

УДК 347.167:2.28.234(477)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17721/sophia.2024.23.13>

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SPESIFICS OF RELIGIOUS SECURITY IN THE (PRE)WAR CONDITIONS IN UKRAINE: THE TASK FOR HUMANITARIAN POLICY

Background. *The article is dedicated to the analysis of the specifics of religious security in Ukraine in the context of Russia's full-scale aggression. The authors examine the role of religion in shaping national identity and its impact on national security, particularly during the hybrid warfare conducted by Russia. Special attention is paid to the strategic use of religious factors by external forces to destabilize Ukrainian society.*

Methods. *The article employs interdisciplinary approaches, including content analysis, comparative analysis, as well as the analysis of sociological data and religious studies sources. The research utilizes empirical and theoretical methods to examine the religious situation in Ukraine before and after the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.*

Results. *The key threats to Ukraine's religious security in the context of hybrid warfare have been identified, including the use of religious conflicts to undermine state sovereignty. The autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine emerged as a significant factor that intensified interfaith tensions, while simultaneously strengthening national identity. State policy in the religious sphere plays a crucial role in ensuring religious security by balancing religious freedom with national interests.*

Conclusions. *Based on the analysis, the authors conclude that it is necessary to develop an effective humanitarian policy that takes into account both the preservation of religious freedoms and protection from external threats. This will help strengthen Ukraine's national security amidst ongoing Russian hybrid aggression.*

Keywords: *religious security, state policy, Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, humanitarian policy, inter-Orthodox relations, UOC, OCU.*

Background

The study of religious security in Ukraine prior to Russia's full-scale invasion is crucial, given the significant role of religion in shaping national identity and consolidating Ukrainian society. Sociological studies indicate a high level of declared religiosity in Ukraine, positioning the religious sphere as a critical element of national security. This issue has become particularly acute in the context of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine, where the religious factor has been actively exploited to undermine state sovereignty. The process of obtaining autocephaly by the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) in 2018–2019 intensified interfaith contradictions and provoked active opposition from the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). This necessitated a balanced state policy to ensure religious security. Analyzing the specifics of religious security in the pre-war period helps us understand the preconditions and factors influencing the religious situation after Russia's full-scale invasion. Key aspects of this problem include defining the essence of "religious security", analyzing the main threats, studying the impact of interfaith relations on religious security, examining the role of state policy in this area, and assessing the impact of the autocephaly process on the state's religious security. Addressing this scientific problem holds significant theoretical and practical importance for ensuring Ukraine's national security amid ongoing Russian aggression. Religious security refers to the protection of the religious sphere from threats that could disrupt societal harmony, undermine state sovereignty, or incite violence and extremism. In Ukraine, where religious identity plays a crucial role in societal cohesion, maintaining religious security involves ensuring freedom of belief, preventing religious discrimination, and managing interfaith relations to avoid conflict. The examination of religious security in Ukraine before Russia's full-scale invasion reveals critical insights into the challenges and strategies necessary for

ensuring national security. The balanced state policy that respects religious freedoms, mitigates foreign influence, and resolves interfaith conflicts is essential. Understanding these dynamics is vital for addressing the complex interplay between religion and national security, particularly in the face of ongoing full-scale aggression and hybrid warfare tactics employed by Russia. Ensuring religious security is not only about protecting the religious sphere but also about safeguarding the broader national integrity and stability of Ukraine.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study. The purpose of this study is to analyze the specifics of religious security in Ukraine in the context of Russia's full-scale aggression. The study aims to define the role of religion in shaping national identity and its impact on national security, as well as to examine the strategic use of religious factors by external forces to destabilize Ukrainian society. The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify key threats to religious security in Ukraine during the pre-war period and in the context of hybrid warfare.

2. To analyze the impact of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine on interfaith relations and religious security.

3. To study the role of state policy in ensuring religious security and protecting national interests in the religious sphere.

Methods

The research methodology is based on an interdisciplinary approach, including the analysis of sociological data, historical sources, and religious studies. Methods such as content analysis, comparative analysis, and the synthesis of scientific works are used to identify key trends in Ukraine's religious sphere. Particular attention is paid to the use of religious factors in hybrid warfare and their impact on national security.

Results

V. Masovets notes that "religious security is a state of protection of the vital spiritual and religious interests of Ukrainian society from internal threats and external interference and the corresponding system of socio-political measures that ensures this protection" (Masovets, 2018, p. 112). The author also adds that religious security depends on the state of religious and church life of the nation, which can be a threat to the national interests of the state, the stable development of society, and the rights and freedoms of citizens. In addition, it is noted that the spiritual and religious factor affects the level of threats to national security in various spheres of society.

The collective monograph "Religious Security in Ukraine in the Context of the Coronavirus Pandemic" is devoted to the phenomenon of religious security. Based on the analysis of the text provided, the following definition of the concept of "religious security" can be formulated: it is a state of relations between religious organisations, the state, and society, which ensures the stable functioning and original development of the religious sphere, taking into account both quantitative (sociological) and qualitative (value, worldview) characteristics, in the face of both internal and external threats (Kharkovshchenko et al., 2021, p. 147).

Viktor Yelenskiy, in his article "Religious Freedom and Security in a Warring Country: The Case of Ukraine", does not provide a clear definition of religious security. Instead, he examines religious security through the prism of the challenges faced by Ukraine during the Russian aggression. Here are the key aspects of understanding religious security that can be distinguished from the text of the article:

I. counteracting the use of religion to undermine statehood. the author emphasizes the threat posed by the Moscow patriarchate, which justified Russian aggression and spread the ideas of the "Russian world";

II. the balance between ensuring religious freedom and national security. Yelenskiy describes Ukraine's strategy to expand religious freedom while countering threats to national security;

III. preventing the use of religion to destabilize the situation in the country, disrupt mobilization, and discredit the state in the international arena;

IV. creating conditions for the free development of different faiths without harassment or discrimination;

V. minimizing external destructive influence through religious organisations subordinated to foreign centers in the aggressor country (Yelenskiy, 2019).

The issue of religious security in the context of Ukraine's national security has been studied by a number of domestic scholars. It is worth noting a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of religious security in Ukraine, carried out by a team of authors. Ukrainian researchers from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The authors examined the methodological foundations of the study of the problem, historical connotations and modern semantic contexts of religious security (Kharkovshchenko et al., 2021, p. 147).

Thus, although researchers does not provide a direct definition, they considers religious security as a complex phenomenon that includes the protection of state interests from religiously motivated threats while ensuring religious freedom and the rights of believers.

Summarizing previous studies, we will use the following definition: Religious security is a state of protection of the vital spiritual and religious interests of society, characterized by the stable functioning and original development of the religious sphere, harmonious relations between religious

organizations, the state, and society, the absence of religiously motivated threats to national security, ensuring freedom of religion, and taking into account both quantitative and qualitative indicators of religiosity.

An analysis of the religious situation in Ukraine from 1991 to 2022 reveals a number of challenges to national security and humanitarian policy related to the activities of religious organizations. The most relevant aspect of religious security from 2014 to 2022 was Russia's hybrid aggression against Ukrainian statehood. However, this issue has remained relevant since 1991, when Ukraine gained independence. Therefore, we will focus on this aspect. Particular attention is paid to the role of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) in the context of complex church-state relations. It should be noted that this name is well-established in political and religious discourse but is legally incorrect, as the religious center of this denomination is registered as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, i.e., the UOC.

Documentary evidence indicates that the UOC is closely linked to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). In particular, the statute of the UOC states that it is "united with the Local Orthodox Churches through the Russian Orthodox Church". This creates the basis for potential external influence on the religious situation in Ukraine.

Between Ukraine's independence in 1991 and the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, church-state and socio-religious relations underwent significant transformations. In the early 1990s, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), and the UOC became key players in the Orthodox field in Ukraine. It was the relationship between these church institutions that determined the main trends in the development of Orthodoxy in Ukraine for a quarter of a century (Zdioruk, & Tokman, 2023, p. 25).

It should be noted that there is reason to believe that the UOC enjoyed a more privileged position among the above-mentioned churches. Since 1991, the main Orthodox shrines of Ukraine – the Holy Dormition Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, the Holy Dormition Pochayiv Lavra, and since 2004, the Holy Dormition Sviatohirsk Lavra – have been under its jurisdiction. Furthermore, during the first prime ministership of Viktor Yanukovich in 2002–2005, these monasteries were transferred to the UOC for a 49-year lease (Zdioruk, & Tokman, 2023, p. 23).

The events of 2014 – Russia's annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the armed conflict in Donbas – markedly clarified the positions of Orthodox denominations. An analysis of public statements and actions by some representatives of the UOC-MP reveals an ambiguous stance on these events. This has caused concern among segments of Ukrainian society and heightened interfaith tensions (Yablonsky et al., 2015, p. 368).

This ambiguity creates preconditions for the UOC-MP to be used as an instrument of ideological and propaganda influence by the Russian Federation on Ukrainian society. Notably, the UOC-MP's top leadership has shown a lack of solidarity with the Ukrainian people amid Russian aggression, failing to clearly condemn the occupation of Ukrainian territories and the annexation of Crimea (Hankevych, 2015). Concurrently, there have been instances where UOC-MP clergy have supported the "DPR" and "LPR" militants and called for Russian interference in Ukraine's internal affairs. For example, the Luhansk Diocese of the UOC-MP has been reported to cooperate with pro-Russian militants, including

consecrating their symbols and participating in propaganda activities that reinforce Russian influence in the occupied territories of Donbas. Additionally, the SBU has alleged that Russian special services have targeted churches and intimidated UOC-MP priests to destabilize Ukraine ahead of elections, using religion for provocations (Balachuk, 2019).

These factors suggest that, at that time, the UOC-MP was already functioning as an instrument of Russian ideological and propaganda influence in Ukraine (Yavorska et al., 2017, p. 138–140). However, it is crucial to recognize the complexity and multifaceted nature of the religious sphere. It is inappropriate to generalize the positions of all UOC-MP believers and clergy, as some demonstrate patriotic stances and support Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The religious factor is actively used by Russia to legitimize its aggressive policies towards Ukraine. The concept of the "Russian world" is promoted as a civilizational model based on a "supranational confessional tradition", allowing Russia to frame its actions as defending Orthodox values and "historical heritage".

This phenomenon reflects the concept of political Orthodoxy, which involves using political instruments and methods to achieve certain social and public goals aligned with the mission of the Russian Orthodox Church. Political Orthodoxy in the modern context is characterized by several key ideas: strengthening the Russian Orthodox Church's influence on public life and state policy, making Orthodoxy the foundation of national identity, and promoting Russia's messianic role as the "Third Rome" and the idea of "Holy Rus", which envisions the political and ecclesiastical unity of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

The influence of political Orthodoxy on Ukraine's religious security between 1991 and 2022 manifested in several ways. First, it created internal tension within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). Supporters of political Orthodoxy often criticized the UOC-MP leadership, accusing it of attempting to separate from the Moscow Patriarchate. This led to conflicts within the church and complicated its relations with Ukrainian society and the state.

Additionally, the ideas of political Orthodoxy posed a potential threat to Ukraine's national security by promoting concepts that undermined state sovereignty. Notably, the idea of "triune Russia" contradicted Ukraine's independence and could justify external interference in its internal affairs. An important aspect of the impact of political Orthodoxy on religious security was the incitement of sectarian strife. Supporters often spoke negatively about other faiths, creating tension in Ukraine's religious environment and complicating interfaith dialogue.

Political Orthodoxy also served as a tool for political mobilization and propaganda of ideas contrary to Ukraine's national interests. This created additional challenges for ensuring state information security and countering external information influences.

A particularly acute problem was the creation of obstacles by supporters of political Orthodoxy to achieving the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Active resistance to this process complicated the resolution of the crucial issue of religious independence and the consolidation of Ukraine's Orthodox community.

It should be noted that the leadership of the UOC-MP officially condemned the phenomenon of political Orthodoxy. At the Council of Bishops on 21 December 2007 and in subsequent statements by Metropolitan Volodymyr

(Sabodan), political Orthodoxy was described as a dangerous phenomenon causing discord in the church and leading people away from true Orthodoxy. This indicates that the church leadership recognized the potential threats associated with this phenomenon (Zuev, 2008).

Despite official condemnation, the ideas of political Orthodoxy continued to influence Ukraine's religious situation through various NGOs and individual clergy. This created additional challenges for the country's religious security and necessitated the development of effective mechanisms to counteract the negative manifestations of this phenomenon.

In summary, political Orthodoxy between 1991 and 2022 was a significant factor influencing Ukraine's religious security. It created numerous challenges related to intra-church conflicts, interfaith tensions, threats to national sovereignty, and information security.

Another aspect of Russia's use of the religious factor is its attempt to position itself as a reliable interfaith mediator in the international arena. This strategy allows Russia to create a positive image and justify its policy towards Ukraine.

Furthermore, the religious factor is used to deepen the split in Ukrainian society. Issues like the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and interfaith contradictions are actively exploited by Russian propaganda (Vasylchenko, 2017).

Thus, the religious factor is a crucial component of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine. It is used comprehensively to legitimize aggression, spread pro-Russian narratives, destabilize the domestic political situation, and create a favorable international image of Russia.

In conclusion, the religious sphere in Ukraine from 1991 to 24 February 2022 was a key arena of hybrid aggression by the Russian Federation. The use of the religious factor as an instrument of external influence posed serious threats to Ukraine's national security, undermining the foundations of statehood and national identity. Addressing these problems required a comprehensive approach that balanced the need to ensure freedom of religion with the necessity to protect Ukraine's national interests in the religious sphere.

Now let us turn to the sociological dimension of religious security in Ukraine from 1991 to 2022 (Specifics of religious and church self-determination of citizens of Ukraine, 2021). Survey results show that Ukrainian society demonstrates a fairly high level of religiosity. Between 2000 and 2010, there was an increase in the proportion of citizens who identified as believers—from 58 % to 71 %. Later, in 2010–2020, the share of believers among adult citizens of Ukraine averaged 70 % (War and the church, 2023).

It is important to note that respondents' declaration of affiliation with a particular religious organization or church is not always associated with identification as a believer. This may be due to socio-cultural or ethnic identity. For example, among those who identify themselves as Orthodox, 73% called themselves believers, 19% were uncertain between faith and disbelief, and 5 % were non-believers or atheists (War and the church, 2023).

Analysis of the data shows a significant difference between the level of declared religiosity and the level of actual religious practice. Although 70–75 % of respondents called themselves believers, only about 20–25% admitted to being members of a particular religious community. Only about 15–20% of respondents attended religious services regularly (weekly) (War and the church, 2023).

The majority of citizens (about 60 %) believe that religious faith does not imply obligatory religious certainty. This point of view prevails in all regions except the West, where the majority supports the view that a believer must necessarily profess a particular religion. As for confessional affiliations, the majority of respondents (about 60–65 %) identify themselves with Orthodoxy. The number of followers of Greek Catholicism is significant (about 10 %), as well as those who call themselves "just Christians" (8–9 %). Other denominations are represented by a smaller number of adherents. It is important to note that religious identity is much less important to citizens than civic or regional identity. Only 3–4 % of respondents identify themselves primarily with people of the same faith or church (War and the church, 2023).

Thus, the analysis of sociological data shows a high level of declared religiosity in Ukrainian society, but a much lower level of actual religious practice. There are also significant regional differences and a dependence of the level of religiosity on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. It is important to take these features into account when studying the religious situation in Ukraine.

Discussion and conclusions

The task of humanitarian policy in the context of ensuring religious security during Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine is to protect the rights and freedoms of believers, including their right to freely practice their religion even during hostilities. It is crucial to prevent religious conflicts that could be used to destabilize the country. Special attention should be paid to helping internally displaced persons, including providing opportunities to meet their religious needs in their new places of residence.

Information support is critical to countering disinformation and propaganda that can exploit religious themes to create division in society. Equally important is the strengthening of cooperation between different religious communities to maintain social unity and solidarity during the war. Ensuring the safety of religious sites from attack or damage as a result of hostilities is also a priority. Psychological and spiritual support for the military and civilian population, actively supported by religious leaders and chaplains, plays an important role in maintaining morale.

The tasks of humanitarian policy also include planning and carrying out the restoration of damaged or destroyed religious buildings after the end of active hostilities. All these efforts aim to ensure religious security, support the spiritual stability of the population, strengthen social unity, and counter the use of religious issues to destabilize the country.

Authors' contributions: Yevhen Kharkovshchenko – developed the conceptual approach to the topic, particularly focusing on the theoretical foundations of the study of religious security in the context of hybrid warfare. He also contributed to the overall scientific direction and the formulation of key hypotheses and conclusions, as well as examined the sociological aspects of religiosity in Ukraine and the impact of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine on interfaith relations; Vitalii Turenko – focused on empirical research and the analysis of political and social processes affecting religious security in Ukraine. He also participated in data collection and the analysis of state policies regarding religious security and the protection of national interests in the religious sphere.

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Отримано редакцією журналу / Received: 11.04.24
Прорецензовано / Revised: 21.04.24
Схвалено до друку / Accepted: 24.05.24

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ОСОБЛИВОСТІ РЕЛІГІЙНОЇ БЕЗПЕКИ В (ПЕРЕД)ВОЄННИХ УМОВАХ В УКРАЇНІ: ЗАВДАННЯ ДЛЯ ГУМАНІТАРНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ

Вступ. Присвячено аналізу особливостей релігійної безпеки України в контексті повномасштабної російської агресії. Розглянуто роль релігії у формуванні національної ідентичності та її вплив на національну безпеку, зокрема під час гібридної війни, що ведеться Росією. Особливу увагу приділено стратегічному використанню релігійних факторів зовнішніми силами для дестабілізації українського суспільства.

Методи. Використано міждисциплінарні підходи, включаючи контент-аналіз, порівняльний аналіз, а також аналіз соціологічних даних і релігієзнавчих джерел. Застосовано також емпіричні та теоретичні методи для вивчення релігійної ситуації в Україні до і після отримання автокефалії Православної Церкви України.

Результати. Визначено ключові загрози релігійній безпеці України в контексті гібридної війни, включаючи використання релігійних конфліктів для підриву державного суверенітету. Акцентовано, що автокефалія Православної Церкви України виявилася важливим фактором, що посилює міжконфесійні суперечності, але водночас сприяє зміцненню національної ідентичності. Виявлено, що державна політика у сфері релігії відіграє ключову роль у забезпеченні релігійної безпеки шляхом балансування між свободою віросповідання та національними інтересами.

Висновки. На основі аналізу зроблено висновок про необхідність розробити ефективну гуманітарну політику, що враховує як збереження релігійних свобод, так і захист від зовнішніх загроз, адже це дозволить зміцнити національну безпеку України в умовах гібридної агресії Росії, що триває.

Ключові слова: релігійна безпека, державна політика, повномасштабна війна Росії проти України, гуманітарна політика, міжправославні відносини, УПЦ, ПЦУ.

Автор заявляє про відсутність конфлікту інтересів. Спонсори не брали участі в розробленні дослідження; у зборі, аналізі чи інтерпретації даних; у написанні рукопису; в рішенні про публікацію результатів.

The author declares no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; in the decision to publish the results.