radonezh, which was also attended by President Vladimir Putin, the Patriarch appealed to global public opinion not to view Russia as an aggressor.**

Given the dependences as outlined above, it took Kirill a long time to express an opinion on the Maidan protests. In one of his first official comments on the issue this January, he stated that the ROC had never identified itself with any geopolitical project. At the same time, he cautioned the Orthodox clergy in Ukraine against becoming engaged in the protests: "The Church may not be directed by any political agenda. If clergymen who incite the public come to the barricades, they are not bringing the message of the Church."<sup>13</sup>

In response to the escalation of tensions in eastern Ukraine, Kirill stated in his diplomatic answer to the aforementioned letter from Metropolitan Onufry on 2 March that he would make efforts to influence representatives of the Russian government to prevent the bloodshed. However, he did not condemn the intention to bring Russian troops to Ukraine. Instead he once again emphasised the ROC's neutrality: "Members of our Church in Ukraine hold different political views and beliefs and are standing today on the different sides of the barricade. The Church does not take sides in the political struggle. It's task is to take care of all those who have been exposed to violence (...)"<sup>14</sup>. In subsequent statements concerning the situation in Ukraine, he has appealed for peace and dialogue.

<sup>13</sup> An interview for *Rossiya Segodnya* news agency, 7 January 2014, <http://www.pravmir.ru/patriarx-kirill-na-ukraine-my-vidim-revolucionnyu-situaciyu/>

<sup>14</sup> Patriarch Kirill's statement on Ukraine, 2 March 2014, <http://www.vz.ru/news/2014/3/2/675113.html>

The fact that Kirill did not attend the official ceremony of Crimea's incorporation into the Russian Federation at the Kremlin on 18 March this year was a meaningful sign. The absence of the head of Russian Orthodoxy during what the Kremlin and the Russian public saw as a solemn and very important ceremony was conspicuous, especially as Kirill had participated in all major state events and had been building up an image of a mediator between the public and the government for the past five years, since he became the head of the ROC<sup>15</sup>. Considering the close relations between the Kremlin and the ROC, it can be assumed that his absence was a tactical solution consulted with the Kremlin. Another symptomatic fact was that the ROC did not take direct control over the parishes in Crimea following Russia's annexation of the peninsula, which still remain under the administrative supervision of the UOC–MP based in Kyiv. A similar situation was seen after the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008; the Moscow Patriarchate did not take control over Orthodoxy in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which still remain under the jurisdiction of the Georgian Orthodox Church. However, it must be emphasised that Patriarch Kirill has never condemned the annexation of Crimea, although representatives of the UOC–MP and most members of the Orthodox community in Ukraine would have expected him to.

Another meaningful fact was that Kirill did not come to Kyiv to attend the funeral of Metropolitan Volodymyr, the head of the UOC–MP, who died on 5 July. Given the tense political relations between Ukraine and Russia, he did not wish to provoke any anti-Russian or anti-Church reactions by his visit. His fears were well-grounded; Kirill's pastoral visits to Ukraine had raised controversies among Ukrainian public opinion in the past. In addition to religious goals, these visits were also intended to serve

<sup>15</sup> One manifestation of these aspirations was his reaction to the mass civil protests in Russia in late 2011/early 2012, when he backed the protesters and appealed to the government for dialogue in one of his speeches.

political and PR purposes; they were intended to demonstrate the supremacy of the Moscow Patriarchate over Ukrainian Orthodoxy, and contribute to building closer political relations between Russia and Ukraine.<sup>16</sup>

Kirill's address on 18 July during the ceremony commemorating Saint Sergius of Radonezh, which was also attended by President Vladimir Putin, marked an important moment. The Patriarch appealed to global public opinion not to view Russia as an aggressor: "God grant that Russia be understood today by those who still do not understand it. God grant that everyone understand that Russia is not a source of a military or any other threat to humanity."<sup>17</sup> In addition to this, Kirill thanked Putin for the expression of the "consensus seen at present among the Russians" and for "formulating thoughts and ideas which unite people".<sup>18</sup> Reactions from Ukrainian and Western public opinion indicate that this appeal was viewed as a manifestation of conformism.

### The 'Russian World' – one idea, two interpretations

The Russian Orthodox Church has been intensively co-operating with Russian political leaders over the past few years<sup>19</sup>, and their mutual relations are increasingly close. Russian foreign policy, especially with regard to the former Soviet republics which share a similar culture, above all Ukraine, has been one of the main areas of this co-operation. The converging interests of the two sides are the main reason for their collaboration: the ROC sees Ukraine as part of the

Russian Orthodoxy's 'canonical territory'<sup>20</sup>, and claims the right to control it. For its part, the Kremlin views this area as its natural zone of political influence. One consequence of this is that Moscow has never stopped challenging the sovereignty of the Ukrainian state. Both the Church and the Kremlin want to strengthen their influence in Ukraine, and in the longer run to consolidate the Orthodox and Russian-speaking population under the religious and political aegis of Moscow. While developing their co-operation over the past few years, the two sides have drawn upon the concept of the 'Russian World' (in Russian: *Rusky Mir*) popularised by the Church. However, Moscow's aggressive policy towards Ukraine has revealed significant differences in the interpretations of this idea by the Church and the Kremlin, and has laid bare the conflict over which methods should be used to implement this idea.

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The Orthodox Church sees the idea of the 'Russian World' as rooted in the canonical concept, according to which all believers are part of one Church and one 'Orthodox nation'<sup>21</sup>. This concept is linked to the Church's sense of mission.

<sup>16</sup> In 2013, these goals were inherent in the celebration of the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus', which was used by Moscow Patriarchate and the political leaders of Russia to reinforce their influence in Ukraine. For more see T. Iwański, K. Jarzyńska, 'Russian-Ukrainian tensions with the anniversary of the Christianisation of Kyivan Rus in the background', *EastWeek*, OSW, 7 August 2013

<sup>17</sup> Formoresee<http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=55957>, accessed on 5 August 2014.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Co-operation between the ROC and the Kremlin began to intensify towards the end of Patriarch Aleksei's primacy (2008).

<sup>20</sup> The 'canonical territory' as understood by the ROC is its natural area of influence extending over the countries inhabited by Orthodox people, above all Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. This term appeared in the Russian public space in its present meaning in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It is believed that Patriarch Kirill, who was the head of the Department of External Church Relations at that time, popularised this term.

<sup>21</sup> This notion appears in the document 'The Foundations of the Social Concept of the ROC', which sets the principles of relations between the Church and the state, and determines the ROC's attitude towards social issues. It mentions the nation as a congregation of faith, the 'Orthodox nation.'

In the ROC's interpretation, the term 'Russian World' extends above all to those areas which once belonged to the historical 'Holy Rus', i.e. also to Ukraine and Belarus, apart from Russia. The ROC's leaders have already drawn upon the 'Russian World' concept for a long time, and used the rhetoric of the unity of the 'fraternal' Slavonic nations to entrench the Moscow Patriarchate's influence in this area. To promote this idea in Ukraine, they have principally employed the popularisation of the traditional Christian

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values and Orthodox identity, pastoral work, and strengthening their informal influence on the hierarchs of the UOC-MP. One example of this activity was the frequent pastoral visits Patriarch Kirill paid to the congregation in Ukraine. During these visits he appealed for the unity of Orthodoxy, obviously under Moscow's leadership.

In the Kremlin's interpretation, the 'Russian World' idea is above all a geopolitical concept which it employs to provide grounds for Russia's imperialistic aspirations with regard to its neighbours – first of all the countries which emerged in the post-Soviet area. When Vladimir Putin resumed the presidency in 2012, he adapted the Church's concept of the 'Russian World' as the foundation of the new Russian state ideology<sup>22</sup>, and turned the ROC into an instrument of Russia's political influence on the neighbouring

countries, especially Ukraine<sup>23</sup>. However, Putin has broadened the interpretation of this idea to adjust it to his political aspirations, and also added new elements to it. Apart from the appeal for unity of the 'Orthodox nation', he has incorporated slogans concerning the uniqueness of Russian civilisation, the common historical, cultural and linguistic legacy of the residents of this area, as well as anti-Western slogans in the idea of the 'Russian World'. By annexing Crimean and unofficially supporting the separatists in south-eastern Ukraine, Russia's political leaders have proven that in order to implement their concept of the 'Russian World' as they see it, they are ready to resort to aggressive media propaganda, foment public unrest and even violate Ukraine's territorial integrity using military means. By broadening the 'Russian World' concept, while employing methods which the ROC as a religious institution cannot openly approve of<sup>24</sup> to put this concept into practice, the Kremlin is *de facto* distorting the idea of the 'Russian World' in its original version, and is discrediting the ROC in the eyes of the Orthodox community in Ukraine.

Judging from the reactions of Ukrainian public opinion, the Kremlin's policy under the slogan of consolidating the 'Russian World' is having detrimental effects from the ROC's point of view. This policy has been thwarting the ROC's efforts to reinforce its public position in Ukraine, and is provoking anti-Russian sentiments among Orthodox Ukrainians. This is because the external threat from Russia has served as a catalyst, consolidating a great part of the

<sup>22</sup> For more see M. Menkiszak, 'The Putin doctrine: The formation of a conceptual framework for Russian dominance in the post-Soviet area', *OSW Commentary*, 27 March 2014, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-03-27/putin-doctrine-formation-a-conceptual-framework-russian>

<sup>23</sup> For more see A. Bogomolov, O. Lytvynenko, 'A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine', Briefing Paper, Chatham House, 1 January 2012, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/181667>

<sup>24</sup> The words of protoiereus Vsevolod Chaplin, who is known for his pro-Kremlin views, have given rise to much controversy in circles linked to the Church in Ukraine when expressing his approval for the Russian possible official military intervention in Ukraine and claiming that the entry of Russian troops could be seen as "Russia's peacekeeping and civilisational mission". For more see Interfax-Religion, 1 March 2014, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=54620>

Ukrainian public against the Russian aggressor<sup>25</sup>. The image of Russia as the enemy also encompasses the ROC and Patriarch Kirill, who are associated with the Kremlin.

The Russian annexation of Crimea and Russian support for the militants from the so-called separatist republics of Donetsk and Luhansk have led to a situation where the new government in Kyiv – a city of utmost importance for the Russian Church since its time as the cradle of eastern Christianity – has set itself the goal of leaving the Kremlin’s area of influence. On the other hand, the confrontational stance adopted in the Ukrainian conflict indicates that Russia’s current goal is to destabilise Ukraine and cause its division, which will in practice also lead to a disintegration of the ‘Russian World’.

### Challenges to the Russian Orthodox Church

The Russian Orthodox Church’s reaction to Moscow’s policy towards Ukraine has proven that it is not an independent social actor, but instead is dependent on the Kremlin’s decisions. Even in a situation when the ROC is sustaining losses due to the Russian government’s policy, it is unable to oppose the Kremlin, due to the still considerable benefits which it derives from its co-operation with the state. The stance which the ROC has adopted indicates that the Church attaches a greater value to its role in the authoritarian government system in Russia than to its religious activity, and is ready to play this role in accordance with scenarios created by President Putin and his aides, while merely creating the appearance of neutrality.

<sup>25</sup> Proof of a significant deterioration in Ukrainian attitudes towards Russians include the tone of public discourse in the media and social networks, and the results of public opinion polls, for example one conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (data as of 17 June 2014, <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=rus&cat=news&id=348&page=1>) and Pew Global Attitudes (data as of 7 July 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/09/russias-global-image-negative-amid-crisis-in-ukraine/>)

The ROC is thus losing its opportunity to build up respect among the believers as an independent religious organisation protecting Christian values.

Therefore, even if the Kremlin attempts to use the Russian Church more actively to lobby for its interests in Ukraine, as it did in the past, the ROC’s reliability and effectiveness will be limited: firstly, due to the negative emotions which the ROC raises among the Ukrainian public, as an institution linked to the Kremlin; and secondly, due to the fact that the ROC’s instruments of influence on the Ukrainian Church have weakened. The weakening of the Ukrainian UOC–MP social position and the intensification of its efforts to gain independence from Moscow will mean that the ROC is losing its informal influence on the hierarchs of the UOC–MP, which have thus far been employed as an instrument for influencing Ukraine’s domestic policy.

### The Kremlin’s policy under the slogan of consolidating the ‘Russian World’ is having detrimental effects from the ROC’s point of view

The Kremlin’s aggressive policy towards Ukraine, which the ROC sees as part of the ‘Russian World’, has placed new serious challenges in front of the ROC. Firstly, as a consequence of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the ROC is being treated by the Ukrainian public with increasing hostility, since it is viewed as the Kremlin’s political instrument and an ally of the Russian aggressor, and not as a neutral religious institution, and this is having a detrimental effect on the UOC–MP’s image. These sentiments are already causing difficulty in contacts between the Moscow Patriarchate and the UOC–MP on the social and institutional levels. There is risk that the hierarchs of the ROC, Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Illarion, would become *personae non gratae* in Ukraine.



Secondly, Moscow's aggressive policy is making it more likely that the Ukrainian Orthodoxy will strive for independence from the Moscow Patriarchate, as a result of a stronger desire for emancipation within the UOC–MP on the one hand, and on the other an increase in public respect for its competitor, the UOC–KP. From the ROC's point of view, this would mean the loss of part of its 'canonical territory', and thus the failure of the 'Russian World' concept it promotes – without Orthodox Ukraine, this project will never be completed. If the ROC loses jurisdiction over the Ukrainian Orthodoxy which it has controlled thus far, its position in the global Orthodox community could be undermined. For ages the Moscow Patriarchate has aspired to historical and religious primacy over the entire Orthodox Church, and sees itself as a successor to the Eastern Christian tradition<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, in the face of the Ukrainian conflict, Kirill has distanced himself from the Kremlin's actions so as not to add fuel to the process of Ukrainian Orthodoxy's consolidation outside Moscow, while at the same time blocking the formal mechanisms for granting autocephaly to any of the non-canonical Ukrainian Churches. Kirill achieved a great diplomatic success as regards this issue, when he tactically forced the global Orthodox community to make the assurance that the issue of granting autocephaly to the independent Ukrainian Church would in fact not be raised during the Pan-Orthodox Council in Istanbul planned for 2016<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> The ROC has used the concept of 'the Third Rome' as a justification for these aspirations. However, the historic Kievan metropolis is the cradle of Eastern Christianity. Kiev, the site of the Baptism of Rus', lost its significance as a consequence of the division of Russia into districts and of the Mongol invasion. In 1325, the metropolitan office was moved to Moscow. In 1448, the Orthodox centre in Moscow was granted autocephaly and thus became independent of Constantinople. Since this happened just ahead of the fall of Byzantium, Moscow began to claim the right to be called 'The Third Rome'. The reconstructed Kievan metropolis accepted Moscow's supremacy in 1686.

<sup>27</sup> Patriarch Kirill has been assured that all decisions during the Pan-Orthodox Council will be taken in consensus. It will be impossible to recognise the independence of the Ukrainian autocephaly without official consent from the Moscow Patriarchate, from which it would have to formally separate.

However, one of Ukraine's Orthodox Churches (or a united national Church) could gain recognition through the renewal of the historic autocephaly of the Kievan metropolis, and not by gaining a new autocephaly. Therefore, what the Moscow Patriarchate sees as a negative scenario, i.e. the loss of its honorary superiority over part of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, is still possible<sup>28</sup>. Thirdly, the Russian intervention in Ukraine is cooling relations between the ROC and the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the perception of the Orthodox Church as the Kremlin's 'ideological department' is being entrenched in the West. The ROC's relations with the Vatican have improved over the past few years, which has also been a result of the Kremlin's political calculations<sup>29</sup>. One sign that these relations have seriously deteriorated is the statement by Metropolitan Illarion in an interview for the *National Catholic Register*<sup>30</sup>, in which he accused the Vatican of fomenting tension among the Orthodox people in Ukraine and acting to the detriment of the ROC. He placed the blame for the conflict in Ukraine on Greek Catholics, who are supported by the Vatican and the West, and who, in the ROC's opinion, "have embarked upon a crusade against it." The Metropolitan added that the Patriarch of Moscow would not meet Pope Francis in the immediate future for this reason<sup>31</sup>. This anti-Catholic and anti-Western stance adopted by the ROC coincides with the narrative of the Russian government, which has been consistently blaming the West for the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine.

<sup>28</sup> In the symbolic hierarchy of the Orthodox Churches, the historic Kievan metropolis would have a higher position than the Moscow Patriarchate.

<sup>29</sup> For more see K. Jarzyńska, W. Rodkiewicz, 'Putin u Papieża: ideologia i polityka', *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, OSW, 27 November 2013, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2013-11-27/putin-u-papieza-ideologia-i-polityka>

<sup>30</sup> National Catholic Register, 'The Pan-Orthodox Council, Ukraine Crisis and Christian Unity', 4 March 2014, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/the-pan-orthodox-council-ukraine-crisis-and-christian-unity/>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

## APPENDIX

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### Declared membership of the Orthodox Church in Ukrainian society

70% of Ukrainians declare themselves as members of the Orthodox Church, including (%)		
	2013	2014
Members of the UOC–MP	27.7	25
Members of the UOC–KP	25.9	32
Followers of the Orthodox religion, without being identified with any Orthodox Church	40.8	40

Data: Razumkov Centre, April 2014,  
[http://razumkov.org.ua/ukr/socpolls.php?cat\\_id=93](http://razumkov.org.ua/ukr/socpolls.php?cat_id=93)

### Attitude to religion in Ukrainian society

How important is religion in your life?	Total (%)	Regions of Ukraine			
		Western regions	Eastern regions	Central Ukraine	Southern regions
Very important	26.3	56.0	11.1	18.6	20.1
Quite important	34.5	25.7	41.7	36.3	34.7
Not very important	26.5	13.7	27.3	31.5	31.5
Does not matter	12.8	4.6	19.9	13.5	13.6

Data: World Value Survey 2010-2014,  
<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

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