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## BELARUSIAN AND UKRAINIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: COMPARISON<sup>1</sup>

Martin Solik – Ján Fil'akovský – Vladimír Baar\*

### ABSTRACT

The successor countries of the former Soviet Union are facing many problems in building their national character, respectively, their national identity. One of the important aspects in the construction of national identity is growing, but controversial role of religion and religious institutions in post-Soviet societies. In Belarus and Ukraine independent Autocephalous Orthodox Churches were created, which are independent of the Russian Orthodox Church based in Moscow. Primary objective of the contribution is to offer two variants of functioning of Autocephalous Church as a social force that seeks to shape the Ukrainian and Belarusian identity, but at the same time pulls combat for its existence with other churches. In these countries, the religious affiliation serves as an element of ethnic, political and regional differentiation. Too many churches on their territory mean a variety of particular interests. The part of the article is devoted to the description of coordinates, which shaped the destinies of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches in the interwar and World War II period too. What was the situation of the Churches in the key periods of formation of national identity in the history? Can they nowadays gain more influence in the minds of the Ukrainian and Belarusian believers? The contribution tries to address these issues too.

**Key words:** Religion, Identity, Autocephality, Orthodox Church, Ukraine, Belarus

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## Introduction

Following the historical development, it can be stated that religion has played an important role in society and the state since time immemorial. Christian religious society developed as soon as in the early medieval states. Monotheistic religions like Christianity in fact helped to unite the tribe, strengthened the state, as well as dependence of subjects on their sovereign. Later, religion even takes a central role in the leadership of the state in the form of so-called theocracy. Examples of this form of government can be found in essentially every world religion even today.<sup>2</sup> The role of religion has taken another form after the establishment of the state on a national basis. It has become clear that there is obviously not a single nation-state whose population is unified under one religion.

Long-term human movement and migration of entire communities, meeting of different cultures and different regimes suggests that the diversity of communities in nation states will be reflected also in region. A similar diversity can be observed in today's post-Soviet space, particularly in Belarus and Ukraine. Christian religion has dominated here for many centuries, namely more dominant Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church with a smaller population of believers. An imaginary line between the two churches divides not only the historical, but also the current territory of the two states. During the emancipatory efforts to create sovereign nations and states, churches played a considerable role. In these efforts, autocephalous (independent) Orthodox churches formed on their background, which are referred to in the present study. Specifically, the Belarus Autocephalous Orthodox Church (hereinafter BAOC) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC hereinafter).

The central theme of the work is not only an empirical interpretation of the historical background of these individual Churches, but also an attempt to their comparison, where different and common features that characterise them, are sought. The study also has the ambition to reveal their importance and influence in current condition of Ukrainian and Belarusian societies. Do these Churches have any possibilities to form and influence religious and social situation in Ukraine and Belarus?

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<sup>2</sup> For Christian Catholics it is for example the Holy See – Vatican; for Muslims it is the current attempt to establish a unified Islamic state, Iran also represents a form of theocracy; for Buddhists in Tibet it was the **Dalai Lama**, forms of theocracy also appeared in the Byzantine Empire, where the monarch was considered a living manifestation of God on the Earth.

The authors' interest in two relatively marginal Orthodox Churches is not accidental. The authors assume that both Churches – the UAOC and the BAOC – have played notable importance in the national-emanicipation efforts of the Ukrainians and the Belarusians and therefore deserve attention. Moreover, both Churches are almost unknown. Authors have an ambition to introduce these Churches to readers and academics, reveal their specific features, activities and attitudes in historical and present consequences.

When researching similar works focused on the role of religion in the state, more particularly the role and influence of the Orthodox Church in nation-states, it appears that there is a considerable amount of works in historiography, political science, and other scholarly texts on this topic.<sup>3</sup> However, on closer examination of the texts it becomes apparent that only a small number of them are devoted to autocephalous Orthodox churches, the BAOC and the UAOC. Even to a lesser extent does the research in these texts focus on the role and activities of the churches in building national identity. Nevertheless, among them there are works of individual authors or teams of authors which, apart from other topics, deal with autocephalous Orthodox churches either in terms of their role in the country as a builder of a national identity, awareness, or as the agents of nationalism (eg. **Baarová** 2015, **Leusten** 2014, **Meyendorff** 1981, **Ramet** 1988), but publications which devote more space to a particular autocephalous Orthodox Church (**Kalkandjieva** 2014, **Marples** 2012, **Reshetar** 1951).

The first part of the study deals with the selection of the topic and methodology that was applied in the study. Another chapter is the theoretical framework, which clarifies the main attributes of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, primarily in relation to construction of national identities. The core of the work consists of short clarification of the religious situation in Belarus and Ukraine and the subsequent flip, or operationalisation, from the theoretical to the empirical part, using the theory of **Pedro Ramet** and his aspects of autocephalous churches. In this section, individual churches will also be compared. At the very end, the results of our research are summarised and an attempt is made to predict future trends and developments of the BAOC and the UAOC.

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<sup>3</sup> To mention just few of the many texts dealing with the Orthodox Church and its role in the state: of more recent works by Russian authors, it is for example **Chumachenko** (2015) **Krawchuk** (2014), and from the Anglo-Saxon literature we can mention especially **Richters** (2013) **Rudling** (2014), **Sutton, van den Bercken** (2001) and **Knox** (2005).

## 1 Methodological framework

The study deals primarily with two autocephalous Orthodox churches, which operate on different bases. It has the aim to identify their major differences, but also the ambition to highlight the attributes that they have in common. It is a qualitative comparative case study, which can be qualified as so-called contrast of contexts. Contrast of contexts is one of the types of comparative studies, which, according to the research objectives, is an empirically oriented type of research. It rather struggles to analyse the surveyed sample cases as such than to draw theoretical conclusions. The purpose of comparison of a number of cases is that it helps in the detection of specific features of each case. Contrast of contexts is based more on general topics, issues and the ideal type than on actual theoretical models. Based on empirical reality, only on the validity of the general concepts and theses is confirmed, but new generalisations are not created. Contrast of contexts is a type of qualitative comparative study not attempting to explain, but to understand (Karlas, 2008). **Kaarbo** and **Beasley** define a comparative case study as a systematic comparison of two or more data objects (cases), which can be examined through the use of case study methods (Kaarbo, Beasley, 1999). Both Churches in this study are seen as objects within the relevant discourses.

## 2 Autocephality and national identity

Religion often has a very important impact on the functioning of the state, even if the society is of a secular nature. Concept, which is characterised as a political theory in which the power of secular government is combined with the spiritual authority of the church is called “Byzantine symphony” (Romocea, 2011). One of the examples of interconnection of state and religion is the Orthodox Church. In this respect, however, the state dominates the church. Therefore, in the territories where the Orthodox Church operates autocephality is created, which is a unique church arrangement where the church is recognized as autocephalous, having its own administration, independent on other churches. These churches gradually move away from formal institutions of so-called canon law and create their own, non-formal (conventional) law (Leusten, 2014). The idea of bringing religious unity, political unity and national identity has existed in the Orthodox world for a long time,<sup>4</sup> but it gained

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<sup>4</sup> This principle has been valid in Eastern Christianity since ancient times and it has been remained unchanged also in so called Oriental Orthodox Churches (inaccurate referred to as “monophysical”

momentum in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in coordination with the ideas of nationalism. Being nations also means to have their own church in their own country (Ramet, 1988).

More specifically, the term “Autocephalous” comes from Greek and means that the subject has its own “head”, and is therefore independent and autonomous. **Juergensmeyer** characterised autocephalous Orthodox churches in a strict sense as a kind of rebellious national movements, whose existence was allowed by **Stalin** in the interwar period only to abolish them later. The fact that many of these churches went into exile (mainly USA) became a symbol of the independent spirit of these religious movements in the struggle for independence and national identity acquisition (Juergensmeyer, 2008). Eastern Christianity recognizes the institute of autonomy in autocephalous churches, which is based on self-defined rules for churches operating in the territory of other subjects of international law. Such a situation arose after the collapse of the USSR, when the autocephality of Russian Orthodox Church (the ROC), which pragmatically granted autonomy not only to churches operating in Ukraine and Belarus, but also in Moldova and Latvia.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, it is necessary to note principled differences between religious terms concerning the Orthodox Churches, which are introduced in this article. These are concepts of “autocephalous church”, “autonomous church” and “exarchate”. The Orthodox Church is a communion comprising the fourteen<sup>6</sup> separate autocephalous hierarchical churches that recognize each other as

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churches – for example Armenian, Coptic or Jacobite Syrian Church). An autocephality arose already in the period when we cannot speak about nations in today's sense, but it is important, that a consciousness of distinct identity has not been shared only through the shared language, but also through its own church. The oldest autocephalous churches are Georgian, Cypriot and Bulgarian Orthodox Church. These churches have been created in the first millennium.

<sup>5</sup> A similar situation also arose in the breakup of Yugoslavia, where the Macedonian and later the Montenegrin Orthodox Church separated from the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), but in parallel there remained an autonomous The Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric for believers in Macedonia, but for Montenegro, the SOC has so far not created any autonomous church.

<sup>6</sup> Today these autocephalous Orthodox churches include the four ancient Eastern Patriarchates (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem), and ten other Orthodox churches that have emerged over the centuries in Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. On its own initiative, the Patriarchate of Moscow has granted autocephalous status to most of its parishes in North America under the name of the Orthodox Church in America. Nevertheless, since the Patriarchate of Constantinople claims the exclusive right to grant autocephalous status, it and most other Orthodox churches do not recognize the autocephaly of the American church.

“canonical” Orthodox Christian churches. Each constituent autocephalous Church is self-governing; its highest-ranking bishop (a patriarch or archbishop) reports to no higher earthly authority. This Church has the right to consecrate its own Holy Chrism, among other prerogatives unique to autocephalous Churches. An autocephalous Church possesses the right to resolve all internal problems on its own authority and the ability to choose its own bishops, including the patriarch, archbishop. While each autocephalous church acts independently, they all remain in full sacramental and canonical communion with one another. The term “autocephalous” literally means “self-heading.” (Kamedina, 2014).

Autocephalous churches may have one or more autonomous churches under their authority, which is exercised only at the time the autocephalous bishop appoints the highest-ranking bishop (an archbishop or metropolitan) of the autonomous Church. Otherwise, each autonomous Church is also self-governing to a certain degree in its internal matters, but its head is appointed or confirmed by the autocephalous Church that nurtures it (by the Holy Synod of its mother autocephalous church). An autonomous Church also receives its Holy Chrism from its “Mother Church” (Kamedina, 2014).

Exarchate is an organisational territorial unit in the eastern Christian churches. Institute of exarchate was – in the context of modern ROC – founded just before the collapse of the USSR specifically for Belarus. The ROC has Belarusian exarchate headed by an exarch who has the title of the Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch of the whole Belarus. The BOC has an extremely weak position in the Orthodox world and remains the only exarchate. Although this church unites all the dioceses in Belarus, it lacks any authority over them and cannot decide alone. The weak position of the Belarusian Exarchate, is, for example manifested by the fact that the Metropolitan of Minsk is appointed by Moscow without the consent of the Belarusian bishops, as was also the case with the present Metropolitan **Paul (Ponomaryov)** (Zřiká se běloruská..., 2015).

**Ramet** further describes three basic attributes that characterise autocephalous Orthodox churches, namely: nationalism, co-optation and opposition. The term “nationalism” in his sense is understood as “*dedication to cultural and linguistic collectivity, manifested in respect to national history, culture, traditions and ... national religion and the aspiration to promote a specific culture and a way of life of a certain group of people who were identified as a nation*” (Ramet, 1988, p. 6). Whether through preservation of folk literature

and artistic development, or by protecting national culture and independence from alien infiltration or domination, Orthodox churches in many cases historically constituted significant nationalist institutions. This “religious nationalism” sometimes supported (supports) the objectives of the state, or the ruling regime (e.g. Russia, Romania, Bulgaria), but sometimes may get in conflict with the ruling regime (Yugoslavia, Albania). Nationalism of the eastern churches makes them involved in politics and thus they enter the church-state relations (Ramet, 1988).

The term “co-option” means *“drawing of the church into a stable cooperative relationship with the state, in which, in exchange for certain benefits (such as subsidies and perhaps state salaries and pensions for the clergy, or perhaps bare toleration), the church agrees (or is forced) to be a “loyal” church and to advance regime goals in specific areas.”* (Ramet, 1988, p. 7). A co-opted church thus becomes a dependent church. This dependence can be achieved in various ways (financial, administrative and legal).<sup>7</sup> Depending on the degree of control, the state is able to apply its demands on the co-opting of church, which would later culminate in a state where the church becomes a pliable instrument, or a cooperative partner.

The last attribute of autocephalous Orthodox churches, according to **Ramet**, is “opposition”. An autocephalous church can *“take on the form of nationalist opposition to the hostile occupier or similar critical opposition to non-Christian or unorthodox State, or may even act as well as the internal opposition within the Orthodox Church itself.”* (Ramet, 1988, p. 7). In the latter case, the alternative views of the society reflected in the struggle for dominance of a similarly alternative or minority current in the Orthodox Church itself. One example of this was undoubtedly the battle in the Russian Orthodox Church (the ROC) and a minority alternative stream called “Living Church” in the early 1920s (Ramet, 1988).

According to the Western model, the national identity of nations is seen as a cultural community whose members are united by shared historical knowledge, myths, symbols and traditions. For new immigrant communities, which have

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<sup>7</sup> In this regard, today a typical example of a co-opted church is the ROC in relation to the Russian Federation. Historically, this church formed as a part of the Russian state from the beginning – in the context of the current turnover of conservatism, the current ruling power counts with the support of the Church – especially in strengthening the moral principles. In the spirit of a union with the Church, which is one of the main elements of **Putin’s** regime, *“religion sanctifies the state, while the state protects the religion.”* (Stier, 2014).

their own national identities and are accepted by another state, it takes several generations to be able to fully accept the national identity of the new nation. Historical territory, legal-political community, legal and political equality of the members and a common civic culture and ideology are essential components of any national identity (Smith, 1991).

Among other, **Grew** considers the cultural content of a particular nation one of the pillars of the national identity. He takes the fact for granted, that the essential core of identity consists of timeless, popular and religious culture expressed in the customs and language of a geographical area and recognizes the constitutive role of formal or high culture of theatres, opera houses, museums, academies, universities, novels, magazines and churches. National style in literature, music, visual arts and in the national language itself began to be defined and recognized mostly through these institutions. It is in these institutions, where elites were created, who then led a strong national movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and who defined their objectives. These institutions have become more admired and omnipresent than ever. Culture as one of the highlights of modern history has been deliberately didactic and wanted to shape the society, which it penetrated by the means of its institutions and schools (Grew 2003).

### **3 The historical evolution of religion in Ukraine and Belarus with emphasis on the national identity and autocephality**

#### **3.1 The period before 1917**

The first attribute, by which **Pedro Ramet** defines autocephalous Orthodox churches, is nationalism. There are several aspects by which one could associate nationalism and autocephality.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, autocephalous Orthodox churches stand out as symbols of the authenticity of national identity. Creation of national patriarchates, particularly in Bulgaria and Serbia, is perceived as part of the nation-building process and was closely associated with the aspect of national identity. On the next level, the Orthodox Church itself became a nationalist institution.

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<sup>8</sup> Although the BAOC and UAOC have "autocephalous" in their names, their autocephalous status exists merely de facto, because they are not recognized by other Orthodox ecumenical churches.

At this point, it should be briefly considered whether Ukraine and Belarus had a certain historical experience with religious organisations that would promote national Belarusian or Ukrainian awareness and values. Belarus, unlike Ukraine does not have a strong autocephalous or autonomous religious tradition. After all, this country was historically always far from global and regional religious centres. As reported by **Bohdan** it is not at all clear whether *“it was the Eastern or Western Christianity, which came first into the territory of Belarus in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, but the fact remains that Belarus suffered from their confrontation. However, the clash of religions did not divide Belarusians along religious lines, but made them extremely flexible and variable in their faith”* (Bohdan, 2012).

Ukraine is different in this regard. Compared to Belarus, which was historically always part of some church organisation (except for a short independent activity of the BAOC on Belarusian territory), Ukraine has a rich and relatively independent, or at least broadly autonomous Orthodox religious tradition under the Patriarch of Constantinople. The first and undoubtedly the defining feature of the Ukrainian national-cultural form, was formation of a powerful state, known as Kievan Rus'. In the 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the Kiev was a residential and a cultural centre of Kievan Rus'. Christianity was officially adopted in Rus' in the year 988, during the reign of the great Kiev Prince **Vladimir**, who introduced Christianity of the Byzantine rite. With the adoption of Christianity from Byzantium, Rus' became part of the Greek-Orthodox East, and also the political universe of Byzantium. Kiev Church thus became an autonomous church headed by the Metropolitan under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Creating the office of the Metropolitan of Kiev, the only one within a half millennium for all eastern Slavic countries, meant historical territory of Ukraine's entry into the Christian world. Mongol invasions in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century caused moving of the political and religious centre from Kiev to Moscow, however, the title of metropolitan connected with Kiev survived in the new eastern Slavic state formation – Muscovite Russia. The gradual liquidation of Byzantium by the Ottoman sultanate weakened the bonds of Moscow and Constantinople both on state and church level, which culminated in the 1448 declaration of the Autocephalous ROC.<sup>9</sup> However, the territory of Ukraine at that time had already

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<sup>9</sup> In 1448, **Vasily II**, the Grand Prince of Moscow, appointed Bishop **Jonah** as the Metropolitan of the ROC. This was crucial for the ROC. **Jonah** became the first (independent) "Metropolitan of Kiev

become a part of Lithuania and the ways of Moscow-Kiev and Russian-Ukrainian Orthodoxy parted for some time.

Orthodox eparchies,<sup>10</sup> which were on the territory of the influential Grand Duchy of Lithuania including Kiev,<sup>11</sup> were resumed under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Metropolitan office in Kiev was restored in 1458 as a reaction to the autocephaly of Moscow from the year 1448. The Metropolitan of Kiev was renamed to Metropolitan of Kiev, Galicia and the whole Russia. For a short period of twenty-five years (1596-1620), the activity of the Kiev Orthodox Metropolia was suspended due to the Union of Brest, by which the Kiev Orthodox Metropolia resumed its unity with the Catholic Church and the UGCC was created. Subsequently, however, the Metropolia was again restored by the Patriarch of Constantinople and entered the last stage when it was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Decades after the Union of Brest the reformist efforts of the Kiev Metropolitan **Petro Mohyla** (1633-1646) enabled the formation of a European-oriented Eastern Christianity. After arranging religious affairs, services, administrative life and ecclesiastical management, the importance of Kiev Metropolia increased again. **Petro Mohyla** started spreading the idea of wide ecumenical unification, compromises with the Western Church, or maintaining the Greek liturgical tradition. For this reason, the Kiev Metropolia turned into an epicentre of the Christian world (Partykevich, 2014), and Kiev became an important centre of Eastern Orthodox Church and during this period it was even referred to as the "*second Jerusalem*" (Wasyliv, 2007, p. 305).

This boom in the Ukrainian Orthodoxy was limited by the Russian occupation of Kiev (Truce of Andrusovo, 1667) and completed in 1686, when Kiev Orthodox Metropolia was – under the consent of the Kiev Metropolitan **Gedeon** – passed from the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Ukrainian Orthodox

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and all Russian lands" who was appointed without the approval of the Patriarch of Constantinople, as was customary until then. By this act, the Russian Church became autocephalous, i.e. independent of the Patriarch of Constantinople – however, he did not acknowledge the change until after more than a century in 1589, so until then it functioned as non-canonical.

<sup>10</sup> Eparchy could be translated as the rule or jurisdiction over something, such as a province, prefecture, or territory. an eparchy is a territorial diocese governed by a bishop of one of the Eastern churches, who holds the title of eparch. It is part of a metropolis.

<sup>11</sup> Kiev belonged to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (since 1471 as a center of Kiev Voivodeship) since 1363 and along with it later to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, during the Union of Lublin. From 1497, Kiev had autonomy according to the Magdeburg legal system.

Church thus became part of the ROC until Ukraine and declared its independence after World War I and the Russian Revolution.

Despite varying historical religious traditions both autocephalous Orthodox churches – the Ukrainian, and the Belarusian – became part of the efforts for Ukrainian and Belarusian independence. Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalist spiritual leaders faced long-term oppression not only by the ROC, but concurrently also from the part of the state administration in the Russian empire (primarily after 1686). These churches were formed at the background of emancipatory nation-building efforts at the end of the World War I, but their activity was ironically approved only by the Bolsheviks in the early 20s of the last century.

*“Humiliating gross restrictions of the tsarist administration against Ukrainians led to tearing Ukrainian soul up”* (Zubov et al., 2014, p. 594). Systematic Russian attacks (ranging between 1686 and 1917) to the Ukrainian nation-building activities and the church efforts with the objective (among others) to break out from under the Moscow Patriarchate left deep impact on nation-building efforts.<sup>12</sup> Also for this reason, the interwar Ukrainian national movement did not receive wider response from the farmers or the labourers in industry. It remained a matter of quite small enthusiastic group of intellectuals (especially teachers, writers and the priests) (Zubov et al., 2014).

The position of Belarusian nation-building intellectuals was even worse. Gradual Russification<sup>13</sup> (between years 1794-1918) and strengthening of the impact of the ROC in the religious sphere, to the detriment of other religions<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Since the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century and throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, more and more official Russian regulations were being generated, which relegated Ukrainian attempts to own emancipation. Already in 1690, for example, the Patriarch of Moscow, **Joachim** declares the church's "anathema" on "the new books of Kiev" (**Petro Mohyla, Kirill Trankvillion Stavrovetsky, Epifani Slavinecky, Ioanykii Galiatovsky, Ioanykii Haliatovsky** and others) written in Ukrainian. In 1720, publishing of Ukrainian books was banned by a Decree (Russian: ukazom) of the Russian Emperor **Peter I** and confiscation of Ukrainian ecclesiastical books was ordered (Jones, 2001). Ukrainian schools were being closed. Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which had enjoyed absolute autonomy under the Patriarchate of Constantinople was, after its incorporation into the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686, restricted and, most importantly, lost jurisdictional freedom.

<sup>13</sup> In 1840, during the reign of Tsar **Nicholas I** Russian judicial code came into force and the use of the name "Belarus" for the allocation of the Belarusian territory was forbidden and replaced by the "North-western region" (Silitski, Zaprudnik, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Uniate Church was officially banned in the Russian Empire in 1839 and then severely repressed. Belarusians were dependent in religious matters on the ROC. A national Orthodox church was not realistic at this time.

resulted in a very slow development of Belarusian national revival. Partly owing to these events, a paradoxical situation occurred – after a brief existence of Belarusian People’s Republic, Soviets decided that *“although the state of Belarus was created by ‘bourgeois elements’,<sup>15</sup> it was not to be destroyed, but revolutionized. Statehood that was thus practically given to a nation that was not seeking it and independence was granted to people who did not pursue it.”* (Zubov et al., 2014, p. 603).

### 3.2 The period between 1917-1938: Foundation and functioning of the UAOC and BAOC

UAOC was formed at the background of chaotic Ukrainian state-building period (1917-1920), when a tough struggle for achieving the UAOC took place within the church. Ukrainian national movement, which was first presented openly within the church in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, was initially – under the long-term effects of persecution and open pro-Russian propaganda – very weak and indecisive. Most Orthodox clergy born on Ukrainian territory openly shared concept of “Malorossiya identity” and strengthened the “All-Russian” concept within the ROC.<sup>16</sup> This fact is confirmed by the historian **Zubov**, who claims that *“in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Ukrainian national consciousness yearned for a creative freedom within a unified Russian Church”* (Zubov et al., 2014, p. 589).

Ukrainian national ideology – in a spiritual context – spread at first among the lower white (married) clergy, who, however, had a negligible impact on religious matters, but also among the seminarians. While it is true that the Orthodox seminar in Ukraine provided education to and influenced important representatives of the Ukrainian national movement, including **Symon Petliura** and **Volodymyr Chekhivsky**, most graduates of seminars joined not the spiritual, but the secular national liberation movement. Moreover, secular Ukrainian movement in the Russian Empire was strongly influenced by socialist

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<sup>15</sup> The Belarusian People’s Republic (1918-1919) was founded within a German plan of advance against Russia (as so-called buffer state).

<sup>16</sup> The Holy Synod of the ROC did relentlessly considered Ukrainians (Malorossiyan) together with the people of Belarus as part of the “All-Russian nation” and strongly rejected any attempts of the non-Russian clergy to distinguish themselves in a national context. As declared by **Martin C. Putna** within the Russian empire, the official name of “Great Russia” was used for the eastern Russia and “Little Russia” for western Russia (Putna 2015).

ideology. Anti-clergy mood among the leaders of the Central Council<sup>17</sup> and other governments of Ukraine (**Mykhailo Hrushevsky** and **Volodymyr Vynnychenko** and others) undoubtedly played a negative role in shaping the autocephalous movement in Ukraine. Nevertheless, it was not the only reason for the weakness of the movement. Before the revolution in 1917, no Ukrainian translation of the Bible was published in the Russian Empire as a result of government regulations known as “Valuev Circular” of 1863, or “Ems Ukaz” of 1876 that completely banned the printing of books in Ukrainian language (Kalashnikov, Buntovskiy, 2009). The first liturgy in Ukrainian was served in Kiev in the summer of 1919 by **Vasyl Lypkivsky** (Conference paper: Religion and..., 1999).

The autocephalous movement in Ukraine started forming in 1917, after the abdication of the Russian tsar **Nicholas II** and the downfall of the tsarist regime. In the spring and summer of 1917 a series of meetings on the eparchial right across Ukrainian territory were held. In December of 1917 a small group of pro-Ukrainian oriented clerics headed by an archbishop **Oleksii Dorodnitsyn** a military chaplain **Oleksander Marychiv** managed to establish All-Ukrainian Orthodox Church Council (Ukrainian: Vseukrajinska pravoslavna cerkovna rada) (Katchanovski et al., 2013). It was founded in St. Sophia cathedral in Kiev and consisted of representatives of clergy and lay people from all over Ukraine. Its primary aim, in addition to reducing the Church’s dependence on Moscow, was to restart the process of the “Ukrainianization” of the ecclesial life and to create a permanent organisational structure of the Ukrainian Church.

Although the UAOC and the BAOC are not an exact synonym of national identity in Ukraine and Belarus, it can be argued that both autocephalous Orthodox churches were strongly associated with nation-constructive process and nationalism in the countries in the interwar period, but even during the World War II. **Ramet** confirms this statement and emphasizes that particularly the UAOC “*was closely linked with the Ukrainianization drive of the 1920s, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox church was likewise a nationalist church, as are the Balkan Orthodox churches.*” (Ramet, 1988, p. 7).

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<sup>17</sup> It was established at the time of the Ukrainian national revolution. On March 4, 1917, Central Council was established in Kiev along with the United Council of Social Organizations. This Ukrainian representative democratic institution originated on the wave of the revolutionary movement in order to lead the national-liberation movement throughout Ukraine. **Mykhailo Hrushevsky**, a widely recognized leader of the Ukrainian liberation movement was in exile at the time when he was elected head of the Central Council.

Ukrainian autocephality was announced (with the consent of the Bolsheviks) in May 1920. Nevertheless, there was a problem. The matter was that church leaders could not find a bishop who would take over the spiritual leadership and consecrate a new hierarchy of the church. The UAOC settled it in its own way and at the Sobor of the UAOC convened in October 1921, the priests and laity resorted to a non-canonical act: they themselves conducted cheirotonia – ordination by laying on of hands – without the participation of other bishops and elected “their” own episkopi (bishop) and, consequently, the first metropolitan of the UAOC, **Vasyl Lypkivsky** (1921-1926) (Magocsi, 2012). At this Sobor the hierarchy of the UAOC was also created. Although the present priests and laity appealed to the early Christian church practice of this “ordination”, it was not accepted by any canonical Orthodox church (Krupa, 2009).

The roots of the autocephalous church in Belarus, as in the case of Ukraine, date back to the interwar period. The BAOC was announced on July 23, 1922, council in Minsk, the part that had only just become independent of the short-lasting Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>18</sup> The first metropolitan was Belarusian Bishop **Melchizedek (Pajewski)**. The BAOC – which was made up of members who formerly belonged to the Polish Orthodox Church, as the western part of present-day Belarus was, in the interwar period, part of Poland, which was also the centre of the Belarusian Orthodox intelligence – benefitted from the short period of independence of the Belarusian state, which soon became one of the founders of the USSR.

Initially nationalistically tuned Belarusians, who within a short period of time lived under four states,<sup>19</sup> liked the idea of a life in the Soviet Union, with the promise of prosperity and uniting several nations (with no nation ceasing to exist and, on the contrary, supporting the diversity of the state) in order improve their life. In those years, the Soviet Union was based on an image of ethnically

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<sup>18</sup> Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic called Litbel existed only for five months (17-02-1919 to 17-07-1919) during the Polish-Soviet War. However, the coexistence of Lithuanians and Belarusians in one state was not accepted by either of the nations (especially Belarusians who understood the act of their connection with Lithuania as an annexation of their own state, which led to the growth of nationalism among Belarusians). Finally, this puppet state split in Lithuanian and Belarusian part, and while Lithuania remained an independent state, Belarus established a soviet republic (Pipes, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> For example, a resident of the Minsk Region lived between the years 1918 to 1922 first in the Russian Empire, then the Belarusian People's Republic, the Socialist Soviet Republic of Belarus, Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (Litbel) and Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was soon incorporated into the USSR.

tolerant country. Moscow's claim to moral superiority in Europe, where fascism and National Socialism was increasing, and the United States, where residents of the Southern States were fleeing from racial oppression and lynching of blacks, was based mainly on the vision of multi-ethnic country with affirmative action<sup>20</sup> (Snyder, 2013).

The second attribute of **Ramet** for the analysis of autocephalous churches is co-optation. As it was mentioned above, in his understanding, co-optation represents drawing of the church into a stable cooperative relationship with the state, or the regime. In this relation, the church is usually subjected to the state and expresses its loyalty and obedience in exchange for certain benefits. Thus, in a co-optative relation, the church becomes dependent (Ramet, 1988).

It can be said that from a historical perspective both the UAOC and the BAOC showed features of co-optation to the state for a simple reason. Their impact on individual activity has always been marginal. Ukrainian and Belarusian Orthodoxy – unlike in Russia – initially (in the early 1920s) benefited from the Soviet religious policies. First, the official ideology of the new Bolshevik rulers proclaimed, above all, the idea of “proletarian internationalism”, not Russian nationalism, which was strongly promoted by the previous, Tsarist regime. Secondly, the Bolsheviks not only eliminated state support for the ROC, but also regarded it their enemy in the religious field<sup>21</sup> (Conference paper: Religion and ..., 1999).

The Soviets openly used competing smaller “alternative” churches, for the purpose of undermining the strength of the conservative Russian Orthodoxy – the factor that was most dangerous ideological enemy of the Bolsheviks. This was both because of the close cooperation of the ROC with the hated tsarist regime and because of its harsh anti-Bolshevik stance during the Russian Revolution. The main tool of the Bolsheviks – In Russia itself – In the attack on the ROC was particularly an influential (schismatic) group of reform-minded leftist clergy, known as “Renovationist” church (Russian: Obnovlencheskaya

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<sup>20</sup> For example, in the popular movie *Circus* from 1936, the main heroine was an American circus performer who after giving birth to a black child finds refuge from racism in the Soviet Union (Snyder, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> The ROC was a strong supporter of traditional social order not only ideologically, but also institutionally. These facts at least partly explain the aggressive approach of the new power against its institutions and representatives. By **Lenin's** decree of January 1918 the centuries-old union of church and state was to be broken within a short time. In addition, in an effort to weaken the ROC all other churches and religious denominations of the former Tsarist Empire were welcomed by this decree.

tserkov), which was cooperating with the Bolsheviks. The majority of members of this church united in a radical group, chaired by **Vladimir Krasnitsky**, and known as “Living Church”<sup>22</sup> (Russian: Zhivaya Tserkov), which was state-controlled, but also state-sponsored.

It was from this reason as well, that Bolsheviks allowed Ukrainian parishes of the ROC to register as independent (including the parish of St. Sophia in Kiev) and also allowed the activity of **All-Ukrainian Orthodox Church Council**. It was by the means of this council, that the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was announced in May 1920. It can be said that the existence of a national UAOC inspired Bolsheviks to initiate the creation of the BAOC in 1922.

It follows that, at first, Bolsheviks supported – for the purpose of dilution or even destruction of the dominant ROC – as many church splits and autocephaly efforts as possible (not only in Ukraine, but also in Belarus). However, once the ROC was weakened and destabilised, Soviets changed their tactics. This happened in 1927, after the new successor to the deceased Patriarch **Tikhon** of the ROC (died in 1925), Metropolitan **Sergius** of Nizhny Novgorod signed a declaration of loyalty to the Soviet power<sup>23</sup> in efforts to save the Church from repression (Palasiewicz, 2015). After the major and powerful ROC became an obedient tool of Soviet state policy, autocephalous Orthodox churches and schismatics were no longer considered useful. The enforcement agencies of the totalitarian Soviet Union started a pre-prepared pogrom on their former protégés with unprecedented brutality.

In many cases, the UAOC shared the fate of the Russian reformist “Renovationist” church, with the difference that the Ukrainian autocephalous Orthodox clergy were persecuted much more aggressively. As a result of the expansion of the UAOC in the 1920s, Bolsheviks began to watch with dismay booming national-educational activities of the Church. They regarded them as a dangerous expression of Ukrainian nationalism. Hence, the clergy of the UAOC

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<sup>22</sup> “Living Church” acted like a modern church, but the Soviet secret police managed to paralyse the ROC and break its structure through members of this church. Bishops, who refused to cooperate with this divisive movement, including the ROC Patriarch **Tikhon**, were interned or imprisoned (Vlček, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> On May 18, 1927 a temporary synod was formed by a group of bishops of the ROC, which soon received registration with the NKVD. Two months later, a declaration of Metropolitan **Sergius** and the Synod was released, in which the faithful were forced to recognize the Soviet government. Further, the clergy in emigration was condemned. The synod issued commands to remember the secular authority during the worship service (Palasiewicz, 2015).

was discredited and blamed not only from a religious, but also a nationalist propaganda, which doubled their oppression and persecution.

As soon as in 1926, the main stage of repressions against the UAOC leaders by the GRU (Soviet military intelligence) began. From early 1930s, pogrom of Soviets on all religious groups in Ukraine continued, including the UAOC, which, according to the Soviets represented "*the strongest institutional expression of popular movement for Ukrainianization*"<sup>24</sup> (Bociurkiw 1982, p. 7). This persecution and destruction of the UAOC lasted until 1936, when it was disposed of its last parish. The ten-year period of repression was characterised, in addition to oppression, even by a short period of "normalisation", which was conditioned by the depoliticisation or loyalty to the Soviet regime and Soviet patriotism by the UAOC (Bociurkiw, 1982).

The same fate befell on the BAOC. That, similarly to the UAOC after the announcement of autocephaly (1922) began to flourish and gradually expanded its scope. However, disillusionment came after Stalin began his policy of repression of counterrevolution, which condemned people based on their social, ethnic or the religious background. The BAOC connected the undesirable "national" and religious "element". In 1925, Metropolitan **Melchizedek** was arrested and expelled from Belarus. In the next decade, the church lost a large number of people and buildings, and as a result of the repressive policy of the communist government, the majority of the clergy was arrested and taken to labour camps, church property was confiscated and religious buildings were used for other purposes (Zaprudnik, Silitsky, 2010).

Thus, the BAOC was almost completely destroyed by 1938. It is estimated that more than 600 thousand Belarusians, who were either killed or interned, moving or otherwise persecuted, suffered by the reprisals<sup>25</sup> (Marples, 1994). For this reason, many Belarusians later (during the World War II) perceived the occupation of the territory of Belarus by Nazi Germany as redemption. Upon

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<sup>24</sup> Soviet leadership realized over time that in Ukraine at the end of the 20s of the last century "*bourgeois nationalism is becoming a greater threat than the mighty power of Russian chauvinism*" (Bociurkiw 1982, p. 7).

<sup>25</sup> As the Poles have their place of mourning after the repression in Katyn, so similarly there was a mass grave of Belarusians discovered in 1988, after the repression in Kurapaty near Minsk. According to its discoverer, historian **Zianon Pazniak** (who later became the leader of the Belarusian national movement for independence), from 150 -200 thousand to 500 thousand residents of Belarus found their death there (Marples, 1994).

their arrival, Germans found basically all areas of life non-functional, including the religious sphere.

In this period (1917-1938), it is possible to find the third element of **Ramet's** theory. This attribute concerning a relation between autocephaly and national identity is opposition. Opposition is undoubtedly a complex phenomenon in terms of its relationship with autocephaly. In this way, it is possible to take two types of opposition into account. On the one hand, the church can participate in activities, or take a view that it is in opposition to the policy of the ruling political regime. On the other hand, church-state relations may be affected by an opposition within the church itself. Due to the atheistic nature of communism, each religious organisation automatically constituted some opposition of a kind in the past. In addition, the nature of the opposition Autocephalous Orthodox Churches could (and can) also lie in the fact that certain autocephalous Orthodox churches can address, or gain supporters from the ranks of the non-believers, because they may offer an alternative view of the world (Ramet, 1988).

Thus, the UAOC and the BAOC are clear examples of the opposition in **Ramet's** sense. As mentioned above, both churches were created on the background of the Ukrainian and Belarusian nation-constructing and emancipatory efforts and they defined themselves against both the ROC and the conservative in the Tsarist Russian Empire. After they had declared autocephaly in 1920, respectively in 1922 – with the permission of Bolsheviks, who at that time controlled the territory of the today's independent republics – and a relatively short period of relaxation and development, there was a period of persecution and repression of their original protégés.

In general, it can be stated that both Autocephalous Churches in their origins represented opposition to tsarist conservatism, to the stiff ROC and thus were connected with reactionary and leftist ideas. Thereby, they gained strong support among non-believers, because, as **Ramet** declares, they offered an alternative spiritual vision (Ramet, 1988). A typical example is the UAOC. During the 1920s, there was a period of rapid expansion of the church (especially in central Ukraine). In early 1924, the UAOC presented it had *“three to six million followers, concentrated in about a thousand parishes that were led by thirty bishops, where there were 1,500 priests and deacons”* (Ramet, 1998, p. 248).

Although the UAOC was associated with the Ukrainian national and revival process in the revolutionary years (it was supported by a part of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and especially lower clergy), at the beginning of its existence, the

UAOC was strongly influenced by the Russian “Renovationist” Church. It was quite clear at the Sobor of the UAOC in 1921. There, the UAOC was regarded almost as leftist and “reformist” as the Russian “Living Church” in Russia. It had integrated many ideas, initially supported by the Russian Movement for Reform Church, including one of the most controversial of them – white (married) bishopric.

The theology and ecclesiology of the UAOC in this period (the first phase of the development of the UAOC) saw a number of specific attributes, which were, however, not in compliance with the interpretation of other Orthodox communities. One of the fundamental principles of the church was its consistent emphasis on the separation of church and state. This requirement had resulted from previous experiences with Tsarist Russia, where the church had served as the handmaiden of the state and the pillar of the autocratic system. Second, church leaders were committed to the idea of independence (autocephaly) of the UAOC. Their argument was that the inclusion of the Ukrainian Church in the Moscow Patriarchate in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century was non-canonical.

They called for a jurisdictional independence from the ROC and a creation of an independent ecclesiastical hierarchy, which would be equal and recognized by the entire Orthodox community. The third feature of the new church was a commitment to conciliarism, or sobor opinion. This concept highlighted entire democratisation and decentralisation of church life and active participation of the laity in decision-making at the Sobor, in which elected representatives of both the clergy and the laity participated, replacing bishops as the highest church authority. Another important element of the UAOC was “Ukrainianization” of religious ceremonies, including the use of the mother – Ukrainian – Slavonic language instead. Finally, the ideology of the church emphasized Christianisation of all aspects of life (Struck et al., 1993).

It follows that the UAOC came up with reform-minded ideas – a method performed at sanctification of their hierarchy, promotion of white (married) bishopric and insistence on the involvement of the laity in church affairs have a particular significance for the church itself. On the other hand, these methods and reforms have become an obstacle to building relationships with other Orthodox churches. With increasing number of its supporters in Ukraine, the ROC itself started to be worried. The UAOC in fact expanded its parishes and churches – including the Church of St. Sofia in Kiev – and thus constituted a potential threat to the dominance of the Moscow Patriarchate.

### 3.3 The period during the World War II – the “second” restoration of the UAOC and BAOC

As it will be discussed later - with other attributes of autocephality according to **Ramet** – the UAOC and the BAOC renewed their activity after a forced termination during World War II, when the Ukrainian and Belarusian territory was incorporated into a civil administrative unit created by the Nazis called Reich Commissariat Ukraine and Reich Commissariat Ostland. After subsequent regaining of these territories by the troops of the Red Army at the end of the Second World War, nationalist clergy of both autocephalous Orthodox churches were violently forced to leave Belarusian and Ukrainian territory for exile and emigrate to the West.

In the spirit of **Ramet's** theory was typical (for this period and for both Autocephalous Churches) not only the opposition, but also the co-optation, because the UAOC and the BAOC became part of a strategy of great power, especially Nazi Germany. It was under Nazi power that the spiritual life was resurrected on the Belarusian territory and the BAOC also got a chance for its establishment. However, this was not a result of a good will, but rather a practical move of the Nazis. It was a co-opted the relationship between the Ukrainian, but also the BAOC and the Nazi command of these territories. The BAOC, as a bearer of Belarusian nationalist ideas, was to act both as an opponent of the Catholic Church (whose believers were mainly Poles), as well as the opponent of the Moscow Patriarchate. In March 1942, there was a meeting of the Belarusian Council of Bishops, where bishop **Panteleymon (Rozhnovsky)** was elected as the new Metropolitan of the Belarusian Orthodox Church (not yet the BAOC) (Sinitsyn, 2015).

The new Metropolitan was to be a puppet in the hands of Nazis and a tool towards a more effective government in the occupied territory. The country was divided into six dioceses – Minsk, Grodno, Mogilev, Vitebsk, Smolensk and Baranovichi-Novogrudok. The seats of bishops of the dioceses were given exclusively to the bishops of a Belarusian origin. Metropolitan **Panteleymon** formally accepted the Nazis, but still maintained informal relations with Metropolitan **Sergius** of Moscow Patriarchate. On this basis, Metropolitan **Panteleymon** was deposed by Nazis and replaced by a loyal Bishop **Philothée (Narco)**. The German authorities decided to move vigorously and organised a church council on August 30th, 1942, where they recognized the restoration of the BAOC (Kalkandjieva, 2014). This de facto meant the establishment of an

Orthodox Church, which was not subordinated to Moscow. However, the BAOC did not exist *de jure*, as it had to be approved by the Metropolitan of other autocephalous churches. The Warsaw and Moscow Metropolitan were naturally against it. Problems of bigger nature occurred when the Eastern Front of World War II began to retreat back to the west. The German authorities had hoped in a greater cooperation from the part of the BAOC and therefore sought to call off Metropolitan **Philothée** and reinstall Bishop **Panteleymon**, which they managed to do on May 16th, 1943. Metropolitan **Panteleymon** realized that the Eastern Front was coming, and therefore tried to appoint Episcopal bishops of non-Belarusian origin. By this act, he wanted to reassure the Moscow Patriarchate of his loyalty. In July 1943, he therefore selected a Russian monk **Paul** to the post of Bishop in Bryansk and a Ukrainian, **Grigorii** as the Bishop of Gomel and Mozyr. In the last days of the Nazi occupation of Belarus a Belarusian church council was held in May 1944 under the auspices of the Metropolitan **Panteleymon**, where two dioceses – Polesia and Brest were returned to the Belarus Orthodox Church, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Moscow (Gurko, et. al., 2010). Gradually all the dioceses came under its administration and the most important decision of the council was that the short-lived BAOC ceased to exist on the Belarusian territory.

After the destabilisation of the “first” UAOC by Bolsheviks in 1936, Ukrainian national Orthodoxy survived and continued its activity on the territory which got under the Polish rule in the interwar period. It was mainly Volyn, Polesia, Chelm. The Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church on the Ukrainian ethnic territory of the then Poland was officially established on 1924 in the eastern part of interwar Poland.<sup>26</sup> In its ranks, there was a large number of Belarusian and Ukrainian spiritual intelligence, which was thus able to maintain the specific features of Ukrainian Christianity (observance of Ukrainian religious traditions), but also the use of the Ukrainian language (Yereniuk, 2008). Even though the Russophile traditions of the Orthodox Church were felt primarily at the central administrative level (almost all the bishops were Russians) and its Polonization was officially supported, the Ukrainian element or character of this church was growing

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<sup>26</sup> Polish Orthodox Church, which was founded in 1924, consisted of five dioceses (Warsaw-Chelm, Volyn, Vilnius, Polese Hrodna) with two theological seminaries in Vilnius and today's Ukrainian city Kremenec, a theological lyceum in Warsaw and an Orthodox Theological Faculty at Warsaw University. The Polish government sought to polonize the church in different ways, but it succeeded only partially. However, its efforts to change the Polish Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism did not have almost any result.

(almost 70% of believers were Ukrainians) and the Polish Orthodox Church was becoming more and more popular.

World War II in Ukraine, like in Belarus created conditions for the revival of the “second” UAOC. Germans were keen to renew the nationalist UAOC in the occupied territory of Ukraine. They put pressure on the head of the Polish Orthodox Church Metropolitan **Dionisio Valedinsky**<sup>27</sup> to intervene more in this issue. Bishop of Lutsk<sup>28</sup> **Polikarp Sikorsky**, native Ukrainian clergyman and a resolute supporter of Ukrainian nationalism,<sup>29</sup> who was active in the interwar Polish Orthodox Church, was promoted to the seat of the Archbishop of Lucy and Kove in August 1941 and in December 1941 (with the consent of Germany) **Sikorsky** was commissioned to the post of the “*Administrator of the Orthodox Church of all Ukraine*”<sup>30</sup> (Kalkandjjeva, 2014, p. 117). In practice, this meant that **Sikorsky** arrived to the occupied territory of the Second Polish Republic as an administrator of the Eparchy of Volyn, acting on behalf of Metropolitan **Valedinsky**. Sikorsky as an administrator began to re-establish UAOC. He asserted his super-ordination in the succession of bishops for the newly forming ecclesiastical structure (Kalkandjjeva, 2014).

The co-optation church-state relationship was expressed by the fact that although **Sikorsky** presented himself as a Ukrainian patriot and nationalist, he was an admirer of Nazi Germany. He was well aware of the German support. In return, he visited the Reich Commissioner **Erik Koch** in the capital of the Imperial Commissariat of Ukraine, Rovne, in March 1942. During this visit, **Sikorsky** expressed his admiration for **Hitler** and promised to pray for the German victory in the war (Kalkandjjeva, 2014). As a consequence, it was possible to convene an ecclesiastical Sobor.

This has happened on February 9-10th, 1942, when the establishment of the UAOC was proclaimed. It was a meeting of the Ukrainian Episcopate in Pinsk

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<sup>27</sup> **Valedinsky** was the Metropolitan of the Polish Orthodox Church, from its establishment (1923-1948). Under his leadership based on a request of the Polish Orthodox Church, Patriarch of Constantinople issued a document guaranteeing the Polish Orthodox Church an autocephalous status (on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1924). **Valedinsky** from the title of his function encouraged the recovery of the Ukrainian church tradition and approved of the translation of liturgical texts into the Ukrainian language and its use in the worship service (Struk et al., 1993).

<sup>28</sup> A historical city lying in the Western part of Ukraine in the historical territory of Volyn.

<sup>29</sup> **Sikorsky** refused to recognize the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate during the Soviet occupation (1939-1941) of Western Ukraine.

<sup>30</sup> Another author states that **Sikorsky** was appointed “*Temporary Administrator of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church in the Liberated Country of Ukraine*” (Lower, 2007, p. 119).

(Belarus town in the historical region of Polesia) and the first Synod of Bishops of the (renewed) UAOC. Metropolitan of Polish Orthodox Church **Valedinsky** blessed this meeting and confirmed the creation of the UAOC. During this Sobor two bishops were ordained and Archbishop **Sikorsky** became the official head of the UAOC with the title of Metropolitan of Lucy and Kove (Plokyh, Sysyn, 2003). During May 1942, more bishops of the UAOC were ordained, including **Mstyslav (Skrypnyk)**, who later played an important role in the Ukrainian religious movement. By the end of 1942, the UAOC already had 15 bishops<sup>31</sup> (Marinovič, 2003).

The “second” UAOC lasted until the return of the Red Army. In 1944, after the German retreat, the Soviets again seized the territory of Ukraine and the UAOC was immediately cancelled. Almost all the bishops and clergy of the UAOC fled to the West. The remaining parishes were either dissolved or forced to join the Moscow Patriarchate, which during World War II, gradually grew in strength and was used by **Stalin** in the fight against the Nazis.<sup>32</sup> A similar fate was shared by the UGKC.<sup>33</sup> The Moscow Patriarchate re-established its jurisdiction over Orthodoxy in Ukraine in February 1944 when Archbishop **John Sokolov** was appointed the Exarch of Ukraine<sup>34</sup> (Chumachenko, 2015). The cooperative relationship of the UAOC/BAOC and the state, or rather the state regime (Soviet Bolshevism and Nazi Germany), was observable both during the “first” and the “second” period of both Autocephalous Orthodox churches. Subsequently, both churches were active in exile.

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<sup>31</sup> Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church had even 16 bishops (Plokyh, Sysyn, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> During World War II, the Soviet regime decided to formalize their new relationship with the ROC, which allowed the election of the Patriarch (the throne of the Patriarch of the ROC was empty from 1925 until 1943) and a virtual transformation of this church into the state's department. As well as under the old regime, the new arrangement supported state-church partnership.

<sup>33</sup> After World War II, almost all Ukrainian Greek Catholics came under the rule of the Soviet Union. Under the Soviet regime in 1946, the so-called Lviv synod declared the Union of Brest revoked. Greek Catholic Church was persecuted and could only exist in secrecy. During this period, it operated mainly in the diaspora abroad.

<sup>34</sup> After World War II, the Moscow Patriarchate enjoyed a period of relative relaxation by the political structures of the Soviet Union. The regime allowed the ROC to maintain its parishes and monasteries which had been reopened during the German occupation. In the early 1950s, the Ukrainian Exarchate included approximately 8,000 churches, 6,800 priests, divided into 18 eparchies (equivalent to municipalities of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), 3 seminaries (in Kiev, Lutsk and Odessa) and 38 convents. Ukrainian Exarchate included more than half of the churches and monasteries throughout the Soviet Union that were most concentrated in the western part of Ukraine (Marinovich, 2003).

Apart from the opposition of the UAOC and the BAOC against the Russian Empire, the ROC and everything Bolshevik, or the Soviet atheist regime, the UAOC conducted an opposition, as described by **Ramet**, to the other autocephalous churches. During the World War II, there was a competition between two frictions of the Ukrainian religious life. In addition to the above-mentioned “second” UAOC, the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church operated in Ukraine simultaneously (also in agreement with the Nazis). The church was founded in Pochaiv in early August of 1941 and was led by Archbishop **Aleksy Gromadsky**. Arcibiskup of the whole Volyn **Aleksy** simply transferred the jurisdiction of Volyn under the ROC – this church thus became canonically subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate of the ROC and he assumed the title of Metropolitan and Exarch.

The church mostly addressed those believers who were focused on traditional Russian church and conservative elements. In total, it had 15 bishops and it was led by Metropolitan of Volyn and Zhitomir, Exarch of the whole Ukraine **Alexy**. The Church has over time expanded from Volyn to the central and eastern parts of Ukraine, namely in the Russian-speaking part of Ukraine (Yereniuk, 2008). Although it was tolerated in the spirit of German religious policy in Ukraine, according to the Reich minister for the occupied eastern territories **Alfred Rosenberg** the church was “*less useful than the autocephalous Orthodox church with the support of Ukrainian nationalists against the Moscow Patriarchate*” (Kalkandjieva, 2014, p. 116).

A dispute between this church and the UAOC began in December 1941, after Metropolitan **Dionisio Valedinsky** commissioned **Sikorsky** the “Administrator of the Orthodox Church throughout Ukraine”. This act was naturally condemned by the competing Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church as non-canonical, but the UAOC was unable to prevent the gradual creation of a second structure of Ukrainian autocephalous Orthodox churches. The UAOC’s church hierarchy was more secular in its behaviour and more involved in politics, in contrast to the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church, which was more adhering to traditions and customs of Orthodox monasticism.

The reborn UAOC refused radical church reforms of the first Metropolitan of the UAOC **Vasily Lipkovsky** and was sought primarily by nationally conscious Ukrainians, who welcomed the revival of the Ukrainian language and religious

traditions of the church's life.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, the bishops of the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church (although all of them were of Ukrainian origin) distanced themselves from any nationalist aspects (Kalkandjieva, 2014), that is from any Ukrainian emancipation efforts. Following the re-establishment of the UAOC in February 1942, the redistribution of Ukrainian Orthodoxy was confirmed also formally. The UAOC found logical support and supporters primarily in the western part of the country (regions of Galicia, Podolia and Volyn), where the nationalist movement was stronger than in the eastern part.

The disagreements between both wings of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy became more commonplace. The ROC supporting the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church abruptly condemned the fact that the leader of the UAOC, **Sikorsky** openly spoke out against the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church and supported the activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.<sup>36</sup> The differentiation of the Autonomous Orthodox Church and the other Autocephalous Ukrainian Church was the cause of a sharp struggle between the two Orthodox churches. A joint meeting of representatives of both Churches in Pochaev monastery on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1942, had no positive outcome in the effort to unite the two churches under a single jurisdiction. One reason for the failure in this regard was certainly the German policy in occupied Ukraine. It clearly did not only promote the continuing divisions and internal conflicts within the Ukrainian Orthodoxy, but also a complete subordination of the individual bishops to local German authorities in Ukraine (Plokyh, Sysyn, 2003).

Mutual hostility between the two Ukrainian churches further deepened after Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church **Alexy** was mysteriously murdered on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1943.<sup>37</sup> Tensions between the churches lasted until the departure of the German army in 1943-1944. Then a part of the hierarchy of the Autonomous Church moved westward, where it influenced the foreign branch of the ROC, and later joined it.

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<sup>35</sup> Despite the fact that the UAOC presented itself as a purely Ukrainian Orthodox church, it had two bishops of Russian origin (Kalkandjieva, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists is an organisation, which was established in the beginning of 1929 in the Transcarpathian Ukraine. The organization led the political struggle and terrorist operations against Polish and Soviet authorities with the aim of creating an independent state of the Ukrainians.

<sup>37</sup> **Daniela Kalkandjieva** states in her book *The Russian Orthodox Church, 1917-1948: From Decline to Resurrection that Alexy "was murdered by Bandera guerrillas"* (Kalkandjieva, 2014, p. 119).

The opposition is characteristic of both churches and at the time of exile after World War II. Exile opposition politics against the atheistic Soviet Union was first carried out in Western Europe (at the end of the war) and later overseas.

### **3.4 The period after the collapse of communism – the “third” restoration of the UAOC, the BAOC still as an exile church**

In the new conditions under independent state bodies of Ukraine and Belarus, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism, the directions of both autocephalous churches were divided. The BAOC failed to use the short but turbulent and politically chaotic period between the establishment of the independent Belarus in 1991 and the advent of President **Lukashenko** to power in 1994, for its political rehabilitation in Belarus. The actual onset of **Alexander Lukashenko** thwarted this option entirely. The BAOC has been operating since the end of World War II in exile and **Lukashenko's** regime does not want to allow the BAOC's return from exile. This church is not officially registered in Belarus and its official registration in Belarus is unrealistic under current circumstances. Within Belarus itself, there is only one parish in Minsk. After all, throughout the world there are only nine parishes – three in the US and Australia, and one each in Canada, the UK and in the already mentioned Minsk.<sup>38</sup> It means that The BAOC has been forced to stay in exile, so it is not collaborative or otherwise associated with the current political regime in Belarus. This church radically stands against the **Lukashenko** regime in contemporary Belarus.

On the other hand, the rehabilitation or the revival of the UAOC after years of exile took place peacefully and non-violently. This happened even before the collapse of the Soviet Union at the time of the religious release under the last General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, **Mikhail Gorbachev**. On October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1989, the Council of Priests and Laity in Lviv proclaimed the revival of the UAOC. Bishop of the Moscow Patriarchate **Ioann (Bodnarchuk)** left the ROC Council and headed the UAOC recovery initiatives. He declared that *“he wants to fight for an 'independent' Ukrainian church, which will be independent on the dictate of atheist authorities”*

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<sup>38</sup> The only permissible parish in Minsk may exist only on condition that it will distance itself strongly from the political affairs of the government and will not develop any social pressures of nationalist character.

(Wawrzonek, 2014, p. 156). Along with other retired bishops of the ROC, he ordained some new bishops. Other priests and parishes gradually started getting out of the ROC and preparing the operation of the UAOC.

At the beginning of 1990, about 200 parishes of Galicia moved under the structure of the UAOC. On June 5-6<sup>th</sup> 1990, the Ukrainian Orthodox Council was held, with a participation of 700 delegates from all over Ukraine, including 7 bishops and over 200 priests. The Council approved of the renewal of the UAOC, its statutes and elected **Mstyslav (Skrypnyk)**<sup>39</sup> as the Patriarch of Kiev and Ukraine. However, he missed the council (as he was still in exile in North America) and did not accept the election immediately. Metropolitan **Ioann (Bodnarchuk)** was appointed his deputy. Authorities of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic officially registered the UAOC on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1990 (Marinovich, 2003).

It is very important to note that The UAOC operates in independent Ukraine freely and legally, taking part in social life. It has never become the target of harassment or persecution on the Ukrainian territory from the part of the authorities. Since the beginning of the 1990s, it declared *“support for right-wing political ideology with an emphasis on national recovery. But it does not express an open support for any particular political party”* (Ott et al, 2014, p. 239). Therefore, it is weakly supported by right-wing parties at the regional Ukrainian level.

The third “rebirth” of the UAOC in the largest city of Western Ukraine, Lviv (traditional unorthodox location) was not accidental. The church initially spread primarily (if not exclusively) in Western Ukraine, which was a traditional stronghold of Greek-Catholics before 1945. However, this necessarily

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<sup>39</sup> **Skrypnyk**, after he had been ordained a bishop of the “second” UAOC in May 1942 and was active in this church, emigrated to Germany at the end of the war in 1944. After World War II he was active in organizing the Ukrainian church life in Western Europe. After two years he moved overseas. In the years 1947-1950, he was a bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada. In 1950, **Skrypnyk** became head of the Consistory (an advisory board of a bishop or the Pope in administrative matters) and a representative of the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA. Later in 1969, he was appointed the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Western Europe and in 1971 the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Church in the United States. Based on his experience and involvement with the Ukrainian Orthodox exiled spiritual life, he was elected Patriarch of the “third” UAOC in independent conditions in the early 1990s (Woronowycz, 1998).

foreshadowed a collision with the *Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church* (UGCC),<sup>40</sup> which also claimed influence in new freer religious conditions still under the Soviet Union.<sup>41</sup> The UGCC had come from illegality after 43 years of persecution and harassment by the Soviet authorities. In the early 1990s, it was fashion in Ukraine to be anti-Moscow and strongly nationalistic. The vast majority of hierarchs of the ROC (and since 1990 the *Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate* (UOCMP) was seen "as former collaborators of the dying communist regime, the KGB and other Soviet structures" (Dacko, Turii, 2015, p. 60).

During this period, based on the increasing waves of Ukrainian nationalist revival, the UAOC publicly presented and preached "its complete independence from all major centres, whether it's Rome, Constantinople, or Moscow" (Dacko, Turii, 2015, p. 68). Impressively, it called itself the "Church of Cossacks" and the "Independent Church in Independent Ukraine" and its justifications why every Ukrainian should be a faithful member of the UAOC only were quite populist as well. "The UOCMP is controlled from Moscow, Greek-Catholics are dependent on Rome and Roman Catholics are essentially of Polish origin and culture" (Dacko, Turii, 2015, p. 69). Nevertheless, the UAOC eventually left the strong nationalist pace.

In general, it can be said that since 2004 (before the Ukrainian presidential elections), when the question of the role of religion in the Ukrainian society and politicisation of churches started to grow stronger, the UAOC has played rather a marginal role. The church did not try to make itself visible in any significant way, unlike the UOCMP or the UOCKP, which publicly expressed unequivocal support to political candidates in Ukraine. On the other hand, the UAOC seems to be very active in international relations. It has significant contacts within the Ukrainian Diaspora especially in the United States and Canada<sup>42</sup> (Ott et al, 2014).

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<sup>40</sup> The UGCC even saw the revival of the UAOC as a provocation by the Soviet KGB to break the religious monolith of Western Ukraine (Dacko, Turii, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Officially, the activity of the UGCC was resumed, or permitted in December 1989. It was during liberal reforms of **Mikhail Gorbachev**, which included the religious sphere.

<sup>42</sup> From the historical context, an Emigration of Ukrainians has been taking place in number of waves. Mass emigration of Ukrainians began in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, primarily because of the over-settlement of arable land. Transoceanic emigration, which began in 1871, was directed primarily toward the United States, where the emigrants worked mainly in industry and construction. In the 1890s, Ukrainian peasants began emigrating to Canada's prairie provinces, Brazil (state of Paraná), and Argentina (Misiones Province). Prior to World War I. "some 500 thousands Ukrainians

## 4 The current religious situation in Ukraine and Belarus including the position of the UAOC and the BAOC

### 4.1 The current religious situation in Belarus

Article 31 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus officially provides for freedom of religion. According to this article: *“Everyone shall have the right to determine independently his attitude towards religion, to manifest any religion alone or in community with others, or to manifest none at all, to express and spread beliefs connected with his attitude towards religion, and to participate in the performance of Acts of worship and religious rituals and rites, which are not prohibited by law.”* (National Legal..., 2016, Art. 31).

Based on Article 31, the religious participation of the population of Belarus today is very varied. According to a survey from 2011, 58.9% of the population consider themselves believers, while 82% of them are Orthodox believers, 12% are Catholic and the remaining 6% are of other faiths (Religion and ..., 2011).

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*immigrated to the Americas, of whom 350 thousands settled in the USA, 100 thousands in Canada and 50 thousands in Brazil and Argentina. On the American continent, Ukrainians created a network of religious, economic, educational, civic, sport and political organisations, helping them maintain their national distinctiveness and ties with their native land.”* (Katchanovski et al., 2013, p. 126). World War I. and the defeat of the Ukrainian Revolution (1917-1921) resulted in the first mass political emigration, which strengthened the existing Ukrainian communities by infusing them with members from political, scientific, and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, some of these new emigrants formed Ukrainian communities in Western and Central Europe. Thus, new communities were created in the Czechoslovakia, Germany, Poland, France, Belgium, Austria, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The largest was in Prague, which was considered one of the centers of Ukrainian culture and political life (after Lviv and Kraków) (Luciuk 2000). The Ukrainian diaspora increased after 1945 due to a second wave of political emigrants. The 250,000 Ukrainians at first settled in Germany and Austria. In the latter half of the 1940s and early 1950s, these Ukrainians were resettled in many different countries creating new Ukrainian settlements in Australia, Venezuela, and for a time being in Tunisia (Ben-Metir), as well as re-enforcing previous settlements in the United States of America, Canada (primarily Toronto, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec), Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. In Europe, there remained between 50,000 and 100,000 Ukrainians that settled in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. An attempt was made to unite the various religious organisations (Orthodox and Greek Catholic). However, this did not succeed. In the early 1970s, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Europe, South America, and Australia managed to unite. Most of the other Orthodox churches maintained with each other some religious links. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church had to wait until 1980 until its synod was recognized by the Vatican. The Ukrainian Evangelical and Baptist churches also created an All-Ukrainian Evangelical-Baptist Union (Magocsi, 2012).

The Belarusian Orthodox Church (hereinafter BOC) holds the status of the largest and most respected religious Faith with the greatest influence in Belarus. However, despite the fact that according to the aforementioned survey, 82% of Belarusians stated that they are Orthodox believers, large part does not maintain the activity of faith, rites, liturgy and devotion any more. This fact only confirms the earlier survey (from 2009), where only 27% of Belarusians claimed that “*religion played an important role in their daily live*” (Bohdan, 2012).

BAOC does not accept the supremacy of the Moscow Patriarchate (under whose jurisdiction the BOC falls) and thus cannot be permitted to register in Belarus (Borowska, 2013). In addition, the Belarusian regime significantly opposes its nationalist character and connection with Nazi Germany, without considerable help of which it would have probably never been established during World War II. Although the exile the BAOB distances itself from its association with Nazism, its official functioning in Belarus is prohibited and there have also been cases of persecution.<sup>43</sup> The BAOB thus remains religious (nationalist) organisation for Belarusians in emigration – in the United States and Canada.

Relations between the main BOC and the state are good despite the fact that the government led by authoritarian President **Alexander Lukashenko** follows a hard line of socialism, part of which is necessarily also atheism. A contribution to this status was made by an agreement of cooperation between church and state in 2003, according to which, in addition to cooperation with governmental institutions, the church also benefits from a considerable financial support from the state. Number of buildings confiscated by the communist authorities were returned back to church, though often in a very miserable condition (Mudrow, 2014). This awkward mutual relation between “Soviet atheism” and Orthodoxy was best expressed by **Lukashenko** himself when he stated that he is an “*Orthodox atheist*” (Bohdan, 2012).

The BOC in cooperation with the ROC has a significant influence on the formation of identity and consciousness of Belarusians, however, not a Belarusian one, but a Russian one. This fact is confirmed by the fact that the BOC is officially a Belarusian exarchate falling completely under the jurisdiction

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<sup>43</sup> In January 2000, as Belarus newspaper Narodnaya Gazeta accused leader BAOB **Ivan Spasyuk** from criminal activities and the church was labelled as “spiritual successors of Hitler” (Department of... 2001, p. 261). **Petro Hushcha**, another of the dignitaries of BAOB was wrongly arrested, jailed and charged with several offenses in 1998 (Department of..., 2001).

of the ROC, which controls all the Belarusian eparchies (Novik, et. al., 2013). Behind this church, two external influences determine it in the formation of opinions and decisions in the spheres of "non-Belarusian" awareness. On the one hand, there is a religious centre, which is located in Moscow, supporting the ideological concept of the so-called Russian world as a spiritual, cultural and political entity, part of which Belarus is to be.

The Moscow Patriarchate not only affects the religious dimension of the Orthodox Church in Belarus, but also Belarusian citizens in general. On the other hand, there is the political centre in Minsk mentioned above with its regime and "Soviet line" that requires loyalty from the church. These two factors both have mechanisms that can affect the church. However, in the church itself there are also poles that are trying to formulate their own agenda regardless of the government or the Moscow center. However, as a result, this clergy does not have big, but very marginal impact and success (Mitrochin, 2006).

In the issues of national identity, the BAOC holds rather to the "Belarusianism" version than the Soviet version, which is promoted by the Government of Belarus. Unlike the official BOC, it does not follow the line of highlighting the ancient roots of the Russian-Belarusian friendship or even brotherhood. It also departs from the approach of class-based society, but the community of believers that the church is too small to allow greater influence of the Belarusian nationality, or even the Belarusian government.

It also departs from the approach of class-based society, but the community of believers of the church is too small to allow greater influence on the Belarusian nationality, or even the Belarusian government. The emphasis is also on the use of the Belarusian language in which all religious ceremonies are held. The Church also disagrees with some official acts and laws of the country, such as death penalty, detention of political prisoners, or lack of appreciation for cultural traditions or historical events that are to be state holidays in the country. However, these political opinions can only be expressed by parishes abroad; the only parish in Minsk distances itself from political issues because of fear of its abolition. The parish in Minsk, under its official statutes, must not (if it does not want to be banned) express any political views and can only address religious affairs (Pravaslavnaja..., 2010). Moreover, the Belarusian regime effectively prevents establishing connections and any impact of the BAOC on Belarusian society in Belarus itself.

The current situation in religious matters from the point of strengthening nationalism in Belarus is generally unfavourable. As mentioned above, the BOC

is an exarch, i.e. a province of the ROC with which it is absolutely tied – its nominal autonomy is only declarative and it resembles the political autonomy of Russian pseudo-federalism. Through this church, Russian language and culture is promoted within the Belarusian society and the national consciousness of Belarusians is being gradually destroyed. Any efforts for higher ecclesiastical independence are strongly rejected. A recent attempt of the current metropolitan BOC **Paul (Ponomaryov)** can serve as evidence. On December 16, 2014, in a speech in Minsk he openly called for a greater degree of autonomy for the BOC. Subsequently, however, the Russian Regnum news portal sharply accused Belarus "*that it is moving towards autocephality*" (Astapenia, 2015). However, as early as in January 2015, **Paul** withdrew this request, probably after a "consultation" with representatives of the ROC.<sup>44</sup> It follows that similar demands for a greater autonomy for the BOC are unlikely to have any effect in the future – they will be eliminated and suppressed strongly by the Moscow Patriarchate.

Religion in today's Belarus does not have the power to encourage any ambitions regarding national emancipation or civil society building. The religious element is de facto irrelevant here. The BAOC is in exile, its impact is negligible and the BOC is in complete subjection to the ROC.

## 4.2 The current religious situation in Ukraine (with emphasis on UAOC)

In contrast, the religion in current Ukraine has greater importance. Ukraine is an important strategic state formation, located between Russia and the European Union.<sup>45</sup> In the past, its territory was mostly under the domination of Russia, as well as of Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Austria and Czechoslovakia, and, in a sense, the modern Ukrainian nation has been under formation until today. As Krupa writes, "*Religion has a dual role in this development, both as a social force that is actively shaping the Ukrainian identity, and at the same time as something that is influenced and shaped by the interests of other states*"

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<sup>44</sup> On January 20, 2015 Metropolitan **Paul** himself said that "*the plan for greater independence was published prematurely and without preparation, and has therefore caused more harm than good*" (Zřiká se běloruská...,2015).

<sup>45</sup> With more than 45 million people (including the population of the Crimea, which according to the census of 2014 counted 2,285,000) (Illarionov, 2015) it is on the 7th place in Europe and its area makes it the second largest country in Europe after the Russian Federation.

(Krupa, 2014). Consequently, among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the most complicated ecclesiastical situation is in Ukraine.

National opinion poll carried out by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) and Ukraine Sociology Service in December 2011 declared that about 31% of the Ukrainian population identifies with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kiev Patriarchate (the UOCKP), 26% of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate (the UOCMP), and only 2% with the UAOC (referred to in the present study). The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (the UGCC) is the largest non-Orthodox church in Ukraine, with about 93% of believers of the church living in the western part of the country. The Roman Catholic Church has about one million supporters who are concentrated in the western and central parts of the country (2011 Report on International Religious ..., 2012). In addition to these three Orthodox churches, the influential UGCC<sup>46</sup> mentioned above operates in Ukraine as well. In the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, we can find the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo, forming part of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. However, it is directly subordinate to the Holy See<sup>47</sup> (Krupa, 2014).

It is necessary to note, that in Ukraine there is also relatively strong Jewish<sup>48</sup> and Muslim<sup>49</sup> community. The size of the current Jewish population in Ukraine varied. The December 2001 census yielded an estimate of 104,300 Jews (Dashefsky, Sheskin et al., 2015, p. 360). Reflecting the dramatic pace of

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<sup>46</sup> UGCC is one of the Eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantine rite. Currently, it is also the most numerous Eastern Catholic church. The Church recognizes the authority of the Pope and shares dogmatic doctrine with the Roman Catholic Church. However, the liturgy is served and celebrated and not in the Latin rite (ceremony), but in the Byzantine rite.

<sup>47</sup> This church formally dates back to 1646. As a result of massive emigration waves in the early 20th century, the population of Ruthenian areas started to migrate for livelihood to the USA. In 1924, an exarch originated in the United States, which, after the communist liquidation of Ruthenian Church in 1947 became its only legally existing part. After years of existence of underground church, on June 16, 1991, the Holy See confirmed Bishop of Mukachevo **Ivan Semedo** in his office. The eparchy brings together about 300 thousand faithful, 350 priests and 420 parishes (Krupa, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Judaism has existed in the Ukrainian lands for approximately 2000 years: Jewish traders appeared in Greek colonies. After the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, Judaism influenced the neighbouring Khazar Khaganate. From the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Ashkenazi Jewish presence in Ukraine increased significantly. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, a new teaching of Judaism originated and became established in the Ukrainian lands – the so-called Hasidism.

<sup>49</sup> The Golden Horde (which adopted Islam in 1313) and the Sunni Ottoman Empire (which conquered the Ukrainian litoral in the 1470s) brought Islam to their subject territories in present-day Ukraine. Crimean Tatars accepted Islam as the state religion (1313-1502) of the Golden Horde and later as vassals of the Ottoman Empire (until the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century) (Magocsi, 2012).

emigration of Ukrainian Jews since 1989, the Census fully confirmed ongoing demographic trends. Census in January 1989 counted even 487,300 Jews in Ukraine. The overwhelming majority of the Jews who remained in Ukraine in 1989 left Ukraine and moved to other countries (mostly to Israel) in the 1990s during and after the collapse of Communism. The world Jewish community assessed the 2014 core Jewish population in Ukraine at 63,000, it means the world's eleventh largest Jewish community (Dashefsky, Sheskin et al., 2015, p. 360).

Since the Ukrainian independence in 1991, the return of Crimean Tatars to Crimea has increased compared to the Soviet era. Although Ukraine's Muslim population consists of various ethnic groups, the majority are of Tatar origin. There has also been a proportionally small settlement of Muslim Chechen refugees in Crimea and other parts of Ukraine. According to the census held in 2001, the number of Muslims by birth (ethnic Muslims) was 436,000, or about 0.9% of the overall population of Ukraine. Main Muslim ethnic groups in Ukraine consisted of 248,200 Crimean Tatars, 73,300 Volga Tatars, 45,200 Azeris, 13,903 North Caucasian ethnic groups, 12,353 Uzbeks (Yarosh, Brylov, 2011, p. 253-254). Estimates of the Ukrainian Muslim population vary, with the 2012 Freedom Report estimating a Muslim population of 500,000 in Ukraine, including 300,000 Crimean Tatars (United States Department of State, 2013). According to Said Ismagilov, the mufti of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine "Ummah", in February 2016 one million Muslims lived in Ukraine. However due to 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and the War in Donbass, which is fought near Donetsk and Luhansk, 750,000 Muslims (including half-million Crimean Tatars) are living in territory no longer controlled by Ukraine (Trach, 2016).

According to number of monasteries, churches and clerics, however, the largest religious organisation is the UOCMP, which has been an autonomous part of the ROC since 1990<sup>50</sup> (Pešek, 2014). The ROC asserts its influence in Ukraine through the UOCMP. The ROC is deeply linked to the secular Russian Kremlin, both in domestic and foreign policy. **Vladimir Putin** – in his first term as Russian president – declared at a meeting with the hierarchs of the UOCMP in October 2004 that UOCMP is not a Ukrainian church, but "a Russian

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<sup>50</sup> Although the ROC granted the UOCMP with an autonomous status, shortly thereafter it became a subject of the ROC. That means that it remained a part of its structure in its external and international relations, that is, the remaining part of the structure (Gretskiy, 2007).

*Orthodox church in Ukraine*" (Zdioruk, Haran, 2012, p. 75) by which he effectively negated its autonomous status.

The other two Orthodox churches, the UOCKp and the UAOC are not exposed to the influence of the ROC and are characterised by pro-Ukrainian nationalist traits. This development marked the mutual misunderstanding and conflict of the early 1990s, which has an impact on today's complicated religious situation in Ukraine. The head of the UOCKp is currently Patriarch **Filaret**, by real name **Mykhail Denysenko**. **Filaret's** fundamental objective is to unify the Orthodox in Ukraine in one national church. The main credo of the church is "*an independent church in an independent state*" (Ott et al., 2014, p. 239). In the political sphere, this church supported pro-Western right-wing ideology. This attitude was demonstrated by supporting **Viktor Yushchenko** and his party *Our Ukraine* and later support of the former prime minister, **Yulia Tymoshenko** and her *Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko*. In addition to pro-Ukrainian politicians at the national level, the UOCKp gained considerable support from right-wing politicians at the regional level (Ott et al., 2014).

The dominant Orthodox religion in Ukraine is appreciably divided. As mentioned, there are currently three Orthodox churches in Ukraine, while only one is canonical, but falls under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>51</sup> This means that a considerable part of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy remains spiritually, administratively and organisationally dependent ROC.<sup>52</sup> The biggest effort to overcome the split in the Orthodox Church was shown by the president **Viktor Yushchenko** (in the office 2005-2010). His ambition was to separate Ukrainian Orthodoxy from the influence of Moscow and reach the

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<sup>51</sup> However, canonisation is not without problems – the Patriarch of Constantinople hitherto failed to recognize the autonomy granted to the UPCMp by the Russian Patriarchate. Apparently, this happened under the influence of hierarchs of the autonomous Ukrainian churches in the US and Canada already mentioned herein. Nevertheless, Constantinople acknowledged the autonomy of the BOC. On the other hand, Moscow did not recognize the autonomy of the Estonian Orthodox Church, which was granted by Constantinople (after decades of its existence the autonomy of the Finnish Orthodox Church was finally acknowledged in 1957).

<sup>52</sup> In this context, it should be noted that the Moscow Patriarchate seeks to prevent the creation of a single autocephalous Orthodox church in Ukraine primarily for two reasons: first, the autocephality of Ukraine would deprive the Kremlin of an effective instrument of promoting influence in that country and it would also prevent the participation of the RF on imperial projects in the Eurasian region. Secondly, the autocephality would cause a serious loss to the ROC (material, financial, personal, as it would decrease in the number of parishes by almost half) (Zdioruk, Haran, 2012). This would drastically weaken the power position of the ROC not only in the Russian Federation, but especially in the world religious sphere – the ecumenical Orthodoxy.

autocephalous status with the help of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Zdioruk, Haran, 2012).

Solving the problem of the Ukrainian Orthodox unity undoubtedly concerns the UAOC as well. According to the expert on religious issues in Ukraine **Alexander Sagan**, however, this church has disrupted the process of establishing a national Orthodox Church several times and, from a wider perspective, it has also had a negative impact on the process of formation of ideological security of Ukraine. The history of many Orthodox Churches confirms that the national security and the lack of ideologically alien spiritual channels of influence on the population are closely related. (Sahan, 2015).

Unfortunately, the UAOC lacks greater commitment, decisiveness and flexibility. At present it does not have a single church media, it does not organise public discussions or debates on urgent topics; it did not organise discussions about merging with the UOCKp or about the request to move under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. According to Sagan, the biggest problem of the UAOC is a lack of a clearly defined strategy that could lead the church in the right direction. Over the past 15 years, joint committees were officially established several times (in 2000-2001, 2005-2007 and 2011) to lead a dialogue (integration) with the UOCKp. However, each time the negotiation of these committees turned into loud quarrels and both-sided accusations. The then head of the UAOC, Metropolitan **Mefodiy (Kudriakov)** (headed the UAOC 2000-2015) often refused dialogue with the UOCKp, although such a refusal had no logical justification (Sahan, 2015).

The activities of the UAOC in recent years – in the conditions of independent Ukraine – did not always lead to the unification of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine into the unity, which was in its title. Nevertheless, the mistake was not always on the part of this church. It can be believed that the complicated and strained relations between religious organisations of Ukraine across the entire spectrum have also contributed to this state of affairs. Particularly strained are the relations between the UOCKp and the UAOC, which were marked by the controversial events of the early 1990s. At the time of the absence of the first Patriarch of the UAOC, **Mstyslav** in June 1992 a “unifying council” was summoned – without his consent – that combined the UAOC and a part of Ukrainian nationalist clergy of the UOCMp led by **Filaret** into a single unit called the UOCKp. The council elected **Mstyslav** (who was in exile at that time) the

Patriarch of Kiev and all Ukraine with **Filaret** appointed his deputy<sup>53</sup> (Wawrzonek, 2014).

**Mstyslav** himself declared shortly before his death (June 1993) that *“the UAOC cannot have any relationship with the former Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church **Filaret Denisenko**, who was stripped of the priesthood by his mother church, which was the only church entitled to do so”* (Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, 2011). In addition, between the two churches, there is disagreement not only about the legitimacy, but also about the church property (the transfer of the UAOC – including its church property – under the UOCKp in the early 1990s) (Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, 2011).

After the death of the head of the UAOC **Mefodiy (Kudriakov)** in 2015 and the appointment of his successor Metropolitan **Makariy (Maleta)**, this church was on the verge of dramatic change. On the one hand, the Ukrainian society expected merger; that means a transition of the majority of parishes under the UOCKp (which was a step called after by Patriarch **Filaret** of the UOCKp). On the other hand, there was the question of the effort of the UAOC to transfer itself under the structures, or the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. There was also a third option. This stems from the indifference and ignorance of the safety religious factor in Ukraine by its present political leaders. In this case, the state of stagnation and decline of the UAOC would be preserved. However, this would only happen in case the new head of the UAOC **Makariy** continued the unpredictable "centrist" policy of his predecessor.

In 2015, there were renewed efforts to unify the UAOC and the UOCKp. The Council of the EU was scheduled on September 14<sup>th</sup>. Efforts, however, failed due to issues of its name, the composition of the council and also on whether all present bishops should remain in office – even where there would be two bishops of the united church in the same city (Krupa, 2016).

The relationship of the UAOC with the political establishment in Ukraine is quite complicated too. It cannot be described as either cooperative, or opposition. It can be defined as centrist. After unsuccessful efforts of the UAOC to integrate, or at least to find a common language with other Orthodox

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<sup>53</sup> Obviously, **Mstyslav** (after returning from exile) and most of the UAOC members disagreed with this step. The original UAOC worked illegally since the Ukrainian authorities, or the then Ukrainian President **Leonid Kravchuk** chose to support **Filaret** (because of the ambitions of creating a single Orthodox church) and the UOCKp was registered by higher state authorities of Ukraine on 10 July 1992 (Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, 2011). The UAOC was re-registered in 1995, but as a new religious movement, not as a successor UAOC of 1990.

Churches, it can be more likely said that the UAOC attempts to obtain certain political or economic dividends in the background of the political process in Ukraine. It can be thus classified as being in a kind of centrist position between two major patriarchates in Ukraine. It is more than clear that the UAOC primarily ambition was not to achieve concrete results in the negotiations, but only to participate formally in such process. In fact, it looked as if the UAOC only pretended to work on the integration with the UOCKp, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, or even with the UOCMp – with which the UAOC also has undermined relations – while pursuing a specific objective.

During its modern existence, the UAOC became a subject to manipulation and speculation on the part of both pro-Ukrainian national political movement and the pro-Russian officials. Before the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2004,<sup>54</sup> a meeting of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations took place (on September 30<sup>th</sup>, a month before the election) with the then Prime Minister (and a candidate for the president of Ukraine) with the participation of the then head of the UAOC Metropolitan **Mefodiy (Kudriakov)**. **Mefodiy** declared (on behalf of the UAOC), after an examination of the electoral program of the candidates for the president of Ukraine, that “*only led by Viktor Yanukovych Ukraine will be stable and able to offer religious peace.*” He also added that, in another case, “*schism and division in Ukraine can be expected*” (Wawrzonek, 2014, p. 184).

Again, the inconsistency with the “pro-Western” oriented Ukrainian Christian community was shown – an open support of a “pro-Russian candidate” from the part of the UAOC, which was demonstrated shortly afterwards, and its non-participation (along with the UOCMp) on a call of six Christian churches in Ukraine on 30 November 2004.<sup>55</sup> These selected churches jointly addressed a request to the former Ukrainian President **Leonid Kuchma**<sup>56</sup> at the time of the escalation of the presidential race in Ukraine in late 2004, in which he was asked to have the forged results of the second round of presidential elections checked (Gretskiy, 2007). The “undecided” activities of the UAOC in the recent

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<sup>54</sup> The controversial elections were held between the pro-Western candidate **Viktor Yushchenko** and the candidate supported by the ROC and the Kremlin **Viktor Yanukovych**.

<sup>55</sup> The call was signed by representatives of UOCCp; the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Churches-Baptistes; the All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian – Pentecostals; the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine; and the Ukrainian Christian Evangelical Church (Glavy Tserkvey Ukrainy ..., 2004).

<sup>56</sup> The President of Ukraine between years 1994-2005.

past considerably weakened and limited the “pro-autocephalous” Orthodox wing in Ukraine, but also limited opportunities to address the issues of concern in its relations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Events in Ukraine at the turn of 2013 and 2014 – anti-government protests and civil rallies were held in Kiev, which got to be known under the name Euromaidan – again called for the creation of a national Ukrainian church, which would help to unite the country. For in these protests, Christian churches were greatly involved that supported the protesters in their struggle for a better Ukraine<sup>57</sup> and participated in the series of civic protests, which is unrealistic in Belarus (currently). The UAOC was also involved in the demonstrations on the Independence Square, although not as extensively as i.e. the UOCKp or the UGCC. Even though they spoke against violence against demonstrators, it retained more or less centrist stance again.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, the UAOC operates legally and is duly registered in Ukraine. Unlike the BAOC, the UAOC has the right to participate in the democratic life in Ukraine. However, its impact on cooperation with the Ukrainian political establishment is minimal. However, the UAOC is a small church, which largely limits its impact. Furthermore, its impact is limited by a lack of major charismatic spiritual leaders, different factions and internal disputes within the church itself (Dacko, Turii, 2015).

## Conclusion

Having analysed both churches, we can see that although they are similar at first glance and follow the same historical and programmatic basis, they still have many differences. Based on the analysis in the final evaluation, we can

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<sup>57</sup> Priests in liturgical vestments were active at the Independence Square – Maidan. They performed religious services; they prayed for peace and supported the protesters. They appealed to the Ukrainian political leaders to respect human rights and the rule of law. Parishes provided food and medical supplies. Religious leaders in their churches provided protection from the police officers to demonstrators.

<sup>58</sup> It was especially the UOCKp and the UGKC, who from the beginning of these protests immediately stood on the side of civil demonstrators fighting against political and economic corruption in Ukraine lead by **Viktor Yanukovych**. At the beginning of the protests, the UOCKp, the UGCC and the Roman Catholic Church showed their solidarity and blessed Euromaidan. On November 29th, representatives of the three churches served a "Prayer for Ukraine" at the Independence Square in Kiev, where they, together with the demonstrators, sung the song "God, the great and the only one". The representatives of the UAOC and the UOCMp were not involved in the event (Yevromaydan blagoslovili svjashcheniki..., 2013).

draw a conclusion that the impact of the two churches on building of national identity of Belarusians and Ukrainians has been marginal so far. It is clear that major changes are unlikely to occur in this respect in the near future.

The role of autocephalous Orthodox churches role in building national identities of Belarusians and Ukrainians is also significantly influenced by the political situation in these countries. First, it is necessary that there is willingness of the political leaders in these countries to create conditions for national religious churches, including a fight for their “canonicity” and a better position. A prime example in this regard is the Russian Federation. On behalf of the common national interest of Russia,<sup>59</sup> its President **Vladimir Putin** acted as the main initiator and intermediary of links between the ROC and the Russian Orthodox Church abroad. It finally happened in 2007, after decades of division caused by the Bolshevik coup in 1917 and the subsequent flight of a large part of priests and believers in exile.

In Belarus, however, this is not realistic. For **Lukashenko**’s political regime, the BAOC is undesirable and it is not officially registered in the country. In Ukraine, on the contrary, after the political changes in 2014, which were accompanied by massive civil anti-government protests – in which religious and church organisations played a key role – the situation of the UAOC in the country has been improving and nationalism has strengthened further. A recent sociological survey of the Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) and the Ukraine Sociology Service from the turn of the year 2014/2015 brought very interesting results,<sup>60</sup> also in the context of recent events in Ukraine (destabilisation of eastern Ukraine, the Russian annexation of Crimea). The confidence in religious institutions has increased significantly (45% compared to 2010), while 28% of people wish to establish a single Autocephalous Orthodox Church, 14% are against and 35% say they want to maintain the status quo. However, the survey demonstrated that up to 44% of people have claimed allegiance to the UOCCp and only 21% to the UOCMp (the UAOC is still supported by 2.4%). Only 7% of respondents described the UOCCp as “schismatic” church and on the contrary, about 19% defined the UOCMp as a

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<sup>59</sup> Russian President **Putin** saw strengthening of his geopolitical power interests in the unity and connection of both branches of the ROC. Their connection represented a *“new globalized Orthodox Church as the primary ideological weapon and a vital tool of foreign policy”* (Zarakhovich, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> The survey covered 4413 respondents from Ukraine, grouped into 11 historical regions. According to the authors, the statistical error is  $\pm 5\%$ .

church of the aggressor (in Galicia up to 42%). (Bilshist naselelnya Ukrayiny vidnosyt..., 2015).

In addition to willingness of political representatives, inner self-reflection within the UAOC and the BAOC is needed, as well as their responsiveness to changing times. Before each church begins influencing their nation more, it must first undergo the difficult path of its recognition in the Christian Orthodox world. In Ukraine, there certainly is a political will to form a unified Orthodox church. Unlike the BAOC, the UAOC has the ability and potential to participate in the civic life of Ukraine. However, to meet this objective, it is necessary to be more active in matters of principle, lead religious dialogue and be able to forgive, and to compromise. If it makes such internal reflection, the UAOC could become a part of a united Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which would significantly eliminate the influence of the Kremlin and the ROC. Russian spiritual and religious leaders are very well aware that “*without a united Ukrainian Church, there cannot be a strong Ukrainian state*” (Sagan, 2011).

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