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# **Eastern Christianity and Politics: Church-State Relations in Ukraine**

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On 23 June 2001, Pope John Paul II arrived in Kyiv for a five-day state visit on the invitation of President Leonid Kuchma. Upon arrival, his first words uttered in Ukrainian were:

‘Let us recognise our faults as we ask forgiveness for the errors committed in both the distant and recent past. Let us in turn offer forgiveness for the wrongs endured. Finally, with deep joy, I have been able to kiss the beloved soil of Ukraine. I thank God for the gift that he has given me today’.<sup>1</sup>

The Pope’s words, which combined religious diplomacy with political reconciliation, were received with scepticism by his counterparts in Kyiv and Moscow. A few weeks earlier, Metropolitan Vladimir, head of the largest Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), asked the Pope to cancel his visit, an unusual request which was regarded as breaching the Vatican protocol. Furthermore, Patriarch Aleksii II of the Russian Orthodox Church declined meeting the Pope either in Moscow, or in Kyiv, as long as ‘the Greek-Catholic war continues against Orthodox believers in Ukraine and until the Vatican stops its expansion into Russia, Belarus and Ukraine’.<sup>2</sup> The Patriarch’s reference to ‘a war’ between Orthodox and Catholics, and continuing religious tension in Ukraine, are part of the wider and complex trajectory of church-state relations within the Eastern Christian world which has developed after the end of the Cold War.

### Eastern Christianity and *Symphonia*

Eastern Christianity is a fellowship of churches, Orthodox and Oriental, the origin of which dates back to the first historical divisions within the Christian world. The 1054 schism between Orthodox Christianity and Roman Christianity indicated a *de facto* division in which the East and the West were formally separated according to imperial rule and religious boundaries. It took a millennium, until 1965, for the 1054 schism to be officially lifted between the Roman and Constantinopolitan churches.

Eastern Christian churches regard themselves as ‘a family of Churches’ divided into the following bodies:

- **Chalcedonian churches** (fifteen Eastern Orthodox churches purporting to be in full communion in their order of honorary primacy which acknowledges the honorary primacy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate):

1            **Ancient autocephalous patriarchates:**

1            The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

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<sup>1</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/06/23/pope.ukraine/> See also <http://www.papalvisit.org.ua/eng/>

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Della Cava, ‘Assessing John Paul II’s Visit to Ukraine’, *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 2001, 5 (1), available at <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol21/iss5/1>

	2	The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria
	3	The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch
	4	The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem
2		<b>Autocephalous churches:</b>
	1	The Russian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate)
	2	The Serbian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate)
	3	The Romanian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate)
	4	The Bulgarian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate)
	5	The Georgian Orthodox Church (Catholicosate Patriarchate)
	6	The Orthodox Church of Cyprus
	7	The Orthodox Church of Greece
	8	The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania
	9	The Polish Orthodox Church
	10	The Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia
	11	The Orthodox Church in America (autocephaly is contested by some churches)
3		<b>Autonomous (or semi-autonomous) churches</b> , such as: The Church of the Sinai (Jerusalem Patriarchate); The Finnish Orthodox Church (Ecumenical Patriarchate); The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (Ecumenical Patriarchate); The Orthodox Church of Crete (Ecumenical Patriarchate); The Monastic Community of Mount Athos (Ecumenical Patriarchate); The Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric (Serbian Patriarchate); The Orthodox Church in Japan (Moscow Patriarchate); The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate); The Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (integrated with the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007).
4		<b>Churches not in communion</b> with the above churches, such as: The Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric (Republic of Macedonia), the Montenegrin Orthodox Church (Montenegro), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.
2.		<b>Autocephalous non-Chalcedonian churches:</b> ‘Oriental’ or ‘Monophysite’ churches. These churches separated from the Chalcedonian churches after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, namely The Armenian Apostolic Church (Armenia); The Coptic Orthodox Church (Egypt); The Syrian Orthodox Church (Syria); The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church/The Indian Orthodox Church (India); The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawehedo Church (Ethiopia); The Eritrean Orthodox Tawehedo Church (Eritrea).
3.		<b>Religious missions</b> of Chalcedonian or non-Chalcedonian churches which are in the process of becoming autonomous.
4.		<b>The Assyrian Church of the East</b> (and its faction the Ancient Assyrian Church of the East) in various countries in the Middle East and its diaspora which accepts only the first two Ecumenical Councils (Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381).
5.		<b>The Greek Catholic churches:</b> ‘Uniate’ or ‘Eastern Catholic’ churches for Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches which recognise the Pope’s primacy while retaining their liturgical and doctrinal communion with other Eastern churches, such as: The Armenian Catholic Church; The Coptic Catholic Church; The Maronite Catholic Church; The Chaldean Catholic Church; The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church; The Melkite Greek Catholic Church; The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; The Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church; The Romanian Greek Catholic Church.
6.		<b>The ‘True Orthodox’ or ‘Old Calendarist,’</b> represented by churches which separated from Chalcedonian churches after the implementation of the Julian calendar or due to Soviet persecution.
7.		<b>The ‘Old Believers’</b> which refused the reforms of Russian Patriarch Nikon in the 17 <sup>th</sup> century.
8.		<b>Small dissident communities and Protestant churches</b> which emerged from Orthodox/Oriental churches.

**Table 1. The Map of Eastern Christianity**

In Eastern Christianity, church-state relations are based on the principle of *symphonia*, which argues for close interaction between religious and political structures. The principle dates back to the Byzantine Empire, in which imperial

authorities intervened in church life to support its jurisdictional and theological development. The idea of the 'church' confined to the limits of religious structures denotes a modern understanding of the term 'religion'; in Byzantium, the 'church' was universal, working together with the empire, imposing authority at home and in foreign lands, and striving for the salvation of the faithful in the material and spiritual worlds. Religious heresy, therefore, equalled state dissent, with those who disobeyed the church persecuted or expelled to the geographical limits of the 'civilized' world. Despite the 1453 fall of Constantinople, *symphonia* has remained a potent concept in the Eastern Christian world. After Prince Vladimir's conversion to Orthodox Christianity (at Chersonesus in Crimea) in 989, the Russian empire encouraged the use of the symphonic concept, as evident when the tsar-son ruled together with the patriarch-father, at the start of the Romanov dynasty in the early seventeenth century. Today, *symphonia* is regarded as an ambiguous concept which is fundamentally opposed to the Western model of church-state relations.<sup>3</sup>

The strongest criticism of the distinctiveness of church-state relations in the Orthodox world came from Samuel Huntington's 1996 book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, which reinforced the Western imaginary of Eastern Christian churches. Huntington's response to the question 'Where does Europe end?' was that 'Europe ends where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin.'<sup>4</sup> His point was built on the assumption that the liberal international order found no parallel in Orthodoxy's engagement with political authorities. The individual, the promotion of human rights, and the holding of free elections were alien to the Eastern Christian world. This assumption drew on Russia's trajectory after the fall of communism, when the state began to expand its political influence through religious values. Huntington observed that, together with five other former Soviet states (Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia), Russia was building an 'Orthodox bloc' which challenged the construction of a secular European Union.<sup>5</sup> He also placed Bulgaria and Romania in the same 'Orthodox space,' foreseeing that, due to the predominant Orthodox culture in both of these countries, the enlargement of the European Union would most likely not include them. The 'clash of civilizations' theory was further developed by Victoria Clark's *Why Angels Fall: A Portrait of Orthodox Europe from Byzantium to Kosovo* (2000), in which Orthodoxy was presented as the main cause of social and political backwardness in Eastern Europe. Clark saw *symphonia* as 'almost always too high and vague an ideal to be entirely practical'<sup>6</sup> and having little to do with secular Europe.

Neither Huntington nor Clark do full justice to the complex relationship between politics and Eastern Christian churches. The spread of modern nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ensured that the 'church' has become directly linked to the nation-building process. Churches closely follow state structures with *symphonia* acquiring the quality of the artefact of the nation, namely religious and political leaders have to cooperate in order to achieve national interests. Today, *symphonia* continues to be a

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<sup>3</sup> For the concept of *symphonia* see John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974); John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>6</sup> Victoria Clark, *Why Angels Fall: A Portrait of Orthodox Europe from Byzantium to Kosovo* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 414-5.

potent concept building on the historical legacy of church and state and the thin lines between the religious and the political realms.

### Eastern Christianity after 1945

Church-state relations working towards the national interest was particularly potent during the communist period.<sup>7</sup> After the Second World War, the Russian Orthodox Church became more assertively employed in international relations when the Soviet Union established a Department of External Church Affairs in 1946. The department had the largest number of employees in the patriarchate and acted as a direct liaison with state institutions. By claiming spiritual superiority over other autocephalous (independent) churches, Moscow sent religious delegations to neighbouring countries, thereby ensuring close contact between Orthodox churches and communist regimes. The Iron Curtain between East and West acquired a religious dimension that separated the predominately Orthodox bloc from the Catholic and Protestant West. Delegations of church leaders travelled between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria and Yugoslavia (1945), Romania (1946), and Albania and Poland (1948); on their return, those that praised the new communist regimes were promoted to the highest ecclesiastical offices. A pattern developed of granting autocephaly or incorporating smaller churches across the region: the Latvian, Estonian, and Georgian Orthodox churches were included under Russian jurisdiction; the Orthodox churches in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria were offered autocephaly upon rejecting their previous ties to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Furthermore, in 1948, in a sign of religious and political co-operation, Orthodox church leaders held a Pan-Orthodox Synod in Moscow, with the aim of rewriting the very foundation of jurisdictional structures within the Eastern Christian world. The Synod concluded by claiming the religious and political superiority of the Orthodox bloc and condemning the West. The refusal of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to attend or support the 1948 Synod ensured that the Synod's decisions were not fully applied throughout Eastern Christianity.

As Table 2 shows, despite religious persecution and atheist state policies, Orthodox churches persisted in retaining significant influence in the social life of their countries. With the exception of Albania, which declared itself the first atheist state, religious and political structures interrelated throughout the Cold War period. In the cases of Romania and Serbia, the number of clergy in 1989 was even slightly higher than in 1945, however, at the same time, the population figures witnessed a significant increase.

Country	Population ~ 1945	Population ~ 1990	Congregations ~ 1945	Congregations ~ 1990
Albania	1,115,350	3,138,100	450 clergy (1950)	0 clergy (1968)
Belarus	<i>See Russia/Soviet Union</i>	10,190,000	967 churches (1958)	900 churches (1995)
Bulgaria	7,029,349 (1946)	8,487,317 (1992)	3,024 clergy	900 priests (1989)
Czechoslovakia	14,151,970 (0.5%)	15,592,086 (0.4%)	259 churches (1950)	143 churches (1987)

<sup>7</sup> See also, Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988); Daniela Kalkandjieva, *The Russian Orthodox Church, 1917-1948. From Decline to Resurrection* (London: Routledge, 2015).

	Orthodox in 1950)	Orthodox in 1991)		
Estonia	<i>See Russia/Soviet Union</i>	1,565,662 (1989)	123 churches (1958)	52 churches (1995)
Finland	68,000 Orthodox out of 4,030,000 total population (1950)	56,000 Orthodox out of 4,999,000 total population (1990)	33 churches (1945)	120 churches (1990)
Georgia	4,044,000 (1959)	5,400,800 (1989)	29 churches (1945)	200 churches (1980)
Greece	7,632,801 (1950)	10,264,156 (1991)	7,150 clergy (1946)	9,682 clergy (1988)
Latvia	<i>See Russia/Soviet Union</i>	2,663,000	123 churches (1958)	100 churches (1995)
Lithuania	<i>See Russia/Soviet Union</i>	3,674,802 (1989)	55 churches (1958)	45 churches (1990)
Macedonia	1,152,986 (1948)	2,033,964 (1991)	200 clergy	560 clergy
Moldova	<i>See Russia/Soviet Union</i>	4,364,000	546 churches (1958)	190 churches (1995)
Romania	14,872,624 (1948)	22,810,035 (1992)	8,279 churches; 8,257 clergy (1930)	9,000 parishes; 9,000 clergy; 12,300 churches (1989)
Russia (Soviet Union)	162 million total population in the Soviet Union (1937)	73,670,000 Orthodox (49.7%) out of 148,292,000 total population in Russia (1990)	73 dioceses, 74 bishops in office; about 20,000 clergy; about 18,000 churches; 67 monasteries and convents; about 10,000 monks and nuns (1945)	70 dioceses; 70 bishops in office; 8,100 clergy; 9,374 churches; 35 monasteries and convents (1989)
Serbia	6,973,000 (1948)	9,038,000 (1991)	22 bishops; 1,860 clergy; 2,643 churches and chapels; 129 monasteries (1953)	25 bishops; 2,000 clergy; 3,000 churches and chapels; 194 monasteries (1986)

**Table 2: Orthodox Christianity, 1945-1990.** Data from individual chapters in Lucian N. Leustean (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and the Cold War, 1945-91* (London: Routledge, 2010).

After the fall of communism, the idea of a distinctly Orthodox civilization has emerged in the discourse of most Orthodox churches with the strongest support first appearing in Russia and other churches following suit.<sup>8</sup> In Russia, both the state and the church have presented Orthodoxy as a unique civilization. In a comparable manner to its interventionism in the emerging Orthodox states in 19<sup>th</sup> century Southeastern Europe, Russia supports the Orthodox faithful affected by modern conflict, whether military as evident in Syria and Ukraine, or societal such as the widespread secularization of the European Union. The engagement of Orthodoxy as a

<sup>8</sup> In 1994, a ‘European Inter-parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy’ was set up in Athens, bringing together members of parliaments from predominantly Orthodox countries in support of a forum within secular Europe to meet regularly in various European countries.

distinct civilization goes further than mere political discourse, with the term ‘spiritual space’ (*dukhovnoye prostranstvo*) being present in many documents relating to Russian foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Orthodox civilization acquires a strategic position which needs to be defended, as for example, in Ukraine and Transnistria, and nurtured, as for example where it exists in small communities amidst other civilizations, such as in the West, China, India, and Japan. Furthermore, the idea of a unique civilization has implications in local politics. Western sanctions against Russia have encouraged politicians to appeal to local popular support by presenting Orthodoxy as incompatible with the West. Anti-Westernism builds on the idea of a distinct Orthodox (and Russian) civilisation that is threatened by the United States and the secularized European Union.<sup>10</sup>

As Table 3 shows, Eastern Christianity now comprises at least 262 million faithful who are not confined to churches in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states but inhabit a wide geographical area in which religious boundaries shift continuously: autonomous churches become autocephalous, religious missions extend the influence of national churches, and the re-emergence of persecuted churches have reshaped traditional church-state relations.

<b>Eastern Christian Churches</b>	<b>Church members</b>	<b>Clergy</b>
The Ecumenical Patriarchate (data for all jurisdictions)	5,255,000	n/a
The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch	542,000	n/a
The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem	39,000	n/a
The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria	10,000	n/a
The Russian Orthodox Church	107,210,100	33,174
The Serbian Orthodox Church	8,500,000	2,000
The Romanian Orthodox Church	18,800,000	14,530
The Bulgarian Orthodox Church	5,758,301	1,280
The Georgian Orthodox Church	3,835,013	1,000
The Orthodox Church of Cyprus	553,635	707
The Orthodox Church of Greece	10,744,390	8,515
The Polish Orthodox Church	509,500	284
The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania	190,483	149
The Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia	75,605	187
Eastern churches in America (data for all jurisdictions)	1,043,800	n/a
The Church of the Sinai	800	n/a
The Finnish Orthodox Church (Ecumenical Patriarchate)	58,000	43

<sup>9</sup> Alicja Curanović, *The Religious Factor in Russia's Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 248.

<sup>10</sup> See also, Victor Roudometof, *Globalization and Orthodox Christianity. The Transformation of a Religious Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2013); John Anderson, *Conservative Christian Politics in Russia and the United States. Dreaming of Christian Nations* (London: Routledge, 2014); Kristina Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2014).

The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (Ecumenical Patriarchate)	27,000	31
The Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate	4,092,045	9,922
The Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate	5,593,713	3,088
The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church	375,417	730
The Latvian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)	285,039	88
The Estonian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)	200,000	39
Orthodox churches in Moldova	3,383,332	n/a
The Macedonian Orthodox Church	1,310,184	850
The Belarusian Orthodox Church	4,618,137	1,485
The Orthodox Church in Lithuania	125,189	47
Orthodox faithful in China	13,000	n/a
The Orthodox Church in Japan	30,000	n/a
Eastern churches in Australia (data for all jurisdictions)	583,986	n/a
The Armenian Apostolic Church	11,030,400	500
The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawehedo Church	32,138,126	190,000
The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church	3,128,000	15,000
The Syrian Orthodox Church	500,000	n/a
The Coptic Orthodox Church	5,000,000	n/a
Syrian churches in India	8,000,000	n/a
The Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East	400,000	n/a
Eastern Catholic churches	17,539,432	n/a
Other Eastern churches	1,000,000	n/a
Eastern Christianity: Total	262,498,627	

**Table 3. Eastern Christianity in numbers, 2014** (approximate numbers; n/a = data not available). Data has been collected from individual chapters in Lucian N. Leustean (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2014); Barnett *et al* (eds.), *Encyclopedia of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Ronald G. Roberson, ‘The Eastern Catholic Churches 2014’, *Annuario Pontificio*, published on the Website of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA). If unofficial church figures are included, such as around 164.1 millions for the Russian Orthodox Church, Eastern Christianity counts over 319 million faithful.

### Church-State Relations in Ukraine

Ukraine has three main competing Orthodox churches which emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, namely the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC).<sup>11</sup> In addition to these churches, a main role in shaping Ukrainian church-state relations has been

<sup>11</sup> A fourth church, the Kharkiv and Poltava Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, split from the UAOC in 2003. A further split led to the formation of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church-Canonical which includes a small number of faithful, mainly abroad.



played by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), a Byzantine-rite church which recognizes the Pope's primacy. The largest religious community is the UOC-MP, followed closely by the UOC-KP, the UGCC and the UAOC (see Table 4).<sup>12</sup> To add to the diversity of Ukrainian religious life, the Ukrainian faithful abroad are under the leadership of two churches, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, both of which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Attempts at unifying the Orthodox churches in Ukraine have occurred regularly, beginning in the first decades of Ukrainian independence with political leaders often involved in the discussions. Similarly, churches were regularly part in political negotiations, as evident at the time of the Orange Revolution when the UOC-KP supported Viktor Yushchynko while the UOC-MP his opponent, Viktor Yanukovich. In 2008, Patriarch Filaret of the UOC-KP publicly encouraged Ukraine to join both the European Union and NATO, while, in the same year, President Yushchynko aimed to organise an independent church outside Moscow's influence and welcomed Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Kyiv.<sup>13</sup>

<p><b>The Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate</b></p> <p><i>Recognition:</i> 1990 (exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1921-90). The only Ukrainian Church recognised by the wider Orthodox communion.</p> <p><i>Religious leaders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko), 1990-92</li> <li>• Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), 1992-2014</li> <li>• Metropolitan Onufriy (Berezovsky), 2014-</li> </ul> <p><i>Structure of the Church:</i> 14 metropolitans, 15 archbishops, 15 bishops, 46 eparchies.</p> <p><i>Number of clergy and church buildings:</i> 9,922 priests, 12,230 churches, 4,625 monks and nuns.</p>	<p><b>The Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate</b></p> <p><i>Recognition:</i> 1992 (unrecognised by the wider Orthodox communion)</p> <p><i>Religious leaders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriarch Mstyslav (Skrypnyk), 1992-93</li> <li>• Patriarch Volodymyr (Romaniuk), 1993-95</li> <li>• Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko), 1995-</li> </ul> <p><i>Structure of the Church:</i> patriarch, 8 metropolitans, 14 archbishops, 17 bishops, 29 eparchies.</p> <p><i>The number of clergy and church buildings:</i> 3,088 priests, 4,455 churches, 175 monks and nuns.</p>
<p><b>The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church</b></p> <p><i>Recognition:</i> 1921; 1990 (unrecognised by the wider Orthodox communion)</p> <p><i>Religious leaders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriarch Mstyslav (Skrypnyk), 1990-93</li> <li>• Patriarch Patriarch Dymytriy (Yarema), 1993-2000</li> <li>• Metropolitan Mefodiy (Kudriakov), 2000-15</li> <li>• Metropolitan Makariy (Maletych), 2015-</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church</b></p> <p><i>Recognition:</i> 1596; 1989</p> <p><i>Religious leaders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, Major Archbishop and Cardinal (1914–2000), in office 1984 (since 1991 in Ukraine)–2000</li> <li>• Liubomyr Huzar, Major Archbishop and Cardinal (1933–), in office 2001–11</li> <li>• Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop (1970–), in office since 2011</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup> Zenon V. Wasyliv, 'Orthodox churches in Ukraine' in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, Lucian Leustean (ed.), 2014, pp. 312-33 quoting data from the Ukrainian State Department at <http://risu.org.ua>. The Kharkiv and Poltava Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church has one archbishop (Ihor Isichenko), 5 deaneries, 30 priests and 27 churches.

<sup>13</sup> Greg Simons, 'Religious Diplomacy in International and Inter-Orthodox Relations' in *Religion, Politics and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Countries*, Greg Simons and David Westerlund (eds.), Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, pp. 32-5.

<p><i>Structure of the Church:</i> 4 metropolitans, 2 archbishops, 7 bishops, 14 eparchies, 3 vicariates.</p> <p><i>Number of clergy and church buildings:</i> 730 priests, 1,208 churches, 10 monks and nuns.</p>	<p><i>Structure of the Church:</i> 25 bishoprics, 3 metropolitanates, 4 exarchates; 3,856 parishes.</p> <p><i>Number of clergy and church buildings:</i> 3,581 churches (in Ukraine); 2,784 secular priests and 437 religious priests, 939 monks, 1,526 nuns and 633 seminarists.</p>
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**Table 4. Ukrainian Churches, 2014.** Data has been collected from individual chapters in Lucian N. Leustean (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2014).

### *The Ideological Dimension of the Ukrainian Crisis*

Russia's takeover of Crimea, conflict in the eastern part of the country and uncertainty regarding political reform have characterised the post-2014 religious situation in Ukraine as 'chaos'.<sup>14</sup> A 2015 Foreign Policy Centre Report states that 'Orthodoxy in Ukraine would seem to be at a turning point, mirroring the pressures and forces at play in the state and society'.<sup>15</sup> The strongest competition remains between the UOC-MP and the UOC-KP, each embedding its own vision for Ukrainian identity, political power and social support.

Most strongly affected by the post-2014 conflict seems to be the largest church, the UOC-MP. A change in church leadership took place at the same time as the ousting of President Yanukovich, with Metropolitan Onufry officially appointed in charge of the Church on the following day. The Russian takeover of Crimea raised an identity crisis: Is the Church Ukrainian or Russian? Should the Church sever its links to Moscow? In the aftermath of Russia's annexation, Metropolitan Onufry wrote letters to President Putin and Patriarch Kyrill in which he condemned Russia's politics of destabilising Ukraine. In response, Patriarch Kyrill refrained from appointing a bishop for Crimea, emphasising the need for dialogue and reconciliation. No official declaration emerged from the church leaders in Moscow, however, in a sermon in Christ the Saviour Cathedral in March 2014, Kyrill encouraged the protection of the 'Russian world' making a particular reference to Kyiv as the cradle of Orthodoxy. He declared that the respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity were necessary in inter-state relations, however, in his opinion, 'this does not mean that the pursuit of legitimate sovereignty should be followed by the destruction of a common spiritual space'.<sup>16</sup> This view implied that Russia was entitled to interfere abroad if the 'common spiritual space' was threatened by political regimes which did follow Moscow's politics.

At the time of Russia's takeover of Crimea, Fr Vsevolod Chaplin, spokesperson for the Moscow Patriarchate, stated that the Crimean population should welcome the Russian military forces as 'peacemakers', a comment which raised controversy and increased religious tension between Ukraine and Russia. A sign of ongoing strain between the two countries was the refusal of Metropolitan Hilarion,

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas E. Denysenko, 'Chaos in Ukraine: The Churches and the Search for Leadership', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 2014, 14 (3), pp. 242–259

<sup>15</sup> Adam Hug, 'Introduction: The Shifting Balance between Church and State' in *Traditional Religion and Political Power: Examining the Role of the Church in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova*, Adam Hug (ed.), The Foreign Policy Centre, London, 2015, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Roman Lunkin, 'The Ukrainian Revolution and Christian Churches', *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 2014, 22 (3), p. 2.

head of the External Church Relations Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, to enter Ukraine via Dnipropetrovsk airport in May 2014.<sup>17</sup>

During the conflict which engulfed the Donbas region, the UOC-MP retained the strongest backing of the local population, to the extent that, in 2014, a paramilitary group titled ‘the Russian Orthodox Army’ was formed to provide spiritual and military support, expressing allegiance to the separatist leader Igor Girkin (Strelkov).

While the UOC-MP remains the main religious player, the UOC-KP has considerably increased its public visibility in Ukrainian society. The pro-European stance of the Maidan protests in Kyiv was strongly supported by the UOC-KP and the UGCC while the UOC-MP was perceived to be supporting the policies of the Kremlin. The growing anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine has led to suggestions that the largest Orthodox communities (the UOC-MP and/or the UOC-KP), should declare autocephaly. As a result, this church could become the second largest world Orthodox church, after the Russian Orthodox Church. The UOC-KP and the UAOC (in 2015) have already asked for recognition from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Until now, the Patriarchate has been neutral, recognising instead only the Ukrainian churches in diaspora. The main issue in setting up scenarios of reunification is the excommunication by Moscow Patriarchate of Patriarch Filaret, head of the UOC-KP.

Religious tension in Ukraine has demonstrated that the military conflict has acquired an ideological form with a threefold impact at the international level:

a) A number of religious and political leaders in the former Soviet states support the idea of ‘European’ as opposed to ‘Eurasian’ values. Eurasianism, which places Orthodox Christianity, tradition, and nationalism at its very core, has been considered by a number of scholars to influence the decision-making process in the Kremlin. Eurasianism regards itself not only in opposition to the values of the European Union but also encourages ultra-nationalist movements across Europe, as evident in cross-party links between Russia, Hungary, Greece, and France. From this perspective, recent and on-going events in Ukraine have a wider transnational dimension which challenges the international state system. Aleksandr Dugin, one of the leading theorists of Eurasianism, even promotes the idea of the dissolution of the nation-state and the establishment of a Eurasian transnational empire from Vladivostok to Austria which opposes secular Western Europe.<sup>18</sup>

b) The prolonged conflict in eastern Ukraine endorses the perception of Russian Orthodoxy as the protector of Orthodox faithful abroad. This view has a wider impact not only for Russian interests in Ukraine, which is regarded as part of the ‘Russian world’, but also in the Middle East. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria retain close relations with the Moscow Patriarchate.

c) Most importantly, the whole structure of Orthodox Christianity could acquire a distinct ideological shape with some churches supporting the Moscow Patriarchate *versus* the Ecumenical Patriarchate. As described in detail below, the

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<sup>17</sup><http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/11/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-church-idUSBREA4A05Y20140511>

<sup>18</sup> ‘Eurasia and Religious Ultra-Nationalism. Beyond Hard-Line’, *The Economist, Erasmus Religion and Public Policy Blog*, 5 September 2014, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2014/09/eurasia-and-religious-ultra-nationalism>; and, ‘Russian Nationalist’s Vision for Austria’, *The Local*, 30 January 2015, <http://www.thelocal.at/20150130/russian-nationalists-vision-for-austria>.

Ukrainian conflict could act as a bargaining tool for decisions taken at the forthcoming 2016 Synod. The Synod could expand the wider Orthodox communion by recognising new churches in the East and the West, separating the Orthodox space according to religious influence. In this case, the impact will be long term, especially for churches in Asia, Latin America, India and China, which currently have small number of believers but could increase their organisations considerably under new political circumstances.

### *The 2016 Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church*

In March 2014, the heads of the Eastern Orthodox churches met under the leadership of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Istanbul, the *primus inter pares* of the Eastern Orthodox world, and announced that it would hold the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church in 2016. The announcement was unexpected. Preparations for the Synod date back to the 1920s. However, the last two decades have constantly been interspersed with jurisdictional tension between Orthodox churches, particularly between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church. The very presence of the Russian Patriarch in Istanbul, meeting his counterparts, was surprising, and a sign that the churches were working towards alleviating disputes. The Synod can be seen as a successor to the Seventh Ecumenical Council of the Eastern Orthodox Church, also known as the Second Council of Nicaea, which took place over a millennium ago, in 787. The decision to announce the 2016 Synod could be interpreted as a wish to maintain the *status quo* in Ukraine with the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate refraining for the time being from recognising new churches and from condemning Russia's takeover of Crimea.

At the time of writing this report, the topics of discussion have not yet been made public.<sup>19</sup> The proposed topics will not fundamentally change any theological areas which could deepen strain between churches. However, there is one item whose legacy could influence relations between churches in the new millennium, namely the diaspora of Orthodox churches. Decisions taken on clarifying the issue of the diaspora, could subsequently lead to major changes in Eastern Christianity, particularly on the granting of autocephaly and the order of honour of local churches. The Fourth Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Conference held in Chambésy, near Geneva, in 2009, proposed the establishment of regional Assemblies of Bishops. As a result, one year later, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in North and Central America was founded. Similarly, in 2010, an Episcopal Assembly of the British Isles brought together thirteen Orthodox bishops in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The large number of migrants from Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania living elsewhere in the European Union complicates the matter with unclear jurisdictional lines. For example, the decision of the Romanian Orthodox Church to ask their faithful living abroad to attend only Romanian churches raised protest from the local communities and other churches.

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<sup>19</sup> A list published by the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia in 2013 includes the following agreed topics: '1. The Orthodox Diaspora; 2. The way in which autocephaly is granted; 3. The way in which autonomy is granted; 4. The diptychs (the order of honour of the Local Churches); 5. The Church calendar; 6. Canonical impediments to marriage; 7. Fasting; 8. Relationships with the heterodox denominations; 9. The ecumenical movement; 10. The contribution of Orthodoxy to affirming peace, brotherhood and freedom'; available at <http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/panorth.htm>

## *Relations with the Catholic Church and Ecumenical Organisations*

Although discussions during the March 2014 meeting announcing the Synod did not make reference to other Christian churches, the dialogue between Orthodox churches and their Catholic and Protestant counterparts is considered significant. Relations with the Roman Catholic Church strengthened after the signing of the Declaration of Ravenna in October 2007, which tackled a sensitive issue for Christian churches, namely ecclesiastical communion, or mutual church recognition. The Declaration stated that ‘Rome, as the Church that ‘presides in love’ according to the phrase of Saint Ignatius of Antioch (*To the Romans, Prologue*), occupied the first place in the *taxis*, and that the bishop of Rome was therefore the *protos* among the patriarchs.’<sup>20</sup> In March 2013, for the first time in the history of relations between the Orthodox and Catholic churches, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew attended Pope Francis’ installation in Rome, a gesture which has been interpreted as having consequences for both the honorary order of churches and Orthodox-Catholic dialogue.

While Patriarch Bartholomew has held many meetings with his Catholic counterpart, relations continue to be tense between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. The Synod does not aim to discuss the Greek Catholic churches and their role in the nation-building process, a move which supports Russian jurisdiction in Ukraine, home of the largest Greek Catholic Church in the world. After the fall of communism, distrust developed around the issue of property restitution, which significantly affected the Greek Catholic churches in the region.

Furthermore, Orthodox churches have had a difficult relationship with ecumenical organisations. In 1997, the Georgian Orthodox Church left the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches; one year later, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church followed suit. In 2008, the Russian Orthodox Church withdrew its participation from the Conference of European Churches due to jurisdictional conflict with the Ecumenical Patriarchate over churches in Estonia. The relocation of the headquarters of the Conference of European Churches from Geneva to Brussels in 2014 and the holding of the 2016 Synod could provide a basis for the Russian reintegration into the Conference of European Churches.

## **Conclusions**

The legacy of communism has influenced post-1989 church-state relations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states. Since 1989, the concept of *symphonia* has reasserted itself at the core of church-state relations in Eastern Christianity. Persecuted churches have officially been re-established while traditional centres of religious power have aimed to strengthen their links to state structures. Churches which engaged with communist authorities during the Cold War period have emerged in an advantageous position; while retaining public support from the faithful they also benefit from access to state funding at domestic and foreign policy levels.

The main actors in Eastern Christianity remain the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church, between whom divisions and jurisdictional tension

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[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/ch\\_orthodox\\_docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20071013\\_documento-ravenna\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html). For a list of meetings between Popes and Ecumenical Patriarchs see [https://www.patriarchate.org/press/-/asset\\_publisher/wfpdvmLXgl9l/content/visits-of-ecumenical-patriarchs-to-rome-and-popes-to-the-ecumenical-patriarchate](https://www.patriarchate.org/press/-/asset_publisher/wfpdvmLXgl9l/content/visits-of-ecumenical-patriarchs-to-rome-and-popes-to-the-ecumenical-patriarchate) The Moscow Patriarchate is the only Orthodox Church which refrained from signing the 2007 Declaration of Ravenna.

are likely to continue. The Moscow Patriarchate has championed the idea of a distinctly Orthodox civilization based on ‘traditional values,’ which challenges the European Union’s models of church-state relations, the secularism and liberalism of European societies, and indeed the liberal international order.

Orthodox churches have held an ambivalent position towards the political construction of the European Union. While many church leaders have supported their country’s EU membership, they feared the spread of secular values among the faithful and the diminishment of their authority. At times of acute economic strain, churches have been praised for their social engagement, as evident in regular welfare activities recently in Greece.

The decision to hold the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church in June 2016, which was agreed by the heads of the autocephalous churches at the time of Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014, may be seen as having religious and political consequences. The 2016 Synod will not address competing church jurisdictions in Ukraine while, at the same time, Russia’s takeover of Crimea has not been unanimously condemned by Orthodox churches. While the final topics of discussion are still to be decided, the issue of diasporas, which is due to be addressed, will have wide ramifications for the structure of Eastern Christianity. The enlargement of the European Union enabled the transnational movement of Orthodox faithful, blurring jurisdictional lines. Who has authority over the faithful in Western Europe, America, Asia, and Australia? Will new churches be recognised as part of the wider Orthodox communion of churches? How will inter-church relations develop after the 2016 Synod? Furthermore, will the Synod encourage a new Catholic-Orthodox rapprochement as evident in unprecedented relations between Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew? These are open and complex questions to be addressed in the future.

Inter-church relations have demonstrated that Orthodoxy has moved closer to Catholicism than ever before. Relations with Protestantism are another matter. While significant contact between Orthodox and Protestant churches took place during the interwar and Cold War periods, the ordination of women into the Church of England has raised a major barrier between them. Furthermore, the process of electing the religious leadership has placed Orthodox churches at odds with their counterparts. In an exceptional move, with the retirement of Pope Benedict XVI, the Catholic world has given a signal that the highest authority in the church (the pope/patriarch) could become ‘emeritus.’ In Protestant churches, the highest authority serves only for a number of years, such as in the Church of England where the Archbishop of Canterbury is not elected for life. Will Orthodox leaders adopt a similar model? By engaging with their Western counterparts, the Orthodox world will not be immune to wider transformations in the Christian world.

The number of Eastern Christian faithful is contested and continues to have a long term impact on church-state relations. For example, a united Ukrainian church may have 30 million faithful, thus becoming the second largest church in Eastern Christianity. The Russian Orthodox Church currently lists this figure under its jurisdiction while the latest sociological polls in Ukraine shows that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate has, in fact, only around 4 million faithful. Similarly, the number of Eastern Christians in the Middle East is uncertain. For example, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, based in Syria, unofficially counts over 4 million faithful compared to only half a million according to Syrian state records. Political challenges in the Middle East will continue to be closely

related to the survival of Eastern Christian churches, affecting the very existence of these churches and, more widely, the future of inter-religious dialogue.

### **Policy recommendations to churches and governments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states**

- Encourage and support the organisation of the 2016 ‘Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church’ which has the potential to tackle religious tension in the region. While the final topics for discussion remain to be decided by church leaders, ideally the Synod should set up specialised committees and take place over a few years, similar to the Second Vatican Council, rather than being a short-lived, ‘photo-opportunity’ event. The Synod should invite a wide range of participants not only from Orthodox churches but also Oriental churches, Roman Catholic and Orthodox lay organisations. Support for the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul for organising the Synod is crucial both from a logistic perspective and to avoid exacerbating disputes at the international level.
- With the support of the Ukrainian government and local authorities, the three Orthodox churches and the Greek Catholic Church should be involved in the process of reconciliation in areas of conflict in Ukraine. Other religious organisations and inter-faith communities, which form the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, should become part of a wider national reconciliation process. Reconciliation and religious dialogue will have to take into account not only Ukrainian churches but also the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.
- Support the full reintegration of the Russian Orthodox Church into the Conference of European Churches. The Conference of European Churches, whose headquarters moved from Geneva to Brussels in 2014, could provide the vehicle of dialogue between European institutions and Orthodox churches. In order to avoid the idea of an Orthodox exceptionalism, the meetings of the ‘Committee of Representatives of Orthodox Churches to the European Union’, which bring together Orthodox representatives in Brussels, should take place within a wider ecumenical framework with representatives from other churches.
- At times of religious crisis, the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches should become more visible at the international level and act as international mediators, comparable to how it fostered cohesion and international support in the first decades after the Second World War. Stronger religious leadership is required from ecumenical organisations who should work closely with local churches.
- The dialogue between Orthodox churches and the Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic churches should be strengthened by addressing both theological and societal issues in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states. The dialogue should focus on inclusion, mutual understanding and society.
- International and national support for the training of the clergy in Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states with an emphasis on inter-religious projects.

- Encourage interdisciplinary research and publications on relations between Eastern and Western Europe with a particular reference to a critical reassessment of the history of churches and their role in politics, society, nation-building processes and social cohesion.

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