

## INDEPENDENCE OF THE UKRAINIAN CHURCH: HOW RUSSIA IS LOSING ITS SOFT POWER TOOL IN UKRAINE

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### Abstract

*The establishment of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in the end of 2018 opened the way for discussions of the Church's role in domestic and foreign policies of Russia and Ukraine. Using the theoretical approach developed by Joseph Nye, this article seeks to examine Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) as a soft power tool of Kremlin along with discussing conservative ideology in Russia itself. In addition, the consequences of autocephaly for Russia and ROC are analyzed. The article argues that annexation of Crimea by Russia and the war in Eastern Ukraine facilitated nationalistic mobilization in the country that resulted in the election of an anti-Russian candidate Poroshenko. Poroshenko was the one who promoted establishment of an independent Church despite his political interests. The article also argues that tomos seriously undermines the stability of the Russian World, erected by means of the educational and cultural institutions and deteriorates the position of ROC in Ukraine. The method of content-analysis is used to examine legislation, official speeches on religious issues in Russia and Ukraine, statements of the Churches' representatives, as well as media coverage of the issue in both countries.*

**Keywords:** Autocephaly, ROC, Russia, Soft Power, Ukraine.

## UKRAYNA KİLİSESİ'NİN BAĞIMSIZLIĞI: RUSYA UKRAYNA'DAKİ YUMUŞAK GÜÇ ARACINI NASIL KAYBEDİYOR

### Öz

*Bağımsız Ukrayna Ortodoks Kilisesi'nin 2018 yılı sonunda kurulması, Kilise'nin Rusya ve Ukrayna'nın iç ve dış politikalarındaki rolü hakkındaki tartışmaların önünü açmıştır. Bu makale, Joseph Nye tarafından geliştirilen kuramsal yaklaşımı kullanarak Rus Ortodoks Kilisesi'ni (ROK) Kremlin'in yumuşak güç aracı olarak incelemeyi ve Rusya'da muhafazakâr ideolojiyi tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, otosefalinin Rusya ve ROK için doğuracağı sonuçlar analiz edilmiştir. Makale, Rusya'nın Kırım'ı ilhaki ve Doğu Ukrayna'daki savaşın milli seferberliği kolaylaştırdığını ve bunun sonucunda 2014'te Rus karşıtı bir aday olan Poroşenko'nun seçildiğini savunmaktadır. Poroşenko, her ne kadar siyasi çıkarları için de olsa bağımsız Kilise'nin kurulmasını teşvik eden kişidir. Makale ayrıca, tomosun eğitim ve kültür kurumları tarafından tesis edilen Rus Dünyası istikrarını ciddi şekilde sarstığını ve ROK'un Ukrayna'daki konumunu kötüleştirdiğini savunmaktadır. Makale, mevzuatı, Rusya ve Ukrayna'daki dini meselelerle ilgili resmi açıklamaları, kiliselerin temsilcilerinin beyanlarını ve konunun her iki ülke medyasında nasıl yer aldığını analiz etmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Otosefali, ROK, Rusya, Yumuşak Güç, Ukrayna.

### Introduction

For Russia - Ukraine relations, the year 2018 was marked with the escalation of tensions. The first crisis stemmed from the decision of Constantinople Patriarch to grant

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autocephaly (independence) from the Moscow Patriarchate to Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). This conflict resulted in Russia's break-up with the Constantinople Patriarchate in October. The second crisis was the incident concerning the seizure of the Ukrainian ships in the waters of the Kerch Strait illegally controlled by Russia following the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

This article aims to discuss, first of all, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in Russia's domestic affairs, its institutions abroad as well as Kremlin's use of ROC as soft power leverage. Secondly, the article seeks to examine the meaning of the Ukrainian Church's autocephaly for Russia. It is argued in this paper that ROC is a tool of Russian soft power along with the Russian-speakers abroad. Loss of Ukrainian laity and attractiveness is a logical outcome of the Russian aggression. Seeking for the second presidential term, anti-Russian president Petro Poroshenko used mobilization and anti-Russian mood of Ukrainians to promote new Church. The author also argues that the autocephaly undermines the Russian World established in the post-Soviet space through the institutions of education and culture. Under the newly adopted legislation on Church in Ukraine, ROC appears to be a victim of Kremlin's policies since it loses the communities as well as properties in Ukraine. Additionally, as an institution of soft power, ROC loses attractiveness insofar as associated with the 'aggressor state'. Finally, for Ukrainian president Poroshenko, establishment of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was an effort to secure his victory in 2019 electoral campaign. However, the election of Vladimir Zelensky creates the situation of uncertainty for Kremlin.

For the analysis of ROC, author embraces the soft power theory of Joseph Nye as a framework. Author uses method of content-analysis to analyze official documents of the Russian Federation and Ukraine related to Church, speeches of the leadership, and statements of the clergy. Additionally, content-analysis of the media content related to Orthodoxy is utilized. Although this article covers the period between 2008 and 2019, the particular focus is on the post-annexation policies since the sanctions imposed on Russia determined the need for more active use of the soft power tools. The article starts with the introduction of the soft power theory and review of the literature on the Russian Orthodox Church. It proceeds with the discussion of the conservative ideology in Russia, particularly the role of Church in its establishment and development. The discussion of the soft power of ROC is followed by the analysis of the Orthodoxy in Ukraine and its lust for an independent Church. Finally, the article discusses the meaning of the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine for Russia and ROC.

## **1. THE THEORY OF SOFT POWER.**

This article engages the theory of the soft power defined by Joseph S. Nye as 'getting others to want the outcomes that you want'. Nye emphasizes that soft power 'co-opts people rather than coerces them'. According to him, the main idea of the soft power is 'the ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye, 2005a: 5). As it is specified, co-optation may be reached through agenda-setting and attraction, by means of cultural institutions and values, among others (Nye, 2005: 12). While Nye points out cultural, political and foreign policy components of the soft power, Tsygankov elaborated on the aspects of Russian soft power stressing such components as "mass media, a large and efficient economy, familiar language and religion, aspects of historical legacy, family ties, and electronic products" (Tsygankov, 2006: 1079). Russia uses her soft power tools in the post-Soviet republics and in the countries of the West. This power rests on significant financial sources of the Russian Federation (RF), first of

all. On the other hand, as this article shows, the soft power of Russia includes Russian language and Orthodox Christianity that secure the support from abroad. Besides, Fiona Hill (2006) argues that the soft power of Russia goes far beyond the energy, but includes culture, consumer goods and job opportunities.

Nye (2013) himself is quite critical in evaluation of the Russian soft power. From the position of American scholarship, Nye argues that "for a declining power like Russia [...], a residual soft power helps to cushion the fall". He is trying to compare Russia to the US and accuses Putin who knows nothing about soft power and fails to attract rather than coerce. At the same time, he stresses that grassroots soft power should be preferred to the state-led soft power. Comparison itself does not seem correct if the only standard is the Western liberal model. Criticizing propaganda in China and Russia, Nye fails to take into consideration the securitization rhetoric as to terrorism and extremism in the US in early 2000s, for instance.

Comparative analysis of China and Russia by Jeanne L. Wilson (2015) shows that the soft power of Russia is an attempt to impede and weaken the Western discourses on democratization, in this way it is a response to the new challenges. Both states are preoccupied with the establishment of the soft power that will express their national identity that is 'enlightened conservatism' in case of Russia. In comparison with China, Russia's budget allocated for the soft power is limited, while its programs are regional. At the same time, Russia tends to follow the Soviet-style policies and reconstructs friendship associations and cultural exchange programs (Wilson, 2015: 1190 - 1193). This is proved by the findings of Smagliy (2018), who points out that education was used by the USSR during the Cold War when the concept of the soft power did not even exist (Smagliy, 2018: 22). More detailed analysis of ROC as a soft power tool and its role in Russian foreign policies is accomplished in the empirical studies presented below.

## **2. RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY. LITERATURE REVIEW.**

The literature on contemporary Russian Orthodoxy in political space is represented by three broad approaches. A great number of studies analyze Church from the perspective of conservative ideology and state-led nationalism (Davis, 2002; Verkhovsky, 2002; March, 2005; Anderson, 2007; Mitrokhin et al., 2009; Pron'ko and Malashenko, 2010; Papkova, 2011; Rousselet, 2015; Mihajlov, 2015). This volume of works on ROC examines among others traditional activities of the Church in the Russian army (Osmachko, 2013), places of detention (Osmachko, 2013), religious tourism (Eleskina, 2015). The second group of scholars (Payne, 2010; Blitt, 2011 - 2012; Torkunov, 2013; Suslov, 2014; Savin, 2015; Stoecki, 2015; Laruelle, 2015, 2018) concentrates on the foreign activities of the Church with the particular focus on the soft power of the ROC. Finally, sociological analysis of the laity and attitudes of the citizens towards religion and Church (Levada Center, 2019) constitute the third group of the works on the topic.

The anti-Western and nationalistic standoff of ROC had led to the establishment of the new form of Christian fundamentalism in Russia, says Aleksandr Verkhovsky (2002). It is anti-global and critical as to contemporary Russian society and reforms. Mihajlov (2015), in his turn, stands against the general idea that the Orthodox Church is homogenous. According to him, there are different groups in it, represented by, first of all, conservative and modernist wings. Papkova (2011) argues that the position of ROC in Russian politics had changed since 1991. Under Patriarch Kirill, the position of

Church had strengthened; however, having achieved all the goals compared to 1990s, the Church finds no more issues on which it will be possible to influence Kremlin. Kathy Rousselet examined the Christianity in Russia as the soil for the daily patriotism of Russians noting that the Church and believers are in the service of the country. Her analysis of the Church publications, interviews with priests and laity accompanied by the observation of religious events allows her to conclude that the Church and laity are in the state of combat. This is proved by memory politics with the special attention to conflicts and wars, engaging *Cossaks* and the idea of spiritual struggle or *podvig* (Rousselet, 2015: 52 - 58).

In the foreign policies, ROC is acting to support a construct defined as a *Russian World* by Patriarch Kirill. Blitt (2011 - 2012) discusses the role of ROC in the foreign policy distinguishing between ideological and practical components of it. While traditional Orthodox discourse is a spiritual sphere, the implementation of it lies in the institutions, such as the Russian World (*Russkiy Mir*), and in the collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ROC. Suslov (2014) refers to the 'Holy Rus' or "a decentralized network model of a transnational society that goes beyond the 'nation-state' and offers new ways to give meaning to identity in the post-Soviet space" (Suslov, 2014: 81). As a basis of the Christian civilization, Suslov says, it has an appeal to Messianism and fundamentalism and proposes criticism of the existing social order along with the revolutionary instruments for its change. However, it is hard to agree with the author on the fact of rejection of the rational dialogue with the secular power by ROC as well as on the idea of the proposed radical changes. Fundamentalism is not also a very pragmatic position as soon as Russians are not familiar with the dogmas of the Church, and Russia is still a secular state. However, ROC has never been void of the Messianism. It is actually the basis for the idea of the Moscow – Third Rome and the Russian World, where Russia is seen as a leader or messiah. The Orthodox Church is an instrument of Kremlin, therefore, ideologically and rationally accepts the existing authority. Laruelle (2015, 2018) analyzes the soft power tools of Russia, notably the Orthodox Church, and provides an overview of the diaspora activities in France (Laruelle, 2018). Her analysis proves far-reaching ambitions of Kremlin: not only the near abroad is the targets of Kremlin's policies, but also the countries of the West are to be attracted by Russian education and culture in order to decrease Russia's isolation after 2014.

### **3. CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY AND ROLE OF CHURCH IN RUSSIA**

When Vladimir Putin occupied the post of the President for the first time, his primary task was to restore sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. However, curbing of the Chechen extremism, re-election and, particularly, the rise of the oil prices in the end of 2000s allowed him not only to promote new nationalist policies but to introduce new conservative ideology. This 'practical' (Fish, 2001) or populist ideology is based on respect to the statehood, authority, order, traditions and Orthodox Christianity.

According to Levada center surveys, almost 80% of Russians identify themselves with the Orthodox Christianity (Levada Center, 2019). This large share is determined by significant Slavic population in the RF. However, there is no pure religious identity of Russians, rather there is an ethno-confessional identity when Orthodoxy means Russian (*russkiy*, an ethnic identity as opposite to citizenship). At the same time, the religiosity of Russians is superficial, not supported by knowledge of the holy texts and dogmas.

Instead, the cultural rituals are in priority. It can be explained by the lack of professional clergy and theology academicians during the Soviet years accompanied by the weak institutions of the Church. Russian constitution declares the separation of state from Church (Constitution of the Russian Federation, Article 14) but this article seeks to show how Putin deliberately used the Orthodox Church, especially following the opposition rallies of 2011 – 2012. Abroad, following the Ukrainian crisis Russia feels the need to use the Orthodoxy as a unifying factor for the Russian World (*Russkiy Mir*) and as a tool to cushion position of the West and decrease the isolation of Russia.

On 8 February, 2012, during the meeting with Patriarch Kirill and religious organizations of Russia, Prime Minister Putin underlined that Russia "need[s] active, direct, effective, daily participation of the religious organizations in the life of society and the state" (Putin, 2012). He called for the greater role of the ROC in promotion of the institution of family, in education and in provision of social care for the insecure Russian citizens. Orthodox Church affects education, first of all. For instance, an elective course titled "Basics of the Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics" has been introduced into the syllabi. It consists of six modules, one of which is "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture" (Ministerstvo Prosveshchenija Rossijskoy Federatsii, 2009). As to the higher education, in 2015, theological education was officially introduced in Russia (Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov', 2015).

The role of the ROC in social politics and family issues can be seen through the prism of its attempts to criminalize abortions. Although position of the government is to keep the procedure legal, the representatives of ROC believe they can at least achieve the exclusion of the abortions from the social security system. Thus, in 2017, participants of the all-Russian public movement *For Life!* and *Orthodox Volunteers* announced that they had collected a million signatures ("Million podpisij", 2017) to support their petition on the ban of the abortions. In autumn of 2016, it was signed by Patriarch Kirill (Gorbacheva, 2018). In February 2017, activists of ROC prepared a document that provided a list of the social indications for abortion in the context of compulsory health insurance (CHI) for up to the 12<sup>th</sup> week. However, Ministry of Health, was in no hurry to agree with the position of the Church on this issue. The ban on abortions would not reduce their number but would move the official ones made in medical institutions to the criminal zone, as it happened in 1930s in the USSR.

Russian Orthodox Church is active in civil society. Its activists, for instance, are founders and volunteers of the organizations providing support and consultancy for women. In 1991, Patriarch Alexiy II blessed the creation of the Holy Dimitriy sisterhood, the community of the sisters of mercy. With their support, in Moscow, Houses for Mother, the crisis centers for women with children, were launched (Miloserdije). The traditional family values are represented in ROC's position on homosexuality. On June 11, 2013, the State Duma, adopted a bill which implies a ban on 'propaganda of homosexuality' (Federal'nyj zakon #135, 2013). According to Mihajlov, who analyzed different streams within ROC, the position of the Church on the issue is not homogeneous. While modernists demonstrate moderate attitude to LGBT communities substantiating criticisms by the statistics of the HIV, conservative radicals, express their thoughts about the connection between LGBT and apocalypses (Mihajlov, 2015).

Along with the attempts to safeguard traditional Russian values, ROC is also active in securing the 'official' version of history. The glorious past and the recognizable heroes accompanied by the spirituality of the Orthodox Christianity have been used not

only in the history textbooks, but also in the mass culture. In this regard, 2017 movie *Matilda*, presenting the love story of the last Emperor Nicholas II and ballet dancer Matilda Kshesinka was criticized by the representatives of the Church. In 1981, Tsar Nicholas II as well as his wife and five children assassinated by the Bolsheviks were canonized as martyrs. Therefore, the story of an affair between the Saint Tsar and catholic ballet dancer undermines the authority and innocence of the Church, while questioning the significance of Romanovs' contribution to the Orthodoxy, as it was proclaimed. Nicholas II is known as the Emperor who facilitated the canonization of some activists of ROC, including Serafim Sarovsky, donated significant amount of money for the construction of churches and monasteries, focused on educating Muslims in the Russian Empire. Film's producer Andrey Uchitel was accused of manipulating history (Juferova, 2016), insulting religious feelings of Russians ("Delo «Matil'dy»", 2017) and undermining family values (Episkop Tihon, 2017), among others. Particularly, the proposition to examine the film on the basis of the article 148 of the Criminal Code, that is 'insulting the feelings of believers', was made by the Duma member and former Prosecutor General of Crimea, Natalia Poklonskaya. Although representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate spoke against the film, they abstained from the demands to ban it, suggesting that the ban would only raise the popularity of the movie.

Russian Orthodox Church is financially strong: according to the Federal Tax Service data, in 2014, the non-taxable income of Church amounted to 930 million US dollars<sup>1</sup>. Between 2000 - 2010s, Russian Orthodox Church obtained lands and buildings from the Russian government: in 2004, the State Duma adopted a law granting the lands to the religious organizations for their needs (Shkel', 2004). In 2010, President Medvedev signed a law on the transfer of religious property of the state or municipal ownership to religious organizations (Federal'nyj zakon RF, 2010). Later, in 2011 - 2012, five more documents regulating the property transferred to Church were adopted (Zakon o cerkovnom imushhestve, 2010). Accordingly, during the period from 1995 to 2010, about 1.1 thousand religious buildings were transferred to religious organizations (9.9% of the number of cultural objects that are religious monuments as of December 1995). Between 2012 and 2016, Church received more than 270 objects of property in 45 regions according to 2010 Federal Law ("Prezident podpisal zakon", 2010). Real estate area is indicated only in 45 objects that is about 55 thousand square meters. (Rejter et al., 2016). In accordance with the law, by 2018, approximately one thousand buildings were transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, about 80% of the remaining religious monuments nationalized during the Soviet period remain the state property. Property transfer is carried out exclusively by the Federal Agency for State Property Management. If the object is a historical and cultural monument the consent of the Ministry of Culture should be obtained. Nevertheless, 2010 Law provoked negative responses of the different groups within the Russian society, including Communists and Ministry of Culture.

In its turn, as it is stated in the *Fundamentals of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000), ROC demonstrates its loyalty to Kremlin. Thus, in 2012, when a punk band Pussy Riot used the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow for their live performance that criticized Church and Putin, five members of the band were sentenced to 2 years in colony. At the same time, Patriarch Kirill said that "the devil

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<sup>1</sup> according to December 2014 exchange rate

laughed at us" ("Russian punk band", 2012) and accused singers of blasphemy (Astrasheuskaya & Gutterman, 2009). The result of ROC's lobby was the adoption of the amendments to the Article 148 of the Criminal Code in order to increase the responsibility 'for insulting the feelings of believers', including establishing criminal responsibility in the form of imprisonment ("Gosduma prinjala zakon", 2013). Between 1997 and 2013, insulting religious feelings was an administrative offense.

Despite the significant role of ROC in Russia, one should not overestimate the influence of the Church on politics in Russia. The firm position of the government as to the abortions shows the limits in the influence of the Church on the Russian leadership. At the same time, the bigger part of the property remains a property of the state that prevents ROC from the financial growth. Another issue is the Isaakiy Cathedral in St. Petersburg the transfer of which from the ministry of culture to ROC is still unclear. Since 1928 the cathedral is one of the biggest museums of Russia and attracts significant number of tourists. The transfer of it to ROC may result in closure of it for the tourists and loss of the museum.

As to the position of people towards Church and its role in the politics, Russians, in general, support the role of the Church in the society. Thus, according to Levada Center surveys, more than 56% of Russians approve the size of impact of ROC on politics. However, the share of those who stands against the intrusion of Church into the public affairs is steadily growing from 11% in 2013 to 15% in 2015. ("Odobrenie roli RPC", 2016). At the same time, Russians positively evaluate the contribution of the religious institutions in promoting moral values and educating the youth.

#### **4. CHURCH AS SOFT POWER LEVERAGES.**

In the foreign affairs, Russian Orthodox Church aims at serving the goals of Kremlin that is the control over the area of primary importance, i.e. the former Soviet republics, and softening the Western countries' position towards Russia. Putin managed to plait the religious ingredient of the Russian ideology into the foreign policy, along with the emphasis on the Russian-speakers abroad. As the head of the Eurasian Movement Leonid Savin notes, Christian Orthodox Church and *Russophones* are the main leverages of the Russian soft power (Savin, 2015). These two are the constituting columns of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World), its spiritual and cultural content (Russkiy Mir, 2009) that together with the Eurasian economic cooperation projects oppose the Western liberalism and unilateralism. If the latter deals with the political and economic institutions, the former seeks to facilitate cooperation in the cultural and spiritual spheres under the guidance of Moscow.

According to the Statute of ROC, it includes the following institutions abroad: two autonomous churches, the Japanese Orthodox Church and the Chinese Orthodox Church (the latter actually ceased to exist in the late 1960s); one self-governing church with the rights of broad autonomy, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate, UOC MP); four self-governing churches, the Orthodox Church of Moldova, the Latvian Orthodox Church, the Estonian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR in New York); one exarchate, Belarusian Orthodox Church; two metropolitan districts, Kazakhstan Metropolitan District (Orthodox Church of Kazakhstan), Central Asian Metropolitan District (Orthodox Church of Central Asia) (Ustav Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi, 2000). So it covers the post-Soviet space including the Baltic countries, except the Caucasus and even has institution in the Western Hemisphere.

As to the involvement of ROC into the foreign policy-making, since 2003, the working group of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Russian Orthodox Church has existed ("Predstaviteli MID i RPC", 2003). The working group meets annually to discuss the most important issues of the Russian foreign policy and international relations. Thus, in November 2018, the group discussed the ways of solution for the humanitarian crisis in Syria ("Predstaviteli MID RF i RPC obsudili", 2018). As Patriarch Alexiy II noted in 2003, MFA and ROC have been actively collaborating in securing religious rights and freedoms of the compatriots ("Predstaviteli MID i RPC", 2003). In 2007, Act of Canonical Communion between ROC and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) was signed (The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, 2007). During the ceremony, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York Laurus promised that "Russian Orthodox Church would constructively develop and deepen our unity and joint service to God and the Russian people, in the Fatherland and in the diaspora". Establishment of the relations with the ROCOR headquartered in the Western Hemisphere, the US, means not only the status of the autonomous unit of the ROCOR within ROC but a tool of influence on the Russians living in traditional Catholic and Protestant countries. Putin was positioned as a unifier of the churches that reinforce his image in the eyes of the Russians. Unification of these churches also jeopardized competition between Constantinople and Moscow (Ginder, 2008). That is why following the announcement of *tomos*<sup>2</sup>, ROCOR released a statement about the break-up of the relations with Fener.

Besides, the ROC is acting through the foundation *Russkiy Mir*. *Russkiy Mir* is a non-governmental organization established in 2007 by Putin's decree (Russkiy Mir, 2007) and is sponsored by the Russian government and oligarchs (Smagliy, 2018). Hilarion, Metropolitan of Volokolamsk and Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, is the member of the Board of Directors. The *Russkiy Mir* foundation focuses on youth exchanges and promotion of academic ties with Western universities. It runs 41 centers of Russian culture in EU member states, including 27 centers at EU universities (Smagliy, 2018: 22).

The place and role of the Orthodoxy in the foreign policies of Kremlin were evaluated by the Russian leadership repeatedly. With the clear references to the works of Aleksandr Dugin on Eurasian civilizations, during 2013 conference of the Valdai Discussion Club, Putin elaborated on complexity of the Russian civilization-state and underlined the role of the Orthodoxy in it. Military, technological and economic strength of the state stems from the moral and spiritual strength of the society, he said mentioning the priority of spirituality before the materialistic issues. Putin also mentioned once again unique identity and multicultural character of Russia (Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, 2013). During the same discussion, Russian President referred to the civilization based on the Orthodox religion, while mentioning the multicultural nature of Russia.

Bringing spiritual and moral component to *realpolitik* is a very pragmatic step of justification of numerous acts of aggression. One should remember that the Kievan Rus' Prince Vladimir was baptized in Crimean city of Khersones near Sevastopol. Putin underlined this fact on December 4, 2014, delivering annual speech to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation following the annexation of the region (Putin, 2014). The adoption of Crimea and Sevastopol into the RF was not only a strategic and

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<sup>2</sup> Important decision in the Orthodox Church. Particularly, decision on independence of the certain unit

security act but a spiritual move that raise the importance of Russia in establishing leadership in the Orthodox world. But first of all, it was an appeal to the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, three Eastern Slavic country that originate from the Kievan Rus'. In July 2018, during the celebration of the 1130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the baptism of the Great Prince Vladimir, Putin stated that the conversion to Christianity was "the starting point for the formation and development of the Russian statehood" ("Putin: "Christianity is the root", 2018). Not deprived of some mystic content, Putin's speech, among others, characterized Prince Vladimir as a warrior that probably had a goal of justifying Russian policies in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria.

ROC not only approves but also actively contributes to the Kremlin's policies. In December 2018, Patriarch Kirill joined the meeting of the Defense Ministry Collegium (Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov', 2018b). On 12 April, Patriarch Kirill met with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and admitted the "active presence of Church in the international affairs" (Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov', 2019b). Patriarch Kirill attends the headquarters of the Russian army on different occasions (Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov', 2019c) and gives motivating speeches to the soldiers as well as diplomacy students (Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov', 2019a) giving a message that both, hard and soft powers of Russia are backed by the Church.

Russian Orthodox Church enjoys active support in the post-Soviet states. During the religious crisis over the decision of Constantinople to grant autocephaly, the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) called on the Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew to 'rethink' the process of granting *tomos* to Ukraine. The head of the BOC, Metropolitan of Minsk and Zaslavsky, Paul, said that the church would suspend service with the bishop of Constantinople ("Mitropolit Pavel: popytka avtokefalii", 2019). Serbian, Polish, Antiochian (Syria) Churches, as the most dependent on Moscow institutions followed the BOC. (Mosalov & Tishhenko, 2019). ROCOR also demonstrated loyalty to Kremlin.

During the Ukrainian crisis of 2013 - 2014, position of ROC and its affiliate in Ukraine, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP), was modest. The UOC MP criticized the Euro-Maidan and the Kyiv Patriarch for his support of the mass rallies in Kyiv and biggest cities of Ukraine. The leaders of the UOC MP even announced their acceptance of Crimea as a part of Ukraine. Moscow Patriarch was also afraid of losing Ukrainian laity and abstained from active engagement into the conflict. Pragmatism and long-term thinking of Kirill prevailed. The representatives of the Church did not attend the ceremony of signing agreement between Crimea and Moscow in March 2018. However, on July 3, 2014, Crimean Diocese sent a report to the Patriarch of Moscow asking for assistance in re-registering its charter in the Ministry of Justice (Aleksandrov, 2015). In fact, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Crimea re-registered itself in accordance with the Russian legislation. Following the autocephaly, anti-Ukrainian stance of the Crimean leadership became even stronger and led to the cleansings against the Ukrainian priests. Thus, the Archbishop of the new Ukrainian Church Kliment, was arrested in the beginning of March in Simferopol ("V okkupirovannom Krymu zaderzhali", 2019).

However, Russian Orthodox Church is active not only in the neighboring countries. In Europe and the US, the main goal of the Russian soft power is to cushion position of the Western countries and decrease Russia's isolation by means of the educational and cultural institutions. This function of the Church has been particularly important after the annexation of Crimea. Western economic and political sanctions

determined the need for the alternative measures to soften anti-Russian stance of the US and European countries. In October 2016, the Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Centre built on a UNESCO World Heritage-listed site near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, was inaugurated ("Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Centre", 2016). As Marlene Laruelle admits, French - Russian bilateral relations are quite strong, including cultural relations because of the Russian diaspora in France. Besides, she points out the strong position of the Orthodoxy in France (Laruelle, 2018) that can be used by Putin in his relations with Macron who is not as Russia- friendly as Sarkozy.

No less important is the proximity of ROC to Papacy in the process of softening of the West. Thus, on 12 February 2016, during his visit to Latin American countries, Patriarch Kirill met with the Pope Francis on Cuba. For Russian side that initiated the meeting, it was a chance to demonstrate that Russia is not isolated from the West. Cuba was chosen as a neutral zone for both churchmen. Pope Francis is sympathetic to Kirill because of his Argentinean origin and young years spent in an authoritarian state. However, the relations between the Holy See and Moscow have not always been void of tensions. Thus, early 1990s were the period of crisis between the two. The main problems were the Catholic proselytism in Russia and other CIS countries, as well as the conflict of the Orthodox and Greek Catholics in the Western Ukraine. Existing issues determined the hesitation of the Pope John Paul II as to the visit to Russia, while the Pope's meeting with the Alexiy II scheduled for 1997 in Graz (Austria) was canceled ("Istorija vzaimootnoshenij RPC", 2017).

New escalation of the conflict between the two confessions occurred in 2002. Its main reason was the decision of the Pope John Paul II to raise the status of the administrative structures of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia to the level of dioceses. The unfriendly to Russia demarche caused a corresponding reaction of the state, the church and the public. A statement was made by Alexiy II and the Holy Synod, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Duma of the Russian Federation, a number of influential public organizations, politicians, public and religious figures. The position of the Orthodox Church was supported by representatives of other religions for Russia. The situation has worsened as a result of recent events in Ukraine, in which representatives of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church took the most direct part, speaking with anti-Russian and Russophobic slogans ("Istorija vzaimootnoshenij RPC", 2017). Recently, parts reached agreement on cultural cooperation.

During the 2016 Latin America tour, Kirill I also visited Paraguay and Brazil, followed by the Antarctica Waterloo Island's visit where he prayed for humankind. Also, in October 2016, Kirill met Her Majesty Elizabeth II as a part of his journey of commemoration of the 300th anniversary of Christianity on British Islands. Particularly, Queen Elizabeth admitted the development of Christianity in Russia within last 20 years. British monarchy positively reviews the development of the conservative values in Russia.

Although ROC has been very active in the foreign affairs it could not impede the anti-Russian mood growing in the closest neighbor. The nationalistic mobilization determined the negative outcome for Russian religious institutions in Ukraine. However, this process has historical roots as well as affected by the pragmatic aspirations of the Ukrainian president.

## **5. ORTHODOXY IN UKRAINE.**

The Orthodox Kyiv Metropolis was transferred to the Moscow Patriarchate through a charter issued by the Ecumenical Patriarch Dionysius and his synod in June 1686. Prince Gideon Chetvertinsky was the first Kiev Metropolitan of the Moscow Patriarchate. In 1688, his title was changed to Metropolitan of Kyiv, Galician and *Malorossiya*<sup>3</sup>. From the beginning of the 18th century, Little Russian eparchies were directly subordinated to the Russian Synod; Kiev metropolitans became ordinary diocesan bishops, who nevertheless had the title of Metropolitan.

After 1991, Orthodoxy in Ukraine has been represented by three institutions. The first one is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, a self-governing body within the Russian Orthodox Church that operated in Ukraine, including the Crimea. As of 2018, it had 19% of the Orthodox citizens. The second one is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC), institution self-proclaimed in 1992 acting under the jurisdiction of Constantinople Patriarchate. It included 43% of the Orthodox adherents in 2018 (Razumkov Center, 2017: 17). The third one is the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), a non-canonical church established in 1917 following the October Revolution and that accounts for 0.4% of the Orthodox of Ukraine. Additionally, there is stable regional affiliation of the religious identification of the Ukrainians: 91% of the citizens in the Western regions of Ukraine consider themselves as believers, while only 43% of the Ukrainians in the Southern parts of Ukraine can say the same (Razumkov Center, 2018: 24).

Some measures for gaining autocephaly by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were undertaken during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko that came to office as a result of the Orange Revolution. Orange Revolution itself was a significant contribution to the mobilization process in Ukraine and became an impetus for changes in national policies in Ukraine. However, the efforts of Yushchenko regarding Orthodoxy in Ukraine appeared to be ineffective. In 2005, he initiated a dialogue between UOC KP and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church that failed. Later, he put an effort to merge UOC MP and UOC KP, and appealed to Fener for the independence of the UOC (Arhiepiscope Umanskij Ioann, 2010). On June 26, 2007, at the meeting of Constantinople Patriarch Bartholomew I and President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko in Istanbul, the question of creating a single local church in Ukraine was discussed (Russkaja Pravoslavnaia Tserkov', 2007). Later, in 2008, Patriarch of the UOC KP Filaret officially met with the delegation of the Constantinople Patriarchate, headed by Metropolitan Emmanuel of Gallia (Adamakis). One of the main omissions of the Ukrainian president was the identification of the Church unification idea with himself and Orange Revolution, therefore it had a short-term nature. The appointment of his elder brother Petro Yushchenko as a chairman of the organization *For Manorial Ukraine* that stood behind all actions of the UOC KP was very promising. But the organization did nothing to facilitate the independence of the Ukrainian Church. At the same time, initial plan of the president considered UOC KP as a basis for the new Ukrainian Church omitting the role of the UAOC. He overlooked the cleavages between different churches in Ukraine and failed to reach agreement with Patriarch Bartholomew (Arhiepiscope Umanskij Ioann, 2010).

Petro Poroshenko, former president of Ukraine, facilitated the process. On the eve of the Pan-Orthodox Council, June 16, 2016, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted

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<sup>3</sup> 'Little Russia' in Ukrainian, historical name for most of the territory of modern-day Ukraine before the 20th century

Resolution "On the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, to the Ecumenical Patriarch on granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine". This provoked a conflict between Ukrainian church and ROC that reached its culmination in late 2018. On October 11, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate abolished the 1686 decision of Synod that allowed Moscow Patriarch the right to appoint Kyiv Patriarch and therefore lifted the control of ROC over the Ukrainian Church (The Ecumenical Patriarchate, 2018). Following this decision, on October 15, ROC declared the break-up with Constantinople (Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov', 2018a). On December 15, the establishment of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was announced (The Ecumenical Patriarchate, 2018). Russia tried to convince Bartholomew using its diplomacy. Visits of the officials and businessmen to Istanbul were recorded. Thus, during his visit to Istanbul in April 2018, Putin had a phone conversation with Bartholomew ("Vladimir Putin pogovoril", 2018). In August 2018, Patriarch Kirill visited Bartholomew in order to convince him not to issue *tomos* for Ukrainian Church (Soldatov, 2018).

The formation of the separate church was an important step insofar as starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ukrainian Church was controlled by the Russian Empire. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when Ukraine was divided between Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia the differences in the nature of Orthodoxy in two different parts of Ukraine started to form. As Kuzio (2010) argued, the language played great role in the process. Besides, civil society was more active and developed in the Western Ukraine that defined the nature of political activism in these regions even in the independence period. However, it is also important to understand that the establishment of the independent Ukrainian Church was the result of Russia's invasion into Ukraine in 2014 and nationalistic mobilization of the Ukrainians. Russia's imperialist policies determined the outcome of the 2014 presidential election, first of all. Anti-Russian Poroshenko got 54.7% during the first round. He received the most votes, about 70%, in Western region of Lviv. Also, turnout in the Western regions of Ukraine was the highest in Ukraine, more than 80%, while average turnout was about 60%. Poroshenko stood for closer relations with NATO and the EU, strong army, diversification of the energy supplies and return of Crimea. Among his main achievements were the visa-free travel to Schengen countries, stronger army and amendments to the Constitution proclaiming Ukraine's pro-Western course. Nevertheless, corruption, high inflation rates, long-lasting war in Eastern Ukraine and huge emigration were the obvious impediments for the second presidential terms. The only trump card could be gaining more independence from Russia and laying down the basis for new pro-European Ukrainian identity consequently he chose to promote independent Church. The support of Poroshenko in Ukraine shortly before the election was low. In February 2019, the leader of the race was Volodymyr Zelensky, the comedian known for his role in the TV series *Sluga Narodu* (People's Servant), with 19%; ratings of Poroshenko and Tymoshenko were 16.8% and 13.8% respectively (Fond Demokratychni Inicyatyvy, 2019). According to 16% of the surveyed, following the declaration of the Holy Synod Poroshenko became the man of the year, while *tomos* was recognized the most important event of 2018 (Fond Demokratychni Inicyatyvy, 2018).

For Kremlin, Poroshenko appeared to be a very convenient figure due to his nationalist anti-Russian stance that allowed Russian policy-makers to develop discourse on 'illegal revolution' and 'Nazi regime' in Ukraine. Under such conditions, Ukraine and Russia have been mutually constituting countries. While for Ukraine, Russia

appeared to be an imperialist aggressor that stimulates the mobilization, for Russia, Ukraine remained the very important part of the ‘Great’ status and threat of ‘Nazi regime’. Newly elected president Zelensky may not be that radical so would complicate Russia’s propaganda on the issue. Additionally, Zelensky has been ironic on the issue of the independent Church comparing *tomos* to thermos in his speeches. Apart from recognizing *tomos* as a victory, Zelensky avoids discussions on religious issues that makes him difficult to predict. He will definitely pay less attention to the issues of Church since parliamentary election and formation of pro-president majority will be the most important tasks of the president in the near future. Besides, Zelensky seems to be modern and pro-European young man in comparison with Poroshenko therefore he will probably diminish the role of Church in the politics. Up to now, he met with the heads of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine on 30 April to celebrate Easter (“Zelenskij vstretilsja s”, 2019).

Establishment of an independent Church, although it has been accomplished with the pragmatic goal, is still an important stage of the self-determination for Ukraine. But it is no less important for Russia considering the threat to the Russian World and growing isolation of the country. Besides, Russian Church itself, and more importantly, its Ukrainian affiliate, appears to be a victim of Kremlin’s policies.

## **6. INDEPENDENT UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR RUSSIA?**

For Russia, *tomos*, first of all, means the failure to play a leading role in the restoration of the ‘Holy Rome’ by means of the Moscow Patriarchate. Since 1453 when Constantinople was seized by the Ottomans, the competition between Moscow and Constantinople for leadership in the Orthodox world has been going on. Independence of the UOC is a failure of Russia to secure succession of the Byzantium heritage and its inability to secure moral rebirth of the Orthodox Christians. At the same time, Russia has understood its deficiency in the spread of moral and cultural values over the closest neighbor and another biggest Eastern Slavic country, Ukraine. This provoked a harsh response of Kremlin: speaker Peskov announced the readiness of Moscow to protect Orthodox believers abroad (Latuhina, 2018). Before, Russia’s decisiveness to protect Russians abroad was based only on the factor of language. But the threat to Russophones in the near abroad provoked invasion into Georgia and Ukraine.

Ukrainian Church is not the first religious institution that has achieved independence from Moscow. In 1996, Estonian Autonomous Orthodox Church was established upon the decision of Constantinople as the exiled Orthodox clergy had come back to the country. This also provoked the conflict between Moscow and Fener, when Alexiy II announced the break up with Constantinople (Mite, 2002). But the patriarchs managed to settle down the conflict through the lease agreement over the properties. Unlike in case of Estonia, in Ukraine, Orthodoxy is dominating religion and its independence is much more significant. *Tomos* emphasized and increased the level of Russia’s isolation, political, economic and now spiritual.

Eurasian civilization theorized and designed by Dugin and constructed through the EurAsEc and Customs Union as well as *Russkiy Mir* as a contrast to Western liberalism and unilateralism is now falling apart. The impetus for this was EuroMaidan and annexation of Crimea in March 2014: three days later Ukraine finalized the Association Agreement with the European Union (Government Portal). After the annexation of Crimea, Russia is losing Ukraine not only politically and economically.

Russia also loses its hybrid war and soft power instruments in Ukraine. Ukrainian TV and radio channels become more popular. In 2017, Ukraine passed a law that banned teaching in languages other than Ukrainian beyond the primary school level. The Ukrainian nationalistic euphoria can be traced in mass culture and everyday life. Establishing its own religious institution with the support of the Constantinople Patriarchate is a step that followed rally-round-the-flag. Now, Russia's efforts are directed towards Belarus: on December 14, Prime Minister Medvedev announced the necessity for closer integration with Belarus. Integration of currencies, judiciary systems and customs can end up with the annexation of the republic since Lukashenko prepared Belarus to silent obedience by wiping out the opposition and civil society ("Otkrovennyj shantazh", 2018). On the other hand, Belarus is willing to use this historical chance in order to get more through the bargains. Annexation of Belarus, would create a serious threat to the Northern border of Ukraine. And this exceeds the framework of the soft power proving the fact that Russia prefers to reinforce the former with the tanks.

Under these conditions, ROC should not be treated as an institution identical to the Russian government. As it was shown in the previous parts of this article, ROC is used by government wisely and deliberately, but they both have their own interests. Thus, in this crisis, Moscow Patriarchate not only loses the believers from Ukraine, but also breaks the relations with Constantinople that increases isolation of Russia. ROC MP has already been losing its adherents because of the war in Eastern Ukraine. Thus, according to 2017 Razumkov Center report, for the first time in the history of the sociological research in Ukraine, the number of adherents of the UOC KP reached twice the number of the adherents of the UOC MP: 27% vs. 12% in 2017, compared to 25% vs. 15% in 2016. In total, the number of adherents of the UOC MP in Ukraine dropped from 43% in 2010 to 15% in 2017 in the Southern regions, and from 22% to 12% in the Eastern regions (Razumkov Center, 2018: 24). Moscow Patriarchate, very popular during the Presidency of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich, loses supporters in the aftermath of Russia's invasion. New Church is very much pro-European that will become a basis for a new identity of the Ukrainians. What is more important, ROC's influence on the Russian government will diminish insofar as Kremlin needs strong institutions of the soft power with the symbolic capital, as Kathy Rousselet notes (Rousselet, 2015). ROC is no longer attractive for the Ukrainians since instead of moral values it supports the 'aggressor state' and gives motivation to its army (Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov', 2019a) fighting in Donbass and Syria.

ROC itself, and first of all its affiliate in Ukraine, is a victim of the aggressive Russian policies. Recently, a few documents have been adopted in Ukraine in order to deteriorate the position of ROC. Thus, on December 20, Ukrainian parliament voted for the law that obliges the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate possessing the status of a self-governing part of the Russian Orthodox Church, to change its name. It is supposed to reflect its affiliation to the Russian Orthodox Church (Zakon Ukrajiny, 2018). In this way, the location of the religious center on the territory of the 'aggressor state' would be clearly represented in the title. Such decision provoked negative response of the UOC MP since they consider their Church to be independent from Moscow but connected spiritually. The protests of the believers proved the reluctance of the Russian Church to deal with the consequences of the Kremlin's policies in Ukraine. Having estimated the decisiveness of some UOC MP's communities to join new Church, on 17 January Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a

law on religious communities. According to it, the members of the religious community may choose their community's subordination through the voting procedure (Zakon Ukrainy, 2019). As it can be concluded from the statement of Irina Lutsenko, Poroshenko's representative in Ukrainian parliament, by 16 January, 70 communities of the UOC MP had joined the new Church ("Irina Lutsenko: okolo 70 prihodov", 2019).

The UOC MP is also losing its properties. A number of monasteries and churches which were either leased to UOC MP by the government or belonged to it, are to be transferred to Constantinople upon the decision of Poroshenko. Such transfer was a condition of the agreement between Poroshenko and Bartholomew. ("Poroshenko uzhe razdaet", 2018). One of them is the monastery in Mezhygor'ye, the residence of the former president Yanukovich. The official list of the buildings has not been published though and bears the declarative character. Additionally, new President Zelensky may not be as radical as his predecessor on the issue of property.

As to the reaction of Kremlin, Russia did not leave the decision of the Constantinople Patriarch without response. Immediately following the announcement of *tomos*, Russia broke up relations with Patriarch of Constantinople announcing that Russian believers can no longer pray at Mount Athos. Besides, the incident in the Kerch Strait occurred when the crews of the Ukrainian boats were arrested and accused of violating Russia's territorial waters. In this way Russia has to reinforce its soft power with the hard one. Additionally, recently Russia stopped supplies of coal, crude oil and oil products to Ukraine in April. Following the announcement of 2019 election results, Putin declared Russia's willingness to provide its citizenship to the people from Donetsk and Luhansk (Ukaz Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii, 2019).

As to the Catholic Church, Vatican preferred to stay neutral during the conflict. It can be explained by two reasons: the competition over the Ukrainian parishes was not desirable for the Pope, on the one hand. At the same time, the establishment of the relations with the Moscow Patriarchate had taken time and effort, so Vatican did not want to provoke a conflict with Moscow.

Following the establishment of the new Church, in its propaganda, Russia upgraded main themes by adding new narratives such as the 'schism provoked by Ukraine'; 'politicized Church in Ukraine'; 'illegal action of the Ecumenical Patriarchate' (#WordsAndWars Digest 2, 2019). Through these narratives Russia is trying to impose the responsibility for the schism in the Orthodox world on the 'Nazi regime' of Poroshenko, accuse him of manipulating the religious issues and undermine the legality of Constantinople's decision. As it was mentioned above, Zelensky most probably will not be a suitable figure for such manipulations and totally new image of Ukraine would be worked out by Kremlin for the sake of propaganda.

To sum up, Russia loses its soft power over Ukraine since its institutions and values are no longer attractive. They are being associated with the 'aggressor state'. Church, instead of dealing with spiritual and moral values, has sunk deeply in politics and conflicts. Traditional ideology is rather ultra-conservative and imperialist. Soft power here is rather a zero-sum that contradicts to Nye's definition of it. For Kremlin, only one ideology can exist in Ukraine, so it should be Kremlin's ideology. The analysis of the Church proves that it bears state-led character and has a propaganda goal, rather than desire to attract people. Although the clergy abstains from the direct involvement into the conflicts, like one can see in the case of Crimea, the speeches of churchmen and media narratives of Kremlin show that Church is a tool of the government.

## Conclusion

The analysis has showed that spiritual sphere is not the only area of the Church's activity. ROC is active in domestic and foreign policies either. Moscow, for centuries, has been using religion for the sake of political decisions. The activation of the role of ROC can be seen during Medvedev's presidency due to the change of the Patriarch and necessity to establish a dialogue with the people. Former KGB official Patriarch Kirill seems to be more assertive and ambitious in the utilization of Church in comparison with the Patriarch Alexiy II. The standoff of ROC is populist, since it acts in different spheres, including political and economic, but lacks professional cadres and educated laity. As to the foreign policy, ROC is dealing not only with spiritual matters, but education, culture, politics. Church exceeds the borders of the former USSR, especially following the imposition of sanctions against Russia. Therefore, ROC cannot be treated as a regional soft power, despite the discussion of Wilson about its regional character. Also, Russia faced the need to move beyond the Soviet Union's practices of the sport or youth events and appeal rather to traditional conservative values of family, social responsibility, respect for authority. Discourse of the Church contains mystical and utopian component, as Suslov notes, and differs by Messianism pragmatically used by Kremlin as a smokescreen.

Annexation of Crimea by Russia and the war in Eastern Ukraine facilitated nationalistic mobilization in Ukraine that resulted in the election of an anti-Russian candidate Poroshenko in 2014. Poroshenko was the one who promoted establishment of the independent Church although for his political interests. The article also proved that *tomos* seriously undermined the stability of the Russian World, erected by means of the educational and cultural institutions and deteriorated the position of ROC in Ukraine. Under these conditions, Russia's isolation is growing: the sanctions against Kremlin move from the political and economic stage to spiritual sphere.

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