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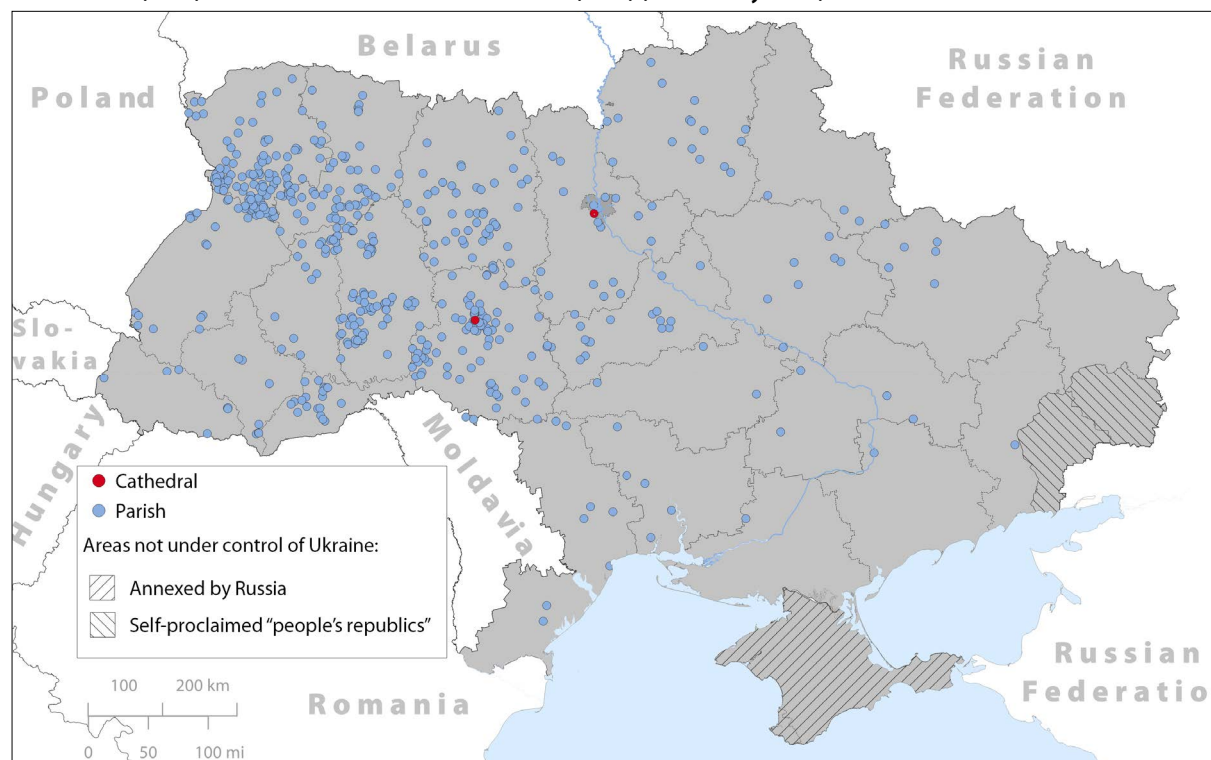
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Map 1: Parishes and Cathedrals That Transferred from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (UOC) to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) (as of 9 May 2020)



Source: Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU) (https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1XQR0sfHFFiiXyGiVYq11mNylJ9fFPdnh&ll=49.131988023060416%2C30.74029849313581&z=7&fbclid=IwAR0tZD7PjM8Fz4pQJG_EZtiz1E_md2nc6dOanWsURfdlejLCH512LJu-o); see also <https://risu.org.ua/en/index/exclusive/review/74069>; map created in QGIS by the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen, with geodata from <https://www.openstreetmap.org>

ANALYSIS

International Implications of Ukrainian Autocephaly (2019–2020)

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Abstract

The recognition of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine by three “Greek” churches represents a viral reaction to their indisputable leader, the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic can reformat Orthodoxy by bringing about a rapid generational change. The collapse of the global economy and political instability will have its inevitable theopolitical impact upon the current Orthodox standoff.

A New Social Doctrine of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

On 27 March 2020, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America under the Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP) pub-

lished, in twelve languages, a brand-new social doctrine of the Ecumenical Patriarchate called *For the Life of the Word: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*.¹ Although this release circumstantially aligned with the

1 “For the Life of the Word: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church,” *The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*, 27 March 2020; <https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos> (accessed 28 March 2020).

outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, it had been finalized in late 2019 and has nothing to do with it in terms of content. However, it is noteworthy that the EP document appeared twenty years after a similar doctrine of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP).² The MP concept was the first-ever Orthodox social response to the challenges of modernity to appear in such a form; the EP version is now the second and, inevitably, more modern. Soon, it will become an object of various comparative studies. For this article, it suffices to point out that the MP version has already been mocked by its competitors as a “rudimentary effort” in a situation of “confessional isolation,”³ which reflects the ongoing jurisdictional conflict between the EP and MP in the Orthodox commonwealth. The EP social doctrine can be seen in this connection as another step in the current standoff, this time on the level of contemporary canon law. Given that the international Orthodox community is steadily morphing into multiple Orthodoxies, the two now-available Orthodox approaches to modern social and political developments inform this process conceptually.

A Viral Reaction to Ukrainian Autocephaly

On 6 January 2019, the Ecumenical Patriarchate issued a declaration of autocephaly (independence) for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU),⁴ created in December 2019. It was done in disregard of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate in the country (UOC MP).⁵ Some ten months later, on 12 October 2019, the Church of Greece, being the first

Local Orthodox Church (LOC) to follow the EP, voted for the recognition of the OCU, acknowledging the right of the EP to “grant [the] autocephaly” (“*παραχώρηση του Αυτόκεφάλου*,” i.e., regarding the OCU). The Church of Greece also stated that Ukraine has remained in the jurisdiction of the EP since its controversial Act of 1686, (according to which, the MP took care of the then-Kyiv Metropolitanate of the EP).⁶ Omitting here a review of recent debates about the Act of 1686,⁷ it is important to keep in mind that “an event cannot be simply erased from history” because “it had consequences, and it led to other acts and to situations that exist today”; therefore, “it is not feasible to go back to 1686 and to restart from there.”⁸

These developments push for a painful transformation of ecclesial borders and identities in and beyond Ukraine. The Moscow Patriarchate took the actions of the EP as an intervention of one LOC in the affairs of the other. As a result, on 15 October 2018, the MP broke the ecclesiastical communion with the EP; and a year later, on 17 October 2019, it ceased communion with the Church of Greece, *except* those dioceses that explicitly distance themselves from the OCU.⁹ The MP applied the same principle to the follow-up recognition of the UOC¹⁰ by the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa on 8 November 2019.¹¹ As I pointed out elsewhere, this MP position *nolens volens* resurrects the interesting antique approach to a diocese as to the Catholic Church (*καθολική εκκλησία*).¹²

Besides, it is likely that the Church of Cyprus will soon follow suit and formalize its now-implicit recog-

2 “The Basis of the Social Concept,” *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*; <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/> (accessed 28 March 2020).

3 John Chryssavgis: “The Orthodox Church & Social Teaching ‘For the Life of the World,’” *Commonweal*, 23 March 2020; <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/orthodox-church-social-teaching> (accessed 28 March 2020).

4 “Patriarchal and Synodal Tomos for the Bestowal of the Ecclesiastical Status of Autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine,” *The Ecumenical Patriarchate*, 14 January 2019; <https://www.patriarchate.org/-/patriarchikos-kai-synodikos-tomos-choregeeseo-autokephalou-ekklestiastikou-kathestotos-eis-ten-en-oukrania-orthodoxon-ekklestias> (accessed 15 January 2019).

5 Alexander Ponomariou: “Ukrainian Church Autocephaly: The Redrawing of the Religious Borders and Political Identities in the Conflict between Ukraine and Russia,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, 231/2019, pp. 2–9; <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD231.pdf>

6 “Η Εκκλησία της Ελλάδος για το ζήτημα Αυτόκεφαλίας της Εκκλησίας της Ουκρανίας” [“The Church of Greece on the Issue of Autocephaly of the Church of Ukraine”], *The Church of Greece*, 12 October 2019; http://www.ecclesia.gr/epikairotita/main_epikairotita_next.asp?id=2882 (accessed 14 October 2019).

7 State of the art: «Воссоединение Киевской митрополии с Русской Православной Церковью 1676–1686 гг.: Исследования и документы», под общей редакцией Митрополита Волоколамского Илариона, Москва: Православная Энциклопедия, 2019; В. Г. Ченцова: «Воссоединение» (рецензия на: «Воссоединение Киевской митрополии...»), *Вестник «Альянс-Архео»*, 30/2019, pp. 87–173.

8 Thomas Bremer / Sophie Senyk, “The Current Ecclesial Situation in Ukraine: Critical Remarks,” *The St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 63-1/2019, pp. 27–58, here p. 42.

9 «Заявление Священного Синода Русской Православной Церкви» [“Statement of the Most Holy Synod of the ROC”], *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 17 October 2019; <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5515008.html> (accessed 17 October 2019).

10 «Журнал №151: Журналы заседания Священного Синода от 26 декабря 2019 года» [“Journal No. 151: The Journals of the Most Holy Synod as of 26 December 2019”], *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 26 December 2019; <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5553804.html> (accessed 28 March 2020).

11 “Communique,” *The Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa*, 8 November 2019; <http://www.patriarchateofalexandria.com/index.php?module=news&action=details&cid=1602> (accessed 29 December 2019).

12 Alexander Ponomariou: “Theopolitische Entwicklungen in der Ukraine” [“Theopolitical Developments in Ukraine”], *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, 1/2020, pp. 13–15, here p. 14; https://www.academia.edu/41642250/Theopolitische_Entwicklungen_in_der_Ukraine_2019

dition of the OCU. Its Primate, Archbishop Chrysostom, participated in a liturgy with the Ecumenical Patriarch on 8 March 2020 in Istanbul, during which the name of Metropolitan Epiphany of the OCU was read aloud among the lawful Orthodox primates (from the EP's point of view).¹³ His participation in the event without objection tacitly approves the EP's actions concerning Ukraine. Moreover, Chrysostom stressed on another occasion that he sees no problem in recognizing the OCU formally (*“Δεν υπάρχει για μένα κανένα πρόβλημα”*).¹⁴ Such loyalty to Constantinople reflects the neo-post-Byzantine identity shared by the “Greek” churches (see below).

“The Orthodox Romans”: A Neo-Post-Byzantine Identity

Because of a shared language, ethnicity, culture, and neo-post-Byzantine identity, the “Greek” churches have traditionally supported the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This support is exemplified by the position of the Albanian Orthodox Church, headed by an ethnically Greek Archbishop, who promised to stay with the EP even in case of a church schism with Moscow.¹⁵ In particular, the Albanian primate vowed, “the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania will remain with the Ecumenical Patriarchate firmly speaking the truth in love.”¹⁶ I want to add here that the statement *“θά παραμένη σταθερώς εν ἀληθευούση ἀγάπη μετά του Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου”*¹⁷ should be more accurately translated “[It] will stay firmly with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in truth-speaking love.” The point, as I see it, is that the Albanian church vows to stay with the EP “in love” (*“ἐν ἀγάπῃ”*), defined by the adjective “truth-speaking”

(*“ἀληθευούση”*),—but *not* to speak, as its official English translation suggests,—which makes a difference: loyalty to the neo-post-Byzantine Constantinople is of high priority for the “Greek” churches.

A peculiar detail in terms of the neo-post-Byzantine identity characterizes the ancient Jerusalem Patriarchate that, despite its name and whereabouts, belongs to the “Greek” churches. Celebrating, on 25 March 2020, the national holiday of Greece and Cyprus in commemoration of the Greek Revolution of 1821, which is their Independence Day, the Patriarch of Jerusalem ended his address at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher with his traditional doxology: *“Ζήτω τό εὐσεβές καί βασιλικόν γένος τῶν Ρωμαίων Ὀρθοδόξων!”*¹⁸ The point is that Patriarch Theophilos emphasizes the imagined Romaness of modern Greeks, providing a link to Byzantium. The official English version of this exclamation is “Long live the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox!”¹⁹ The Arabic and Russian versions render the genitive plural substantive *“τῶν Ρωμαίων”* (i.e., “of the Romans”) as *“الرومى”*²⁰ (*al-Rumi*) and *“Ромеев,”*²¹ respectively, although the Arabic transcript omits “Orthodox.” However, it is noteworthy that the Romanian version translates it *“al grecilor”*²² for a reason (cf. “Roman” and “Romanian”); and, thus, it deprives the Jerusalem doxology of its neo-post-Byzantine connotation.

A Jurisdictional Pandemic

By way of counteraction, the Moscow Patriarchate made a strategic decision to regard the EP jurisdiction as non-existent and, instead, expand its own where possible. At the same time, the EP did a great disservice to itself on 29 November 2018 by lightheartedly dissolv-

13 «Името на Киевския Митрополит Епифаний беше поменато при съслужението между Вселенския Патриарх и Кипърския Архиепископ» [“The Name of the Kiev Metropolitan Epiphany was Mentioned during the Co-Service of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Cyprian Archbishop”], *Doxologia Infoneus*, 8 March 2020; <https://www.doxologiainfoneus.com/2020/03/imeto-na-kievskia-mitropolit-epifanii-beshe-pomenato-pri-syluzhenieto-mejdu-vselenskia-patriarh-i-kipyrskia-arhiepiskop.html> (accessed 31 March 2020).

14 “Η απάντηση του Αρχιεπισκόπου Κύπρου προς τον Οικουμενικό Πατριάρχη” [“The Reply of the Archbishop of Cyprus to the Ecumenical Patriarch”], *Romfea*, 6 March 2020; <https://www.romfea.gr/epikairota-xronika/35665-i-apantisi-tou-arxiepiskopou-kyprou-pros-ton-oikoumeniko-patriarxi> (accessed 31 March 2020).

15 Alexander Ponomarev: “Theopolitics on the Grand Chessboard: Ukraine between the Church Canons and the Canons of War,” *CEES Working Paper No. 2/2019*, University of Zurich: Center for Eastern European Studies, p. 7; https://www.cees.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:305943d1-de5a-4be2-929b-9a561805e27b/CEES%20Working%20Paper%20No._2%202019.pdf

16 English version: “On the Ukrainian Ecclesiastical Question: 2nd Reply,” *The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania*, 21 March 2019; <http://orthodoxalbania.net/images/PDF/PatriarchBartholowmew321English.pdf> (accessed 13 April 2019).

17 “Περί του Ουκρανικού ζητήματος: 2α ἀπόκριση” [“On the Ukrainian Question: Second Reply”], *The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania*, 21 March 2019; <http://orthodoxalbania.net/images/PDF/Patriarch2.pdf> (accessed 13 April 2019), here pp. 6–7.

18 Greek original: “The National Feast of 25th March 1821 at the Patriarchate,” *The Jerusalem Patriarchate*, 25 March 2020; <https://jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2020/03/25/η-εθνικη-εορτη-της-25ης-μαρτιου-1821-εις-το-π> (accessed 27 March 2020).

19 English version: “The National Feast of 25th March 1821 at the Patriarchate,” *The Jerusalem Patriarchate*, 25 March 2020; <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2020/03/25/the-national-feast-of-25th-march-1821-at-the-patriarchate/> (accessed 27 March 2020).

20 Arabic version: “The National Feast of 25th March 1821 at the Patriarchate,” *The Jerusalem Patriarchate*, 26 March 2020; <https://ar.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2020/03/26/65187> (accessed 27 March 2020).

21 Russian version: “The National Feast of 25th March 1821 at the Patriarchate,” *The Jerusalem Patriarchate*, 25 March 2020; <https://ru.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2020/03/25/65234> (accessed 27 March 2020).

22 Romanian version: “The National Feast of 25th March 1821 at the Patriarchate,” *The Jerusalem Patriarchate*, 25 March 2020; <https://ro.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2020/03/25/44932> (accessed 27 March 2020).

ing the Exarchate of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe, headquartered in its jurisdiction in France. Ostensibly, it was designed as a motion to eliminate the “Russian threat” in Europe in response to the MP’s break of communion. However, on 23 February 2019, the Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe rebelled against the decision of the EP;²³ and, on 7 September 2019, its Extraordinary General Assembly passed a resolution, (by 58.1 percent versus 41.9 percent), to join the Moscow Patriarchate as a self-governed ecclesial entity formed under French law.²⁴ On 14 September 2019, the MP announced the inclusion into its jurisdiction of the head of the Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe, Archbishop Jean, “together with all the clergy under his leadership who wish to follow him and parishes which will express this desire.”²⁵ Although the Archdiocese comprised only around one hundred and twenty parishes in Western Europe, the change of jurisdiction marked a reputational and tactical,—yet unplanned,—victory for the MP over the EP.

It took the EP a few months to counter the defeat: on 9 March 2020, the EP’s Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America announced the creation of the Vicariate for the Orthodox Christian Communities of Slavic Tradition, consisting so far of three parishes.²⁶ This American attempt to counterbalance the European losses of the EP looks weak at present, and it remains to be seen if the EP can manage to benefit from it in the midterm.

On the other hand, on 28 December 2018, a fortnight after the OCU had been founded in Kyiv, the MP decided to found an Exarchate of South-Eastern Asia that would thus overlap with EP jurisdiction in that part of the world. This demonstrative and preemptive motion was based on the conviction that, apart from Ukraine, “the EP attempts to take control over the [MP’s] Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church and the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church” (“君士坦丁堡宗主教还

企图对日本自治东正教会和中国自治东正教会进行控制”).²⁷ Even communist North Korea (!) has become a factor in this jurisdictional pandemic, its Orthodox Temple of the Life-Giving Trinity in Pyongyang being a cause of contention between the conflicting parties.²⁸ It all signals that the tension between Moscow and Constantinople nears a point of irreversibility.

Theopolitical Constellations prior to Global Lockdown

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization characterized the swift spread of Covid-19 as a pandemic,²⁹ which resulted in a near-global lockdown throughout March. In this regard, those six LOCs (out of fourteen) that accepted the invitation of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and came to a “fraternal” meeting to Amman, Jordan in late February 2020 were lucky to still be able to travel and gather for a tête-à-tête discussion; albeit, Jerusalem or Bethlehem would have been more appropriate as a venue. The delegations in Amman were the Russian Orthodox Church (led by Patriarch Kirill), the Serbian Orthodox Church (led by Patriarch Irinej), the Polish Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, and the Romanian Orthodox Church. Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem presided. The rest of the LOCs ignored the invitation. There are grounds to believe, however, that the ancient Patriarchate of Antioch, based in Russia-controlled Syria, refused to join the six churches in Amman because of its own jurisdictional conflict with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The presence of the Russian and Serbian Patriarchs was stipulated by the issues discussed: Ukrainian autocephaly and the standoff between Moscow and Constantinople, as well as problems for Belgrade in Northern Macedonia and Montenegro. The five-plus-one constellation demonstrated the actual theopolitical potential of Moscow. Nevertheless, it does not mean ipso facto that

23 “Communiqué of the Diocesan Administration,” *The Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe*, 23 February 2019; <http://exarchat.eu/spip.php?article2335> (accessed 20 September 2019).

24 “Communiqué of the Diocesan Administration,” *The Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe*, 10 September 2019; <http://exarchat.eu/spip.php?article2405> (accessed 20 September 2019).

25 “The Russian Orthodox Church Holy Synod integrates the head of the Archdiocese of the Western European Parishes of Russian tradition as well as clergy and parishes who wish to follow him,” *The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations*, 14 September 2019; <https://mospat.ru/en/2019/09/14/news177560/> (accessed 14 September 2019).

26 “Archbishop Elpidophoros Announces the Creation of a New Vicariate in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese,” *The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*, 9 March 2020; <https://www.goarch.org/-/2020-03-09-vicariate-of-slavic-churches> (accessed 10 March 2020).

27 Yuan Quan: “Exclusive Interview with Dmitri Petrovsky: ‘U.S. behind the Russian-Ukrainian Orthodox Church Schism,’” *The Observer* [原泉: “专访德米特里·彼得罗夫斯基: ‘俄乌东正教会分裂·背后是美国’,” 观察者], 17 December 2018; https://www.guancha.cn/DmitriPetrovsky/2018_12_17_483490_s.shtml (accessed 9 September 2019).

28 Alexander Ponomariov: “‘Digital’ Canon Law: On the Innovative Digital Dimension of the Concept of Canonical Territory of the Russian Orthodox Church,” *Magazin des DFG-Graduiertenkollegs »Privatheit und Digitalisierung«*, 12/2019, pp. 25–30, here p. 27; https://www.academia.edu/41366002/_Digital_Canon_Law

29 “WHO Director-General’s Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19,” *World Health Organization*, 11 March 2020; <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020> (accessed 31 March 2020).

the EP controls the rest of the LOCs. One can confidently speak about the “Greek” churches (i.e., of Greece, Cyprus, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Albania) as allies or, even, vassals of the EP that will hardly disobey it. On the other hand, it is incorrect to subdivide Orthodoxy only into the “Greek” and “Slavic” parts, since the “Latin” Romanian Orthodox Church, the Georgian Orthodox Church, and the Patriarchate of Antioch (now Arabic) do not belong to them and can circumstantially support either of the two.

A recent example of emerging multiple Orthodoxies was the All-Orthodox Council of 2016, led by the EP, in which four LOCs (Russian, Bulgarian, Georgian, and Antiochian) refused to participate. This time, the “Slavic” Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church did not side with Moscow. As for the “Latin” Romanian Orthodox Church, it is interested in 127 Romanian-speaking parishes in Ukraine that belong to the UOC MP, which Bucharest wants to organize “within a *Romanian Orthodox Vicariate*.”³⁰ Hence, on the one hand, Bucharest needs the MP as a partner; on the other hand, Moscow has here certain leeway for a vicariate-in-exchange-for-support tradeoff.

Given that the meeting in Amman was organized by a “Greek” patriarch, it is no wonder that the press release does not display any aggression toward the EP. Admitting “the imminent danger of schism within our Orthodox Communion,” its text basically calls for dialogue, unity, and reconciliation.³¹ The UOC MP was disappointed by the press release, wishing the topic of Ukraine should have been stated clearly and concretely.³² Indeed, in consideration of the MP position before its adoption,³³ the document is lackluster. Moreover, some of its formulations testify against the MP position, (e.g., “the granting of autocephaly to particu-

lar Churches should be *finalised* [...] with pan-Orthodox consensus”). This text could be interpreted in such a way that Ukrainian autocephaly is a fact and that its recognition by the other LOCs is just a matter of time. In addition, the document expressed the humble hope “that His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with his known seniority of honour (*πρεσβεία τιμής*) will join this dialogue along with his brother Primates.” It is not quite clear what made Patriarch Kirill sign up to this humiliating address after the radical break of communion with the EP. Yet, it is clear that the “Orthodox Romans” managed to partially impose their own agenda upon the Moscow-led constellation.

It is noteworthy that Patriarch Theophilos announced his decision to convene the Amman meeting *after* Patriarch Kirill had awarded him the Patriarch Alexy II Prize in Moscow, on 21 November 2019,³⁴ and *after* a meeting with President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, on 20 November 2019.³⁵ It engendered the hearsay that Moscow simply bribed Jerusalem and emphasized the role of the Russian state in MP affairs. On the other hand, the involvement of the U.S. Department of State and Secretary Michael Pompeo personally in OCU affairs is an open secret, too. For instance, on 10 January 2019, the U.S. Department of State stated that the “announcement of autocephaly for an independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine marks a historic achievement.”³⁶ During his last visit to Ukraine on 31 January 2020, the U.S. Secretary of State said at a press conference with Ukraine’s President Zelensky that he “was pleased by the recent decisions by the Greek and Alexandrian Orthodox Churches to recognize the Orthodox Church of Ukraine as a fellow autocephalous church,” stressing, “Russia should never stand in the way of the Ukrainian people’s fundamental right to exercise their religious freedom.”³⁷

30 English version: “Holy Synod Examines Ukrainian Ecclesiastical Issue at First 2019 Working Session,” *The Romanian Orthodox Church*, 21 February 2019; <https://basilica.ro/en/holy-synod-examines-ukrainian-ecclesiastical-issue-at-first-2019-working-session/> (accessed 25 February 2019).

31 “Dialogue and Unity: The Amman Fraternal Familial Gathering of the Orthodox Primates and Delegates,” 25–27 February 2020, Amman, Jordan. *The Jerusalem Patriarchate*; <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2020/02/26/maintain-the-unity-of-the-spirit-in-the-bond-of-peace-eph-43-the-amman-fraternal-familial-gathering-of-the-orthodox-primates-and-delegates-25-27-february-2020/> (accessed 24 March 2020).

32 «Пресс-конференция Блаженнейшего Митрополита Онуфрия и митрополита Черногорско-Приморского Амфилохия в Подгорице» [“Press Conference of Metropolitan Onufrii and Metropolitan Amphilochius in Podgorica”], *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, 28 February 2020; <https://www.facebook.com/unionoftheo/j/videos/191045898840303/> (accessed 28 March 2020).

33 «Святейший Патриарх Кирилл принял участие во встрече Предстоятелей и делегаций Поместных Православных Церквей в Аммане» [“Patriarch Kirill Took Part in the Meeting of Primates and Delegations of the LOCs in Amman”], *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 26 February 2020; <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5597933.html> (accessed 24 March 2020).

34 “The Patriarch of Jerusalem Honoured for his Endeavours Promoting Church Unity, Announces Decision to Host Primates in Jordan,” *The Jerusalem Patriarchate*, 21 November 2019; <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2019/11/21/the-patriarch-of-jerusalem-honoured-for-his-endeavours-promoting-church-unity-announces-decision-to-host-primates-in-jordan/> (accessed 2 April 2020).

35 “Встреча с Патриархом Московским и всея Руси Кириллом и Патриархом Иерусалимским Феофилом III” [“A Meeting with Patriarch Kirill and Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem”], *President of Russia*, 20 November 2019; <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62081> (accessed 2 April 2020).

36 Michael Pompeo: “Declaration of Ukrainian Autocephaly,” *U.S. Department of State*, 10 January 2019; <https://www.state.gov/declaration-of-ukrainian-autocephaly/> (accessed 28 March 2020).

37 “Secretary of State Pompeo Meeting with Ukrainian President,” *C-SPAN*, 31 January 2020; <https://www.c-span.org/video/?468813-1/secretary-state-mike-pompeo-meets-ukrainian-president-zelensky> (accessed 28 March 2020).

Pompeo also regularly meets with Metropolitan Epiphany of the OCU, and the latter calls for the “restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity, its sovereignty within internationally recognized borders,”³⁸ as if he were a lay politician. Besides, *before* the Patriarch of Jerusalem received his award in Moscow, Epiphany had been awarded the Athenagoras Human Rights Award in New York on 19 October 2019;³⁹ whereafter, on 23 October 2019, Secretary Pompeo and Metropolitan Epiphany “expressed their hopes for a diplomatic resolution to the Russia-instigated conflict in eastern Ukraine”⁴⁰ at a joint meeting, during which Epiphany reported to the U.S. Secretary of State on the recognition of OCU autocephaly by the Church of Greece.⁴¹ This dynamic highlights an active top-tier theopolitical competition between Russia and America, with Ukraine remaining an object of their politics.

Conclusion

The formal recognition of the OCU by the Church of Greece and the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

and the implicit recognition thereof by the Church of Cyprus represent a viral reaction of the “Greek” churches to their indisputable neo-post-Byzantine leader, the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Orthodox commonwealth is thus facing an “imminent danger of schism.”⁴² Furthermore, the black-swan outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic may result in disruptive consequences for the Orthodox communities and their elderly leaders who are especially susceptible to the disease. The example of a 70-year-old bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church, who died because of the coronavirus on 30 March 2020 in Belgrade,⁴³ is telling in this regard. The pandemic can reformat the churches by bringing about an unexpected generational change; wherefore, neither Patriarch Kirill nor Patriarch Bartholomew, (nor politicians like Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin), can be confident about the near future. Besides, the collapse of the global economy and the ensuing political instability will have its inevitable theopolitical impact upon the current Orthodox standoff, depending on which nation manages to weather the viral challenge with less damage.

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38 “His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphany, the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, met with the US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo,” *The Orthodox Church of Ukraine*, 31 January 2020; <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/vsi-novyny/his-beatitude-metropolitan-epiphany-the-primate-of-the-orthodox-church-of-ukraine-met-with-the-us-secretary-of-state-michael-r-pompeo/> (accessed 28 March 2020).

39 «Блаженнішому Митрополиту Епіфанію вручено шановану відзнаку – “Нагороду Афінагора з прав людини”» [“Metropolitan Epiphany Received Honorable Prize ‘Athenagoras Human Rights Award’”], *The Orthodox Church of Ukraine*, 20 October 2019; <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/vsi-novyny/blazhennijshomu-myropolitu-epifaniyu-vrucheno-shanovanu-vidznaku-nagorodu-afinagora-z-prav-lyudyny/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

40 “Secretary Michael R. Pompeo’s Meeting with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine’s Metropolitan Epiphany,” *U.S. Department of State*, 23 October 2019; <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeos-meeting-with-the-orthodox-church-of-ukraines-metropolitan-epiphany/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

41 «Митрополит Епіфаній зустрівся з Державним секретарем США Майклом Помпео» [“Metropolitan Epiphany met with U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo”], *The Orthodox Church of Ukraine*, 23 October 2019; <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/vsi-novyny/myropolity-epifanij-zustrivsia-z-derzhavnym-sekretarem-ssha-majklom-pompeo/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

42 “Dialogue and Unity...”

43 “Bishop Milutin of Valjevo, Serbia, reposed in the Lord,” *The Serbian Orthodox Church*, 30 March 2020; http://spc.rs/eng/bishop_milutin_valjevo_serbia_reposed_lord (accessed 31 March 2020).