

I.  
Ringens um individuelle und politische  
Selbstbestimmung



# Ukrainian National Identity in Transition: Geopolitics and Values

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Turbulent events in Ukraine, which began in late 2013 on Maidan Square in Kyiv, have sparked a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, causing serious concern for the integrity of the country itself and to the neighboring countries' foreign and security policies. The conflict carries major and long-lasting consequences not only for the geographical, political, national, social, cultural and religious transformation of Russia and Ukraine, but also a profound shift in the methodology of international relations. To put it in the words of NATO's deputy secretary general Alexander Vershbow at his speech at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, "Russia's aggression against Ukraine is not an isolated incident, but a game-changer in European security."<sup>1</sup>

One of Russia's recent projects – a creation of a so called 'Novorossiya' (New Russia) – aimed to gain more of the eastern-southern Ukrainian territories. This would allow Vladimir Putin's Russia not just to dominate the entire Black Sea northern littoral but also to expand its territory to the borders of Moldova and Romania. The Ukrainian peoples' reaction to this plan, including in the stormy months of armed violence in Kyiv, Russia's annexation of Crimea and anti-terrorist battles in the east of Ukraine – what became known as 'the Ukrainian crisis' and which now is more frequently regarded as the Russian-Ukrainian war, is often seen as the third attempt since Ukraine's Independence in 1991 and the Orange Revolution of 2004 to overcome post-Soviet authoritarian structures in the country.

This contribution offers a hermeneutical analysis of the internal socio-ecclesial, political and religious aspects of the conflict. It covers a transition in the Ukrainian people's self-perception during the last few years, expressed particularly in the Euromaidan uprising or 'Revolution of Dignity.' I situate the legacy of the Ukrainian-Russian political discord within a larger context of the religious diversity in contemporary Ukraine, offer an examination of the role that the Church and non-Christian religious

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1 [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_117068.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_117068.htm) (access on 4/09/2015).

communities played in the national transformation of the Ukrainian identity, and, lastly, attempt to explore the complex interplay between two phenomena: ‘Orthodox politics’ and ‘political Orthodoxy.’

### *1. A quick look into the past. Legacy of the Russian-Ukrainian Discord*

The events of the past years in Ukraine have developed into an unprecedented and very complex multifaceted phenomenon, which appears incomprehensible at the first glance. There have been many attempts, both from the inside participants and the outside observers, to analyze this phenomenon by using the familiar methodologies and political vocabulary, such as pro-European movement, anti-Soviet autocracy uprising, national(istic) liberation movement etc. However, it is rarely possible to solve new issues by using old methods. More nuanced analytical language and explanatory models are still lacking to fairly describe the birth of a new civil society in Ukraine. In order to better understand the roots of the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity and the subsequent turmoil in the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine, one needs to make a precise distinction between, on the one hand, the existing problems of the different political attitudes toward “the West” and “the East” and, on the other hand, intentionally imposed propagandistic clichés regarding ‘unbridgeable’ internal “East-West” divisions.

The past 25 years in Ukraine have been wrought with both hopes and disappointments. This began with national independence, endorsed by 90% of the citizens in 1991 but which was eventually compromised by the predatory elite. This culminated in the 2004 Orange Revolution that also did not live up to the high expectations preceding it. The 2010 election of Viktor Yanukovich only changed things from bad to worse. Quickly the narrow circle of the president’s allies nicknamed “The Family” usurped all power, accumulated enormous resources via corruption schemes, destroyed the court system, encroached on civil liberties and violated human rights. To give an idea of the extent of the embezzlement, since 2010, cash flows out of Ukraine are estimated by the Prosecutor General’s office to be nearly \$100 billion.<sup>2</sup> This is an example of the hypocrisy of the ruling elite who claim to be pro-European and anti-corruption.

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2 <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBREA3T0K820140430?irpc=932>.

The dire results of this elite rule became evident not only in the economic stagnation and the virtual collapse of the financial system under the burden of international and domestic debts, but also in Ukraine's dramatic downgrading in various international ratings, and its relegation from a "Free" to a "Partly Free" country in the Freedom House rankings. However, probably the most damaging consequence of the misrule is the complete distrust of the Ukrainian citizens in every single state institution. By the end of 2013, only 2% of respondents fully trusted Ukrainian courts (40% declared they had no trust in them at all), 3% trusted the police, the prosecutor's office, and parliament, and 5% trusted the government. The only institutions with a positive balance of trust/distrust appeared to be the churches, NGO's and the mass media.

Viktor Yanukovych's decision to not sign the Association Agreement was an explosive moment of truth. In fact, the Maidan uprising meant a confrontation of two diametrically opposed worlds, two political systems and sets of values: the "Europe" embodied by the EU and the "Eurasia" embodied by Putin's Russia.

On 25 May 2014, Petro Poroshenko was elected president of Ukraine. The election of the millionaire "Chocolate King" was unsurprising. What came as a surprise, however, was the fact that for the first time the election of the president of Ukraine was achieved in one round of voting. With 23 candidates running, Petro Poroshenko got 56% of the vote, according to exit polls, clearing the 50% threshold to win outright without a second round.<sup>3</sup> Ukraine finally elected a head of state whose legitimacy was rooted in democratic processes.

This resounding victory was an expression of the Ukrainian people's hopes for an end of the power vacuum at the top of their state's political system after months of accelerating violence. The task of the president-elect, which was simplistically summarized in five words: 'to stop the 'Ukrainian crisis' pursued an ambitious yet urgently needed agenda: to stabilize the situation on the eastern part of the country; do away with corruption; and

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3 Shaun Walker, *Petro Poroshenko wins Ukraine presidency, according to exit polls*, in *The Guardian* (from May 25, 2014) at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/25/petro-poroshenko-ukraine-president-wins-election> (retrieved on July 24, 2014); Two „nationalist“ candidates Tyahnybok and Yarosh got less than 2,5% taken together and each less than a Jewish candidate Rabinovych (2,2%); 500,000+ Ukrainians are said to have voted abroad (most of them had to travel hundreds of km), which is so far the highest turnout of Ukrainian diaspora.

move ahead with painful economic reforms. Despite the *de facto* frozen conflict in the east of the country, political life in Ukraine became relatively more stable in 2015. Freedom House reports some progress on the huge range of reforms Ukraine requires to become a fully democratic state based on the rule of law.<sup>4</sup> The position of President Poroshenko was strengthened in part due to the weakness of his rivals; while public confidence in him decreased, he still enjoyed the highest approval ratings of Ukraine's top politicians.<sup>5</sup>

For Europe, however, as the British scholar of Ukrainian studies, Rory Finnin, argues, Ukraine remains largely a *terra malecognita*: a diverse, complex, understudied and often badly understood country.<sup>6</sup> The contemporary language of Europe's interests towards the post-Soviet countries, Ukraine in particular, shifted to become predominantly (if not exclusively) a discourse on geopolitics, business, economics, national policy and military defense. Yet, in my opinion, there can be (and should be) much more on this agenda – as Euromaidan, for instance, demonstrated that there is a language of values and personal and civic dignity which remains central to the democratic transformation of this country and sets a tone for its relationships with other states.

Ending the Russian-Ukrainian war became a test to the United States and European leadership of this generation. Some suggest that countering Russian aggression needs to be done by imposing even stricter economic sanctions and a more effective presence of the Western communities, while others claim that it is better for the international community to stand aside this complex matter, as it should be resolved solely between Russia and Ukraine.

As for Ukrainian society itself, the armed conflict became a turning point in the development of a national and civic identity. The 'Revolution of Dignity' gave rise to a new civil society which had been missing for many years in the post-Soviet countries. It was a rebirth of the society itself, based on basic principles of rule of law, human dignity, protection

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4 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2016/ukraine>

5 "На президентських виборах Порошенко знову переміг би Тимошенко" [At presidential elections Poroshenko would win again over Tymoshenko], Dzerkalo Tyzhnya, 16 October 2015, [http://dt.ua/POLITICS/na-prezidentskih-viborah-poroshenko-znovu-peremig-bi-timoshenko-188178\\_.html](http://dt.ua/POLITICS/na-prezidentskih-viborah-poroshenko-znovu-peremig-bi-timoshenko-188178_.html)

6 Finnin, R., *Ukraine: Europe's Terra Malecognita*, at [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-rory-finnin/ukraine-europes-terra-malecognita\\_b\\_1653469.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-rory-finnin/ukraine-europes-terra-malecognita_b_1653469.html)

of human rights and strong civic and religious values. And although the society will still need many years to be educated, to develop and to reinforce itself, it has already become the society of a newly transformed nation.

## *2. Ukraine on the Map of Values*

The people's uprising, which began on Kyiv's Maidan Square and continues in its various forms up until today, is certainly more about a growing people's movement than plain political expression. The Maidan started as a protest against the destruction of the dignity of the Ukrainian people operated by a power that tried to solve the problem of security with strength. It was the people's reaction against the general atmosphere of fear and intimidation, against wanton corruption and oppression in the country. Unlike a Bolshevik-style revolution of marginals, lumpens or social outcasts, the Maidan Uprising was carried out primarily by educated people: the middle class, students, professionals, and businessmen. According to sociological surveys, nearly two thirds of the Maidan protesters were people with higher education.<sup>7</sup> As such, the Maidan was neither a "nationalistic mutiny" nor "election technologies" applied by the opposition, as Viktor Yanukovich and his Kremlin patrons claimed. Rather, it was a classical social revolution, an attempt to complete the unfinished business of the 1989 East European anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial uprisings. It was clearly a bottom-up movement with the citizens at its core, striving to (re-)gain the power of the powerless and aiming at civil self-empowerment. In a number of ways this event resembles the 1968 democratic revolutions that spread in Europe and across the globe introducing a radically new, non-materialistic agenda.

A strong desire of the Ukrainians to keep it as citizens' movement without involving political forces testified, on one hand, to the distrust of the political class that characterized the country at that time, and on the other, to a certain independence from the imposition of any external political agendas on the protestors. Maidan brought in a new way of thinking about the relationship between the citizens and the state based on the accountability of politicians towards voters, the interplay of national and religious identity, and the shift from powerlessness of the inherited past of

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7 <http://dif.org.ua/ua/events/vid-ma-zminilosj.htm>.

the country to people's self-empowerment to be able to design its future for next generation rooted in freedom and democracy.

And so, as an embodied expression of the Ukrainian people's affirmation of the right to self-determination, the Revolution of Dignity was much more than just a regime change. Neither the national matters, which are often reduced to the questions of geopolitics, language or historical memory, nor the desire to become a member state of the European Union were central to the Ukrainian Euromaidan. The Revolution embodied the understanding of the universality and urgency of social transformation with a particular emphasis on the attitude of active co-responsibility, and thus pushed against the Soviet legacy of blind obedience and conformism. At the heart of the people's uprising was the shift – or rather the revolution – of values.

The mapping of the Ukrainian value system, performed by the World Value Surveys, confirmed that the profound shift in values in the country in three waves, although slow and sometimes incoherent was nonetheless persistent and probably irreversible. The surveys reflected, on the one hand the predominance of 'secular-rational values' versus 'traditional values'; and, on the other hand, they identified the country's shift from the process of modernization and industrialization characterized by the so-called 'survival values' to a move towards the post-industrial (service) development model with its roots in the values of 'self-expression'.<sup>8</sup> The two waves of data collection also revealed that in the last two decades Russia remained within the former industrial socio-economic model, while Ukraine made a noticeable transition to the latter post-industrial one. Based on the comparative data analysis of the cases of Ukraine and Russia, the designers of the World Value Surveys, Christian Welzel and Ronald Inglehart, made an important claim that the societies leaning toward 'self-expression' values have a lower chance of accommodating and/or sustaining the authoritative power.<sup>9</sup> According to Yaroslav Hrytsak, herein lies the major drama of the Ukrainian–Russian relationship: while 'Ukrainians of Euromaidan are preoccupied with modernization and values, Putin's Russia worries about security and identities'.<sup>10</sup> If these observations are true and a gradual shift from materialist to post-materialist values is a reality in Ukraine,

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8 R. Inglehardt; Ch. Welzel, *Changing Mass Priorities: The Link Between Modernization and Democracy*, in: *Perspectives on Politics*, June 8, no. 2 (2010), p. 555.

9 Cf. Ch. Welzel, R. Inglehart. *The Role of Ordinary People in Democratization*, in *Journal of Democracy* (2008), pp. 126–140.

10 Y. Hrytsak, *Ignorance Is Power*, in *Ab Imperio*, 3/2014, pp. 218–228, p. 225.



any attempt to install a fully-fledged authoritarian regime in Ukraine was doomed from the very beginning.<sup>11</sup>

The studies of the values transition processes indicate that Ukraine is indeed divided. However, they also mark a profound break away from the linguistic, religious or historical memories divides. Meanwhile, the new divides across age, class and education, which in 2013 split the country more profoundly, tend to be largely overlooked. However, if they continued to be overlooked, it becomes very difficult to understand what brought Maidan on the first place and why it was significantly more than just civilian dissatisfaction with the issue of the non-signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union.

This is most noticeable in the correlation of the attitudes of different age groups with various value-charged issues. The 2013 national value survey<sup>12</sup> reveals a strong link between the age, class and education of respondents and their attitude toward some fundamental issues such as “democracy versus a ‘strong hand’,” “freedom of speech vs. censorship,” “a planned economy vs. the free market,” and, the most general issue, “lamenting/not lamenting the demise of the Soviet Union.” The data also reveals that ethnic Russians are much more prone to long for the Soviet Union than ethnic Ukrainians. The reason is rather simple: for Russians and Russophiles it was much easier to internalize the Soviet ideology as “ours” than for their Ukrainian counterparts who strove to preserve their cultural identity.

The fundamental differences in political orientations of Ukrainians lie not in languages or cultures, but rather in political traditions that have historical origins. It is high time now to get rid of propagandistic stereotypes and to re-conceptualize Ukrainian cleavages as primarily ideological rather than ethnic or regional. There are two political nations with different values and development vectors that cohabit in the same state – Eurasian and European. The nation of paternalistic subjects and of emancipated citizens that bear the same name but are fundamentally divided by the very idea of what Ukraine is and should be.

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11 The WVS Cultural Map of the World; [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder\\_published/article\\_base\\_54](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_54)

12 Sociological group ‘Reityng [Rating], Кілька тез про ціннісні орієнтири українців [A few theses about value orientation of the Ukrainians], in [http://www.ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG\\_Orientyry\\_052013.pdf](http://www.ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG_Orientyry_052013.pdf), May (2013), p. 8, 11, 14, 18 (retrieved on 31/07/2016).

### 3. Religious Diversity and Awakening of the Ecclesial Solidarity in Ukraine

The social transformations that have been taking place in Ukraine have also greatly affected inter-church relations. They brought the complexity of the confessional and religious situation in Ukraine to the forefront of the discourse as well as some serious questions, which churches have tried to answer in the past 25 years of the country's independence. In this particularly uneasy period the churches undertook one of the most important tasks: to identify a socio-political ideology in order to unite the country or, at least, to avoid splitting it any further.

Characteristically for Ukrainian society churches play a pivotal role in the re-discovery of the value of national and religious identity as well as the nature of the church itself as a particular form of social life. Churches carry the responsibility for solid social formation. As the Revolution of Dignity was not solely a secular event but intrinsically religious, any interpretation of it that does not take the role of religion into serious consideration would be incomplete. The question about what role, if any, churches should play in the international political conflict between Ukraine and Russia seems to have captured the attention of many intellectuals yet still remains a marginal area in comparison to other research interests. Especially now, when the post-Euromaidan Ukraine is experiencing the dramatic anthropological metamorphosis from *homo Sovieticus* to *homo Maidanus*, the role of religions and churches is indispensable. While discussing the responsibility of the churches in the (trans)formation of civil society and the protection of fundamental human rights, some even made an attempt to initiate a 'Revolution of Dignity Theology'. Instead, the Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate claimed that taking part (or sides) in this revolutionary movement is sinful and should be condemned.

According to the current Constitution of Ukraine, churches are separated from the state (§35),<sup>13</sup> yet they are not separated from the society. Since the Maidan, the continuous presence of priests, prayer and an unprecedented level of cooperation between various Christian denominations as well as non-Christian religious communities have shaped the revolution as a spiritual and moral event, not just as a political one. The active role of the churches became the unique formative element of a rebirth of the religious and national consciousness of the Ukrainian people.

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13 Constitution of Ukraine, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/44a280124.pdf>

Ukraine is the only country among post-socialist countries of Central-Eastern Europe, which does not have dominant church and thus can enjoy religious freedom and diversity of belief traditions. In contrast to Russia, Ukraine seems to be both church-minded<sup>14</sup> and open to religious pluralism. In 2011, there were around 34,000 churches and religious organizations registered in Ukraine (in a country with a population of about 45 million people).<sup>15</sup> The category of ‘traditional’ churches could be fairly equally applied to three major Orthodox jurisdictions, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Armenian ecclesial community, as well as to a variety of Protestant Churches (Lutherans, Calvinists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists.)

Churches in Ukraine assume a service to the people as protector and teacher of fundamental human values, particularly by the proclamation of liberty and respect for human dignity and thus stand for liberation from the reality of sin, both personally and, more importantly, socially. The Maidan brought the significance of the practical effectiveness of the churches’ role to the fore: it is not enough only to proclaim the good; the church is called upon to manifest and achieve good with a conscious preference for the common good.

As an inseparable part of the human environment, the churches in Ukraine became involved in social transformation through their prophetic presence by remaining vigilant to the signs of the times, witnessing the good and criticizing the evil, by teaching God’s word and by learning its manifestation from people within and around them and, most importantly, by taking concrete action in reaction to social injustice. Based upon a genuine sense of dignity, equality, fundamental rights and freedom of all, most churches clearly manifested their opposition to any kind of oppression and pleaded for a new focus on social justice.

Strivings to overcome injustice and violence were supported and sustained by the clergy from all of these traditional Christian communities (except the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate), as well as Jewish and Muslim religious leaders. Acting in harmony, the churches held ecumenical prayers, set up so-called ‘ecclesial tents,’ where

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14 Razumkov Center’s research conducted in late May 2013 reveals that Ukrainians have the most trust in the church, the media, and the armed forces, and the least trust in the parliament, the president, and the courts. Cf. [http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/poll.php?poll\\_id=83](http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/poll.php?poll_id=83)

15 Cf. <http://risu.org.ua/en/index/reference>

priests and pastors granted people confessions, spiritual and psychological consolation as well as physical help. Many monasteries and church buildings were turned into field hospitals providing basic medical help and shelter for the wounded.

### *All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations*

An enormous peacekeeping role in facing both the threat of external danger and special internal challenges was played by the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations. It is a unique unifying body that brings together representatives of eighteen of the largest Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, representing over 90 percent of religious adherents, and is currently chaired by Mykhailo Panochko, head of Union of Churches of Christians of Evangelical Faith. Its role of protecting universal human values and building peace became particularly discernable since the unfolding of the international conflict between Ukraine and Russia. In its statements and concrete actions, the interreligious council regards and appreciates European values as, primarily, respect for human dignity, support of peoples' initiatives, protection of their citizens' rights, the rule of law and many other fundamentals of a free democratic society. In order to overcome aggression and establish a just peace in Ukraine, the council extends far beyond its expected role as the representative and the unifying force of the voices of the faithful of various religious denominations, and whenever possible, calls to unite the efforts of society, all branches of government, political parties, and civil organizations.

The first major joint statement was issued by the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations during the Maidan uprising on 10 December 2013 and conveyed four main points: the government should listen to the people; violence is unacceptable; Ukraine is an indivisible state; and dialogue is the only legitimate path.<sup>16</sup> Ever since the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations has consistently defended not only the religious freedom of the Ukrainian people, but has also supported peaceful protests against the use of force and punishment,<sup>17</sup> strongly condemned any attempt to divide Ukraine,<sup>18</sup> expressed support

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16 [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/state/national\\_religious\\_question/54569/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/state/national_religious_question/54569/)

17 [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/confessional/aucacro/55391/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/aucacro/55391/)

18 [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/confessional/aucacro/55984/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/aucacro/55984/)

for a legitimate Ukrainian Government, and stressed the importance of preserving religious peace in the country. When the Russian aggression accelerated with the annexation of Crimea and believers faced the threat of the ban of their worship and religious activities on the peninsula, the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations made serious attempts to protect the freedom of religion and interests of local Ukrainian believers and religious communities.<sup>19</sup> In late October 2014 in response to the emerged war and on behalf of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, the presiding then chairman of All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, Patriarch Filaret, encouraged Ukrainians of different religions and denominations to support and defend their homeland and called on the faithful to organize humanitarian aid in the anti-terrorist operation area.<sup>20</sup>

### *Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church*

Resistance to the Kremlin's propaganda, which has permeated all areas of social and cultural existence, became a question of 'life and death' for the voices that openly oppose Putin's agenda with regard to Ukraine. In particular, in early January the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has come under particular scrutiny from the government for its involvement in the protests. The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture sent a letter to the Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Svyatoslav Shevchuk, threatening a revocation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's legal status as its support of the Maidan movement was perceived as aiding the opposition.<sup>21</sup> It was a very serious statement, especially taking into account that the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was the biggest body of resistance against Soviet rule and as a result from 1945 to 1989 was declared illegal and all its bishops were imprisoned. The issue was 'clarified' in January 2014 by the Minister of Culture in Ukraine, Leonid Mykhaylovych Novokhatko, who denied the planned "legal action" against the Church and

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19 [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/confessional/auccro/57984/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/auccro/57984/)

20 [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/confessional/auccro/58062/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/auccro/58062/)

21 The letter is dated January 3, 2014, (№ 1/3/13–14) signed by First Deputy Minister Timofiy Kokhan. [A scanned copy of the letter in Ukrainian is posted with this news story at [www.ugcc.org](http://www.ugcc.org)]

even praised its “peacekeeping role.”<sup>22</sup> For his part, Archbishop Shevchuk said that he hoped the public authorities, particularly those whose task is to serve the people to ensure people’s right to religious freedom in Ukraine, have the wisdom not to transfer the current socio-political crisis to the religious environment too. The parties recognized the last statements of government on inadmissibility of banning people to pray where they are physically located to be positive signals to the religious community.

### *Orthodox Churches*

The revolution served as a litmus paper – it disclosed the moral face of people and institutions, the churches in particular. The churches’ choice of the level of engagement during the revolution and the post-Maidan events made it clear what values and priorities, particularly their leaders, were pursuing. The display of considerable military aggression of one nominally ‘Orthodox country’ towards another made the ambiguous discourse on the ‘Orthodox civilization’ meaningless. Ambiguous because there are three jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and there are no major theological differences separating these Orthodox Churches, yet the cultural and political accents create a large distance between them.

The strong connection between orthodoxy and ethnic, national and political (as well as geopolitical) identity has led not only to internal conflicts between people of different identities, but also to controversies within one ecclesial Orthodox tradition. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, which actively supported the Euromaidan, emerged from the revolution with a strong moral ascendancy and enhanced its own reputation in society. For the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate these events turned out to be somewhat of a disaster.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate remained one of the most powerful cultural and political links between Kyiv and Moscow. Although the Moscow Patriarchate recognizes the existence of the state of Ukraine as a separate political entity, it continues to regard Ukrainian society as part of

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22 “Attack on the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC): a mess in the Ministry of Culture or beastly grin of “neo-Stalinism”?”, in *Den. Kyiv. UA*, at <http://day.kyiv.ua/en/article/day-after-day/attack-ukrainian-greek-catholic-church-ugcc-mess-ministry-culture-or-beastly>

the common civilizational space – the “Russian world.” For this reason, any aspirations of ecclesiastical independence from Moscow are treated as unacceptable. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom reported that the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine officially views other Orthodox churches, particularly the strongly pro- Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, as “schismatic nationalist organizations.”<sup>23</sup>

The level of engagement of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate caused many people to negatively associate it with Putin’s agenda. This became particularly apparent when the initial silence or claimed certain ‘neutrality’ of Moscow’s Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev) and his failures to protest against the Russian invasion on the Ukrainian territory as well as his numerous controversial anti-Ukrainian statements clearly demonstrated the extent to which the Russian Orthodox Church is dependent on the Kremlin.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate consequently faced an internal split among its congregation into those whose pro-Russian views and sentiments were weakened, and those who became even more radical in their post-Soviet political ideology. The sudden increase of the anti-Russian sentiment among a significant part of the faithful and some clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate resulted in many changes for the Church: many members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate became followers of the Kyiv Patriarchate, a few parishes changed their subordination (this complies with Ukrainian legislation, according to which it is religious communities and not church organizations that are recognized as legal subjects), some of its clergy members have blessed and backed volunteer battalions, as well as some local churches no longer mentioning the name of the Moscow Patriarch in their liturgical celebrations. The fact that many people see the ‘canonical’ status of the church (including the validity of the sacraments) as rather insignificant in comparison to the national, political and ethical orientation, may eventually force the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to counter the ideology of ‘political Orthodoxy’ and identify itself more strongly with the Ukrainian state and nation.

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23 Cf. USCIRF 2015 Annual Report, p. 181: <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF%20Annual%20Report%202015%20%282%29.pdf>

It would be naïve, however, to expect that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate would change its hostile attitude to the pro-Western policy suddenly and unequivocally. It is not only because this step would make the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate seem to be following the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, which would be unacceptable for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate; and not because the Western values are seen as a trigger to the post-Soviet moral system, as described through Putinesque pejorative nicknames “Euro-Sodom” or “Gayropa”; but rather because a great part of its followers, particularly on the territories of the Eastern Ukraine (mostly ethnic Russian citizens of Ukraine), openly oppose Kyiv’s policy and encourage religious and socio-political separatism. For them, democracy is a danger as it wrecks the pseudo-ecclesial ambiguity of the “Russkyj mir” (Russian World) – the idea of greatness and uniqueness of Russian civilization necessarily embodied in Orthodoxy. This new political ideology – or rather mythology – so masterly incorporated into the traditions of Orthodox Christianity, contradicts the Christian ethical ideal in so many ways and demonstrates how instrumentalized and politicized faith can be and thus invents a new theology of politics with its own moral standards and a phantom image of Catholicism as a threat to Russian identity and authenticity.

Ensuring a peaceful co-existence between these two polarized groups and keeping the emerging (generational) tensions to a minimum while continuing to disregard the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and maintaining bonds with the Russian Orthodox Church are probably the most urgent yet close to impossible tasks of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate today. The Church’s leaders can neither move far enough in a pro-Russian direction as would be expected by the elder generation and to support the numbers of people who are convinced that Ukraine is a victim of the ‘Fascist-US aggression’, nor can it turn towards the pro-Western direction as the growing majority of the younger lay and clergy population would desire, to support pro-democratic position and to take part in common action with other churches.

The year 2014 was proclaimed by the Ecumenical Patriarch as the ‘Orthodox Year’ in Ukraine – alongside the whirlpool of political conflict – in order to overcome internal divisions, to resolve the matter of “canonical territory,” and to rejuvenate Orthodox social and moral teaching with regard to the contemporary context. A constant danger of losing a large part of its followers makes the Moscow Patriarchate extremely cautious with



regard to the “Ukrainian issue” as far as to non-recognition of Crimea as a ‘canonical’ territory of the Moscow Patriarchate’s outreach and leaving the Crimean dioceses in the composition of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is equivalent to non-recognition of the peninsula annexation. Calls have been growing for an independent Orthodox church that would unite all of Ukraine’s Orthodox churches. It is very likely that, if relations between Russia and Ukraine continue to deteriorate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople would eventually recognize a united Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Should this happen, an amalgamated Ukrainian Orthodox Church could significantly redraw the map of Orthodoxy and open the door for a closer, respectful and more effective dialogue between the Christian Churches.

#### *4. Ukrainian post-Euromaidan identity*

For the past two-and-half decades Ukrainians made great moves towards freeing themselves from the archaic image-construct of a supra-ethnic and quasi-spiritual identity created by Peter the Great more than three centuries ago. His new-born empire, which then fused political loyalty or submission with the traditional religiosity of Orthodox Slavdom, redefined Ukrainians and Belarusians as a ‘sub-group’ of the Russian great nation and made them ‘younger’ brothers (also referred to as ‘almost the same peoples’ as occasionally appears in Putin’s rhetoric). This constructed quasi-identity in many ways legitimizes Russia’s repression of a separate Ukrainian national identity and impedes the development of a genuine Russian national and civic identity. The degree and the speed of the Ukrainian people’s liberation from the mythical imaginary community of Eastern Slavonic brotherhood, i. e. from the ‘Russia’s younger brother’ identity, were uneven in different parts of Ukraine (proving to be more successful in the territories that are not under or under a lesser control by Russia), as well as within different social strata.

Today, the Ukrainian society appears to be less ambiguous but more heterogeneous and inclusive. Ukrainian identity is becoming increasingly civic rather than ethnic, progressively incompatible with a supra-ethnic, non-civic, quasi-religious Eastern Slavonic identity. While Ukrainian civic identity and civic unity is clearly on the rise, Ukrainian attitude toward Russians remains generally positive: Ukrainians proved to be much less inclined to identify the people and culture with the state and politics. Many

Ukrainians do not object open borders and good relations with Russia though increasingly impossible at the time of war. The war redefined many aspects of Ukrainian national identity. It has consolidated the Ukrainian nation and seems to have increased the level of trust between ethnic and linguistic groups. A renowned Ukrainian economist, Anatoly Halchynsky, once argued that: “the goals of 1991, of Maidan 2004, and of the Euro-maidan are the same. They are of the same origin, related not only to the assertion of Ukraine’s national sovereignty but also putting an end to the Soviet epoch, freeing our mentality from the remnants of totalitarianism. European integration is merely a designator of these changes.”<sup>24</sup>

Among many things, the 2013 Revolution of Dignity, the Euromaidan revolution, dismantled the cliché of Ukraine as a divided country between Eastern and Western Ukraine, between the Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking population, or between the Orthodox and Catholics, which mistakenly equates *all* those aspects for most Ukrainian citizens. Claiming the division of Ukraine as ‘pro-Russian’ (read: anti-Ukrainian or anti-European) and ‘pro-Ukrainian’ (read: anti-Russian but pro-European) – is a simplification. The revolution proved that, despite common assumptions, the lines of political demarcation in present-day Ukraine run rather along diverse values, often determined by generational differences: there are those who mourn the loss of the paternalist Soviet system and those who work for the prosperity of the independent Ukraine, based on the values nourished by the European West.

Ukraine is trying hard to turn the corner. There is indeed still much to be done. The reforms facing the Ukrainian government, the political and economic system as well as civil society are gargantuan: nothing less than a radical transformation from a post-colonial to a democratic political culture in the country. It is very difficult to achieve any substantial progress if the country’s political process is overshadowed by the continuous threat of war.

However, there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of this country. Despite facing several unprecedented challenges and rather severe setbacks including lack of political unity, weak governmental institutions, the firm grip of notorious oligarchs and the legacy of the two decades long corrupt governance, Ukraine has demonstrated impressive resilience and desire to break free from the pattern of Soviet mentality. Arguably,

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24 [http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/anatomiya-revolyuuciyi-notatki-vchenogo-\\_html](http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/anatomiya-revolyuuciyi-notatki-vchenogo-_html)

in the last three years, the country made more progress than in the two last decades. Unlike after the Orange Revolution in 2004, the civil society has not retreated from politics; instead it has become a forceful driver for its reform. The values of human dignity, freedom and solidarity became decisively integrated into the structural transformation of contemporary society and are a clear manifestation of a renewal of the people's self-understanding. Furthermore, although the achievements gained so far remain fragile and Ukraine is vulnerable, the vectors seem to be set in the right direction. Building and maintaining a strong, democratic and prosperous state will be a triumph not only for Ukraine, but also for the wider international community.

