

**The role of religious factor in the formation of civil society in Ukraine:
before / during / after the Revolution of 2013-2014**

***Abstract.** The article analyzes the place and role of religious factor in whole as well as the Church as an institution in particular in the formation of the civil society in Ukraine. There is defined the participation of religious organizations in the events before, during, and after the revolution of 2013-2014, their influence on the formation of a new type of the relationship between the Church, society, and the state which has formed in modern Ukraine. The conclusion is that religion and the Church can catalyze civil society formation and promote the dialogue between the government and society.*

***Keywords:** civil society, church, social institution, political power.*

***Anotacja.** Artykuł jest poświęcony analizie miejsca i roli czynnika religijnego – ogólnie oraz w Cerkwi jak instytucji – w kształtowaniu społeczeństwa obywatelskiego na Ukrainie. Został opisany udział organizacji religijnych w wydarzeniach do, podczas i po rewolucji 2013-2014 lat, ich wpływ na kształtowanie nowego typu stosunków między Cerkwią, społeczeństwem a państwem, które utwożyły się we współczesnej Ukrainie. Wyciągnięto wnioski, że religia i Cerkiew mogą być katalizatorem procesu kształtowania społeczeństwa obywatelskiego oraz sprzyjać dialogowi pomiędzy władzą a społeczeństwem.*

***Słowa kluczowe:** społeczeństwo obywatelskie, kościół, instytucja społeczna, władza polityczna.*

The current role of religion in society shows that in the ideological and institutional manifestation it can perform and performs successfully the functions of social and political consolidation. Religious institutions are no longer present only in public life, but they have often influenced directly on the activities of the Ukrainian authorities. Religious organizations are actually involved in political life; with their influence, they involve widely different social organizations and even create them for the implementation of social and political tasks. Therefore, it is appropriate and important to analyze the relationship of religious associations and civil society.

Religion is one of the oldest social phenomena. At least, it is obviously older than economic, political and educational institutions, and as a minimum, it equals to the institution of the family by its age. It should be noted that religion as an important social institution is

able to maintain a certain system of the social values that unite its believers, because it provides the worldview of its worshippers with their metaphysical foundation, in which the requirement degree may vary greatly depending on culture or individual.

Modern society is characterized by the formation of new syncretic mental structures, which combine elements of different shapes and types of consciousness. A new socio-cultural reality is being created with its pluralistic coexistence of religious systems that have recently been in a partially closed position caused by the closeness of certain ethno-cultural regions.

These processes are clear signs of a new socio-cultural phenomenon – a postmodern society, where spiritual reality is a sufficient factor in the formation of new relationships between different cultural paradigms and hence new ideas of God, because a spiritual and social reality interact, influencing each other.

Modern processes led to the rapid development of religious communications. The church should have had a constant communicative relationship with their believers, wherever they are. Therefore, in today's global mobility, it also seeks to have all relevant global and mobile communications. If people do not go to church, it should go to them.

Despite the existing differences between approaches to the concept of “civil society”, the researchers are unanimous that there is a special scope of civil society – the scope of political participation in which citizens take part in the formation of a government and governmental policy. Though the civil society is not a political phenomenon, but at the same time it is a prerequisite for the development of political democracy. The following political entities operate within its framework: political parties, associations, clubs, societies, mass media, electoral mechanisms, political representation. The above institutions operate both in civil society and in rule-of-law state. The civil society in that its manifestation is a socially organized structure which forms out of the borders of purely political structures, but comprises them as they are also its segment, consists of citizens and is formed by them as well.

Unlike many approaches to the phenomenon of civil society and the concept of “civil society”, there is a fairly recognized understanding of the phenomenon of church and the concept of “Church” in theoretical works and in the Ukrainian legislation as well. The distinctive attributes of church are the presence of common beliefs and dogma developed (Creed), religious activities (cult and out-of-cult), control system based usually on the hierarchical principle and authoritarianism¹. Thus, by its definition the church has both

¹ Religious Studies Dictionary, Kyiv 1996, p. 372.

internal church and external church dimensions of its activities; it has its own belief system. Any developed belief system can not ignore the real outside world, that's why churches (even those with totalitarian, anti-social character) have its social teaching or social doctrine. These social concepts being justified not by science, but by own dogmas of religious confessions, form directly the social culture of believers, their social ethics, influence on the process of their socialization. In collaboration or at struggle with other social teachings, philosophies, concepts, they form public consciousness, influence on public attitudes and public life. Social and political history gives many examples of using religious communities in the interest of some political or other groups, of abusing them to achieve some political goals. On the other hand, political processes and events often take the religious form when church hierarchs consecrate political or socio-political revolutions, movements, events or consecrate activities of certain political leaders. In the countries where totalitarian or autocratic regimes are established and developed civil society is absent, the social and political programs are performed by administrative, political, and military elite alienated from the people, which addresses to the most authoritative church at the moments of dramatic social and political changes in order to gain its support and stabilize a situation.

Thus, religion (religious organizations) influences on the social and political consciousness of people, affecting the form and content of the activities, the purpose of which is to regulate human relationships to ensure a certain state of the social unit, developing the method of awareness of group needs, interests and means of their satisfaction. The presence of powerful religious institutions can influence on the political system of society, on the formation and functioning of the government. Parties and public associations are formed and operated on the religious grounds. They are created by purely religious affiliation or consist of people with different political views, it can be so called "traditional believers" or non-believers at all, but those who share certain religious (confessional) values and consider them to be a unifying factor. Regarding the participation of church in the social and political life of a certain country, its forms and methods of interaction with civil society, each religious community has its own attitude to the earth's fate not only of its followers, but the whole society as well. Each religious association justifies theoretically or recognizes empirically the belonging of its believers to different social groups, their political, economic and cultural orientation¹.

¹ M. Rybachuk, Civil Society and Church, "Modern Ukrainian Politics. Policies and Politicians Talking About It" 2004, 5 Issue, Kyiv, p. 9-10.

Through its interaction with the political aspects of society Church can help this society not only to treat causes, but also symptoms of social and political disease. Against such social causes and symptoms of diseases, that threaded the very life of Ukrainian society, Maidan rebelled. Overcoming of these diseases is possible through the cooperation of the Church and society.

An important task of the interaction between religion and politics is also to comprehend the process of civil society formation from the religious point of view, which is extremely important for Ukraine. Two Ukrainian Maidans of 2004 and 2014 became the significant points of this process. The Revolution of Dignity in 2014 as well as the Orange Revolution in prior years gave a powerful impact to the formation of civil society in our country. Both Maidans were not only public or political events, but religious phenomena as well. Especially Maidan of 2013-2014 was different, which expressed itself through religious symbols and appealed to ethical axioms in clear religious terms. The very religious ideas played a significant role in the preparation and course of the Revolution of Dignity. The religious ideas have directly (learning from belief systems) or indirectly by a philosophical progress of civilization prepared the necessary ideological and cultural ground.

In most European countries the formation of civil society took place without participation of church, moreover, even in spite of it. Ukraine became an exception in this sense – here churches supported actively Maidan and thus contributed to the development of civil society. As it turned out, the Church can continue and does continue to play an active role in this process. As an example they could contribute significantly to the formation of new principles of the social ethics of Ukraine.

In the events of Maidan the Church actually sided with of the Ukrainian society that proceeded to the mass actions of the civil resistance. Only a few bishops spoke in support of the government and the then President V. Yanukovych. In general, the Church condemned strongly the use of force against peaceful Maidan. Monasteries and temples of Kyiv provided shelters, protection and assistance for protesters. During the military actions the clergy were as a human shield between the parties to the conflict, calling first the uniformed officers not to execute criminal orders and not to use weapons against civilians. The all-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations was doing everything possible to establish a dialogue between the government and the opposition, and Maidan.

Thus, in the events of Maidan the Church revealed itself as a powerful and integral institution of the civil society, which is able to protect the interests of citizens from the government misconduct. It should be noted that such position of the Church was promoted by

the corresponding public demand. According to the social research, the vast majority (74%) of Ukrainian citizens are convinced that “the Church should always side with the people and protect them from the government misconduct”. In general, the Church keeps holding the first position in terms of confidence among social and political institutions. As in all previous surveys, the majority of people today have shown a particular measure of confidence in the Church. At this time, it is expressed by an average of 66% surveyed: from 88% citizens in the West to 53% in the East of Ukraine¹.

If the basis for civil society is solidarity and mutual respect of equal effective subjects cohabited (of various professional, age, gender, national, religious, geographical affiliation), then the Church of Maidan has showed the same characteristics in the interfaith relations. The citizenship of the Church of Maidan was manifested in common prayer actions, spiritual address and guidance, and complementary actions. The Church of Maidan has demonstrated the interfaith solidarity not only in case of the care of community and protection of Human, but also supported each other in difficult moments².

Admittedly is that the Church today is the most stable, structured, powerful and widespread institution of civil society among all the functional ones. It is clear that institutions such as political parties or NGOs are much less common, have less influence and credibility in the community. One of the public figures said such words about the impressions of Maidan: we used to think that the Church is the mediator between me and God – I came to the church, put a candle and prayed, and this is the mission of Church in my life. At Maidan we realized that the Church can play an important social role, we saw another church on the Maidan. But this was not another Church – we have seen the true Church at Maidan. A Church that is not closed by the walls of monasteries, which opens the door to those who are beaten, a church that goes to the barricades to stop a barrage of hate and deadly fire. A Church must be rooted in spirituality, but also has to wrap a whole society and each person in particular with itself. The church has the potential to be an active participant in the formation of civil society, can be a particular arbitrator, can make certain statements that influence to the power and all Ukrainian society – and it does make them.

Today the acute social and political resistance in the country has been increased by the external interference – Russian Federation, which has made great efforts from the beginning of the 2000s to organize and support pro-Russian movements in Ukraine, and then it has

¹ Ukraine-2014: Social and Political Conflict and Church, Kyiv: Razumkov Centre, 2014, p. 24.

² O. Horkusha, L. Fylypovych, Born in Maidan – The Civil Church of Ukraine, http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/studios/studies_of_religions/56419/

proceeded to the open aggression and separatism promotion in some Ukrainian regions. In this situation, the Church is still the most stable, structured, influential and widespread civil society institution among all that are in force. It is obviously that such institutions as political parties or public organizations are much less in evidence, have less influence and credibility in society. The recent events have showed that the Church is a necessary factor in the formation of Ukrainian future, in particular, a factor in the formation of civil society. We can even talk about the existence of a new phenomenon among modern realities – the Civil Church which is not a separate organization, but integrates different religious organizations in order to build the future on the basis of higher spiritual values.

Ukraine has demonstrated that religion and the Church can catalyze rather than impede the formation of civil society. Thus, it is possible to build civil society on religious values . But it will not happen automatically. We need to rethink cardinaly the role of the Church in society and develop new paradigms of its cooperation. In particular, with its own example Ukraine may offer a new model of relations between church and state, namely proceed to the three-dimensional triangle “Church-society-state” – and in that very order. Previously, Ukrainian churches tried to assert themselves functionally in the system of State-Church relations, while Maidan gave to understand that the most effective thing in the modern world is to focus on their cooperation with civil society.

Thus, the civil society is a social organization providing an effective system of the legal protection of civil rights from government misconduct. The basic foundation for the civil society is the political and legal support of various self-organizations of people. Usually church opposes such unfair actions by defining them to be sinful, addressing to mass media, publishing applications, and delivering church sermons. Church can not oppose the same way as civil society is able to do. The civil society has an opportunity to use and does use such forms of struggle as civil disobedience, rallies, strikes, hunger strikes and others, protecting both church and society from the state. Representatives of religious communities also participate in such forms of resistance as members of civil society. From the perspective of social partnership the civil society performs its human rights function concerning the protection of violated rights of religious communities. Self-organization and effective self-defense as one of the conditions for the functioning of civil society become more noticeable features of religious and social associations.

Today the Church is ready to enter into the partnership with the state and the Ukrainian civil society. It is ready to help “in the new revival of the Ukrainian state”. Indeed, the victory of Maidan has created the opportunities to renew the Ukrainian society and

government, to build a democratic state in Ukraine. For the realization of these opportunities it is necessary not only to remove the danger of external military intervention, but to solve the internal social and political conflict as well. And we can solve it through the strategic partnership of churches, civil society and the state.

Nobody demands and requires from church to substitute certain institutions. But what it can is to control. Churches have to control both the government and things that happen within themselves. The formal division of church and state may remain in the Constitution, but there are no such limits *de facto* in the national life of society. Churches play the role of the subject of legitimacy again, they become the leading force of civil society again, and their leaders are already the leaders of public opinion.

So, after the Revolution of winter 2013-2014 it becomes increasingly clear that the key factor that will determine the role of churches and religious organizations at the present stage of the Ukrainian nation formation, will not their activity in consolidation of the nation on the basis of shared beliefs, customs and symbols, but ability to take the vanguard in deep social and moral transformation. In this case, the role of religion for the future Ukraine possibly will be extremely important. Also, in our opinion, current philosophy of the church's interaction with the outside world should be changed, they should become more open and communicative. This will be one of the most important steps towards the European system of values of the Ukrainian society.

The Maidan has shown that society can be organized and function differently – not as much as before in Ukraine, that is based on the vertical of power, not on force, but on the self-organization of community and identity of its members. That should be a society where its members know what they are, what their role in the community. And this is only possible with a high level of consciousness of all citizens, and we need to form the consciousness. And today there is no other institution except the Church, which would have the confidence of society, such experience and knowledge, and therefore is able to consider the opinions and position of each member of society.

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