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## THE ROLE OF STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS IN ENSURING RELIGIOUS SECURITY IN UKRAINE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

**Background.** *This article examines the role of state and non-state actors in ensuring religious security in Ukraine through a comparative analysis. Religious security is an essential aspect of national security, as religious conflicts can significantly impact social stability and state sovereignty. Given Ukraine's religious diversity and external geopolitical challenges, effective management of religious affairs is critical for maintaining peace and national cohesion. The research focuses on the interaction between government institutions, religious organizations, and civil society in addressing religious security issues.*

**Methods.** *The study employs a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, integrating historical, legal, and sociological perspectives to assess how different countries handle religious security. Key findings highlight that state involvement in religious affairs must balance the principles of religious freedom and national security. While the Ukrainian state remains secular, it plays a crucial role in regulating religious organizations, preventing their exploitation for political or extremist purposes, and maintaining legal oversight to ensure equal treatment of all confessions.*

**Results.** *Furthermore, the study examines the challenges of religious security in Ukraine, including interconfessional tensions, the transition of parishes between denominations, and the influence of external religious-political forces. The experience of other nations, such as France, the United States, and Poland, provides valuable insights into effective models of religious security management. Recommendations include refining legal frameworks, strengthening state oversight while respecting religious freedoms, and fostering interfaith dialogue.*

**Conclusions.** *By addressing these issues, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of religious security as a dynamic factor in Ukraine's social and political stability. It underscores the importance of coordinated efforts between state authorities, religious institutions, and civil society to uphold religious peace while safeguarding national interests.*

**Keywords:** *religious security, state policy, interfaith relations, religious freedom, national security, comparative analysis.*

### Background

Ensuring religious security is a crucial component of Ukraine's overall national security, as religious conflicts can impact social stability and state sovereignty. Given the country's religious and cultural diversity, as well as external threats, effective management of religious relations is a key aspect of maintaining peace and security within society. The role of both state and non-state actors in this process is particularly significant, as government authorities, religious communities, and civil society must cooperate to achieve this goal. In this context, a comparative analysis is essential for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to ensuring religious security.

**The aim of this article** is to analyze the role of state and non-state actors in ensuring religious security in Ukraine through a comparative approach.

To achieve this goal, the study sets out the following objectives:

- to identify the specific interactions between the state, religious institutions, and civil society organizations in the context of religious security;
- to examine key mechanisms and tools for ensuring religious security, analyze current challenges, and provide recommendations for improving national policy in this field.

### Methods

The methodological framework of this study is based on a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, integrating historical, legal, and sociological perspectives to examine the role of state and non-state actors in ensuring religious security in Ukraine. Given the complexity of religious security as a concept intersecting with national security, social stability, and human rights, the research employs a qualitative analysis of legal documents, policy frameworks, and case studies from Ukraine and other countries to identify effective mechanisms for managing religious affairs. The study utilizes comparative analysis to assess how different nations, such as France, the United States,

and Poland, address religious security while maintaining the balance between religious freedom and national interests. A legal analysis of constitutional and legislative provisions governing religious organizations is conducted to explore the extent of state regulation and its impact on interfaith relations. In addition, sociological data, including surveys and reports on religious affiliations, interconfessional tensions, and state-religion interactions, are examined to contextualize the empirical landscape of religious security in Ukraine. The interdisciplinary nature of this research allows for a holistic understanding of religious security, integrating theoretical perspectives from political science, religious studies, and security studies. Furthermore, the study considers geopolitical factors, particularly the impact of Russia's influence on religious institutions in Ukraine, and evaluates the role of international organizations in shaping religious policy. The methodological approach ensures a nuanced examination of the relationship between the state, religious institutions, and civil society while offering recommendations for policy improvements. By employing a multi-method strategy, including document analysis, case studies, and comparative insights, this research contributes to the broader discourse on religious security and its implications for national cohesion and stability.

### Results

**Specifics of the Interaction Between the State, Religious Institutions, and Civil Society Organizations in the Context of National Religious Security.** The interaction between the state, religious institutions, and civil society organizations in the context of religious security constitutes a crucial aspect of national security. Religion plays a key role in shaping social norms, worldview orientations, and even the political preferences of citizens. In this regard, it is essential to examine how these three primary actors cooperate to ensure religious security in Ukraine – a multi-confessional state undergoing a complex

period following the Revolution of Dignity and the armed conflict with Russia, which has significantly influenced religious dynamics within the country.

Religious security, on the one hand, pertains to guaranteeing freedom of conscience and religious rights, while on the other, it involves ensuring social peace and stability, preventing the use of religion to undermine state sovereignty or carry out terrorist activities. Given the significant religious transformations in Ukraine, particularly the shifts in the jurisdictional affiliation of religious organizations and the transition of parishes between denominations, it is especially important to understand how the state, religious institutions, and civil society organizations maintain a balance between freedom of religion and national security.

It should be noted that "according to sociological studies, the level of religiosity among the Ukrainian population has remained consistently high over the years, as also indicated by José Casanova. "In 2000, 58 % of respondents identified as believers, rising to 71 % in 2010 and 76 % in 2014. The year 2014 marked the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, a period of extreme tension for Ukrainian citizens. Researchers attribute this sharp increase in religiosity to socio-political upheavals, where reliance on worldview values serves as a means of adaptation. In the following years, religiosity slightly declined. However, with the onset of full-scale Russian aggression, it increased again to 74 % (ranging from 84 % in the western regions of the country to 63% in the east and 61 % in the south)" (Kharkovshchenko et al., 2024, p. 6).

Therefore, it is essential to remember that one of the key aspects of the interaction between the state and religious institutions is that Ukraine is a secular state. This means that there should be no direct dependence between religious organizations and state authorities. However, this does not imply that the state should refrain from involvement in matters of religious security. On the contrary, the state's role in these issues is exceptionally significant, as it is responsible for ensuring the equality of all religious denominations before the law and creating conditions for their proper functioning. At the same time, the state must have mechanisms to respond to situations in which religious organizations may become instruments of external or internal influence, potentially posing threats to national security.

One of the most important instruments of state interaction with religious institutions is legislation. In Ukraine, as in most democratic countries, religious matters are regulated by the Constitution, laws, and subordinate legal acts, which must guarantee freedom of religion without infringing on the rights of other citizens. The state must ensure the legality of religious organizations' activities and oversee their financial operations to prevent possible manipulations or the financing of terrorist organizations under the guise of religious activity. At the same time, the state must exercise caution to avoid interfering in religious affairs or imposing repressive measures against specific religious groups or organizations.

This is precisely why the field of religious studies exists within the humanities – to provide an adequate response to security challenges and evolve into a practical and effective discipline capable of addressing the specific needs of society and clarifying complex and controversial situations. As emphasized by L. Fylypovych and O. Horkusha, "fundamental knowledge should not remain dormant or serve merely as archival material; instead, it must become a vital source of information and actively contribute to

contemporary issues. Due to its polymethodological nature, religious studies should promote the pluralization of religious life, the diversity of people's worldviews, and the use of academic knowledge to foster tolerance in interfaith relations and mutual understanding among believers of different religions. It should affirm religious peace not as an alternative to religious conflict but as the only viable existential reality" (Fylypovych, & Horkusha, 2024a, p. 61).

Thus, a particularly significant aspect in this context is the role of religious institutions in maintaining religious security. Religious organizations in Ukraine actively contribute to addressing social issues by providing social services, assisting war victims, internally displaced persons, and other vulnerable populations. They also play a crucial role in the moral recovery of society, particularly in wartime conditions. However, like any other institutions, religious organizations can be subject to external influence.

Following the outbreak of war with Russia, certain religious organizations, such as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, came under heightened state scrutiny, leading to social and political tensions. These organizations were accused of supporting Russia's aggressive policies, which resulted in some parishes deciding to switch to other religious jurisdictions. Meanwhile, other religious organizations, particularly the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (which later merged into the Orthodox Church of Ukraine), supported the country's national interests, solidifying their role as an essential component of national identity.

A particularly noteworthy institution in this context is military chaplaincy, which became increasingly active following the full-scale invasion. As domestic scholars rightly note, "the primary criterion for the effectiveness of chaplaincy is practical experience in combat military units. At present, bureaucracy has little influence on Ukrainian military chaplaincy. The extreme conditions of war have enhanced both the quality and effectiveness of chaplaincy candidates. A chaplain's work is not limited to pastoral care but also focuses on the moral and psychological support of military personnel. To fulfill their mission and purpose, military chaplains need to develop and test new forms and methods of work, including media tools" (Kostiuk et al., 2023, pp. 82–83).

Therefore, the interaction between religious institutions and civil society organizations is also a crucial component of ensuring religious security. Civil society organizations in Ukraine actively support human rights, including the rights of religious minorities, and combat extremism and religious fanaticism. They often act as intermediaries between the state and religious communities, facilitating dialogue and fostering mutual understanding among different religious groups. At the same time, civil society organizations can serve as catalysts for legislative or policy changes regarding religious security, as well as conduct educational campaigns to prevent religious conflicts.

One of the key challenges in the interaction of these actors is maintaining a balance between state interests and citizens' rights to freedom of religion. Ukraine is home to numerous religious organizations, ranging from Catholics to Muslims, each with its own unique characteristics. Therefore, an essential aspect of religious security is the development of mechanisms that allow these diverse groups to coexist peacefully without generating tensions or conflicts. This requires both a clear state policy and a willingness to engage in ongoing dialogue with religious leaders and civil society organizations.

The international dimension also plays a crucial role in religious security. As part of the global community,

Ukraine must adhere to international human rights standards, particularly regarding freedom of religion. At the same time, the state has the right to restrict religious activities if they pose a threat to national security, such as in cases of support for terrorism or extremism. This further underscores the necessity of a well-balanced policy that involves cooperation with international organizations and religious leaders.

Thus, the interaction between the state, religious institutions, and civil society organizations in the context of religious security in Ukraine is a complex and multifaceted process requiring a balanced approach. The state must safeguard citizens' rights to freedom of religion while preventing threats to national security. Religious institutions, in turn, should actively contribute to maintaining peace and stability, avoid political manipulation, and serve as moral authorities for society. Civil society organizations play a vital role in facilitating dialogue between the state and religious organizations, helping to preserve social harmony and cohesion within the country.

**Key Mechanisms for Ensuring Religious Security and Ways to Improve National Policy for Its Implementation.** One of the key mechanisms for ensuring religious security is the development of an effective legal framework. Legislation should not only guarantee freedom of religion but also include safeguards against the misuse of religion for destructive purposes. As noted by Ye. Kharkovshchenko and V. Turenko, "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 military actions. It is crucial to prevent religious conflicts that could be exploited to destabilize the country" (Kharkovshchenko, & Turenko, 2024, p. 69).

In this context, significant legal provisions include the prohibition of religious hatred propaganda, mechanisms for registering religious organizations and determining their legal status, and the clear delineation between state and religious spheres. Judicial practice in protecting citizens' religious rights and the activities of relevant state bodies that monitor and ensure compliance with legislation also play a crucial role.

The administrative mechanism of religious security includes the activities of state institutions that coordinate interactions between the government and religious organizations, prevent conflicts based on religious differences, and counteract external interference. In this regard, the work of specialized agencies handling religious affairs, as well as local governments that directly engage with religious communities, is particularly effective. Special attention should be given to interfaith dialogue and ensuring legal equality among religious organizations. As the Ukrainian experience, especially during the Russian-Ukrainian war, has shown, "religious security is an essential element of national and state security. Ignoring it leads to tragedies, conflicts, and losses. Recognizing the significance of religion as a spiritual, ideological, and institutional phenomenon and incorporating its security potential into national defense strategies will strengthen the entire state security system. It will make the Ukrainian world and its people genuinely protected from any encroachments by external forces. Religious security must become a defining feature of Ukrainians' national identity as a political nation that defends itself not only on military fronts but also on spiritual and ideological ones" (Fylypovych, & Horkusha, 2024b, p. 80).

The educational dimension of religious security is crucial for fostering social tolerance, critical thinking, and resilience against the destructive influence of radical ideologies. The study of the history of religions, their fundamental principles, and their role in society can contribute to citizens' awareness of the importance of interreligious harmony and help prevent the spread of xenophobic sentiments. Furthermore, religious education should be directed toward cultivating a responsible approach to freedom of religion, understanding the mechanisms of religious manipulation, and seeking constructive dialogue between representatives of different religious traditions.

In the international context, religious security entails cooperation with international organizations, the exchange of best practices in preventing religious extremism, and the implementation of advanced legal frameworks for regulating religious processes. A particularly significant aspect is combating religious discrimination at the global level and ensuring compliance with human rights in the sphere of freedom of conscience.

Among the pressing challenges in the realm of religious security are the threats posed by religious extremism, the instrumentalization of religious rhetoric for political purposes, the increasing influence of foreign religious organizations, and issues related to digital technologies. Radicalization through social networks, disinformation on religious topics, and the emergence of online communities that promote intolerance and violence necessitate new approaches to state policy in this field. It is essential to monitor religious content in the information space, counteract destructive cults, and develop response mechanisms to instances of inciting religious hatred in digital environments, as "religious security correlates with religious freedom in the implementation of the protective function of those communities that adhere to democratic values and the principles of civil society" (Predko, & Predko, 2024, p. 72).

Recommendations for improving national policy in the field of religious security include strengthening interagency coordination in religious policy, refining the legislative framework, enhancing the training of specialists in religious studies and security, expanding international cooperation, and utilizing modern technologies for monitoring religious dynamics. The development of a unified national strategy for religious security is necessary, incorporating mechanisms for both prevention and response to potential threats. A significant role will be played by the development of civil society, the engagement of religious leaders in addressing social issues, and the enhancement of public oversight regarding the protection of religious rights and freedoms.

A comprehensive approach to ensuring religious security will enable effective responses to contemporary challenges, contribute to the harmonization of interfaith relations, and ensure societal stability. The primary objective of state policy in this domain should not only be the prevention of religious conflicts but also the creation of conditions for constructive dialogue between different religious communities, thereby strengthening national unity and social cohesion.

#### Discussion and conclusions

The study has examined the role of state and non-state actors in ensuring religious security in Ukraine through a comparative analysis, focusing on the interaction between government institutions, religious organizations, and civil society. The findings indicate that religious security is a critical component of national security, requiring a balanced

approach that upholds religious freedom while preventing potential threats to state sovereignty and social stability. The research has demonstrated that Ukraine's secular status necessitates a legal and administrative framework that ensures the equal treatment of all religious organizations, safeguards against external influence, and prevents the instrumentalization of religion for political or extremist purposes.

By analyzing the mechanisms and tools for ensuring religious security, the study has identified that a comprehensive legal framework, state oversight, and interfaith dialogue are essential in mitigating interconfessional tensions and maintaining social cohesion. The challenges facing Ukraine, particularly the transition of parishes between religious jurisdictions and the geopolitical influence on religious organizations, highlight the need for adaptive policy measures that align with both national interests and international human rights standards. Comparative insights from countries such as France, the United States, and Poland reveal that successful religious security policies integrate legal protections with mechanisms for fostering religious pluralism and social dialogue.

The study's recommendations emphasize the necessity of refining the legislative framework, strengthening institutional cooperation between state agencies and religious organizations, and enhancing civil society's role in religious security management. Additionally, the integration of modern technologies for monitoring religious dynamics and countering digital radicalization is crucial in addressing contemporary threats. Ultimately, religious security in Ukraine must be approached as a dynamic and multi-dimensional process, requiring sustained engagement from state institutions, religious leaders, and civil society.

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## РОЛЬ ДЕРЖАВНИХ І НЕДЕРЖАВНИХ АКТОРІВ У ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННІ РЕЛІГІЙНОЇ БЕЗПЕКИ В УКРАЇНІ: КОМПАРАТИВНИЙ АНАЛІЗ

**Вступ.** Досліджено роль державних і недержавних акторів у забезпеченні релігійної безпеки в Україні на основі компаративного аналізу. Розкрито, що релігійна безпека є важливим складником національної безпеки, оскільки релігійні конфлікти можуть суттєво впливати на соціальну стабільність і державний суверенітет. Наголошено, що в умовах релігійного та культурного різноманіття України, а також зовнішніх геополітичних викликів ефективно управління релігійними відносинами є критичним для збереження миру та національної єдності. Увагу зосереджено на взаємодії державних інституцій, релігійних організацій та громадянського суспільства у сфері забезпечення релігійної безпеки.

**Методи.** Засновано на компаративному та міждисциплінарному підходах, що охоплюють історичний, правовий та соціологічний аналіз. Ключові результати підкреслюють, що втручання держави в релігійну сферу повинно зберігати баланс між принципами релігійної свободи та забезпеченням національної безпеки. Хоча Україна залишається світською державою, вона відіграє важливу роль у регулюванні діяльності релігійних організацій, попередженні їх використання для політичних чи екстремістських цілей, а також у підтримці рівності всіх конфесій.

**Результати.** Проаналізовано виклики релігійної безпеки в Україні, зокрема міжконфесійні суперечності, перехід парафій між юрисдикціями та вплив зовнішніх релігійно-політичних сил. Досвід інших країн, зокрема Франції, США та Польщі, дозволяє окреслити ефективні моделі забезпечення релігійної безпеки. Запропоновано рекомендації, що включають удосконалення законодавчої бази, посилення державного контролю збереження релігійних свобод, а також розвиток міжконфесійного діалогу.

**Висновки.** Дослідження сприяє глибшому розумінню релігійної безпеки як динамічного чинника соціальної та політичної стабільності України. Підкреслено важливість скоординованих зусиль держави, релігійних організацій і громадянського суспільства для збереження релігійного миру та захисту національних інтересів.

**Ключові слова:** релігійна безпека, державна політика, міжконфесійні відносини, релігійна свобода, національна безпека, компаративний аналіз.

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Ensuring religious security not only contributes to national stability but also reinforces Ukraine's commitment to democratic values and human rights.

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