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UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE: FROM THE REVOLUTION OF DIGNITY TO THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR (2014–2022)

Abstract. *Ukrainian churches have long played a unifying and state-building role. However, today the religious factor is often used as a destabilizing element within the state. The article highlights and analyzes the main stages of strategic initiatives of the leaders of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) from 2014 (the Revolution of Dignity) to 2022 (the beginning of a full-scale Russian invasion). The article also examines the activities of the clergy and religious communities of the UOC-MP during this period. The study aims to explore the impact of the UOC-MP's actions on Ukrainian society, particularly their role in shaping political and social discourse amid the ongoing crisis. It also investigates how the relationship between the UOC-MP and state authorities evolved during the examined period, considering the broader context of geopolitical tensions and internal societal divisions. The conclusions highlight that while the UOC-MP has historically served as a spiritual and cultural institution for many Ukrainians, its association with Russian political and ideological narratives during critical moments of Ukraine's recent history has significantly undermined its role as a unifying force. Instead, its actions have often aligned with destabilizing efforts, leading to growing mistrust and calls for greater regulation of religious organizations perceived as influenced by foreign powers. This dynamic reflects the broader challenges of balancing religious freedom with national security in a time of war today.*

Key words: *Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Religious communities, Russian-Ukrainian war, Tomos, Ukraine, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.*

УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦЕРКВА МОСКОВСЬКОГО ПАТРІАРХАТУ: ВІД РЕВОЛЮЦІЇ ГІДНОСТІ ДО РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ (2014–2022)

Анотація. *Українські церкви історично виконували об'єднавчу та державотворчу роль, сприяючи формуванню національної ідентичності та підтримуючи духовні основи суспільства. Однак сьогодні релігійний фактор часто використовується як дестабілізуючий елемент у державі. Метою пропонованого дослідження є аналіз діяльності духовенства та релігійних громад УПЦ МП упродовж 2014–2022 рр. Методологія дослідження ґрунтується на використанні міждисциплінарного підходу, що поєднує історичний, соціологічний та політологічний аналіз. Використано метод контент-аналізу офіційних заяв УПЦ МП, медійних публікацій тощо. Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у комплексному аналізі стратегічних ініціатив УПЦ МП в умовах соціально-політичної кризи та відкритої російсько-української війни. Вперше зроблено спробу систематизації подій, що відображають зміну позиції УПЦ МП у контексті її впливу на національну безпеку та єдність українського суспільства. Також досліджено вплив зовнішніх факторів, зокрема російської пропаганди, на діяльність УПЦ МП та її роль у внутрішньодержавних процесах. У висновках зазначається, що, хоча УПЦ МП історично виконувала функцію духовної та культурної інституції для багатьох українців, її асоціація з російськими політичними та ідеологічними наративами в період новітньої історії України значно підірвала її роль як об'єднавчої сили. Натомість дії духовенства УПЦ МП часто співпадали з дестабілізуючими подіями, що призвело до зростання недовіри та закликів до посилення регулювання діяльності релі-*

гійних організацій, які сприймаються як такі, що зазнають впливу з боку іноземних сил. Ця ситуація демонструє складні виклики, пов'язані зі збереженням релігійної свободи та забезпеченням національної безпеки в умовах війни, яка триває сьогодні.

Ключові слова: Православна Церква України, Українська Православна Церква Московського Патріархату, релігійні громади, російсько-українська війна, томос, Україна.

Problem Statement. The modern policy of Ukraine regarding religion and the church has a significant impact on the democratization of church and religious life. This policy contributes to the sustainable dynamic development of the network of religious organizations, providing them with the necessary conditions for functioning and growth. In addition, it promotes the confessional diversity of the religious environment, taking into account the ethno-confessional and cultural needs of the Ukrainian people. With the help of such a policy, Ukraine creates conditions for the diversity of religious beliefs and practices, promoting freedom of choice. After the declaration of independence and the beginning of democratic transformations, the role of the church and religion acquired fundamentally new features for the entire history of the existence of Christianity on the territory of Ukraine. The most significant steps taken by the authorities of independent Ukraine were the recognition of the church as a significant institution of society at the legislative level.

Therefore, after gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine became one of the few post-communist states where real democracy in the religious sphere was implemented, a model of a multi-confessional society with liberal legislation was created, and the concept of a «state church» was absent. The high level of religious freedom, as well as the presence of the «Soviet past» contributed to the emergence of a pro-Russian religious factor, which became the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP).

During the full-scale aggression of Russia, the issue of the presence of the UOC-MP in the Ukrainian religious space became acute. In connection with the deep integration of religion in the Russian Federation into the state apparatus, the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in Ukraine require special attention. Taking into account all that the Russian Federation has committed and continues to commit in an unprovoked war, quite expected radical attitudes towards the UOC-MP are spreading in society, which indicate the desire of Ukrainians to ban the activities of this religious organization.

The UOC-MP became the object of mass public discontent precisely because of its anti-Ukrainian activities, which, with the beginning of the full-scale invasion, went beyond the spheres of religious and psychological influence. Press coverage of the facts of the spiritual support of the so-called mercenaries. «Donecka Narodna Respublika» («DPR», Donetsk People's Republic) and «Luhanska Narodna Respublika» («LPR», Luhansk People's Republic), attempts to disrupt mobilization, calls for unity with the aggressor and other manifestations of anti-people and anti-state activities are becoming increasingly unacceptable in the current conditions of Ukrainian society.

The aim of the proposed study is to analyze the activities of the clergy and religious communities of the UOC-MP during 2014–2022.

1. UOC-MP: A Tool of Russian Geopolitical Strategy

In the context of the nationwide religious revival in Ukraine during the late 1980s and early 1990s, several significant developments shaped the religious landscape. One of the pivotal events was the reemergence of the UGCC from the underground in 1989. This Church had been liquidated within the territory of the USSR by the decision of the Lviv Council in 1946. Additionally, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) was established, and a split occurred within the UOC-MP (formerly known as the Ukrainian Exarchate of the ROC) leading to the formation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church by Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) and the UOC-MP. Consequently, three branches of Orthodoxy were established in Ukraine at the beginning of the 1990s. Scientists emphasize that due

to the division of Orthodoxy in Ukraine, the Russian model of «symphony» between the government and the church could not be established [1, p. 5–11].

During the early 2000s, the Russian leadership and the ROC began paying close attention to the events of the Orange Revolution in 2004. In this period, the clergy and followers of the UOC-MP aligned themselves with the pro-Russian forces, particularly supporting Viktor Yanukovich, who had strong ties with this church. On the other hand, other branches of Orthodoxy such as the UOC-KP and UAOC, as well as the UGCC, sympathized with the opposition led by Viktor Yushchenko. This led to the politicization of religion and the fusion of politics and religious symbolism in Ukraine, which became more evident during the presidential elections in 2010. While Viktor Yushchenko, after his victory in the Orange Revolution and the presidential elections, symbolically supported the UOC-KP and initiated the process of granting autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church, Viktor Yanukovich's rise to power in 2010 marked a shift. The pro-Russian forces and oligarchic structures openly began to support the UOC-MP in their relations with the state [2; 3].

The President made regular visits to the UOC-MP and allocated funds from the state treasury for the restoration and construction of churches. Surprisingly, even in Western Ukraine, the UOC-MP received implicit support from the state, including the return of confiscated temples, subsidies, and the allocation of budget funds through illicit financial schemes. The president's inauguration in 2010 coincided with the visit of Patriarch Kirill of the ROC, who led a celebratory prayer. The patriarch visited Ukraine twice more that year, demonstrating his growing interest in the country. In 2011, the patriarch displayed even greater engagement by personally visiting the parishes of the UOC-MP on seven occasions. During his visits, Donetsk held a significant place as one of the locations where the Patriarch stayed. He not only emphasized the region's importance for the ROC but also referred to the local diocese as nothing less than the «diocese of the ROC» [4].

The significant influence of the ROC in Ukraine, which faced resistance primarily from national-radical forces, provided a basis for asserting that the concept of the «Russian world» had already gained substantial prominence in the country's socio-political life by the time of the 1025th anniversary of the baptism of Russia in 2013. This phenomenon drew Ukraine into the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. This proactive engagement, characterized as a «multi-vector intervention» spanning religious, educational, linguistic, and cultural domains, garnered increasing attention. It became evident that the religious practices of the UOC-MP were largely disconnected from the spiritual values of Ukrainians [5, p. 41–42]. This disconnect served as a significant catalyst for separatist ideas, particularly in the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine, where the UOC-MP had a concentrated presence. Supporting evidence was found in liturgical books that contained elements of subservience to the ruler (tsar), a portrayal of «Ukrainian inferiority», a «guilt complex», and so on. Ukraine was referred to as ancient Russia, and the princes of Kyiv were labeled as «Russian tsars», while the population of «ancient Kyiv» was described as the «Russian people». Consequently, all these factors contributed to the far-reaching geopolitical ambitions of the Russian leadership [6; 7].

It is worth noting that, despite the real threat posed by the ROC to Ukraine's national security, it did not receive significant attention from Ukrainian politicians for a considerable period of time. Within the religious sphere of the country, the focus of authorities was primarily on the «Orthodox split» between the UOC-MP, UOC-KP, and UAOC, rather than on the ROC. Concerns were more directed towards «non-traditional» and «new» religions, even though these religions did not have deep cultural and mental roots within Ukrainian society. It was believed that these religions represented a potential danger due to their potentially destructive influence on the consciousness and behavioral norms of Ukrainian believers. Surprisingly, neither the officials of the Security Service of Ukraine nor the current authorities emphasized the threat posed by Moscow Orthodoxy in Ukraine to the country's sovereignty and national revival. They also disregarded the warnings issued by Ukrainian religious

scholars who talked about this danger. As a result, the blow came from the East and from the territory of the annexed Crimea, rather than from the West where «new religious cults» were more prevalent [8, p. 248–250].

The true stance of the UOC-MP was revealed during the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict starting from 2014, which encompassed the Revolution of Dignity and the annexation of Crimea and eastern regions of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Clergy members of the UOC-MP were implicated in various actions that undermined Ukraine's interests and aligned with Russia. These actions included advocating for betrayal of Ukraine and joining Russia, offering blessings to Russian weaponry aimed at Ukraine, cooperating with the Russian Armed Forces, labeling the Russian-Ukrainian conflict as a civil war in Ukraine, consecrating monuments honoring occupiers, endorsing leaders of terrorist organizations such as DNR and LNR, engaging in espionage on behalf of these organizations and Russia, cursing the Ukrainian government and obstructing military mobilization efforts, denying the presence of Russian troops in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO, until 2018 – Operation of the United Forces) zone, prioritizing the interests of the Russian Federation and the ROC over Ukrainian interests, and refusing to honor Ukrainian heroes who lost their lives in the ATO in the east of Ukraine [9–12].

In the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine since 2014, the UOC-MP did not distance itself from the position of the Moscow Patriarchate, thereby creating the risk of utilizing its network to promote the aggressor's ideology. In an interview, Metropolitan Onufrii of the UOC-MP referred to the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine as a civil and fratricidal conflict [13]. However, he did not mention a single word about the fratricidal war between one Orthodox nation (Russians) and another (Ukrainians), the annexation of Crimea, or condemn Vladimir Putin's aggressive policies. Similar statements were made by Bishop Pavlo (Lebid), the vicar of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. He claimed that the 1954 annexation of Crimea to Ukraine was «illegal» and denied its Ukrainian status. When asked about the parties involved in the conflict in Donbas, Bishop Pavlo stated that it was unclear who was fighting and with whom. He further emphasized that there is no Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine, only the ROC [14].

During the Revolution of Dignity and the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), it is evident that the hierarchy and a significant portion of the clergy within the UOC-MP did not lend their support to the Ukrainian state and society, which were striving for transformative changes and a European path of development. While many religious denominations in Ukraine played a role in fostering a civil society with a pro-European outlook, supporting the participants of the Revolution of Dignity and the Ukrainian military in the ATO zone, the UOC-MP predominantly aligned itself with the Russian Federation and the concept of the «Russian world».

2. Development of Ukrainian Orthodoxy during 2018–2021.

Under the influence of Russian aggression against Ukraine and the ongoing unconventional war since 2014, the domestic political landscape has experienced significant changes, prompting a reevaluation of the religious community's stance on these events. The hybrid warfare tactics employed by Russia have demonstrated the extensive array of methods being used against Ukraine. A key instrument in Russia's humanitarian intervention is the exploitation of religious and ecclesiastical factors. Through the UOC-MP, the Kremlin actively manipulates the perceptions of millions of Ukrainians, seeking to propagate the ideology of the «Russian world», undermine the movement for autocephaly in Ukraine, foster tensions within inter-Orthodox relations, and attempt to appropriate Ukraine's national history.

In 2018, the process of establishing a unified autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) received support from the Ecumenical (Constantinople) Patriarchate. This significant development followed President Petro Poroshenko's visit to Istanbul on April 9, 2018, during which he held

discussions with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and members of the Holy Synod. On April 17, 2018, President Poroshenko officially requested the Ecumenical Patriarch to grant autocephaly to OCU. The Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate made the decision to grant the Tomos of autocephaly to the OCU on October 11, 2018. This decision also entailed revoking the legal validity of the synodal letter of 1686 and restoring the institution of *stauropygy* [15].

The position of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew played a significant role in this discussion, which he repeatedly expressed in his speeches and statements. He emphasized his constant concern and interest in resolving the Ukrainian church issue and restoring unity among the divided church bodies in Ukraine. On July 1, 2018, during a speech commemorating the 40th day since the passing of Metropolitan Petros Evangelos, the Ecumenical Patriarch made this declaration in the Throne Room of his residence [16].

Metropolitan Emmanuel of Gaul, speaking at the celebrations marking the 1030th anniversary of the baptism of Ukraine-Rus on July 28, 2018, assured that the Ecumenical Patriarchate would not leave Ukrainian Orthodox believers without support. He emphasized that granting autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church is solely the jurisdiction and competence of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Metropolitan Emmanuel of Gaul also informed the media about the readiness of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church. He discussed the active process of implementing this decision, which was announced after the meeting between Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in Istanbul on August 31, 2018. Although this meeting took place on the initiative of the Moscow Patriarchate [16].

At the same time, an important part of these events is the level of awareness among the Ukrainian public regarding the Tomos and the process of acquiring autocephaly. According to a survey conducted in September 2018 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology on behalf of the public organization «Detector Media», only 28.5% of Ukraine's residents demonstrated knowledge of what the Tomos is 71.5% of respondents either did not know or could not answer this question. Among those who showed knowledge of the Tomos, 42.3% learned about it from the mass media, 19% from religious figures' speeches, 17.4% from President Petro Poroshenko's speeches, 15.9% from politicians' speeches, and 11.5% from their surroundings. In western Ukraine, 43% demonstrated knowledge of the Tomos, in the central part of the country – 30%, and in the south and east – only 16-18% [17].

In November 2018, the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Holy Synod discussed the Tomos on Ukrainian Church autocephaly, resulting in a Communique outlining the creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) statute. In December, the Unification Council in Kyiv brought together representatives of the UOC-KP, UAOC, and part of the UOC-MP, forming the OCU and electing Metropolitan Epiphanius (Dumenko) as its head. The UOC-KP and UAOC parishes transitioned to the OCU's jurisdiction, dissolving their former structures [15]. On January 6, 2019, the Ecumenical Patriarchate granted the Tomos to the OCU, officially recognizing it as the 15th canonical Orthodox Church and the successor of the Kyiv Metropolitanate [18, p. 87].

The UOC-MP opposed autocephaly discussions, with the ROC mobilizing believers against the move. Church leaders instructed dioceses to appeal to the Ecumenical Patriarch, opposing the unified local church in Ukraine and labeling its advocates as threats to Orthodox unity [19]. Meanwhile, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeev of the ROC conducted eight diplomatic visits to local Orthodox churches in May, lobbying against Patriarch Bartholomew's autocephaly initiative. This escalated competition for influence among Orthodox churches. Even Russian President Volodymyr Putin and other officials attempted to meet the Ecumenical Patriarch, but their efforts failed [20].

After December 2018, the UOC-MP clergy rejected the Unification Council's decisions, with its Synod labeling the council an unlawful assembly and its resolutions as invalid [21]. Before the Tomos was granted,

the ROC severed Eucharistic communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In a letter dated December 31, 2018, Patriarch Kirill of the ROC urged Patriarch Bartholomew not to grant the Tomos and even invoked the Last Judgment [22]. Following the Tomos, Archbishop Clement (Vecheria) of the UOC-MP criticized it as violating canonical norms governing Orthodox churches [23]. The UOC-MP, closely aligned with the ROC, played a significant role in promoting the «Russian world» ideology in Ukraine. The Kremlin continues efforts to position the Moscow Patriarchate as the leader of global Orthodoxy, leveraging both religious and political channels to influence local Orthodox churches and governments [24, p. 242–248]. After the Unification Council, 1,191 parishes and monasteries transitioned from the UOC-MP to the OCU by January 16, 2023, compared to 39 transitions to the UOC-KP and 2 to the UAOC during 2014–2017 [25; 26, p. 151]. These transitions often involved conflict, with violent church seizures intensifying after the OCU gained autocephaly. Despite expectations, mass transitions did not occur, as the ROC utilized its influence to hinder the process. Meanwhile, pro-Russian politicians obstructed measures against the UOC-MP's anti-state activities. The UOC-MP leadership, to maintain power, continues to portray OCU supporters as schismatics, fueling religious discord.

The establishment of a local church and the granting of autocephaly to the OCU are significant both religiously and geopolitically. Autocephaly elevates the OCU's status, aligning it with other autonomous Orthodox churches. It strengthens the state, while its absence weakens it, making it vulnerable to manipulation and using the church as a political tool for foreign interests [27]. Russian policy has shown the importance of an independent Orthodox Church in defending national interests. The Tomos process also highlighted Constantinople's independence and reduced Moscow's influence, potentially leading to its religious isolation. Ukraine's departure from Russian religious control challenges the "Russian world" concept, weakening Russia's influence in Ukraine and diminishing the authority of the UOC-MP. Thus, the OCU's recognition by Constantinople counterbalances Moscow's pressure and opens new possibilities for the development of Orthodoxy in Ukraine.

3. UOC-MP after a full-scale Russian invasion in 2022

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the UOC-MP, unlike the OCU and UGCC, has not condemned Russia's aggression or recognized it as an aggressor. It also maintained its connection with the ROC, which continued to influence its actions. Under pressure from its congregants, the UOC-MP held a council in May 2022, distancing itself from the ROC but refraining from condemning Russia as the aggressor or denouncing collaboration with the ROC [28].

Despite this, the UOC-MP leadership showed no intention of fully severing ties with the ROC. After the council, ROC leaders confirmed the unity between the two churches [29]. The UOC-MP actions were largely seen as an attempt to placate believers dissatisfied with the church's pro-Russian stance, as noted by theologian Andrii Kuraiev [30].

In December 2022, President Zelensky's decree, based on a National Security and Defense Council decision, targeted pro-Russian religious groups. The SBU conducted searches of UOC-MP clergy, seizing Russian passports, literature, and propaganda [31; 32]. Over 40 counterintelligence operations were launched, resulting in over 60 criminal cases against UOC-MP clergy who sided with Russia [33; 34]. Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, in a 2022 speech, condemned the ROC's alignment with Putin and its role in dividing Orthodox Christianity, viewing Moscow's long-term agenda as a geopolitical catastrophe for Ukraine and global Orthodoxy [35].

In January 2023, UOC-MP clergy petitioned their leaders to clarify the Church's position on the war [36]. However, the church leadership has not yet responded. A religious expert study in January 2023 assessed the UOC-MP's status and the legitimacy of its May 2022 council under the National Security and Defense Council's directives [37].

At the end of January 2023, a religious expertise was conducted with the participation of leading Ukrainian religious experts. The expert religious study of the status of the UOC-MP was conducted

based on the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine «On certain aspects of the activities of religious organizations in Ukraine and the application of personal special economic and other restrictive measures (sanctions)» dated December 1. The purpose of this expertise was to examine the status of the UOC-MP and the legality of convening the Council of the UOC-MP in May 2022 [37].

The findings of the expert group are as follows:

- The new edition of the Statute on the Administration of the UOC-MP (dated May 27, 2022) and the resolutions of the UOC-MP Council did not lead to the rupture of the canonical connection between the UOC-MP and the ROC. The status of the UOC as a structural subdivision of the ROC, enjoying certain rights of autonomy but not constituting an autocephalous Church, remains unchanged.

- The UOC-MP relationship with the ROC is a canonical connection of parts with the whole. The relationship between the UOC-MP and the ROC is not the relationship of two independent (autocephalous) Churches. The UOC-MP also does not have the status of an autonomous Church recognized by other churches. Therefore, from the perspective of ecclesiology and canonical law, the UOC-MP is considered a structural subdivision of the ROC with certain rights of self-governance but without its own canonical subjectivity.

- The current activities or inaction of the highest bodies of church authority and administration of the UOC indicate that it continues to be subordinate to the ROC. It does not function as an independent (autocephalous) Church and does not proclaim its own self-governance (autocephaly). The expert group has not found any documents or actions indicating the transformation of the UOC-MP into an independent religious organization relative to the ROC.

Therefore, the UOC-MP has been and continues to fulfill not only a religious but also an ideological function in Ukraine. In the context of the ongoing struggle for statehood, which has persisted throughout Ukraine's years of independence, anti-Ukrainian ideological slogans permeate the minds of Ukrainians not only through television screens but also from the pulpits of this particular Church. The logical outcome of the activities of Moscow-aligned clergy and hierarchs has been the cultivation of anti-Ukrainian sentiments among the faithful of the UOC-MP, which has been particularly pronounced in Crimea, the South, and the East of Ukraine during the post-Maidan crisis of identities against the backdrop of Russian aggression.

Conclusion. Russian occupation of parts of Ukrainian territories has clearly divided the religious landscape in Ukraine based on attitudes towards the processes of national state-building. This has prompted deeper understanding among the Ukrainian people and government regarding the significance of building a national Church. Gustave Le Bon once noted that a significant portion of historical events, particularly related to the formation of political and social institutions, is the result of the influence of religious ideas on these processes.

During the years 2014–2022, Ukrainian Orthodoxy experienced both positive and negative, crisis-driven changes. While the OCU and the UGCC support Ukraine's destiny and pray for its victory, the UOC-MP has revealed its true face and its genuine anti-Ukrainian stance. It is important to recognize that the UOC-MP serves as an integral weapon for the Kremlin in spreading the «Russian world» and guarantees that Ukraine remains within its sphere. Therefore, the UOC-MP clearly falls into the category of individuals/institutions that pose a threat to Ukraine's national interests and sovereignty as an independent state. However, Ukrainian society still expects more effective steps from the clergy of the UOC-MP in distancing themselves from anti-Ukrainian and chauvinistic ideas of the «Russian world», actively propagated by both the Moscow Patriarchate and secular Russian authorities. Nonetheless, according to Ukrainian religious experts, this process will not happen soon.

Ukrainians have long been in need of a qualitatively «different Orthodoxy», which can be achieved through a departure from the Moscow paradigm of church-building, a genuine restoration

of unity, and, most importantly, a different understanding of unity. The creation of a unified OCU and the receipt of the Tomos in 2018 were events of not only geopolitical significance but also a true religious victory for Ukraine in its confrontation with Russia. It is crucial to understand that an independent state requires an independent church, which acts as a significant factor in strengthening the Ukrainian nation and contributes to its European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

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