

## INTER-ORTHODOX POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS AMID RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

*The article analyzes inter-Orthodox Polish-Ukrainian relations in the conditions of Russia's war against Ukraine. It has been established that the activity of Orthodox religious organizations, as an institution of civil society that represents the interests of various social groups in Ukraine and the Republic of Poland, is regulated by legislation defining their powers and functions. In Ukraine, Orthodoxy is represented by the religious organizations of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, in the Republic of Poland by the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. To analyze the structural components of Orthodox religious organizations of Ukraine and the Republic of Poland, to determine their essential characteristics and functionality, a structural-functional method was used, which was reflected in the process of comparing their activity and attitude to Russia's war against Ukraine in accordance with the norms of Orthodox canon law. The principles, methods and mechanisms of formation and implementation of inter-Orthodox Polish-Ukrainian relations have been established. The impact of the church on the social and political life of the Republic of Poland, which played an important role in the formation of the state and nation and the preservation of national identity, was noted. Secularization trends in Polish and Ukrainian societies are analyzed, which are manifested in a decrease in religiosity, a weakening of the influence of religion and the church on the everyday life of the population, and a loss of trust in religion and the church. Attention is focused on the content and orientation of the activity of Orthodox religious organizations, which depends on the nature of state-church and interfaith relations, the religious situation in the country and the level of religious freedom. It has been proven that inter-Orthodox Polish-Ukrainian relations in the conditions of Russia's war against Ukraine depend to a large extent on politics, the vectors of which are established by state authorities in accordance with religious, political and social demands.*

**Key words:** religion, inter-Orthodox relations, state-church relations, religious policy, Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

### **Олег Соколовський. Міжправославні польсько-українські відносини в умовах війни Росії проти України**

*У статті проаналізовано міжправославні польсько-українські відносини в умовах війни Росії проти України. Установлено, що діяльність православних релігійних організацій як інституту громадянського суспільства, який представляє інтереси різних соціальних груп в Україні та Республіці Польща, регламентується національним законодавством, де визначено їхні повноваження та функції. В Україні православ'я представлено релігійними організаціями Православною церквою України та Українською православною церквою, у Республіці Польща – Польською автокефальною православною церквою. Для аналізу структурних складових православних релігійних організацій України та Республіки Польща, визначення їх сутнісних характеристик та функціональності використано структурно-функціональний метод, який знайшов відображення в процесі порівняння їх діяльності й ставлення до війни Росії проти України відповідно до норм православного канонічного права. Установлено засади, принципи, методи та механізми формування й реалізації міжправославних польсько-українських відносин. Констатовано вплив автокефальної*

православної церкви на суспільне та політичне життя Республіки Польщі, вона відіграла важливу роль у становленні держави й нації, збереженні національної самобутності. Проаналізовано секуляризаційні тенденції в польському й українському суспільствах, що проявляються в зниженні релігійності, послабленні впливу релігії та церкви на повсякденне життя населення, втраті довіри до релігії й церкви. Акцентовано увагу на змісті та спрямованості діяльності православних релігійних організацій, від якої залежить характер державно-церковних та міжконфесійних відносин, релігійна ситуація в країні, рівень релігійної свободи. Доведено, що міжправославні польсько-українські відносини в умовах війни Росії проти України значною мірою залежать від політики, вектори якої встановлюються органами державної влади відповідно до релігійних, політичних і суспільних запитів.

**Ключові слова:** релігія, міжправославні відносини, державно-церковні відносини, релігійна політика, Православна церква України, Українська православна церква, Польська автокефальна православна церква.

### **Oleh Sokolovskyi. Stosunki międzyprawosławne polsko-ukraińskie w warunkach wojny Rosji przeciwko Ukrainie**

W artykule przeanalizowano stosunki międzyprawosławne polsko-ukraińskie w warunkach wojny Rosji przeciwko Ukrainie. Stwierdzono, że działalność prawosławnych organizacji religijnych jako instytucji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, reprezentującej interesy różnych grup społecznych na Ukrainie i w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, reguluje ustawodawstwo krajowe, które określa ich uprawnienia i funkcje. W Ukrainie prawosławie reprezentowane jest przez organizacje religijne: Kościół Prawosławny Ukrainy i Ukraiński Kościół Prawosławny, natomiast w Republice Polskiej przez Polski Autokefaliczny Kościół Prawosławny. Do analizy elementów strukturalnych prawosławnych organizacji wyznaniowych Ukrainy i RP, w celu określenia ich zasadniczych cech i funkcjonalności, zastosowano metodę strukturalno-funkcjonalną, co znalazło odzwierciedlenie w procesie porównania ich działalności i stosunku do wojny Rosji z Ukrainą zgodnie z normami prawosławnego prawa kanonicznego. Określono zasady, zasady, metody i mechanizmy kształtowania i realizacji stosunków międzyprawosławnych polsko-ukraińskich. Zauważono wpływ autokefalicznego Kościoła prawosławnego na życie społeczne i polityczne Rzeczypospolitej, który odegrał ważną rolę w kształtowaniu państwa i narodu oraz zachowaniu tożsamości narodowej. Zanalizowano tendencje sekularyzacyjne w społeczeństwach Polski i Ukrainy, które przejawiają się spadkiem religijności, osłabieniem wpływu religii i Kościoła na codzienne życie ludności, utratą zaufania do religii i Kościoła. Zwrócono uwagę na treść i kierunek działalności organizacji religijnych prawosławnych, od której zależy charakter stosunków państwo-kościół oraz międzywyznaniowych, sytuacja religijna w kraju i poziom wolności religijnej. Wykazano, że stosunki międzyprawosławne polsko-ukraińskie w warunkach wojny Rosji przeciwko Ukrainie w dużej mierze zależą od polityki, których wektory są ustalane przez organy władzy państwowej zgodnie z wymogami religijnymi, politycznymi i społecznymi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** religia, stosunki międzyprawosławne, stosunki państwo-kościół, polityka religijna, Kościół Prawosławny Ukrainy, Ukraiński Kościół Prawosławny, Polski Autokefaliczny Kościół Prawosławny.

**Formulation of the problem.** The religious sphere is a social space that is formed by organizing organized relationships between people. The duty to ensure the stability of such an organization is assigned to religious institutions, which were formed during a long historical development and expressed the religious interests of certain social groups. The peculiarity of religious organizations as social institutions is their legitimacy, that is, their activities are regulated by legislation that defines their powers and functions.

Religious organizations as a structural element of the spiritual system reflect the interests and needs of various social strata of society. In our research, we will consider those religious organizations that, within the limits of their powers, influence the formation of religious policy and religious

processes in Ukraine and Poland. They primarily include Orthodox religious organizations, represented in Ukraine by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and in the Republic of Poland by the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Religious organizations as an institution of civil society influence the spheres of social life and represent the interests of various social groups in the state.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The scientific analysis of the inter-Orthodox relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Poland proves the considerable attention of Ukrainian and foreign scientists to this issue and is an area of interest for many humanities and social sciences. Theological features of the studied problem were highlighted in the works of M. Babii, S. Bohdan, V. Yelenskyi, M. Palinchak, V. Patlachuk, M. Marchuk and others. However, the analysis of inter-Orthodox Polish-Ukrainian relations, relations in the conditions of Russia's war against Ukraine, was not the subject of comprehensive research. In many publications, the specifics of the state policy regarding religion and the church in the Republic of Poland and Ukraine are considered only in the context of political history, and therefore require further elaboration.

**The purpose of the article** is to analyze inter-Orthodox Polish-Ukrainian relations in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine.

**Discussion and results.** An important structural unit of the political system of Ukraine is the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, whose competence includes constitutional powers to regulate public relations in the religious sphere. First of all, this is expressed in the determination of the principles, principles, methods and mechanisms of formation and implementation of state-church and interfaith relations [1]. A significant regulator in the formation of religious policy lies in the authority of the parliament to listen to the annual and extraordinary messages of the President of Ukraine, where issues of state-church and inter-religious relations are raised. In addition, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine exercises its powers in the religious sphere through the mechanism of parliamentary hearings and inter-factional parliamentary associations on church issues.

An important instrument of the parliament in the implementation of religious relations is the Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which is formed from the number of people's deputies of Ukraine to carry out legislative work in separate areas, preparation and preliminary consideration of issues assigned to the powers of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, performance of control functions [2]. State policy in the field of freedom of conscience and religious organizations is implemented by the specialized committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on issues of culture and spirituality [3, s. 168]. The profile committee preliminarily considers proposals for holding parliamentary hearings on religious issues.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, in the development of the concept of separation and balancing of power, specifically introduces into the state mechanism at the same time two bodies of legislative power – the Sejm and the Senate [4, s. 47]. Provisions of the Constitution, which grant legislative functions to the Seimas and the Senate, are determined by constitutional provisions that regulate the mechanisms of creation, internal organization, rules of operation, status of deputies and senators, etc. [5, s. 142]. The Constitution does not define differences between both bodies of legislative power. In the explanation of the regulations, the equality of the chambers is noted as a legal consequence of the implementation of the bicameral structure of the parliament. From the principle of bicameralism of the parliament, it is possible to derive an interpretive norm that if there are doubts about the sphere of competence of the Seimas or the Senate, one should proceed from the assumption of equal rights of both chambers, "which successfully reflects the legislator's desire that laws be adopted by a bicameral parliament" [6, p. 253].

The legal foundations of state-confessional relations are regulated by the Laws of May 17, 1989: "On relations between the state and the Roman Catholic Church", "On guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion", "On social security of the clergy". The content of the laws was regulated with the country's international obligations in the field of human rights. The religious policy of the institution of parliamentarism is regulated by the content of the Law of the Republic of Poland "On Guarantees of Freedom of Conscience and Religion" [7].

In accordance with Article 1, the Republic of Poland provides every citizen with freedom of conscience and religion, which consists in freedom of choice of religion and religious beliefs, their expressions - individual and collective, private and public. Believing citizens of all faiths, as well as non-believers, have equal rights in state, political, economic, social and cultural life. The government supports religious denominations and does not create any obstacles for their activities.

The law gives citizens the right to create religious communities in order to recognize and spread religious faith; participate in religious activities and rites, as well as perform religious duties and celebrate religious holidays; spread their religion and beliefs, raise their children according to their own beliefs in a religious spirit; not to disclose their religious preferences; participate in the work of international religious organizations; use sources of information on the topic of religion; to produce and buy items needed for cult purposes and religious rites; become a priest or monk; to be buried according to religious ritual or belief.

However, the specified law also provides for restrictions imposed by the state during the exercise of these rights. In particular, Article 3 states that: "Individual or collective manifestation of one's religion or beliefs may be limited by law only in the interests of protecting public safety, order, health or morality of the population or the legal rights and freedoms of other persons. Freedom of conscience and religion cannot be the reason for exemption from the fulfillment of public duties provided for by law" [7].

Citizens have the right to provide material assistance to the church and other religious institutions, as well as to charitable institutions, and no one may be discriminated against or privileged on the basis of religious affiliation or religious beliefs. It is forbidden to force citizens not to participate in religious activities or rituals, as well as to force them to participate in them. Foreigners residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland have the same right to freedom of conscience and religion as Polish citizens.

The Polish state, and this also confirms its tolerant attitude towards the church, regulates at the legislative level that persons who belong to the church and other religious organizations and whose religious holidays are working days by law have the right to receive a day off on their own request, necessary for the celebration, according to the prescriptions of his religion.

The law also provides for guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion in relations between the state and the church and other religious institutions. Among them, we can name the separation of the church and other religious institutions from the state, the freedom to perform religious functions by the church and other denominations, the equality of churches and other religious organizations regardless of their charter. The Republic of Poland is a secular state, neutral in matters of religion and worldview.

According to the law, the state cooperates with churches and religious communities in maintaining peace, in determining the conditions for state development and improving the moral atmosphere in society. The Church and other religious institutions enjoy the freedom to exercise their religious activities on an equal basis. During its implementation, they have the right to recognize religious doctrine, dogmas and principles of faith, as well as liturgy; to organize and publicly send a cult; provide religious services; conduct ceremonies and religious gatherings [7].

The church and other religious institutions have the right to own, manage, establish and expand burial cemeteries; teaching religion, raising children and young people in a religious spirit, according to the choice of their parents or guardians. Moreover, religious education of children and youth is an internal matter of the church and other religious institutions. It is organized according to a program approved by the leadership of the church itself or another religious institution, in prayer houses and other appropriate premises.

In Ukraine, the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on April 23, 1991 of the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" was of decisive importance for the formation of a model of state-church relations and the determination of the foundations of religious policy in the period of democratization of Ukrainian society. One of the politically important provisions of this law was that "implementation of state policy regarding religion and the church

belongs exclusively to the jurisdiction of Ukraine" [8]. The Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" contained a definition of its key category – "freedom of conscience", which includes the right "to have, adopt and change a religion or belief of one's choice and the freedom to practice any religion or not to practice any religion, conduct religious cults, openly express and freely spread their religious or atheistic beliefs" [8]. Given that this right is one of the fundamental human rights, it was later enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine. Unlike the Soviet legislation on religious cults, which contained a number of prohibitions on the activities of religious organizations, the Constitution of Ukraine and the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" the exercise of the right to freedom of conscience could be limited by law only in the interests of protecting public safety and order, life, health and morals, as well as the rights and freedoms of other citizens [8].

The religious policy of the legislative power is formed on the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. The main provisions determine that the government in the state maintains impartiality in matters of religious, ideological and philosophical beliefs, ensuring freedom of their expression in public life. Relations between the state and churches, as well as other religious unions, are built on the principles of respect for their autonomy, as well as mutual independence of each in their sphere, as well as interaction for the good of man and the common good [9, s. 19–20].

The main concepts of the religious sphere are determined by Articles 25 and 53 of the Constitution, the content of the Preamble and provisions of the constitutional act, which have an extended interpretation. Article 25 establishes equality of relations between the state, churches and other religious associations. They are formed on the basis of guaranteeing their autonomy, independence and cooperation for the benefit of people. The authorities do not interfere in religious matters, and ensure freedom of their expression in public life. However, the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church is determined by an international agreement (concordat) concluded between the Holy See and the Polish state.

Article 53 of the Constitution of Poland is devoted to religious issues, which guarantee the realization of the right to freedom of conscience and religion. Freedom of religion includes the freedom to practice the religion of one's choice and to worship individually or in association with others in public or private. The concept of religious freedom includes the ability to use temples and other religious buildings, which can be built according to the needs of believers, as well as the right of people to give and receive help from the church. Parents have the right to provide their children with religious upbringing and education in accordance with their beliefs. At the same time, the possibility of limiting the freedom of religion is established on the basis of the law, if it is necessary to protect the security of the state, its protection, public order, health, morals or freedoms and rights of other persons [9, s. 25–26].

At the same time, it is indicated that no one can be forced to participate or not to participate in religious rites, and state authorities have no right to oblige citizens to explain their worldviews, religious beliefs or convictions. Thus, on the one hand, associations are subjects of religious freedom along with citizens, foreigners, repatriates and children, on the other hand, religious associations are created to ensure the right of believers to practice their religion according to their beliefs, as well as to provide or receive help from the church [9, s. 25–26].

It is difficult to fully determine the extent to which the influence of the Moscow Patriarchate manifests itself in the relations between the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church (PAOC) and Ukrainian Orthodoxy, especially in the process of the latter's canonical autocephaly. However, the authority of the PAOC in this matter is aligned with Moscow, both before the onset of the full-scale war in 2022 and afterward. Specifically, on November 15, 2018, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the PAOC prohibited its clergy from engaging in liturgical and prayerful contacts with representatives of Ukrainian churches – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church – which "by their current actions have caused much harm" [10]. Additionally, the Synod of Bishops of the PAOC called for a meeting of the heads of all Orthodox churches to resolve the issue of divided Orthodoxy in the Ukrainian lands.

On December 15, 2018, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew invited bishops from all Ukrainian Orthodox churches to participate in the Unification Council. However, the leadership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate prohibited its representatives from attending. Instead, all bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and even two metropolitans of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, participated in the Council. The Council adopted a historic decision to unite the Ukrainian Orthodox churches into a single religious organization – the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The Statute of the OCU was also approved, and its Primate – Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine Epiphanius – was elected. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew invited the head of the newly formed church to Istanbul to receive the Tomos of autocephaly. Finally, on January 5, 2019, in Istanbul, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew signed the historic document and ceremoniously presented it to Metropolitan Epiphanius [11].

In contrast, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) launched a broad anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign with the involvement of Russian President V. Putin. At his initiative, the Ukrainian church issue became the subject of discussion at an operational meeting with permanent members of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. Additionally, the Kremlin leader initiated a phone call with Bartholomew, attempting to persuade him of the erroneous nature of the decision taken [12].

The absence of a universally accepted mechanism and the presence of several historical precedents facilitated the unilateral adoption of such a decision by Constantinople. Gradually, the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Greece, and Cyprus recognized the legitimacy of Patriarch Bartholomew's decision and began to include the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in their liturgical prayers. Meanwhile, the ROC and its allies (the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia) at the universal level are actively blocking the recognition of the OCU. The ROC even severed its liturgical communion with churches that have already recognized the Ukrainian church. The Synod of Bishops of the PAOC refused to recognize the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, as reported in a communique following the synod on October 29, 2019. The document states that "the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church does not oppose granting autocephaly to the church in Ukraine based on the dogmatic and canonical norms of the entire church, not to a group of apostates-schismatics" [13]. The document also states that "those who deviate from the teachings of the Holy Church cannot represent a healthy church organism," which, as stated, violates the Eucharistic unity of Orthodoxy [13].

After the start of the full-scale aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the position of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church (PAOC) developed in two directions. The first of these is humanitarian and diplomatic measures aimed at aiding the refugees and attempting to influence the Moscow Patriarchate to stop the military aggression of Russian forces. The second direction is related to the relations between the hierarchy and clergy of the PAOC and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU).

In the first month of the war, on March 22, 2022, the chancellery of the Orthodox Metropolitan of Warsaw and All Poland issued a statement regarding assistance to Ukrainian refugees. It emphasizes the need for prayers for peace, lists actions and initiatives that the Polish Orthodox community and charitable institutions have already supported, and expresses gratitude to the Polish population for their Christian attitude toward people. On March 14, 2022, Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw wrote a letter to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, urging him to influence on stopping the war that Russia is waging in Ukraine. In the letter, this war is characterized as an internal Ukrainian military conflict, emphasizing that both Russian and Ukrainian Orthodoxy derive from "one baptism of Saint Vladimir" [14]. Separately, there was an appeal from the Holy Synod of the PAOC on March 22, 2022, to the leadership of the Russian Federation. The actions of Russian troops in Ukraine in this appeal are characterized as "un-Christian and incomprehensible" [14]. These steps, as well as the involvement of Orthodox individuals and institutions on the side of Ukraine and refugees, are one of the aforementioned directions of PAOC activity in connection with the war.

On the other hand, several months after the start of the war, problems related to the attitude of the PAOC toward the OCU became known. Evidence of this is a letter from Epiphanius, the head of the OCU, to Archbishop Sawa in August 2022. The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine said that Ukrainians are grateful for the assistance they have already received from Poland: We ask for your further assistance, as the situation, especially now, becomes increasingly complicated. We need help in very different areas. And we will need even more help in rebuilding Ukraine after the war" [15]. He also noted that Christians primarily need spiritual and prayerful support: "Our faithful who are refugees in Poland also need this spiritual support. This is because, unfortunately, the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church does not want to take care of our faithful and refuses to administer the sacraments. We want to engage in fraternal dialogue with them and send letters, but they remain unanswered" [15].

At the same time, the Synod of Bishops of the PAOC, held on October 25, 2022, under the leadership of Metropolitan Sawa, reaffirmed its position regarding the OCU, considering it "non-canonical" and not recognizing the dignity of Epiphanius as Primate and metropolitan [16]. The Synod of Bishops called on the faithful to continue praying for peace in Ukraine, stopping of the war, and the end of the split in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The escalation of diplomatic relations was also reflected in a congratulatory letter from the head of the PAOC to the head of the ROC, Kirill, on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of his enthronement. In it, Metropolitan Sawa emphasized that "the enemy of faith does not like church stability; he seeks to destroy it"[17]. "What happened in Ukraine vividly demonstrates this. However, the power of God is great; it is invincible. We deeply believe that the evil that destroys the Divine Church organism will be destroyed by Christ – the Victor over death and hell" [17]. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Pawel Jablonski, recognized the letter from Metropolitan Sawa to the head of the ROC as an absolutely fatal situation deserving maximum condemnation. He noted that this situation puts Polish Orthodox believers in an uncomfortable position, as they know very well the reason for Russian aggression in Ukraine: "It is not at all a struggle to protect faith, as the Russian church tries to present it, but imperial aggression" [18]. The Polish diplomat also pointed out that the head of the PAOC, Sawa, had previously cooperated with communist special services.

The head of the PAOC, Metropolitan Sawa, apologized for the form of his congratulatory letter to the head of the ROC, stating that he condemns Russian aggression in Ukraine and supports the independence of the OCU: "I condemned and condemn the criminal invasion of Russia into independent Ukraine. I expressed this position in March 2022, calling for its cessation to the Russian Federation and personally to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill" [19]. According to him, he, altogether with the episcopate, clergy, and Polish Orthodox believers support the Ukrainian people in their quest for the restoration of full freedom, sovereignty, and integrity of the country. Referring to the congratulatory letter to Kirill, Metropolitan Sawa noted that this document was formally protocolled one without considering the complex geopolitical situation [19].

**Conclusions.** Currently, in Polish Orthodoxy, there is a certain unanimity regarding the negative assessment of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the need to provide assistance to refugees. However, there is a divergence in attitudes toward the OCU as the Polish bishops firmly oppose the autocephaly in the form it received from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. At the same time, among secular individuals, including experts society and even some clergy, there are sounds of often quite decisive voices in favor of adopting the position of Constantinople and promoting the process of complete alienation of Ukrainian Orthodoxy from Russian influence.

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