Religion and Politics in Contemporary Ukraine: The Problem of Interaction

Sergii Geraskov*

Abstract

This paper is devoted to the analysis of the place and role of religion in contemporary Ukraine, its influence on the political processes, and the transformation of religious life under the influence of political factors. The gradual increase of political and religious factors in modern human-caused society puts new tasks in the interpretation of these new occurrences and processes. Currently, religious influences on political life in Ukraine seem to be quite noticeable. Apparently, both religion (churches) and politics (state) are social institutions; determining further development of the Ukrainian society. Hence, their interactions are problematic and deserve more detailed research. This paper examines some aspects of problem of interaction between the state and the churches at the time of independent Ukraine. At first, the current situation of religious life in Ukraine is explained; mapping religion and politics is also considered. Next, the model of state-church relationship in Ukraine and state policy for religion is discussed. A brief observation of churches’ involvement in political processes in Ukraine is done by looking through some bifurcation points of modern Ukrainian history including the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity.

Key words: religion, politics, interaction, state-church relations, religious organizations, contemporary Ukraine

1. Introduction

Though religion and politics are different forms of social consciousness, throughout history they closely intertwined and constantly crossed each other. It was not by chance that political science of religion occurred as a discipline studying the features of interaction of religious and political factors in society. The Ukrainian people’s history was determined by different factors including religious one. Since Christianity has been established ethnic and religious processes took place by interacting not only with each other, but also with state and political development of society. During the national liberation struggle, the faith became a kind of basis for the Ukrainian people that played a significant role in the process of choice of the Ukrainian political allies. For a long time Ukraine had seemed to be an object of encroachments by neighboring states

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*Associate Professor, Donetsk National Technical University, Ukraine.
Researcher, Department of Sociology, Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan
with different political regimes and religious situation, because of its favorable geographical
location and various natural resources such as fertile soil for cereals, coal, iron ore, manganese,
nickel, uranium and others. According to Yarotskyi (1993), “it has been trapped politically from
East, West and South, while the Ukrainian church was sandwiched between different religious
centers—the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow, the Curia’s of Rome and Warsaw”
(Yarotskyi, 1993 : 126).

When Ukraine proclaimed its independence in 1991, the processes of democratization of society
and establishing new system of value orientations had naturally led to dynamic development of
religious and church life. The number of religious institutions as well as the proportion of the
population integrated in different types of church activities was increasing. However, along with
a dynamic revival of religious and church complex, some old problems and, therefore, new
challenges have appeared. For instance, problems encountered in the Ukrainian Orthodoxy—its
split into three Orthodox churches—had caused extreme politicization and regionalization of
religious environment.

In earlier studies, the problems of functioning of religion in Ukraine were considered from
different research perspectives: sociological, historical, cultural studies, law, theology etc. Yet,
we lack a comprehensive and interdisciplinary analysis of the meaning and the roles that
religion in general and Christianity in particular play in political life of the post-Soviet Ukraine.
Research efforts that have been undertaken in this area—although very valuable—have not
yielded conclusive answers to many questions including the changes in state-church relations,
churches’ involvement in parliamentary and presidential elections and so forth. Sometimes these
answers or the very approaches to the topic were subject to a significant degree of the
researchers’ subjectivity (Wawrzonek 2014).

This paper examines some aspects of complicated problem of interaction between social
institutes—the state and the churches at the time of independent Ukraine. At first, current
situation of the religious life in Ukraine will be explained; mapping religion and politics will
also be considered. The model of state-church relationship in Ukraine and state policy for
religion will be discussed in the next section. A brief observation of churches’ involvement in
political processes in Ukraine will be done by looking through some bifurcation points during
the period of independent Ukraine including the Orange Revolution (2004/5) and the Revolution
of Dignity (2013/14).

The multi-ethnic composition of the Ukrainian population has promoted historic co-existence of different confessions, religious movements and churches. Some of them are still functioning, while some have transformed and joined with other ones. It should be marked that there were no large-scale religious wars or serious religion-based conflicts in the Ukrainian history. Of course, some disputes between Orthodox and Uniates (Greek-Catholics) or Orthodox and Protestants have had happened. However, tolerance had generally been dominated resulting in multi-confessional situation in Ukraine.

Data concerning to religious organizations in Ukraine are officially recorded by the Ukrainian government and can be considered as an important index reflecting religious situation. For ‘religious organizations’ the government statistics includes administrative structures of denominations, churches, religious movements, communities (parishes), monasteries, missions and brotherhoods, and religious educational institutions as well. This is why we should distinguish the concepts of ‘religious organizations’ and ‘religious communities’ where the former includes the latter.

Religious situation in Ukraine can be characterized primarily by the state and by the dynamic changes in network of the religious communities. A view through these indicators allows us to determine the main trends of religious environment in Ukraine as multi-confessional country. According to the Ukraine State Committee on Nationalities and Religions report, there were 34,183 religious communities in Ukraine as of January 1, 2016\(^1\) (Ministry of Culture of Ukraine 2016). In comparison with 2004, the network of religious communities has been increasing by 19.4%. At the same time, the dynamics of growth shows a steady downward trend, as in 1998-2004 the annual increase in the number of religious communities amounted to 5-8% annually, in 2000-2005 it decreased 4-5%, and in 2007-2009 it was only about 2-4% (as portrayed in Figure 1).

The distribution of religious communities by confessional attributes suggests the preservation of the dominance of Orthodoxy where 18,676 communities or 55% of total religious network in Ukraine belong to. In 2004 there were 14,935 Orthodox communities or 52.2% of total religious network in Ukraine (State Committee of Ukraine on Religion Affairs 2004). For the last 12 years the number of Orthodox communities has been increasing by 25.8%, while its percentage share in the total number has been increasing only by 2.8%.

\(^1\) For detailed information see Appendix I.
The Ukrainian Orthodoxy has no single institutional formalization—there are three large Orthodox churches: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), and several small communities confessing some separate versions of Orthodox creed (233 communities or 1.3% of all Orthodox communities). As shown in the diagram in Figure 2, the largest part of Orthodox communities (two thirds) belong to the UOC-MP. At the same time, the share of UOC-KP in the total number of Orthodox communities has been increasing (from 22.1% to 26.4%), while the share of UAOC has been decreasing (from 7.2% to 6.3%) for the last 12 years.

The second confession by its number of religious communities is the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) (3,366 communities). However, its share as for the total number decreased from 11.7% to 10%. On the contrary, the share of Protestant denominations increased from 25.1% to 29.3% (see Figure 3).
A comparative analysis of the growth rate of religious communities of the Orthodox and the Protestant trends as well as of some new denominations (especially of the Charismatic trends) shows a strong tendency toward outgrowing Orthodox communities by the Protestant ones. For example, the Orthodox communities have increased by 25.8% whereas the Protestant communities have increased by 39.6%. The Protestant churches are also rapidly expanding. In the Soviet period, for good reason, Ukraine was referred to as the ‘Bible Belt of the USSR’ (Fletcher 1985). Today, in the post-Soviet era, this characterization is just as appropriate. The Protestants’ successes are first of all explained by determination to engage in missionary activities, while the Orthodox churches used to appeal to the historic background and the Slavonic identity. A major consequence of Ukraine’s church divisions (three Orthodox jurisdictions and two Catholic confessions—Greek Rite and Latin Rite) is that no single church can function independently, unlike Russia where the special contribution of Orthodoxy is recognized by the law (Russian Federation Federal Law, 1997: Preamble). As a result, Protestants have had much more freedom to exist and to evangelize than has been the case in Russia.

The religious situation in Ukraine seems to be different from the one that formed in the majority of Central-East European post-socialist countries: in Ukraine there is no church that could be regarded as dominant for the whole society or the majority of population. Each of the churches has, to a smaller or larger extent, a regional character, and has a limited sphere of influence. Perhaps, the UOC-MP is the closest to the nation-wide status, by its spread and presence in the regions, but even this church does not pretend to be dominant all over Ukraine. Moreover, after the Ukraine crisis in 2014, the UOC-MP leadership was greatly shaken because of its pro-Russian position.

Figure 3 Religious organizations network structure by confessional attribute (Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, 2016)

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The intensification of religious life after 1991 had resulted in a considerable rise, as compared to the Soviet times, in the level of the Ukrainian society’s religiosity. In the 1970s concrete case studies fixed the Ukrainian population’s religiosity within 15-20% level, while 55-60% of respondents had identified themselves as believers3) from early 1990s. According to the results of the poll carried out by the Ukrainian Center for Economic and Political Studies (UCEPS) sociological service in August 2000, 58% of respondents had identified themselves as believers; 23% had considered themselves to be in-between belief and unbelief; 12% had identified themselves as non-believers and 3% as staunch atheists (Dudar and Shangina, 2000 : 83). It should be noted, while indicating rather high declared level of religiosity, respondents had shown a considerably lower level of trust in the Church—only 33.1% fully trusted in it (only 48% among believers). Religious activities of believers was also not very high: the religious services, gatherings and sermons were attended by 69.4%, only 39.1% went to church not less than once a month, and almost half of the believers (49.6%) attended the church only during religious holidays (Dudar and Shangina, 2000 : 86-87). However, by 2016 the number of believers has increased to 70.4%. The level of trust to the Church also increased to 44.8% (68% among believers). According to the latest data of Razumkov Center (2016), the religious activities are decreasing as 58% of believers attends church and 35% goes to church not less than once a month, while 51.7% attends it only during religious holidays.

On the whole, either conscientiously, or otherwise, the Ukrainian people consider faith to be rather a personal, not public affair, and even not a Church affair. A comparatively high level of religiosity demonstrated today by the Ukrainian population is not directly and sufficiently connected with acknowledgment of religion as a fundamental value—the guide in daily life. The indices of believers’ religious affiliation and general level of trust in the Church seem not to correspond to the manifested level of religiosity. Fylypovych (2015) identifies this type of religiosity as situational, because some people are inclined to idealize and romanticize it. Moreover, ‘double-faith’ phenomenon (Christian-pagan syncretism) should also be taken into account.

When looking through the mapping of religion and politics in Ukraine we should keep in mind that practically all confessions in Ukraine are regionally structured. The center of religious life is clearly concerned to the Western regions, where the level of religiosity is traditionally higher than in the Eastern and Southern ones. Seven regions of Western Ukraine (Chernivetska, Ivano-Frankivska, Lutskia, Lvivska, Rivnenska, Ternopilska and Zakarpatska) form not only the most religious zones in Ukraine, but also the most competitive and most pluralistic ones.

3) In Ukraine, sociologists usually use ‘the believers’ as a steady nondenominational concept by default without specifying of which faith (see Babii 2015).
Religious pluralism seems to be a vital social change for Ukraine. Casanova notes “it is important to remember that within all republics of the Soviet Union the state-sponsored atheism was the established secular religion. The only church that was tolerated by the Communist regime was the Russian Orthodox Church. As the repository of Russian national identity and as the historic partner of the Russian ruling elite, this church was permitted to function under the tight control of KGB4” (Casanova 2015 b: no page number). In Ukraine, after the destruction of the UAOC and the UGCC by the Soviet authorities, many Ukrainians joined the local Russian Orthodox parishes (now the UOC-MP). However, the USSR dissolution brought another change: the majority of Ukrainians rejected Communism along with the Orthodox church controlled by the Soviet authorities and either came back to their ancestral churches, or joined the Baptist community of Ukraine (by far, the largest in Europe) and other Protestant denominations (Kolodnyi 2003). Nowadays, most of the Orthodox parishes in the Central Ukraine are those of the Kyiv Patriarchate, while in the South-Eastern Ukraine the believers show their loyalty to the Moscow Patriarchate. In the Western Ukraine, after coming up from the Soviet underground, it is the UGCC that has the leading positions. At the same time, Jewish communities are spread all over Ukraine. An intense interest in religion is apparent (Casanova 2015 b).

It seems representative to correlate the index of religiosity with the results of the parliamentary elections in 2006 as a particularly good indicator for political sentiments in Ukraine, because they are widely considered to be the first legitimate, unfalsified election results in independent Ukraine. From this correlation we can conclude that the regions where Party of Regions dominated (East and South) had lower index of religiosity, unlike the regions where ‘Our Ukraine’ and ‘Yulia Tymoshenko’ Blocks had won (West and Center).

As regarding to the Ukraine’s political and religious mapping an interesting hypothesis in which peoples’ religious preferences impacted their political preferences was tested by Katherine Peisker (2014). It revealed the strength of correlation between the parties and the confessions. For example, the UOC-MP inclined towards the Party of Regions, while the UOC-KP and the UAOC had been drawn to the Bloc of Yuliya Tymoshenko and ‘Our Ukraine’ correspondingly. In Ukraine, as has been referenced throughout this paper, the issue of regionalism is so important that regarding it as the determinative factor seems to be critical though any further studies on it would require more scrupulous statistical work to demonstrate the validity of such kind of assumptions.

4) The KGB (Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti) in the Soviet period is usually translated to Committee for State Security in English.
3. State-Church Relations Model: State Policy for Religion

Since the Soviet times, the church did not have any impact on the policy of the government, while the state was present in all elements of the church activities. In the USSR one-sided separation of church and state had been declared, so the church posed to inability to influence the authorities while, at the same time, the state had impacted on any side of church life. After Ukraine had proclaimed its independence in 1991, a separation of church from the state was insured. “The Church and religious organizations in Ukraine shall be separated from the state, and school shall be separated from the Church. No religion shall be recognized by the state as mandatory” (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996: Article 35). However, the church possessing powerful material and human resources, with direct access to the electorate, actually became not only an integral part of social and political processes, but also started a kind of struggle for an appropriate place on the political scene. At the same time, the authorities traditionally tried to use religion as mobilizing or disintegrating factor of social processes.

Moreover, the state policy in Ukraine is closely connected with an adjustment that religion is an important element for the definition of common interest and will of the majority of citizens whose way of thinking is, to some extent, subordinated to religious values. As it is generally known, religion is a form of social consciousness that shapes social norms under which a system of social relations is being constructed. In turn, religious organizations fall under the influence of state policy that expresses and realizes the interests of society as a whole and the individual in particular. Thus, the state and religious organizations affect each other. The quality of their interaction determines the formation of harmonious and fruitful relations in the system: individual-religious organization-state-society. One of the key tools of the state is its policy in the sphere of religious relations.

The Ukrainian government pursues a policy of non-interference concerning to religious organizations. This ensures neutrality in matters of confessional affiliation, the obligations of guaranteeing the freedom of conscience, and at the same time, creates equal conditions for protecting the rights and freedoms of all citizens. However, this policy provides some leverage on freedom for not being turned into uncontrolled permissiveness that may cause violations to the rights of others, public order and so forth. A special legal framework and authorities are being in operational in order to achieve these goals. Relations between religious organizations and state are regulated by the Constitution, laws of Ukraine and international acts. Legal basis of the state’s religious policy is formulated in the Constitution of Ukraine that enshrines “everyone has the right to freedom of beliefs and religion. This right includes the freedom to profess any religion or profess no religion, to freely practice religious rites and ceremonial
rituals, alone or collectively, and to pursue religious activities. No one is exempted from his/her duties to the State or refused to abide by laws on religious grounds. If the performance of military duty contradicts the religious beliefs of a citizen, the performance of this duty is replaced by alternative (non-military) service” (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996 : Article 35).

More detailed legal relationship between religious organizations and the state are written in the Law of Ukraine ‘On freedom of conscience and religious organizations’ (1991). The Law regulates the charters registration, conducting public worships, ceremonies and processions; it also regulates religious organizations’ involvement in political life of society. It had been preceded the USSR dissolution and recognized negative effects of previous Soviet policy. The said law confirms that believers and religious organizations have the same right with other public organizations to take part in public life of the community except of the political process on the formation of state authorities. Religious organizations do not take part in political parties, neither they provide any financial support to political parties, nominate candidates for state authorities, campaign or finance in the election campaigns of candidates to these authorities. Clerics have the right to take part in politics along with all citizens. That is, citizen who professes a particular religion can take part in political life, like any other citizen, but as a head of religious organization or on behalf of the parishioners s/he is deprived of this right (Law of Ukraine 1991 : Article 5). It should be noted that currently there have been some amendments to the Law in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 2003, 2009, 2012, and 2014 for educational, financial, social, and registration issues of religious organizations. Currently, the new version of the Law is under discussions.

On the whole, many Ukrainian scholars believe that the whole philosophy of church-state relations in Ukraine should be changed (Chornomorets 2015, Sagan 2015). It means Ukraine must shift from the declaration of separation model moving to partnership model, not in words, but in deeds. Ukraine has to move away from the Soviet paradigm and understand that the church and the state cannot be completely separated, since a same person can be both a believer and a clerk. Under the present circumstances other churches obviously perform a lot of functions that are purely state obligations: they organize hundreds of programs in the field of social policy—helping disabled children, homeless, frail and elderly people and others. Churches are now also engaging in moral education of the youth. Thus, the Ukrainians have long been living in a regime of partnership of the state and the church, it is just not duly documented (Sagan, 2015 : 71). Surely, any changes in the model of state-church relations are still debatable, but the need to improve the legal framework of state-church relations seems to be apparent as new realities have appeared in the relations between confessions.
4. Church Involvement in Political Processes

Certainly, the church is not a political institute; however, as evidenced by historical experience and current situation, it makes quite an important impact on political life of society. Though religious organizations are not subjects of political process, but they are capable to side with certain political forces. Kudoiar (2000) distinguishes areas of religious influence on the policy in independent Ukraine: religion intervenes in political life by using the political views of believers; politicians use religious organizations for their own purposes; believers are getting more involved into the mass social movements under their own convictions.

In Ukraine today, the problem of church involvement into political processes, and more generally—the influence of religion on politics—is extremely relevant, as Ukraine is not monoreligious state. Results of numerous polls confirm that the influence of the church in modern Ukraine as an institution of civil society is more powerful than that of political parties or government officials. Therefore, local political parties and some politicians have traditionally used the church to fight for the electorate, because without considering social, political, ideological, cultural imperatives of believing population (especially keeping in mind relatively high level of manifested religiosity in Ukraine), one cannot count on effective activities of state authorities, political parties, public organizations and so forth. However, the influence of the church on political views of believers is usually not high. The level of influence of the church on political views of citizens in 2016, compared with 2000 and 2010, has not changed much—12% of respondents in 2000 and 2010 had answered that it ‘Has any impact’, while in 2016, 9% believed so, and only 3%, 4% and 2% of respondents in 2000, 2010, 2016 respectively had answered that it ‘Partially affected’ (Razumkov Center 2016).

The creation and existence of political parties with ideology and program documents based on religious foundation may be regarded as factor that indicates the politicization of religion in Ukraine. In particular, these parties include Republican Christian Party of Ukraine, the Party of Muslims of Ukraine, the Christian-Democratic Party of Ukraine, the Social Christian Party, and others. On the one hand, it shows that there is an interest by citizens and politicians in religious and political problems, which is not duly marked in the programs of other political forces. On the other hand, these parties are often created opportunistic, looking through the problems within the Orthodox environment or situational challenges. However, such religion-oriented parties have no significant support among citizens and are not able to influence on the political situation in the country, staying in marginal niche. The Ukrainian people have expressed a desire not to mix religion and politics, because they are not used to such kind of substitution. The participation of the laity in political parties is carried out independently and is not
identified with the position of the church. Thus, the higher church authorities do not give special blessing upon the political activity of the laity. Although sometimes violation of this rule can happen. For example, it concerned to the Party of Regional Revival of Ukraine (later the Party of Regions, now famous as Opposition Bloc) that called at the parliamentary elections in 1998 to provide the UOC-MP with all of the privileges. The UOC-MP bishop Pavlo (Lebid) was the second number in the list of the party and nominated as candidate from the higher church authorities blessing. It was stressed in leaflets portraying the bishop that the election process for him was the ability to solve many problems of the church. Generally, from the mid-1990s there was amplification of religious organizations’ requirements to political parties and blocs that had claimed to their support in the elections.

Politicization of religion is also reflected in attempts of shaping the local authorities on confessional basis. This tendency leads to the fact that representatives of local authorities, members of local governments, branches of political parties and public organizations, and some politicians quite often provide support and exercise protectionism for some churches by ignoring the interests of others, in correlation with their political and confessional orientation. The state largely justifies its attempts to influence on the church processes with the idea that the church plays a significant role in public interest or even security. From its point of view the church takes an important role for the state-building process, affects the growth of separatist sentiments on regional and ethnic reasons, provides opportunities for intervention in the internal affairs of Ukraine by external forces through the church channels, affects electoral behavior and expressions of potential protest in society that might undermine credibility of Ukraine in the international arena by promoting its own interests and so forth.

In parallel it has become a tradition among the ruling elite to attend the church service on major Christian holidays, to build a temple at their own expense and so on. The idea that Ukraine is an Orthodox or at least a Christian state seems to be rooted in political and managerial discourse. Given these stereotypes concerning to religious orientation of the population, political parties and individual politicians tend to declare their affiliation to one of the traditional Ukrainian Christian confessions—UOC-MP or UOC-KP, sometimes UGCC and UAOC.

From time to time, some politicians who are not competent in matters of inter-church relations proclaim the theses of the need to unite the Ukrainian Orthodoxy into one Orthodox Church or granting special status to a single ‘canonical’ UOC-MP (Opposition Bloc 2016). Such ideas are challenged by Casanova (2015 a) who believes the power of Ukrainian religiosity to be in religious pluralism of the Ukrainian people. These slogans are declarative and often attempt to disguise manipulating public sentiments and feelings of the believing electorate. It also seems
dangerous for integrity of Ukraine to support the plans of some UAOC officials and activists for dividing Ukraine on the canonical territory of the Moscow and the Constantinople Patriarchates.

We also need to pay attention to the interaction between churches and the Presidents of Ukraine due to the fact of establishing the President institute. Presidents Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yushchenko tried to follow the equal attitude of all churches and religious organizations in Ukraine, inviting the heads of the largest confessions to the solemn meetings by occasion of certain events of national importance, taking part in various conferences on church life in Ukraine and so on. However, at the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych the situation changed radically. In 2010, there had been no meetings between Yanukovych and other top officials—neither with the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO) and other associations of religious organizations nor with representatives of separate churches and religious organizations, with the exception of meeting with the leaders of the UOC-MP and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). In 2010, President Yanukovych repeatedly met with them and participated in events held by the ROC. In this way he had strengthened his positions in the South-East regions where the majority traditionally belongs the UOC-MP. On the other hand, the acting President Petro Poroshenko had expressed his loyalty to the UOC-MP, but this has not been followed by actions.

In this respect the analysis of the importance of religious factor in the Ukrainian presidential election of 2004 seems to be symptomatic. At that time all structures of the UOC-MP, including the Primate, had actively interfered the election campaign. It even led to protests from other churches, especially when Yanukovych’s sympathizers in the UOC-MP depicted him as the icon of ‘the Blessed Virgin’ (Sagan 2004). The behavior of pro-Moscow oriented church was entirely predictable. The religious map of Ukraine followed the political one and significantly polarized. As a result, one pole was the UOC-MP, and the second—a range of confessions, such as the UOC-KP, the UGCC, the RCC, some Protestant denominations etc. Though neither the Jews nor the Muslims or followers of Eastern religions could find common position on the elections and the Orange Revolution, the church being separated from the state showed it would be difficult to separate it from society. The Orange Revolution and events of 2004-2005 testified this. To be fair, the motives of those who supported or did not support certain political force, were quite varied, moreover, they were not always religious. Within the framework of the same denominations one supported Yanukovych, while the other Yushchenko, and some took a neutral position trying to be far from events on the Maidan. Therefore, it is important to realize that sharing in relation to different political tastes had emerged not between confessions, but rather within them.
It is significant that some Ukrainian experts expressed optimism about the events related to the Maidan. In their opinion, both Orthodox and Catholics, Protestants and Muslims, Jews and Buddhists indicated interfaith harmony during the Orange Revolution (Kolodnyi 2005). This also echoed in 2013-2014 during the Revolution of Dignity. When the government security forces started firing on the Maidan crowds, the AUCCRO protested demanding the end to the violence and offered to become an intermediary between the protesters and the government. This kind of action could only have happened in a society where religious pluralism has become an unfeigned value, that is, in a society which offers no special status or political advantage to any one confession (Casanova 2015 b). In Ukraine, this means that even the UOC-MP allied with the Patriarch of Moscow has had to update its position in order to cooperate with all the AUCCRO members.

Despite the fact that one third of all Ukrainian believers are members of the UOC-MP, it is also the reason of tension between the Ukrainians and the Russians within Ukraine. At this moment, it would be difficult to make any kind of long-term prognoses for further inter-Orthodox relationship. As Casanova (2015 b) asserts: “should the present status of the UOC-MP in Ukraine change, should its communities come to the UOC-KP, as several in Volyn region have done recently—the status of both the UOC-MP and the Patriarchate of Moscow could change too. Without Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church would not be the largest Orthodox church in the world” (Casanova, 2015 b : no page number).

**Conclusions**

Thus, in contemporary Ukraine we can see a kind of symbiosis between politics (state) and religion (church) that is mutually beneficial for both parties. As discussed in this paper, the degree of politicization of religious organizations or the confessions’ involvement into political processes is determined with several factors: patronage of some confessions by the authorities, legal ambiguity in defining the limits of activity of religious institutions, unclear law on responsibility for its violations and so on. A brief look through the issue of relationship between religion and politics, under current Ukrainian realities, suggests their active cooperation as well. This has motivated researchers to use concepts of ‘religious and political syncretism’, ‘political science of religion’, ‘political function of religion’ and so on. Here it becomes of very importance the prudence of the authorities, their competence, professionalism towards religious organizations, and modernization of the national model of state-church relations. The problem of understanding and interconfessional tolerance as components of the political functions of religion is very relevant not only for churches operating within the state, but also for the international image of Ukraine. Religion in Ukraine is still often the way of political struggle,
because religious motives in some situations largely affect peoples’ psychology than legal and economic arguments. However, the farther is the church from the policy, the more reliable and stable will be its position in society. At the same time, the distance of the church leaders from the interests of the people inevitably leads to a split therein and catalysts the split in society, threatens unresolved interconfessional problems. The church can define its role only in cases where it is not an object of political manipulations and not an instrument for achieving political goals. It should have the opportunity to remain as church, trying to avoid channeling the power of religious feelings into political confrontation.

References
Religion and Politics in Contemporary Ukraine

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### Appendix I. Network of religious organizations in Ukraine as of January 1, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confessions</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Religious communities (including non-active and non-registered)</th>
<th>Monasteries/monks/missions</th>
<th>Priests</th>
<th>Higher education establishments/students</th>
<th>Sabbath schools</th>
<th>Mass-media</th>
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<td><strong>ORTHODOX</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate</td>
<td>12334</td>
<td>207/4847/47</td>
<td>10169</td>
<td>19/4861</td>
<td>3707</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate</td>
<td>4921</td>
<td>67/211/37</td>
<td>3332</td>
<td>18/1230</td>
<td>1174</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church</td>
<td>1188</td>
<td>13/19/9</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>7/100</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>–/3/1</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td><strong>Total Orthodox</strong></td>
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<td>27/2550</td>
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<td>1473</td>
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<td>1373</td>
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<td>4/287</td>
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<td>1339</td>
<td>13/732</td>
<td>384</td>
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<td>Others (including Jehovah’s witnesses)</td>
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<td>–/–/13</td>
<td>3776</td>
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Source: Ministry of Culture of Ukraine (2016)