



THE LOCAL ELECTIONS 2020 IN UKRAINE: REGIONAL PECULIARITIES AND COLLABORATION OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The changes in the Ukrainian legal system in 2020, which provoke active participation of religious organizations in political issues, make the topic under research relevant. The article studies the collaboration of the political parties and the religious organizations in Ukraine on a case of the local election 2020. The aim of the article is to analyze the peculiarities of this collaboration; its consistency with the legislation of Ukraine and corporate acts of certain religious organizations; the attitude of the religious organizations to these processes; the influence on these processes from the foreign policy and regional differences of Ukraine. The research was conducted within the framework of classical legal methods and techniques such as legal comparative method, legal and historical method, methods of analysis and synthesis, and static method. The main thesis of the article is that the political and religious sympathies of the population of the different regions of Ukraine correlate with their preferences of the foreign-political vectors. Variety of the foreign political orientation amongst the parties and the religious organizations enables every participant to find an ally from the relevant part of the spectrum.

Keywords: local elections, local self-government, state and church relations, legal regulation of religious organizations, collaboration.



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1 INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Ukrainian local elections (deputies of district councils and rural townships were elected) took place on 25 October 2020 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020b). These elections were organized by the new rules: the gender quotas were set, proportional electoral model was used, epidemic control measures were taken (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020a). Such changes in the electoral process comprise a part of a greater decentralization reform, which is being held in Ukraine for the last several years. The aim of this reform is to increase the powers and authority of the local governmental bodies and bring them closer to the EU member-states standards of democracy, the importance of which is discussed broadly by the European researchers (Brezovnik, 2008; Grafenauer, 2000; Klimovský et al., 2019).

The novelty of the article is based on the changes in the Ukrainian legal system in 2020, result of the local elections of 2020 and changing of the role of the religious organization in Ukraine in the context of the various state and political tendencies, democratization processes, legal system changing in the approaching for EU standards and the social crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, which are taking place in the last years.

The research uses classical methods and techniques developed within the framework of the legal sciences. The legal comparative method is used to point out the differences at the relations of the various religious organizations to the political parties, actual legal-state tendencies, euro-integration processes, etc. Characteristic feature of the forms of participation of the religious organizations in the social and legal state processes is that the religious organizations are conservative and they apply the rules and traditions, formed during the centuries to govern such interaction. The participation of the population in the local self-government bodies and these bodies social, political and economic influence is also conservative and traditional (Klimovský et al., 2019; Grafenauer, 2000). Therefore, the research requires using the analysis and legal-historical methods in order to understand and determine the modern tendencies of the state and local legal-state development of Ukraine. The data for the analysis of the



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election' company and results, the engagement of the religious organizations to this process were obtained from the results of the sociological polls and the official electoral statistics, and were studied with an application of the statistic method, methods of analysis and synthesis.

The literature sources, which were used in the research, could be grouped in three parts. The first consists of legal and doctrinal sources of the regulation of the local elections' procedure in Ukraine and the legislation about the religious organizations. There are legal acts of the Parliament of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine), acts of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, orders, and instructions of the Central Election Committee etc. The doctrinal sources are the general-purpose acts of the religious organizations (statutes of the religious organizations, their internal regulations, rules of their collaborations with the governmental bodies and political parties), and the special purpose rulings (instructions and orders on the certain casus or persons). The second part includes the statistical data, e.g. official statistics of the presence of the religious organizations and political parties in the different regions of Ukraine, statistical data of the Central Election Committee, public polls etc.

The third part consists of the scientific researches about the functioning of the local self-governmental bodies of Ukraine and the EU member-states, organizing of the local elections, the legal status of the religious organizations, political parties etc. The modern status of the local self-governmental bodies, religious organizations, political parties system and the attitudes of the local population to all of the above is influenced by the conservative traditions developed over the centuries. These peculiarities were analyzed on the bases of the legal historical researches of these institutes. The development of the local self-governmental bodies at the western Ukrainian lands under the impact of the legislation of Austrian-Hungary and Poland were analyzed on the base of the researches, made by B. Grafenauer (2000), M. Kambic (2008), A. Bereza (Bereza et al., 2006), J. Kostrubiec, and G. Smyk (Bereza et al., 2009), S.M. Berg (Berg, 2010), M. Dajnowicz (2005) and others. The influence of the European states' legal tradition, the high authority



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of the local clergy (Dajnowicz, 2005; Shedel, 1990), noticed by these authors, is seen in the social sentiments and the activities of the political parties in the western Ukraine today.

The evolution of the local self-government, political and religious powers in the eastern Ukrainian lands got much more attention of the Ukrainian and Russian researchers, such as S.V. Vostrikov (2002), I. Mishin (2018), N. Petrenko (2017) and others. The elections of 2020 were organized under the new legislation, introduced as a part of the decentralization reform, which has started after the signing of the Association with EU. One of the aims of this reform is to bring the legal system of Ukraine and its local self-governmental system closer to the standards and the realities of the EU member-states. Main ideas and the implementation of the decentralization reform were analyzed in the articles of L. Vasylenko and M. Dobrovinskyi (2017), S. Lubenets and O. Troyan (2020), N. Khomiuk (2019). The legal status of the religious organizations in Ukraine was researched by V. Lutsenko (2019), O. Melnychuk (2020), A. Vasylyak (2011) and others.

An interesting peculiarity of the local elections of 2020 was an active involvement of the religious organizations. This phenomenon indicates several trends: the increase of the religious organizations and religion's impact in the Ukrainian society, the combination of forces of the political parties and the religious organization, the explicit territorial difference of the political and religious sympathies. The question remains whether the electoral activities of the religious organizations comply with the Ukrainian legislation and with the main principles of the local self-government? What is the attitude to this situation of the religious organizations themselves? Why the religious organizations and their representatives were active specifically at the local elections? What is the relation between the activities of the different religious organizations in the different parts of Ukraine and the political sympathies of the population?

Therefore, the aim of this article is to answer these questions and thus to analyze the role of the religious organizations in the political, legal, and governmental field of the Ukrainian legal system on the example of the local election of 2020.



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2 THE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONJUNCTURE AT THE DIFFERENT REGIONS OF UKRAINE

Local self-government in Ukraine has continuous traditions of its development and demonstrates significant regional differences. Historically Ukrainian lands could be divided into western, central, and eastern ones. The western region (Ivano-Frankivskska, Ternopil'ska, Lviv'ska oblasts) has more developed traditions of the local self-government, its population has strong pro-European orientation, because historically these lands were parts of the different European states (Poland, Austria-Hungary) with significant legal traditions of the self-government and the local democracy (Kostrubiec, 2019; Kostrubiec et al., 2021; Bereza et al., 2006; Kambič, 2008; Bereza et al., 2009). Although contemporary researchers critically view the democratic and liberal character of the local self-government in the EU Eastern Europe (Rupnik, 2018; Dobos, 2020; Kostrubiec et al., 2021; Obrębska & Wróbel S., 2016; Gołębiowska & Zientarski, 2016), it is obviously higher, comparing with the post-Soviet countries. The same is true for the Western regions of Ukraine. The eastern and central regions (Chernhiv'ska, Kharkiv'ska, Odeska and other oblasts) for a long time were parts of the Russian state. For all of that period the state power there was much more centralized and authoritarian, so the role of the local self-government bodies in the life of the population, their influence and authority were reduced (Petrenko, 2017; Frumak, 2012; Vostrikov, 2002).

The religious sympathies of the population of the various regions of Ukraine are historically conditioned by being the parts of different countries. Around 70 % of the Ukrainians identify themselves as Christian Orthodox (Center of Social and Marketing Research "SOCIS", 2019), since it was the state religion of the Russian empire and a mass religion in the USSR. There are near 10 % of Catholics and Greek-Catholics believers (Center of Social and Marketing Research "SOCIS", 2019). The two latter confessions have great popularity at the western lands, because they were announced as the state religions of the states (Austria-Hungary, Poland), these lands were parts of



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(Ramet, 2017). The clergy of these confessions had great authority in the past there (Porter-Szucs, 2011; Shedel, 1990; Berg, 2010).

The Orthodox Christianity in Ukraine is represented by three religious organizations: the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) – 34% of the whole population, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP) – near 14% of the population, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP) – near 1% (Center of Social and Marketing Research “SOCIS”, 2019). Each organization has its own entities, hierarchy, and structure. Relations between these organizations are visibly tense. The Moscow Patriarchate (as well as its Ukrainian filial, UOC MP) recognizes neither OCU, no UOC KP. The Moscow Patriarchate has proclaimed an anathema (the most severe punishment in the canon law) on the leader of the UOC KP, patriarch Filaret (Denisenko) (Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1997); also, Moscow has stopped the Eucharistic communication with two other Orthodox Patriarchates – Constantinople and Alexandria as a result of their support of the OCU foundation (Journals of Meeting of the Holy Synod..., 2018; About the consequences..., 2019). There is near 28% of the Ukrainians, who identify themselves as Orthodox, but without affiliation to any of the religious organization (Razumkov Centre, 2020). This phenomenon could be explained with the long years of repressions of the religious organizations in the USSR. So, a number of people do not visit church or take part in the religious rituals, but respect the Orthodox tradition in general (celebrate the Christmas and the Easter, wear religious symbols and so on).

It is worth noting, that the credibility of the religious organizations at the Ukrainian society is traditionally high in the small towns and villages. During the centuries the clergy has been providing a lot of social functions at the rural and low-urbanized areas (e.g.: medical treatment, education, representation of the interests of the local communities at the governmental bodies) (Dajnowicz, 2005; Koshetar, 2005; Rutkowski, 2005; Panfilova, 2014). The secularization processes, which were widely spreading in Europe in the XVIII – XIX centuries, were running in Ukraine not so actively. Though the period of the USSR anti-religious atheistic repressions in the middle of the XX century (Johnstone, 2018) have



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reduced the amount of the clergy and the Church's property, it has not finally destroyed the authority of the Church at the eyes of the broader public. After the independence of Ukraine had been proclaimed and the freedom of beliefs had been granted, religious organizations have steadily increased their congregation, influence, and presence (Lutsenko, 2019). Already in 2018 the Pew Research Center has placed Ukraine at the 11th in Europe in the ranking of the religiosity of the population (Evans & Baronavski, 2018). Number of political parties form the political landscape of Ukraine. The most influential of them there are the following:

- Pro-European parties – the “European Solidarity” – “Evropeiska Soldarnist”; the “UDAR” – the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform; “*Syla i Chest*” – the “Strength and Honor”.
- Pro-Russian parties – “The Opposition Block “For Life” (OBFL) – “Opozytsiynyi Blok “Za zhyttya”; “For the Future” – “Za maibutne”; the “Our home” – “Nash dim”.
- The European-skeptic, but not pro-Russian parties – the “Freedom” – “Svoboda”; the “People’s Movement” – “Narodnyi Rukh”; the “Fatherland” – “Batkivschina”, the “Trust” – “Dovira”.

The party which holds the majority in the parliament – the “People’s Servant” was organized not after the ideology, but around its leader – current President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyi. The absence of ideology allows for the presence of pro-European and pro-Russian groups within the party. In general, the support of political groups and parties corresponds to the historical traditions of the regions. The eastern regions of Ukraine, where the population has strong cultural connections with Russia - often vote for pro-Russian political parties. Western ones give support to the pro-European. Central regions remain a competition field.

The religious sympathies of the population mostly follow the political inclination. In the western regions there are parishioners of the Greek-Catholic and Catholic Churches (30% from the whole population and near 60 % of the religious people in these regions) (Razumkov Centre, 2020). The Orthodox Christianity (the most popular among the today's



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population of Ukraine) in the western regions is mostly represented by Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) – autocephaly Church of Constantinople Patriarchate. It was founded with the active support of the previous President of Ukraine – Petro Poroshenko and his radically pro-European political party the “European Solidarity”. Active involvement of the politicians in the Church affairs has led to the numerous public discussions. The conclusion was that despite of the governmental support of the OCU it does not lead to the creation of the state church of Ukraine, does not discriminate other religious organizations and does not imperil the secular character of the Ukrainian state (Tsvietkova, 2020).

Near 20 % of the population of the eastern regions of Ukraine identify themselves as parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP). In the central regions this religious organization has sympathies of 12 % and in the western – only of 9 % (Razumkov Centre, 2020). UOC MP is a Ukrainian filial of the Russian Orthodox Church. The leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church are associated with the Russian government (this situation has been historically formed in the XV century as a characteristic feature of this religious organization) (Rastimeshina, 2016; Mishin, 2018), so they promote the pro-Russian views, policies and agenda. The UOC MP has maximum dissemination in the regions, which were parts of the Russian states (the Kingdom of Muscovy, the Russian empire, the USSR) for a long time.

Newborn OCU is conflicting with the Moscow Patriarchate and proclaimed as anti-Russian, so in the eastern regions it has only 23% of supporters, but in the central and western ones - more than 40 % (Razumkov Centre, 2020). We can see that the territorial structures of the political and religious sympathies are mostly matched. This creates the preconditions for the political parties and religious organizations to combine their possibilities to influence the society. It is brightly evident during the local elections.



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3 THE LEGAL REGULATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS TAKING PART IN THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE: VIEW OF THE LEGISLATOR AND THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS OWN DOCTRINES

The Ukrainian legislation regulates engagement of the religious organizations in the political processes in line with the declaration of Ukraine as a secular state with the separation of the State and Church powers (Vasylyak, 2011; Melnychuk, 2020). The article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine proclaims that “the Church and religious organizations in Ukraine are separated from the state” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1996). There are no limitations for participation of the citizens of Ukraine in the electoral process based on a religion (Art. 69, 70, 71, 141 of the Constitution of Ukraine). The main act which establishes the legal status of the religious organization is the Act 987-XII “About the Freedom of Conscience and the Religious Organizations” 23/04/1991. By this act, the religious organizations do not participate in the activities of the political parties, do not finance them, do not nominate the candidates to the governmental bodies, do not agitate or finance the elections campaigns. But the mentioned prohibitions are only targeted at the official engagements of the religious organizations as a whole (e.g.: the religious organization could not be mentioned in the party statute as a founder or a donator). The clergymen have the political rights same as the other citizens (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1991). The legislation norms leave to the clergy a possibility to be engaged in the political activities as citizens, to support the political party in the mass media or on the internet, or to be a party member.

Indeed, the political agitation by the legislation of Ukraine “...this is activity of the citizens, political parties, other citizens corporations, staff of the enterprises and organizations for the creating of the popular thoughts and electors behavior into the interests of the candidates or political parties...” (Filippov et al., 2021). The clergymen in such situations justify their political activities by referring themselves as the citizens of Ukraine, but not as the members and representatives of the religious organizations. Although practically, when they agitate for the certain political party, they use not only their



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own personality, but the whole authority of their religious organization (which is very high in the rural territories and this is extremely important in the local elections campaign). So, the looseness of the legislation formulae leaves the separation of the Church and the state activities to the sole discretion of a religious organization. That is why the real rules of the clergymen engagement in the election processes are made by the leaders of the religious organizations. That was seen during the electoral campaign of 2020.

The religious organizations expressed their positions to the clergy engagement in the local elections since the very start of campaign and these positions differed drastically. The Catholic and the Greek-Catholic Churches were strongly against any engagements of their clergy. The 63rd Session of the Bishop Synod of the Kyiv-Galician Supreme Archbishop approved “The Manual on the Behavior of the Clergy of the UGCC during the Election Campaigns” 08/04/2014. The Art. 1.4. of the Manual categorically forbids the UGCC and its clergy to agitate, to support any political parties; it only allows promoting the legal and honest elections. According to Art. 2.1 and 2.3, the clergymen are even forbidden to take part in any events, organized by the candidates or political parties during the campaign; to get any public donations from them or to express gratitude towards (Information Resource of Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, 2014). The one and only permitted activity for the Catholic and Greek-Catholic clergy was the encouraging and promotion of the congregation to realize their political rights and to vote. S. Sus, the Bishop of the Kyiv-Galician Supreme Archbishop Curie 02/10/2020 was asked in the interview for advice to the upcoming local election. He has stated that parishioners should visit the elections, to study biographies and activities of candidates for better choice, and do not make a decision after the agitation in the mass media or advertizing, but after the personal conscience only (Tsytzak, 2020).

The UGCC has not only declared its negative relation to the participation of the clergy in the election campaign, but also acted accordingly. For example, the Sambir – Drohobyc parish of the UGCC issued a warning to the priest Volodymyr Luzhetskyi of the church in Stebnyk. V. Luzhetskyi has been nominated by the political party “*Syla i Chest*” (Strength and Honor) to the deputy of the Lviv region council. The Parochial Office of the



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Sambir – Drohobyc had called the priest and ordered him to withdraw from elections under threat of punishment. The authority of the UGCC reacted extremely negative to the initiative of the major of Lviv A. Sadovyi and his political party “Samopomich” (“The Self Help”), who emphasized themselves as faithful parishioners of the UGCC, when major and his party has tried to involve the clergy to the post-election self-government activities (Boyko, 2020). Such strict position of the Catholic and Greek-Catholic Church about non-participation in the elections does not mean that these Churches do not collaborate with the self-governments absolutely. Usually they have a lot of common programs and activities, and this collaboration is typical not only for western regions of Ukraine, but for the other countries of Eastern and Southern Europe as well (Sidor et al., 2020; Smrke, 2016; Črnič et al., 2013).

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (with autocephaly from the Constantinople patriarchate) related to the engagement in the local elections somewhat milder. Its supreme body in Ukraine – the Synod on 24.05.2019 decided (journal № 24) to recommend the clergy to abstain from nominating in local elections (Journals of Meeting of the Holy Synod..., 2019). But the decision indicates that a clergyman may be nominated as a candidate in the elections to the self-governmental bodies or be engaged in the activities of these bodies upon condition of the direct request from the local community to the Church leaders and getting these leaders’ blessings. The separate paragraph said that when the clergy take part in election campaign – it is forbidden for him to use the church buildings or the church services for the agitation, to be a member of a political party, to criticize other parties while communicating with the congregation. The OCU permitted its clergy to combine their church functions with the activities of the government deputies only in case of being elected into the regions councils. According to the legislation of Ukraine, the deputies of these councils works pro bono, so it implies that the deputies continue their professional duties in other jobs, and the clergymen can be also doing this. However, there are certain local self-governmental positions which require a full-time work, such as major, his deputy assistants or substitutes and cetera. The OCU Synod bans such positions for holding by its clergy, referring to the ancient Apostolic rules



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6 and 81, which prohibit working in the ruler (state) services to the clergy. After the election or appointment to these positions the OCU clergy have to choose between governmental or church services (Journals of Meeting of the Holy Synod..., 2019).

The Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate announced the most loyal attitude to the engagement of its clergy in the local elections. Since this religious organization is subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church, it uses Russian Church' documents and doctrines. The decision of the Archbishop Council of the Russian Orthodox Church from 02/02/2011 permits its clergy to interact and to collaborate with the political parties and governmental bodies. The text of this decision is rather pharisaic. The beginning of the decision notices, that, in general, it is not acceptable to nominate a cleric to the governmental bodies (**Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2011**). But, the next paragraphs contain provisions, which actually cancel this ban. For example, clergy can be members of political parties and can be nominated to the governmental and self-governmental bodies, for "resisting the forces ... which can use their powers to harm and detriment the Orthodox Church". This rather abstract formula with hypothetical conditions creates the unlimited opportunities for the clergy to justify their nomination. The one and only limitation of this process the Russian Orthodox Church requests is that nominating clergy ought to get a "blessing" from the high Church authorities. The journal №93 of the decisions of the Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2012 sets the procedure of the clergy nominating in the elections so much in details (About the procedure for..., 2012), that it is becoming clear that the prohibition, noticed in the decision on 02/02/2011 is null and void.

Analysis of the lists of the candidates in the local elections 2020, published by the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (2020) demonstrates significant activities of the clergy of the different religious organizations in Ukraine, and gives us possibility to compare their activities with the doctrines of the specific religious organizations and to reveal their links with certain political parties and platforms.



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4 THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, WHOSE CLERGYMEN HAVE BEEN NOMINATED IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS 2020 AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES SUPPORTED BY THEM

The decentralization reforms after their implementation have significantly increased the organizational, financial and social-political opportunities of the local self-government (Brezovnik, 2008). The decentralization reforms in Ukraine foresee the full autonomy of the local self-governmental bodies from the central government, transferring to them the sources of income and material resources (Khomiuk, 2019; Vasylenko & Dobrovinskyi, 2017). This is corresponding to the European Charter of the Local Self-Government, which was ratified by Ukraine in 1997 (Lubenets & Troyan, 2020). The implementation of this Charter from 2014 into the Ukrainian legislation increased the role and the opportunities of the local self-governmental bodies, and that is resulted with the growing interests in them from all the participants of the social relations, including the political parties and the religious organizations. They join their forces and capabilities to get better results of the local elections.

As it was mentioned above, the congregations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP), which is known for her pro-Russian views, prevail in the southern and the eastern regions of Ukraine. The parties with pro-Russian orientation are also present on the Ukrainian political scene and their collaboration with this Church seems absolutely logical. UOC MP is the filial of the Russian Orthodox Church, so they share the same loyalist vision, as it has been described above. This loyalist concept makes the nominating of the clergy easier, thus facilitating in the building of the relations with the political parties.

Also, pro-Russian political parties and the UOC MP have the common foe. Former President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko and his extremely anti-Russian political party the “European Solidarity” greatly supported the creation of the Autocephaly (from Constantinople patriarchate) Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which resulted in the cession of more than 500 parochial districts out of the UOC MP. The leaders of the UOC MP



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perceive the creation and spreading of the OCU as a “crime” against the Russian Orthodox Church (Kondrashov, 2021). This gives them opportunity to extend the reservation of the Archbishop Council of the ROC decision 02/02/2011 to such situation and to interpret nominating of the UOC MP clergy in the local elections in Ukraine as a protection of the Church interests from “the harming forces”. In order to spread and maintain its social influence the UOC MP actively collaborates with the political forces, usually choosing the pro-Russian and EU-skeptical ones in the regions with the mass support of these parties. As a result, the UOC MP clergy comprise near 60% of the clergy candidates in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine in the 2020 local elections (e.g. 6 of 10 clergy-candidates in Odesa region, 6 of 9 – in Chernihiv region were from UOC MP). The political parties, who nominated the UOC MP clergy, were from the pro-Russian wing: “The Opposition Block “For Life” (OBFL); the “Our land”; the “Our Home” (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2020). The election campaign offices of these political parties not only nominated the UOC MP clergy, but also used all the amenities of this Church for the party agitation (At the day of election..., 2020).

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (Constantinople Patriarchate) took the second place in the activities of the election campaign 2020 in the eastern and southern regions. The leaders of this religious organization, as was mentioned above, view the engagements of their clergy in the elections or governmental bodies not so leniently, as those of the UOC MP. However, they do not forbid such activities strictly. Political sympathies of this Church are also clearly traceable in this case. Because of her conflict with the Moscow Patriarchate and the UOC MP clergy this Church stays on the anti-Russian position. Not surprisingly that the clergy bloc with the parties of the same views. Even in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, the OCU clergy are often nominated either from a pro-European, drastically anti-Russian political party the “European Solidarity” or from Russian-skeptic parties as the “Fatherland” or the “Freedom” (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2020).

The activities of the religious organizations and political parties and their local population support in the western region of Ukraine demonstrate other patterns. The



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whole amount of the clergy candidates there in local elections 2020 was two-three times bigger than in the eastern regions. This can be explained by the higher religiosity of the western Ukrainian population and the lesser urbanization level (Razumkov Centre, 2020; Khomiuk, 2019; Vasylenko & Dobrovinskyi, 2017). Although the Greek Catholic Church is the most popular religious organization in this region, the extremely negative reaction of her leaders to the clergy nomination led to the practical absence of her clergy in the lists of the local candidates. Only 3 UGCC priests tried to ballot themselves in the Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2020). The leaders of the UGCC have persuaded two of them to withdraw from the election. The third one, priest M. Medynski refused and was prohibited to continue his service in the church and to use his church regalia (Dymnich, 2020).

Despite of the presence of UOC MP congregations in the western regions their clergy did not nominate there – probably because of the low chances to win. After all, the pro-Russians parties (the “Our land”, “The OBFL”) the UOC MP blocs with have actually lost the local elections in these regions: these parties got any mandates in the local councils only in two out of the eight western regions, and even in those two regions they get less than 10% of the votes (Analytic Portal “Slovo i Dilo”, 2020). The majority of the clergy candidates in the western regions were from the OCU. There were 16 OCU priests out of the whole amount of 23 clergy candidates in Ternopil region (Domska, 2020), and 14 from 20 – in Ivano-Frankivsk region. The pro-European views of the OCU leaders corresponded to the political doctrines of the parties there as well. The OCU clergy nominated from the pro-European, or, as a minimum, from the Russian-skeptic political parties: the “European Solidarity”, “the UDAR”, the “Freedom”, the “People’s Movement”, the “Fatherland” (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2020).

The western regions of Ukraine are also a home to an electoral group, which has the Euro-skeptic views, but does not support pro-Russian policy either. This electoral group would not sympathize the pro-Russian parties and the UOC MP (as a Church, leaded by the Moscow authorities), but, at the same time they would not like the pro-European parties and the OCU (as a Church, collaborating with them). This political and



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religious space is occupied by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate, which is in bad relations both with the UOC MP and with the OCU. The clergy of the UOC KP collaborated with the political parties of European-skeptic and Russian-skeptic views, such as the “Fatherland”, the “People’s Movement”, the “Freedom”, the “Trust”. The percentage of the UOC KP clergy, nominated in the local elections 2020 in the western regions of Ukraine is high enough – it is near 25% from the whole clergy candidates (6 priest of the UOC KP in the Ternopil region and 5 priests - in the Ivano-Frankivsk region) (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2020). This share looks very big, because of the extreme leakage of the UOC KP congregations for last several years (their parochial districts being transferred en masse to the OCU). The proponents of the UOC KP by the last statistic data comprise only 1-2% of the population of Ukraine. The political parties of their preference represent their views – these are anti-Russians the “Fatherland”, the “People’s Movement”, the “Freedom”, the “Trust”; anti-European “For the future”, and, as exceptions – couple of candidates from mild anti-Russian, but pro-European the UDAR (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2020).

5 THE COLLABORATION OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS DURING THE ELECTIONS IN THE BALTIC STATES

The connections of the activities and orientation of the political parties and the religious organizations in the election processes are clearly seen not only in Ukraine, but also in other post-Soviet countries. In the second half of the XX century the Soviet Union’s governmental bodies run the policy of the “melting pot”. This policy led to the compact settling of the non-titular ethnic groups (most of all, Russians) at the lands of the former Soviet republics, which are the independent states now. Numerous members of these groups have the political rights as the citizens of the newly-created states, and there are political parties seeking their electoral support. Usually, as the subjects and bearers of the “Russian culture”, these people are members of the Russian Orthodox Church (or its local



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departments, daughter religious communities also), are Russian-language speakers, and sometimes do not identify themselves with the countries of their citizenship. This situation creates the fertile ground for the collaboration of these religious organizations and political parties, who can target their efforts on these ethnical, cultural, religious, and language minorities. Such situation, which is similar to Ukrainian one, is clearly visible in the political scene in the Baltic member-states of the EU – Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia.

The basic principles of the governmental bodies' elections, political parties and religious organizations relations in the Baltic States are defined in their Constitutions, the same is in Ukraine. Art. 12 of the Constitution of Estonia bans the discrimination on the basis of religious or political beliefs, the fomenting of the religious or political discords; art. 40 and 41 declare freedom of conscious, religions, and beliefs, absence of the state religion. Art. 156 of the Constitution of Estonia provides the main principles of the local elections by means of general, direct, free, *equal and secret* suffrage (Republic of Estonia, 1992). Art. 99 of the Constitution of Latvia, besides the declaring of the rights for freedom of thoughts, conscious and religious beliefs, categorically states that “church is separated from the state” (Constitutional Assembly, 1922). According to Art. 116 of the Constitution of Latvia, the state has the right to limit the religious and political rights “in order to protect the rights of other people, the democratic structure of the State, and public safety, welfare and morals” (Constitutional Assembly, 1922). In 2019, according to these principles, the Latvian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate was “deprived of its right” to be ruled by a leader appointed from abroad (Zverev, 2020). The Constitution of Lithuania differs the freedom of conscious and the freedom of faith: the former is granted in the art. 25, and the latter – in the art. 26. Another distinction of the norms of the Constitution of Lithuania from the legal norms of the Constitutions of Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine, is the greater attention to the activities of the religious organizations and to their participation in the social and political processes. Art. 43 insists that there is no state religion in Lithuania (and this norm is similar with the Constitution of Estonia), but it also adds, that only “traditional and supported by society” religious organizations can be registered in the country (The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992).



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Estonia identifies the religious organizations as a “private law legal entities” in Art. 5.1. and 5.3. (The Riigikogu, 2002), Lithuania – as a “legal entities” in Art. 43 (The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992). Estonian and Lithuanian legislations for the political parties’ activities do not ban the collaboration of the political parties and religious organizations directly (The Riigikogu, 1994; Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, 1990). This is similar to the Ukrainian legislation, and, as well as in Ukraine, it creates the perspectives for their cooperation and the mutual using of their social influence resources. In general, the collaboration of the political parties and religious organizations in Estonia is not so active comparing to Ukraine. This can be explained with the lower level of the religiosity of the population of Estonia. The research of the Pew Research Center places Estonia on the last position in the list of other European countries by this mark (Evans & Baronavski, 2018). Each of two most popular religious organizations in Estonia (the Estonian Evangelic-Lutheran Church and the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate) embraces 13% of population only (US Embassy in Estonia, 2019). The congregation of the Evangelic-Lutheran Church is spread mostly all over the country. The congregation of the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is concentrated locally in the eastern lands of Estonia and in its capital (Statistics Estonia, 2011), exactly as it is in Ukraine.

The priests of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate recognize openly, that their Church is leaded and financed from the Russian Federation and accepts all the decisions and doctrines of the Russian Orthodox Church (Mudrov, 2019; Kravtsov, 2017). The majority of the congregation of this Church is ethnical Russians or the bearers of the Russian culture, who live in the East of Estonia, near the border with the Russian Federation (Statistics Estonia, 2011; Zverev, 2020). Such social commonality on the ethic, cultural, language and religious bases did not pass unnoticed through the political sphere. Indeed, the political party “for the Russians electorate” was organized. It becomes the Centric Party of Estonia (Eesti Keskerakond) (Delfi, 2011). The comparison of the maps of spreading of the Orthodox Church Congregation (Religious map of Estonia) and the electoral support of the Centric Party of Estonia in the election 2019 indicate almost a



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complete match: both of these organizations prevail in the counties Ida-Virumaa and Harjumaa.

The same picture can be seen in the territorial, religious and political landscape of Latvia. The ethnic Russians in Latvia live compactly in its eastern regions (Kuzmin, 2019). Exactly these regions are the places of concentration the Latvian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate communities, and exactly there the majority of electoral voices is for the political party Saskana (Kireev, 2018). The leader of this party, Nil Ushakov openly positions himself as a parishioner of the Latvian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, he has got official honors from the Russian Orthodox Church, and the active support from the bishop Alexandr, the Metropolitan of Riga (Press service of the Latvian Orthodox Church, 2016).

Although the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox Churches in the Baltic States deny their interference in the political affairs of the hosting countries, such interference is clearly observed. Numerous researchers from the Russian Federation openly admit (and some of them even praise) such an activity of the Moscow Patriarchate (Zverev, 2020; Elts, 2011). Therefore, we can conclude that the legislation of the Baltic States regulates electoral cooperation between the political parties and the religious organizations to the lesser extent than in Ukraine, although such cooperation is clearly visible there. The regions densely populated by ethnic Russian and Russian speakers have high percentage of the Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox Church parishioners. During the election namely these regions significantly support with their votes those parties who collaborate with that Church.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the political parties and religious organization's participation in the local elections 2020 in Ukraine identified the main peculiarities of their collaboration in the different regions of Ukraine, and the correlation with the current electoral sympathies of



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the population. Despite of the general legislative declaration of Ukraine as a secular state, where the Church and the State are separated, the majority of the religious organizations takes active part in the political processes. The main regulation of their activity comes from their own corporate acts and doctrines, but not from the state, governmental legislation, which is rather declarative and vaguely defined.

The religious organizations themselves have different attitude to their political activities and engagement to the political processes: the attitude varies from the extremely negative rejection (the Greek-Catholic and Catholic Churches) to the neutral acceptance (the Orthodox Church of Ukraine of the Constantinople Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate), and to the direct endorsement (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate). There has been a direct correlation between the doctrines of the religious organizations, the internal and foreign policy of Ukraine and the political parties' programs. Mostly, every political organization has certain political parties to collaborate with on a basis of the similar views at the political and social processes. The increase of activity of the religious organizations in the local elections can be explained by the greater credibility of the clergy in the small towns and rural area, and drastic political and religious regional differences in Ukraine. This enhances agitation opportunities for the religious organizations and gives them possibilities to focus and to get effective results on the level of local government.

The political and the religious sympathies of the population of the different regions of Ukraine correlate with their preferences of the foreign-political vectors for her potential development: pro-European, pro-Russian, European-skeptical and Russian-skeptical. Existence of the whole range of the political parties and the religious organizations advocating all of these vectors creates a strong base for the collaboration of the political parties and the religious organizations and their common activities in the political spheres, inter alia, in the local elections. The Post-Soviet Countries, the member-states of the European union (the Baltic States) regulates electoral cooperation between the political parties and the religious organizations to the lesser extent than in Ukraine, although such cooperation is clearly visible there. These processes are definite visible between the



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religious and political organizations, whose members have Russian ethnical-cultural identity.

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