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Religion and Nation-Building in the Epoch of Desecularization: The Case of Ukraine

I.

Theoretically speaking, several factors have contributed to the prominent role of religion in “belated” nation buildings. Such a prominent role is present when religion is the central element of proto-national mythology; or when religion has provided the forging nation with its symbolic boundaries, leading to the dissolution of earlier collectivities; or/and when a nation-making *ethnie* (ethnic group) has lost other important identity markers (such as common language or shared territory); or/and when the ethnic core of the modern nation coincides with a religious affiliation; and, finally, when a newly formed nation has been deprived of political institutions, thereby leaving the Church as the sole remaining force for institutional nation building.

The forerunners of Ukrainian nationalism did not consider religion as the “Ukrainian navel,”¹ although they undoubtedly alluded to the significance of religion for the forging of Ukrainian ethnic identity. Different variations of this theme are found in the writings of the forerunners of the Ukrainian national movement, such as the writings of Panteleimon Kulish, Mykola Kostomarov, as well as in the works of outstanding figures of the Ukrainian national pantheon (Taras Shevchenko, Mykhailo Dragomanov and Ivan Franko). It is also present in the writings of those authors whose nationalism was expressed in explicitly political forms (such as, for instance, Julian Vassian or Mykola Mykhnovskyi). Specifically, for generations of Ukrainian nationalists, the writings of Mykola Mykhnovskyi served as the main frame of reference. In his writings, Mykhnovskyi expressed the view that religion could provide the fabric for nation-formation, but that could only become reality at some point in the distant future, since at the moment “not only [the] Tsar-foreigner reigns over Ukraine, but God [himself] has become an alien [to Ukraine] and does not speak Ukrainian” (Protsenko, Lysovy 2000, p. 418).

¹ This notion, of course, was borrowed from Ernest Gellner (1997).

Additionally, since Eastern Orthodoxy was one of the central pillars of the common Ukrainian-Russian identity, Ukrainian nationalists viewed it as destructive for the national consciousness of the Ukrainian masses. This attitude was expressed irrespective of these activists' personal religious backgrounds and beliefs (Taras Shevchenko's caustic remark about the Byzantine religio-political tradition and its Russian imperial incarnation were not unique).

The crucial factor that shaped the attitude of Ukrainian national figures toward religion was their social convictions. The famous remark of the Ukrainian historian Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytskyi upon seeing earnest youngsters with "Marx's *Communist Manifesto* in one pocket and Shevchenko's collected poems *Kobzar* in the other" (Lysiak-Rudnytskyi, 1987, p. 139) was very indicative with respect to the intellectual atmosphere in the Ukrainian national movement at the turn of the twentieth century. Ukrainian activists, similar to elites of other stateless nations, strived to mobilize the masses and spoke highly of onslaught, the will to live, and liberation. Neither humility, nor repentance ranked highly in the qualities they stressed.

In his version of Ukrainian ethnogenesis, Roman Szchporluk offers the following narrative: during the eighteenth century Ukraine was a retarded suburb of Russia and Poland. In turn, both Russia and Poland were, to a degree, cultural suburbs of the far more advanced Western Europe. In the modern epoch, when nationalism became a means of the global modernization of backward ethnic communities, the Polish and Russian societies were transformed into modern nations. In that way, the formation of the modern Polish and Russian nations presented Ukrainians with a challenging choice of alternatives: either they become a part of these modern nations, or they try to transform themselves into such a nation. As Ukrainians themselves were not satisfied with the place reserved for them in modern Russian and Polish nation-building projects, as they had preserved certain historical and cultural traditions, as they had an elite (or, in the strict sense, rather latent elite) and a feeling of local patriotism, they opted for transforming themselves into a nation. This choice offered them the possibility of achieving greater status in the world, which would not be the case had they remained a periphery to their more advanced neighbors. The growing Ukrainian nationalism aspired to transform the unarticulated cultural identity already existing in some cases for centuries into a political aspiration of national independence.

What role did religion and churches play in the formation of the unyielding determination of the Ukrainian elite to pursue nation-building? The particular salience of this role can be traced in the case of Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church. When, after the first partition of Poland (1772), Ukrainian Galicia passed under Austrian rule, the Greek Catholic hierarchy received the support and the protection of the imperial government. The educational reforms of the Habsburg rulers Maria Teresa and Joseph II led to formation of an intelligentsia coming from the educated Greek-Catholic clergymen that represented the subordinated Ukrainian population of Galicia. Under the relatively liberal Austrian rule, the Greek-Catholic hierarchy

(seminarians, priests, and bishops) flourished. Some among them conducted the initial “heritage-gathering” work typical for the cultural stage of national movements. Up to the end of 19th century Greek-Catholic clerics dominated among Ukrainian public figures in Galychyna. In 1890 in Galychyna there was not a single Ukrainian intelligent other than those who had originated from a clergy family (Грицак 2000, p. 78). Although from the 1860s the secular intelligentsia had begun to assume the leadership of the national movement, clergymen were elected to the Galician Diet and the all-Austrian Parliament and remained even more important at the local level, where they founded various educational and cultural establishments. They also provided critical institutional support for Ukrainian candidates in elections (Himka 1988, p. 105–142). The Greek-Catholic Church helped the rejection of three alternative models for the national development of Galicia’s Ukrainian population (the Moscowphile model, the Polish model and the Austrian-Rusin model). Eventually, after years of rather sharp intellectual debate among supporters of different orientations, the Greek-Catholic church supported *narodovstvo*, that is, the Ukrainian national movement.

Interpreting the Greek-Catholic church as the guardian of Ukrainian originality constitutes a wonderful component for a national myth. But this component clashes with that of the most important element of the collective conscience, namely, with the so-called Cossack myth. John Armstrong maintains that Cossack’s myth of belligerent, chivalrous republics of free and patriotic militants, which became a central component in the emergence of a distinctive Ukrainian ethnic identity (1982, p. 78). A crucial element of the Cossack myth was the Cossack’s participation in the 17th-century wars. But these were wars carried out under religious slogans, for the protection of the “Native Orthodox Faith” and the “Cossack Church,” against Catholic expansion, and so on. Therefore, Ukraine’s actual religious composition and the concrete historical circumstances of its nation-formation demanded that the Ukrainian nationalists maintain a degree of deliberate distance from the religious factor. The founding fathers of Ukrainian nationalism considered religion a stumbling block rather than a reliable resource for nation-building. In Ivan Franko’s writings, religion was not a fuel for nation building, but first and foremost a source of acute tension between Ukrainians. In his 1906 article, “Ukraine and Galychina,” Michailo Hrushevs’kyi warned his compatriots of the reoccurring danger of Serbs and Croats, religiously divided nations, which have arisen from a common ethnic base (1906, p. 494). At the next stage of the forming of the national consciousness of the Ukrainian elite, the conceptual dimension of the political nation building was forged. The main parameters of such a dimension were integral Eurocentrism, unification of all ethnic Ukrainian lands into a nation-state and, last but not least, secularism.

II.

Contrary to Greek-Catholicism and the Uniate Church, the role of Eastern Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church in preserving/overcoming regional differences and preventing/making an All-Ukrainian identity seems to be much more complex and as a matter of fact disregarded by historians and students of religious studies. Based upon Ukrainian history, it seems that Orthodoxy did not play a vital role in Ukrainian nation building, because Orthodoxy was an ineffective identity marker between the new nation and Russia, the nation that Ukrainians compared themselves to and the nation that the most ardent nationalists among them wished to be separated from. But such an argument openly neglects the Polish factor, which had exceptional importance for Ukraine even after the 18th-century partition of Poland.¹³ Examining the Polish factor in Right-Bank Ukraine from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Kimitaka Matsuzato came to the conclusion that the Latin-Catholic tradition observed in the region continued to surpass the Greco-Orthodox tradition in resources and influence even at the beginning of the twentieth century (cf. 1998). Roman Szporluk rightly argues that Russians were resolved to prove that Right-Bank Ukrainian lands were not Polish. In these efforts, Ukrainians supported them. "It took some time before the Russians realized the Ukrainians were also to prove that the lands in question were not Russian, either" (Szporluk 2000, p. 77).

Even after the 1863–64 Uprising and the eventual abolition of Polish autonomy, and for most of the nineteenth century, Right-Bank Ukraine was marked by violent antagonism between the Polish gentry and Ukrainian peasants. This conflict was heavily colored by confessional sentiments. The case of the so-called "*hlopomany*" (Ukrainian activists originating from previously Polonized families) is indicative of the high tensions between rival religious traditions. Among these activists were the Ukrainian historian Volodimir Antonovich (1834–1908) and Taddey Rylskyi, father of the famous Ukrainian poet Maxim Rylskyi. When the "*hlopomany*" declared their return to their "native nationality" they accompanied it with converting (or "returning") back to Eastern Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism. At the time, for Ukrainians in Right-Bank Ukraine, Eastern Orthodoxy was viewed as a rather anti-Polish, anti-Jewish, and then, anti-Russian identity marker. For a Ukrainian peasant from a Volyn' or Podoliia's village, a Russian (or Great Russian, as the terminology of the day dictated) was still a stranger, a bureaucrat from a distant city whom he or she might never come across during his or her entire life.² Orthodoxy in their eyes was not a belief imposed by the Russians, but the native faith of rustic folk. Its originality and ethno-specific shape remained to a great extent indissoluble, notwithstanding the routine campaigns instigated by the St. Petersburg's Holy Synod against Little Russia's "harmful peculiarity" in liturgy, rites, and devotions.

² According to the 1897 census Russian speakers made up only 3.5% of the total population of Volyn' province, 3.3% of Podoliia province, and 5.9% of Kyiv province. See: *Pervaiia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii* (1897, 8, p. viii).

At the beginning of the 20th century the Church in Right-Bank Ukraine appeared in the very epicenter of a fierce struggle for the future of this region. Imperia tried to undermine Polish and Jewish influences and paid special attention to strengthening the position of Orthodox Church. But contrary to the expectations of the official St. Petersburg, Russianness did not mean for the Ukrainian peasantry unity with Russians (*velikorossy*), but rather an awareness of their own peculiarity and opposition toward Poles, Jews, and what appeared to be the real threat for the regime, hostility toward “people at the top” (Омельчук 2006, p. 156, 160). These people vocally manifest their Orthodox identity as a very local and distinctive from an All-Russian Orthodox identity. Nor less significant also that on the eve of the fall of Russian empire the tacitly articulated national identity of Ukrainian peasants gave birth to a very strong aspiration to obtain a “native,” “proper” Church, though. The philosopher, Church leader, and public figure Fr. Vasili Zen'kovskiy vividly recalled the extent of his surprise at the storming “Ukrainian Church Sea”: “I came to the conclusion that the Church’s Ukrainianess was very strong in rural areas, that within the Church’s Ukrainianess, there was a strong yearning for an expression of its own national character through the means of religious (church) life” (Zen'kovskiy 1995, p. 39).

III.

In Soviet Ukraine religion ceased to be the core component of the Ukrainian peasant identity after the barbarian Stalinist modernization, famine homicide, and suppression of Churches’ activity. Meanwhile, two important things should be taken into consideration concerning religion and nation building during the Soviet time. First of all, the Soviet period was not a sort of “lost time” for the forging of the Ukrainian nation, and it was of central importance for the formation of Ukrainian identity. The Soviet regime united the Ukrainian ethnic lands, it twice legitimized Ukrainian identity both within the borders of the quasi-state formation and in the passport of every ethnic Ukrainian (e.g. the notorious “fifth entry” indicating the ethnicity of every Soviet passport), and the regime institutionalized the Ukrainian language as well as the corresponding cultural and educational establishments.

Secondly, Ukraine did not turn into a sort of “religious desert” as a result of forceful Soviet secularization. Powerful resistance to this secularization came from popular-religious enclaves, mainly in Bukovyna, Zakarpattya, Volyn’, Podoliia, Galychyna. Galychyna put up especially incessant resistance to Soviet secularization. A Galician popular-religious enclave, which displayed a clear Ukrainian identity and strong religious sentiments, was formed by Greek-Catholic bishops, priests, monks, and nuns non-united with the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as by *irredenta* Ukrainian Catholics forcedly reunited with ROC, but culturally and institutionally unassimilated within Orthodoxy. After Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaign of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Galychyna became the region with the highest concentration of Orthodox parishes within the Soviet Union. In its effort to expunge the “remnants of Uniatism” the regime pursued in Galicia a somewhat

different policy in comparison with other Slavonic regions of the USSR. To deal with the “Uniate threat” Soviet officials unintentionally opened the door for a “quiet Ukrainization” of the Orthodoxy in the region. In the mid-1970s, thirteen out of sixteen Orthodox hierarchs in Ukraine were ethnic Ukrainians; nine of them were Western Ukrainians; and three of them were former Uniate priests. The latent process of the Ukrainization of Orthodoxy in Ukraine was spearheaded by priests of a Greek-Catholic background, who had converted to Orthodoxy and then strived to create an independent Ukrainian spirit in their parishes.

IV.

Since the late 1980s Ukraine has been witnessing a phenomenon of desecularization, that is, the returning of religion to its previously “forbidden” spheres. This “great return” comprises diverse but unidirectional processes, first of all, an explosive growth in religious institutions – from 6,000 in 1988 to 35,000 in 2013. Among newly established institutions there are thousands of those unconditionally prohibited by Soviet law, e.g., more than 13,000 Sunday schools, 370 missions, 80 brotherhoods, hundreds of charitable, youth, professional etc. faith-based organizations.

Desecularization influenced religious and cultural practices (extremely varied from region to region though) and even has its own impact upon the food preferences of Ukrainians.³ Religion manifests itself in the public sphere and political realm. Churches and religious organization addressed the faithful and society as a whole with statements, appeals, memorandums on human dignity, the rights and duties of citizen, on civil society, on the memory of millions murdered by the Famine Genocide, on justice, on European values, on numerous urgent domestic, international, social and moral issues. At the same time the Churches’ hierarchy uncompromisingly opposed abortions and same-sex marriages, and considered it as not only possible, but also necessary to restrict human rights when these rights transcend doctrinal dictation and devotional duty.

Furthermore, religion is changing the landscape of Ukrainian cities, towns and villages where during the last 25 years 6,500 sacral building have been built and another 2,400 are under construction; dozens of statues of Christian saints were installed, at least fifteen monuments to Pope John Paul II and a countless number of memorial Crosses devoted to the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium.

However, the process of desecularization has not merely regional distinctions, but has taken various shapes in different regions of Ukraine. Vyacheslav Karpov, who defines desecularization as a process of counter-secularization, through which religion reasserts its societal influence, also suggests that depending on the social

³ For instance, during the 2013 Lent, dairy products consumption in Ukraine decreased by 20%, eggs and chicken meat, by 10% while consumption of vegetables increased by 15–20%, and mushrooms by 30%. See *Как Великий пост повлияла на продажи продуктов питания* on <http://forbes.ua/business/1351334-kak-velikij-post-povliyala-na-prodazhi-produktov-pitaniya>.

actors involved, the desecularization can be seen as initiated and carried out “from below” and/or “from above.” A desecularization from below takes place when the activists and actors involved are grassroots-level movements and groups representing the masses of religious adherents. By contrast, when the activists and actors largely include religious and secular elites and leaders, those in a position of power and authority, we are dealing with a desecularization from above. The two models are ideal types capturing prevailing patterns of counter-secularization (Karpov 2010).

This theoretical framework enables us to retrace the genesis and evolution of two desecularization regimes. Indicatively in 1988 (the year of the Millennium of Rus’ adoption of Christianity and the year of the beginning of real changes within Soviet religious politics) 56% of the religious organizations of Ukraine were centered in 7 western oblasts, compared to: Donbas, which had less than 5%; Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhya which had both 2% and so on. However, when destroyed ecclesiastical structures had the opportunity to revive their natural scale, believers started to create religious communities not in “churchless” regions, but in Western regions already quite saturated enough with religious institutions (and even oversaturated according to Soviet standards). Special importance in this respect had the dynamic of religio-institutional growth between 1988 and 1991; years when such a growth had an entirely “popular” character and were fulfilled mostly by the means of local parishioners and activists without any governmental assistance. Within these years the number of religious communities in the Lviv oblast increased by 11.3%, in Zakarpattia – by 10.7%, in Ternopil’ by 9.5%, while in Zaporizhzhya – by 0.8%, in Luhansk and Dnipropetrovsk oblast – by 1.6% and 1.2% respectively.

Again, at the turn of the 1990s there were “ordinary Ukrainians” and nobody else who presented themselves as a chief agent of desecularization. However, “little Ukrainians” had strongly pronounced religious needs in some Ukrainian regions and feebly marked religious desires in others. In the middle of the 1990s 40% of all religious organizations in Ukraine were still centered in the Lviv, Ternopil, Zakarpattia, and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts.

V.

Nevertheless, beginning with the second half of the 1990s, the situation has begun to even out. In 1998 western Ukraine, already awash with religious institutions, was responsible for 13% of the general growth in religious communities in Ukraine, while Donbas and Dnipropetrovsk contributed 14.5%. Such a remarkable change was essentially rooted not in the growing piousness of “easterners” and their aspirations toward greater religious participation, though. A new class of *desecularists* advanced on the Ukrainian stage. In the first years after the proclamation of Ukrainian independence the exclusive license for religious issues used to be in the hands of Ukrainian nationalists. The Soviet Ukraine’s *nomenclature* had unconditionally yielded the realm of culture and religion to their temporary allies in exchange for freedom of action in the sphere of misappropriation and reallocation of state-owned

property. However, gradually religion gained a new status as a political resource and the Churches became particularly attractive for persons and groups striving to acquire or preserve positions of power. Consequently, Orthodox issues turned out to be in the center of sharp political debate within the Ukrainian polity, and the entire spectrum of parties and political leaders had to articulate their own religious policy.

The elites of South-Eastern Ukraine began to take religion seriously and to consider Orthodoxy (understandably, “canonical Orthodoxy,” that is under the auspice of the Moscow patriarchate) as a core of the regional identity forging. This identity in a tangled manner has merged elements of “all-Russian,” Soviet, “Cossack” and local identities and avoided embarrassing issues for South-Eastern elites from Ukrainian nationalists’ discourse. These very elites championed desecularization with a subitaneous enthusiasm. They founded churches, theological schools and influenced the Church’s manpower policy (it is meaningful that among eight bishops of UOC MP who were born in Donbas seven obtained archpriest ordination within the last seven years). In 2004, during the first rise of Viktor Yanukovich as a prime-minister, the *Svyatogorsky* monastery was elevated to the rank of *Lavra*. It was the first such elevation since 1833 and the relatively poorly known *Svyatogorsky* monastery was to become the fifth *Lavra* ever in the whole ROC’s history. Governmental press-service specifically emphasizes in this connection that Viktor Yanukovich initiated the restoration of *Svyatogorsky* monastery and personally headed the board of trustees. Press-service publicized the then prime-minister’s efforts at reviving religious life in Donbas, informing that under his leadership during the period 1996–2002 sixty three churches were built and thirty five restored.⁴ The Donbas elite conceived *Svyatogorska Lavra* as a spiritual backbone of the region and a powerful symbol of its historical self-sufficiency. Not accidentally Viktor Yanukovich stressed that in obtaining its “own *Lavra*” as honorable as both those in Kyiv and Pochaiv, Donbas manifested not only its industrial superiority but its spiritual and cultural strength. The celebration of the *Svyatogorska Lavra*’s new status fell at the very height of the 2004 presidential campaign and was accompanied by numerous billboards with the image of the *Lavra* and the slogan “With Donbas in one’s heart.”⁵

As a matter of fact not the people, but several wealthy and influential persons created the whole of the Church’s infrastructure in Donbas. It was exactly the end of 1990s when they actively started church-building in the region. Whereas in 1992–1997 twenty one churches were built, in 1998 thirteen churches alone were erected and in 1999 – forty three. The most colorful among the church builders in Donbas was the coal tycoon and member of the richest Ukrainians’ top-ten club, the billionaire Viktor Nusenkis. He established fifty Orthodox communities in enterprises of his concern “*Energo*” and founded there thirty five churches

⁴ Віктор Янукович відвідав Свято-Успенську Святогірську лавру (2004) Прес-служба Кабінету Міністрів України on http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=7627635

⁵ Самойленко Світлана. Як Святогорський монастир став Лаврою, http://infocorn.org.ua/materials/articles/Як_Svyatogorskiy_monastir_stav_Lavroyu/43954

and fifteen prayer rooms. Over the course of twenty years the concern “*Energo*” has built altogether in Ukraine and Russia 650 churches (Бессмертный 2011). Nusenkis introduced in some of his enterprises compulsory liturgy services, tried to control policy of the UOC MP leadership and in the summer of 2011 even tried unsuccessfully to remove the Primate of UOC MP from his Kyiv Metropolitan seat. (Высоцкий 2011, Скоропадский 2011).

VI.

Thereby, the first and extremely important difference between desecularization from below and from above concerns the mode of revival, development and support of religious infrastructure. In the former case there was predominantly popular participation, while in the latter a decisive role has been played by political and business elites. Contrary to the East and South of the country laymen and laywomen in Galychyna, Zakarpattia, Bukovyna and Volyn’ maintain intense links with their communities and have a strong sense of responsibility for keeping parishes in decent condition; there exists a stable and in places inviolable tradition of house-to-house collecting funds for Church support and fundraising campaigns on the occasion of feasts. These norms legitimated by Church decrees are especially clearly defined in the documents of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC).

In the East and South people have an incomparably weaker sense of affiliation with a specific religious community; a declaration of belonging to a Church does not mean for them belonging to a concrete parish and a responsibility for its well-being. (See Tab. 1–2). That is why the attempts of churchmen and/or the authorities to make “ordinary people” responsible for church buildings caused protests and resistance in Donbas.⁶

Tab. 1. Do you support the Church financially? (%)*

	West	Center	South	East
Yes, on a regular basis	28.5	4.2	5.2	3.7
Yes, occasionally	41.7	24.5	29.4	29.2
Never	6.9	37.6	36.9	36.5
I make a donation during the most respected Holidays and pay for sacraments, rituals, and services of need	22.6	33.6	28.1	30.4
No answer	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2

* Hereinafter in Razumkov survey, the regional division of Ukraine is as follows: the West: Volyn, Transcarpathian, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsi regions, the South: Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Odesa, Kherson, Mykolayiv regions, the East: Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zaporizhyya, Luhansk, Kharkiv regions, the Centre: city of Kyiv, Vinnytsya, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernigiv regions.

Source: Survey of the Razumkov Center (Kyiv) conducted in March 2013 (hereafter – Razumkov 2013)

⁶ See, for instance, about the protest of miners in the town of Dimyetrov in Donetsk oblast against appeal of mine administration to transfer miners daily wage for construction of local church – В Донецкой области людей заставляют жертвовать на храм МП – депутат, on <http://podrobnosti.ua/society/2011/06/16/775814.html>

Tab. 2. Do you support the Church financially? (%)

	UOC-MP	UOC-KP	UGCC
Yes, on a regular basis	13.8	13.2	28.1
Yes, occasionally	38.4	35.3	42.1
Never	13.3	19.7	5.3
I make a donation during the most respected Feasts and pay for sacraments, rituals, and services of need	34.5	31.5	24.6
No answer	0.0	0.3	0.0

Source: Razumkov 2013

Responsibility for one’s “own”/“home”/“native” Church and active religious participation in the case of desecularization from below leads to much more higher Church confidence and estimation of the societal role of religious organizations in comparison with desecularization from above (See Tab. 3–5).

Tab. 3. Trust in the Church (%)

	West	Center	South	East
Rather trust more than not	43.9	44.2	44.4	35.4
Rather don’t trust	7.7	16.5	16.3	15.3
Entirely distrust	2.3	7.9	6.9	23.7
Hard to say	7.2	10.1	12.5	10.9

Source: Razumkov 2013

Tab. 4. Societal role of the Church

	West	Center	South	East
The Church plays a positive role	74.8	42.5	61.3	38.8
The Church doesn’t play a noticeable role	16.0	42.1	26.9	41.3
The Church plays a negative role	1.3	3.9	4.3	6.4
Other	1.3	2.8	0.7	0.6
Hard to say	6.6	8.8	6.9	12.8

Source: Razumkov 2013

Tab. 5. Societal role of the Church

	UOC MP	UOC KP	UGCC
The Church doesn’t play a noticeable role	29.6	25.2	11.5
The Church plays a negative role	1.8	1.4	0.0
Hard to say	2.8	4.9	5.3

Source: Razumkov 2013

Similarly, in the case of desecularization from below people perceive the Church to a considerable extent as a guardian of the poor and disadvantaged while in the case of desecularization from above – very often as an apologist of the wealthy and authority.

Secondly, desecularization from below leads to an intensive revival of religious practice, whereas in the case of the desecularization from above the impressive growth in the number of religious establishments does not reflect itself in adequate changes in the sphere of religious behavior (See Tab. 6).

Tab. 6. The growth of religious establishments and church attendance in regions

Region (oblast)	Growth of religious organizations 1988–2013 (times)	Church attendance (weekly and more often than weekly, %)
Lvivs'ka	4.7	49.4
Ivano-Frankivs'ka	4	40
Zakarpats'ka	29	39.4
Ternopils'ka	3.3	36.1
Chernivets'ka	3.2	27.3
Khmelnits'ka	8.1	20
Volyns'ka	5.8	19.5
Ryvniens'ka	3.6	16.5
Zchytomirs'ka	6.4	16
Chernihivs'ka	6.2	9
Odes'ka	7.3	7.6
Kyivs'ka	9	7
Crimea	35.8	5.1
Kyiv	58	5
Poltavs'ka	14.6	5
Zaporizchs'ka	20.1	4.9
Sums'ka	5.6	4.5
Vinnits'ka	4.9	4.7
Cherkas'ka	8.7	4
Dnepropetrovsk's'ka	19.7	3.8
Mykolaivs'ka	10.8	3
Donets'ka	10.2	2.5
Kharkyvs'ka	6.9	2.5
Khersons'ka	15.7	2.1
Luhans'ka	9.2	1.7
Kirovograds'ka	8.6	1.6

Source: "Region, Nation, and Beyond Survey" conducted in 2013 within the project "Region, Nation and Beyond. A Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Reconceptualization of Ukraine"; State Statistics (Statistics presented by the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the Council of Ministers of UkrSSR [1988–1991]; The Council for Religious Affairs attached to the Council of Ministers of Ukraine [1992–1994]; The Ukrainian Ministry for Nationalities, Migrations and Cult Affairs [1995]; The Ukrainian State Committee for Religious Affairs [1996–2004]; The Ministry of Justice [2005]; The Ukrainian State Committee for Nationalities and Religious Affairs [2006–2010]; The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture [2011–2013])

Thirdly, the growing presence of religion in the public sphere and the rise of religious self-declaration have no sizeable impact on demography or moral characteristics. Regional differences in this sphere are very substantial and the reverse correlations between intensity of religious practices and “problematic behaviour” are pronounced. In 1999, for example, Sevastopol had by far the highest number of abortions; Luhansk region, second; Zaporizhyya, third; Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk and Rivne, last, second to last, and third to last, respectively. In 2007 the number of HIV cases per 100,000 people in Transcarpathia was 3.5; in Ivano-Frankivsk, 7; in the Chernivtsi Oblast, 7.4; in the Dnipropetrovsk region, 78.2; in the Donetsk region, 82.7; in Kherson, 96.6. There is roughly the same disproportion in suicide (Домбровська et al. 2007, s. 12–13), AIDS cases, the number of convicted criminals⁷ etc.

VII.

Vyacheslav Karpov predicts that desecularization from above in Russia would lead to a decline in piety and to a noticeable exodus of youngsters, well-educated groups and the intelligentsia from the ROC MP. He wrote that it is likely to gradually gain traction among less educated and less prosperous groups, who will perceive official religions as part of the establishment that disadvantages them socio-economically. Thus, grounds will be gradually emerging for a more massive anti-clerical, secularist backlash (Karpov 2013).

In Ukraine two distinctive models of desecularization with an expressive regional character would have to reinforce regional differences and frustrate the consolidation of nation. However, some factors do prevent the escalation of such a scenario.

Firstly, West Ukraine and Donbas represent two poles, two extremes, ideal type of desecularization. Between these poles Central Ukraine extends where two models of desecularization – from above and from below – merge with each other. Furthermore, even desecularization in Donbas is not a sort of “distilled” desecularization from above. There is also desecularization from below promoted by Evangelical Protestants (note that 43% of all religious organizations in the Donetsk oblast are created by Evangelical Protestants compared to 48% created by Orthodox believers of all jurisdictions, including the Old Believers and ROC abroad).

Secondly, the main actors of the Ukrainian religious stage have exclusively all-Ukrainian but not regional aspirations, despite the fact that more than half of UOC KP parishes are located in Galychyna, Volyn’ and Podoliia, and 80% of all UGCC parishes are located in Galychyna and another 11% in Zakarpattya where Greek-Catholics are not subordinated to the Major Archbishop of Kyiv and Galych. The Primate of UOC KP restlessly insists that his Church is an All-Ukrainian entity which stands up for national unity and integrity and as a real national Church is backed by millions of Ukrainians. Patriarch Filaret is inspired by the fact that all opinion polls

⁷ Статистичний збірник «Регіони України 2009» (2009, p. 340).

show a small margin between the adherents of UOC MP and UOC KP. In this regard, it is indicative that 18.8% of those surveyed in the *Region, Nation, and Beyond Survey* declare that they belong to the UOC KP, while 22.3% declare they belong to the UOC MP. This result contrasts sharply with the resources of these two institutions: while the UOC MP has 2.7 times more the number of institutional establishments than the UOC KP has, it has only 3% more faithful as its main competitor. For insiders acquainted with the realities of Ukrainian religious life there is only one explanation for these results: when a person declares that he or she belongs to the Kyiv and not to the Moscow Patriarchate, this statement is understood as a declaration of his or her national identity and, if you want, as a loyalty to Ukrainian statehood. Next is that a sizeable portion of the Church's public are not consistently practicing believers and do not attach much importance to the jurisdiction of the churches they occasionally attend. Additionally, what should be taken into consideration is that one third of all Orthodox faithful in Ukraine (22% of all respondents questioned within the *Region, Nation, and Beyond Survey*) define themselves as "just Orthodox," who do not belong to a specified Church jurisdiction. Two thirds of all "just Orthodox" attend churches only during the most esteemed Feasts, another 10% – once a year.

Not surprisingly that UGCC also has all-Ukrainian inspirations. The primate of UGCC in 2000–2011, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, uncompromisingly upheld the all-Ukrainian vision of his Church and his successor, Svyatoslav Shevchuk, confirms this position. On the eve of the symbolic and centuries-awaited moving of the UGCC's Archiepiscopal See from Lviv to the Ukrainian capital (August 2005), Lubomyr Husar underscored: "We are not a provincial Church somewhere on the edge of Ukraine where they wanted to push us out. We are one of the four branches of the Kyiv Church – an all-Ukrainian [Church], [Church] of the whole [Ukrainian] nation" (Гузар 2011). UGCC offers to other "branches" a model of the future that may seem fantastic. This model implies the unified national Ukrainian Church that will rise with the communion of the Churches of the Kyivan tradition, which considers itself and each other to be the heiresses of Holy Volodymyr's Baptism. Every confessional branch of the unified Kyivan Church, would not interrupt its confessional connections blessed by time with their historical ecclesiastical centers. In brief, a unified Kyivan Church would be in communion with Rome and Constantinople (Гузар 2004), that is it would become a pioneer of an extremely ambitious ecumenical project.

At the same time UGCC urges Ukrainians to develop a Ukrainian world – both within Ukraine as well as outside its borders. "We build our national-cultural space when we counteract any attempts to assimilate us; when we help our countrymen in their every need; when we cultivate our own national consciousness, culture and language; when we honor our cultural and religious traditions. This is how we give real, contemporary substance to the concept of Ukrainian statehood and Ukrainian patriotism."⁸

⁸ A Letter of Greeting from His Beatitude Sviatoslav to the faithful of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church on the 21st anniversary of Ukraine's Independence, on <http://www.ugcc.org.ua/2454.0.html?&L=2>

VIII.

The appeal of the Major Archbishop Svyatoslav to develop a Ukrainian world obviously became a response to Russian World Doctrine and provoked a painful reaction and frantic discussions in Ukraine.

Tab. 7. In your opinion the “Russian World” doctrine aims at (% of those who have heard about this doctrine)

	UOC MP	UOC KP	UGCC
Spiritual unity of fraternal Russian, Ukrainian and Belarus people	70.9	20.0	2.5
Restoration of Russian Imperia	15.1	69.5	95.0
Hard to say	14.0	10.0	2.5

Source: Razumkov 2013

The responses of Ukrainian Churches to the “Russian World”⁹ doctrine are quite significant for analyses of the role of the religious factor in Ukrainian nation-making. The understanding that the “All-Russian” (*obscherusskyi*) and Ukrainian nation-building projects would be nothing but competitive projects was realized by Russian intellectuals as long ago as in the second half of the 19th century (Miller 2003, p. 249f.). Accordingly, the concept of the “Russian World,” “imagined community” based on Russian language, culture and Orthodoxy¹⁰ categorically denied the very foundation of a Ukrainian nation-building project. During his 2009 visit to Ukraine the Patriarch persistently called on Ukrainians to reexamine their historical choice.¹¹

If the negative attitude of the UOC KP and UGCC toward the Russian World doctrine was entirely predictable (see Tab. 7), the UOC MP stance requires a special mention. The last five years saw the emergence of new ideas and new accents in the public rhetoric of the primate of UOC MP. At a council in Moscow, the metropolitan Volodymyr cited Samuel Huntington and argued that “Ukraine is a divided country

⁹ Russian political consultants Shchedrovitskyi and Ostrovskyi claimed that they have coined the very term ‘Russian World’ around 1998 (Pavlov, Shir Khan. ‘Russian World: history and History’, on http://www.archipelag.ru/ru_mir/history/histori2004/shirhan-russmir/). Postulation of the existing ‘Russian World’ they used as a core idea for their concept of Russian Federation politics toward post-Soviet countries. In any case, in 2001 President Putin stated that “[...] [T]he notion of ‘Russian World’ from time immemorial has transcended Russian geographical borders and even more, transcended the boundaries of the Russian ethnos.” – Address to fellow countrymen. October 11, 2001. <http://2004.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2001/10/28660.shtml>

¹⁰ Opening address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to 3rd Assembly of the Russian World, on <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1496028.html>

¹¹ See the speech of Patriarch Kirill on the “Inter” TV channel. July 28, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSWAeCAi-jk>

with two different cultures.”¹² The metropolitan also stressed that his Church did not claim the right to determine the civilizational choice of Ukraine, and admitted that the schism was caused not only by politicians and insidious “schismatic leaders,” but also by the social and cultural division of the country. The metropolitan patronizes the UOC MP intellectuals who develop a historiosophical vision of a special destiny of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, believing that it is rooted in a different theological, cultural or even civilization tradition, than that of Russian Orthodoxy.¹³

IX.

Finally, despite an evident linkage between religious groups and the regions of their dominance it is religion itself that has been considered by the Ukrainian ruling class as a powerful tie for national unifying and consolidation. For the modern Ukrainian elites, religion should play a much more central role in the post-communist nation-building efforts than used to play in earlier phases of Ukrainian nation building. Against the background of an undeveloped party system and weak trade unions, the Church exists as a deeply stratified structure, a proven system of communication one well adjusted over the centuries, possessing the means of transplanting quite sophisticated ideas into the fabric of ordinary consciousness. These features make the Church exceptionally attractive for persons and groups striving to acquire or preserve positions of power. The representatives of the post-communist elite view the Church as a means of political or ethnic mobilization, as an instrument through which to legitimate their regime or to transmit certain ideas. The elite finds itself in the constant process of searching for the sort of reliable ties able to fasten the unstable construction of the newly formed State.

Ukrainian regionalism and confessionalism were decisive factors that made the founding fathers of Ukrainian nationalism indifferent and even hostile toward religion during the early stages of nation building. However, at the end of 20th and the beginning of 21st centuries Ukrainian elites demonstrate quite a different approach toward religion and religious institutions. The collapse of the “great ideologies” of 19th–20th centuries and the globalization that leads to a global resurgence of religion and a global struggle for authenticity has returned religion to the place from where the “-isms” of the past strove to oust it (Thomas 2003, p. 22). Ukrainian presidents do not state any longer as Hrushevs’kyi did: “*We’ll do without clerics*”, and demonstrate their piety before TV-cameras. Not only officials, politicians and public figures, but also stars from the worlds of pop music and sport who are very popular among young

¹² The Ukrainian Orthodox Church on the Border of Epochs: Challenges of Modernity, Trends of Development. Report of His Beatitude Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine Volodymyr on the Bishop Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow, June 2008). http://orthodox.org.ua/uk/slovo_do_chitachiv/2008/06/25/3165.html

¹³ Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine, Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Volodymyr. Memory of New Jerusalem and Kyiv Tradition. (Opening word at the 9th International Митрополит Київський Dormition [of Virgin Mary] Assembly ‘Memory and Hope: Horizon and Paths of Awareness’. <http://orthodox.org.ua/uk/node/5692>

people will emphasize that they belong to a church. There are no prominent public figures in Ukrainian politics or culture that openly manifest religious skepticism (not to mention atheism). All of the presidents of Ukraine, prime ministers, and top officials fund churches and readily turn to religious symbols in their rhetoric. The religious factor has played a part, often a prominent part, in every single election campaign.

At the same time, religious diversity, inter-Churches rivalry and strong regional differences in religious preferences have not turned into a ruinous factor for Ukrainian nation building. On the contrary, "the most pluralistic and competitive religious market in all East Europe" finally entailed a sort of equilibrium between the main centers of religious power which has caused, in its turn, relatively high standards in the sphere of religious freedom (Casanova 1996, p. 38). These power centers that function as rivals, addressing their own sector of public opinion and their own corresponding circles of political elite, were able to achieve two important things though. First of all, they laid down the common agenda for central authorities and organized themselves to counteract state pressure. Secondly, competition demands religious actors to contest for people and to display sensitivity not only in the spiritual, but also in political and social realms as well. They have put forward valuable civil initiatives, stand for political freedom and justice for all, have loudly expressed their support for political prisoners, and asked for the release on bail of the convicted ex-Prime-Minister Julia Timoshenko. Nobody among the main religious actors casts doubt on the Ukrainian choice of 1991 and to the point whereby even the leadership of UOC MP did not support the Kivalov-Kolesnichenko 2012 law directed towards the annihilation of the Ukrainian language.¹⁴

Ukrainian Churches and religious organizations have played a significant role on the Ukrainian EuroMaidan during the winter of 2013/2014. At the very beginning of the crisis the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and religious organizations condemned the brutal force used against civilians, as witnessed at Kyiv's Independence Square on November 30, 2013. Many thousands meeting on Maidan were accompanied by Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant priests (some days up to 150 members of the clergy of different faiths) and every Sunday the rally on Maidan was started with an Ecumenical Service. Dozens of clergymen were with their faithful during the assault on the night of December 10th to 11th, and on the barricades, and during the most dangerous and tragic days of late February. They felt that the people needed much more now than in normal times; they were willing to stand between the protesters and the riot police, to serve, to profess, and to comfort people in the bitter cold and among the flames. Prayer and worship on Maidan was the creation of a sublime spiritual space, which not only united and elevated those who were present, but also legitimized Maidan as a mature and integrated community of moral and highly responsible people.

¹⁴ See, among others, the appeal by members of civil society to President Yanukovich and the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Volodymyr Lytvyn (2012), *'The Kivalov-Kolesnichenko Language Bill must not be signed into law!'*, <http://www.khpg.org/index.php?id=1341602399>

Hierarchs appraised protests as the Revolution of Dignity (Archbishop Svyatoslav) and as the confrontation between the government and the people but not as a civil conflict (Patriarch Filaret). During those days the Ukrainian religious environment came out with at least two unprecedented actions. The first, after the assault on Maidan's protesters on December 10th–11th, the community of the Ukrainian Catholic University called for civil disobedience against the president and his government and proclaimed that after that night to follow the orders of the government would be opposing the human conscience.

The second, after the shooting of protesters on February 20th, 2014 the Holy Synod of the Kyiv Patriarchate voted to suspend commemoration of the President and civil authorities of Ukraine during services resulting from their use of firearms against the people whom they had sworn to serve and protect.

Hereby, the key issue concerning the role of religion in the current stage of Ukrainian nation building is not a consolidation of the forging of nation on the basis of common faith, customs and symbols. What seems to be really decisive is the ability of religious actors, regardless of confession, denomination and region, to move in forefront of the "crusade of values." In this case the religious factor might be really crucial for the Ukrainian future.

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Abstract

It is a sort of truism in the sociology of religion that since the late 1970s the world has been witnessing the great return of religions, and religion has emerged as a key variable in understanding modern societies. After Peter Berger's groundbreaking "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview" (1999), the notion of desecularization has gradually displaced secularization theory from papers describing global religious trends and the interweaving of religion and politics. Yet, while there is little doubt that religion has indeed resurged and the conception of desecularization is possible to live with, not much has been done to reveal the ways desecularization changes domestic politics, the ethno-social, identity forging etc. processes. This article explains why and how religion that was not considered by the forerunners of Ukrainian nationalism as the "Ukrainian navel" (borrowing from Ernst Gellner's metaphor), has been resurrected as a powerful component of the post-Soviet stage of Ukrainian nation-building.

Key words: desecularization, nation-building, nationalism