

# Between Church and State

*Conflict, contention, and coping through the politicisation of religion in rural Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) communities.  
Rivne Oblast, Spring 2019.*



Elsa Court

6495001

Utrecht University

02/08/2019

A Thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Supervisor: Dr Chris van der Borgh

02/08/2019

MA Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Programme Trajectory: Internship & Thesis Writing (15 ECTS)

Word Count: 16442

Cover image is author's own.

Picture of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Chudel, Rivne Oblast.



British Foreign Office Travel Advice Map of Ukraine © Crown Copyright



Map of Ukraine with Oblast boundaries, Rivne Oblast in green. Wikimedia Commons (CC).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thanks must go to my thesis supervisor, Chris van der Borgh, for your inspiration, guidance, and critique throughout my long process of writing. Thanks also to the Europe team at PAX, particularly Andriy, Cinta, and Medina, for making the office a welcoming place for an internship, and of course for your help, knowledge, and encouragement of both my research and (unexpectedly multiple) trips to Ukraine.

I also owe a great debt to my parents and grandmother, as without their considerable moral and financial support, my studies in the Netherlands would not have been possible. I should also mention that I greatly appreciate your restraint in not calling the British Embassy when I forget to contact you from the Ukrainian countryside. To Christian, you know your translation, editing, and proofreading skills did not go unused. Thank you for laughing with (or at) me and for sharing your expertise, as well as your unending patience and constant enthusiasm for all I do.

Last but not least, thank you to Tanya, without whom this thesis would not be half as good. I am hugely grateful to both you and Katya for arranging interviews, meetings, and marshrutka rides, for your explanations, anecdotes, hospitality, help, trust, and translations, but most of all your friendship. I feel very lucky to have come to know a corner of your country that few foreigners have the opportunity to come across, which is filled with such wonderful people.

Все буде добре.

## ABSTRACT

Since the formation and granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) in 2018-19, the country's historically larger Orthodox denomination, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), has come under significant pressure. Unlike the OCU, the UOC-MP is part of the Russian Orthodox Church structure and for this reason is deemed a threat by many political elites. As a result, many parishes are forced to make a choice between 'switching' from the UOC-MP to the OCU, or face scrutiny at remaining with an 'unpatriotic' church. This thesis examines how rural church communities in Rivne oblast, in north-western Ukraine, reacted to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level. Three cases were examined to understand how these villagers cope, adapt, and react in the short term to structural changes in religious organisation. In turn, this research raises potential reasons as to why this process was affected by conflict between local actors in some communities, and why in other cases, conflict was avoided. While each village is unique due to specific local factors, this research provides an insight into the scenarios of reaction by UOC-MP communities to the activation social boundaries along religious lines.

## Contents

Introduction.....	8
Methodology.....	12
Positioning my Research .....	12
Research method and data collection techniques.....	13
Limitations.....	17
Theoretical Background: 'Us' vs 'Them' .....	18
Social boundaries and boundary work.....	18
Social boundaries and religion.....	20
Social boundary mechanisms .....	21
Dealing with social boundary change .....	23
Conclusion .....	24
Analysis: Introduction .....	26
Ukraine since 1991 .....	26
Ukraine's Religious Landscape.....	26
Rivne Oblast.....	29
Case I: Derazhne / Деражне .....	30
Past Attempts .....	31
The Issue of Language.....	32
Conclusion .....	33
Case II: Nova Moshchanytsia / Нова Мощаниця .....	34
Prayers and a Protest.....	35
Confrontation .....	37
Securitisation of religion .....	38
Protecting Property .....	39
Conclusion .....	39
Case III: Chudel / Чудель.....	41
Avoidance.....	42
Dialogue .....	43

Silence.....	44
Blame Deferral .....	44
Local Identity.....	45
Conclusion .....	47
Conclusion .....	48
Works Cited.....	50
Appendix.....	54

## Introduction

'Moskal' is a derogatory term in the Ukrainian language, used against the Ukrainians who are perceived to place their allegiance with Moscow, as well as against Russians themselves. While the word has been in use for hundreds of years (and by many is considered an ethnic slur), its popular usage re-emerged during the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution as a protest chant against then-President Yanukovich's pro-Russian policies.<sup>1</sup> Since the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and outbreak of the conflict in the eastern Donbas region (which by now has killed over 13,000 people), this word is often used to refer to separatists or traitors. In 2018, however, I noticed the word was also being used to insult a new set of characters: Orthodox priests. Even in areas hundreds of kilometres from the front line, where Ukrainian-speaking populations were served by a long-standing Ukrainian priest, the 'Moskal' label was becoming more prevalent, particularly on social media. Specifically, those under fire belonged to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), historically the largest of the three Orthodox denominations that arose in post-Soviet Ukraine. Of these three, only the UOC-MP is officially part of the Russian Orthodox Church structure, headed by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow. This reason, along with the ongoing conflict and a series of changes in the relationship between religion and politics, the position of this church has come increasingly into question in Ukrainian society. As a result, many UOC-MP parishes have found themselves in a position where they are forced to make a choice: between their perceived allegiance to their church, or their state. This thesis will explore the impact of the politicisation of this denomination on such communities, specifically in one region of north-western Ukraine.

### Army, Language, Faith

While officially part of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate does have extensive autonomy in regard to administration, financial issues, and the election of its own primate. Moreover, ethnic Ukrainians dominate among both the leadership and membership of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, its place in the hierarchy of Russian Orthodoxy means it would be false to suggest that there was never distrust over the 'Russian' orientation of this Church in independent Ukraine. Anxieties increased as religion joined language at the forefront of Putin's neo-imperialist 'Russian World' ideology, as the relationship between his

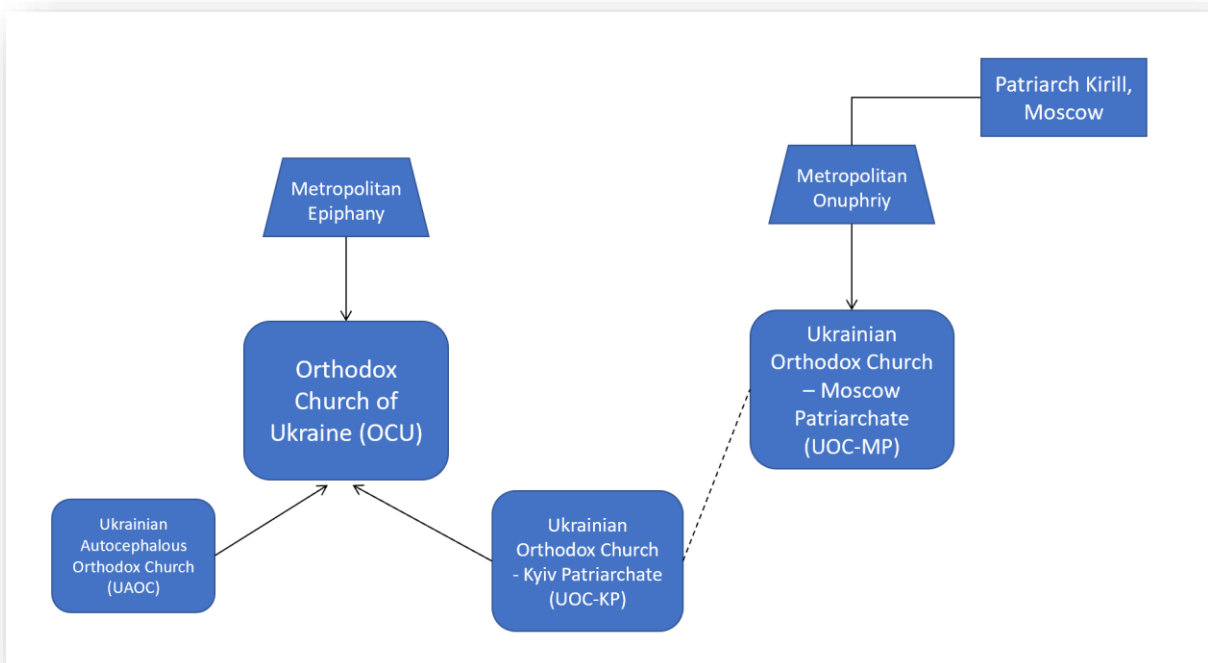
---

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Kazakov, *Evromaidan 'kto ne skachet tot moskal'*, YouTube Video, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzE9rep2svI>.

<sup>2</sup> Katarzyna Jarzyńska, 'Patriarch Kirill's Game over in Ukraine', OSW Commentary (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 14 August 2014), [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary\\_144\\_0.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary_144_0.pdf).



regime and the Russian Orthodox Church grew closer.<sup>34</sup> However, in 2018 a new political dimension was at play in Ukraine. It was clear incumbent President Petro Poroshenko would be running for re-election, and lacking any resounding success on the economic or military front, his campaign strategy centred around Ukrainian patriotism. Billboards began to appear across the country with his eventual campaign slogan “Army, Language, Faith”, which he used to position himself as the only candidate capable of defending the Ukrainian nation. Simultaneously, he was pushing for the recognition of a single national church in opposition to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP). What happened next, depending on one’s perspective, was either a politically-engineered (and completely illegitimate) schism of an ancient institution, or the rightful unification and recognition of an independent church.



The situation culminated in Kyiv on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2018, when a unification council of Orthodox bishops convened inside St Sophia’s Cathedral to officialise a monumental shift in the structure of the religion in Ukraine. Unlike Romania, Serbia, or Bulgaria, a recognised Ukrainian national branch of the Orthodox Church had not existed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Instead, the religious landscape was fragmented between three branches of Orthodoxy: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), and the smaller Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). It should be underlined that the differences between these denominations have little to do with

<sup>3</sup> Cyril Hovorun, ‘Interpreting the “Russian World”’, in *Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis*, ed. Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 164.

belief or practice, but rather, “they hinge on the different authority figures each recognises”.<sup>5</sup> Of the three, the first has historically been considered to be largest, and was the only to be internationally recognised as legitimate. The Church is headed by Metropolitan Onufriy, who, as already mentioned, sits below Patriarch Kirill of Moscow in the hierarchy of the Church. The UOC-KP was led by Metropolitan Filaret, previously a UOC-MP bishop who created the Kyiv Patriarchate after engineering a schism in 1992. He had since been involved in numerous attempts to unite the churches under his leadership. However, it was at the council in St Sophia’s that the decision was finalised to merge the UOC-KP and the UAOC into a new church in opposition to the Moscow-backed UOC-MP, thereby creating the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), headed by a newly elected leader, Metropolitan Epiphany. Only two bishops of the UOC-MP attended the event, with the vast majority of the clergy boycotting. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2019, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, effectively the ‘first among equals’ of international Orthodox leadership, granted the OCU a *Tomos*. This document is a decree of independence, or official recognition of the newly formed church. In response, the Russian Orthodox Church cut off ties with Constantinople and continues to view the OCU as completely illegitimate.

### Research Topic

Much of the reporting on this schism has focused on the (geo)political roots and implications of these events, on the positive impact on Ukraine’s nation building project, and on the way politicians both in Kyiv and Moscow have turned to religion to score political points. However, little attention has been paid to how this will affect the everyday lives of Orthodox believers in Ukraine. The UOC-MP has historically held more parishes in Ukraine than the UOC-KP and the UAOC combined (see figure 1 in the appendix). Though the country is constitutionally secular, many politicians encouraged parishes to switch from the UOC-MP to the new ‘national’ Church, framing the UOC-MP as pro-Russian and a threat to national security. For many UOC-MP believers, particularly in western Ukraine, such rhetoric is non-sensical: local priests have never stirred up trouble in the region and five years have passed since the war began. Such people propose that the run-up to the Presidential elections in March 2019, in which religion was a major polarising topic, led to a significant increase in the politicisation of religion. In their opinion, Orthodoxy has remained unchanged for centuries; switching over to a new church that appears to be engineered by politicians appears to be the ultimate blasphemy. However, for others, the conceptualisation of the OCU by figures like (former) President Petro Poroshenko as the ‘national’

---

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Wanner, “‘Fraternal’ Nations and Challenges to Sovereignty in Ukraine: The Politics of Linguistic and Religious Ties”, *American Ethnologist* 41, no. 3 (2014): 432.

church is attractive, and represents a long-awaited a Ukrainian church for the Ukrainian people.<sup>6</sup> For them, the OCU represents a new Ukraine, a country truly separated from Moscow not only by state, but by church too.

## Research Question

This thesis is a story about what happens when the everyday becomes political, leaving some communities to abruptly end up on the ‘wrong’ side of a newly-emphasised boundary. It explores the various scenarios that UOC-MP parishes have undergone in the north-western province (Oblast) of Rivne, in order to understand the complex process of boundary formation and negotiation at a local level, with differing results. It thereby seeks an answer to the question: *how did rural Moscow Patriarchate parishes in Rivne Oblast react to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level, following the unification of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2018?* The focus on rural communities is twofold. Firstly, rural areas in Ukraine have much higher religiosity rates, thus religion is a more important organiser of social life. For this reason, the activation of religious boundaries has a greater impact. Secondly, smaller communities usually only have one house of worship, meaning the question of switchover presents little opportunity for compromise. From the beginning, it was clear that that growing significance of national-religious boundaries in Ukraine affected each UOC-MP parish differently – some coped well, negotiating dialogue or even a calm transition of the church to the OCU, whereas others experienced violent confrontation and unresolved conflict, as parishioners clashed with each other or with their priest over perceived allegiances. Therefore, although this thesis focuses on how communities reacted, it also suggests potential factors that cause or mitigate local conflict because of the structural changes in boundaries between denominations of the same religion.

To achieve this, I used a number of sub-questions, which established the local context and history of each case, the timeline of events, the result of any discussion or vote on a switchover, evidence of aggressive discourse, confrontation, or open conflict between sides, or alternatively the existence of coping mechanisms in the case of conflict being averted. The research question has both academic and social significance. There is a common trope that Ukraine is ‘two nations’ divided between the Russian-speaking East and the Ukrainian-speaking West, but the reality is far more complex. Its variety of linguistic, religious, cultural, and territorial boundaries, even within regions, are understudied, and so the multiplicity of social boundaries in the Ukrainian context is often ignored. In turn, this has meant that the picture of ‘East vs West’ is yet to be fully

---

<sup>6</sup> Although Poroshenko failed to win a second term, statistics show as many as a third of his voters chose to support him because of his role in the OCU being granted autocephaly. See: ‘Svezhiy opros: Stalo izvestno o reitingakh Zelenskogo i Poroshenko’, Hvylya.net, 11 April 2019, [https://hvylya.net/news/exclusive/svezhiy-opros-stalo-izvestno-o-rejtingah-zelenskogo-i-poroshenko.html?fbclid=IwAR2IMihlHJq1\\_IardPAXjb2YJ0DhUFxAyy7qq\\_hRFSHv9M4357ASIPT1Fc](https://hvylya.net/news/exclusive/svezhiy-opros-stalo-izvestno-o-rejtingah-zelenskogo-i-poroshenko.html?fbclid=IwAR2IMihlHJq1_IardPAXjb2YJ0DhUFxAyy7qq_hRFSHv9M4357ASIPT1Fc).

discredited. Moreover, the study in this thesis of the sudden intensification of social boundaries in seemingly homogenous communities is universally relevant.

In the next sections, I will present my research methodology and theoretical background on social boundaries. These constitute the academic foundation and practical guidelines for the analytical portion of the thesis. After introducing the wider political and religious context, the analysis consists of two parts: the first seeks to understand scenarios of communities that switched with and without conflict; the second considers the scenario of no switch and no conflict, and thus will focus more on the use of coping mechanisms as part of the reaction.

## Methodology

### Positioning my Research

When considering social boundaries in the case of Ukraine, there is a widespread image of the country divided between Russian-speakers in the South and East, and Ukrainian-speakers in the North and West. However, this is an oversimplification of a vast country with a range of linguistic, ethnic, and religious groupings, whose borders and demographics have changed many times throughout history. Therefore, the exploration the complexity and multiplicity of boundaries within one province alone (albeit, Rivne Oblast is around half the size of The Netherlands) can shed light on a range of issues related to boundary making that are relevant to societies all over the world. Most important to my thesis is the development of an understanding of how the sudden intensification of certain social boundaries at a structural level plays out within seemingly homogenous communities, and why in some cases this results in conflict, and in others not. By doing so, I propose potential causal explanations as to why conflict arises in certain cases. In this way, epistemologically my research sits in between interpretivism, which emphasises the exploration and understanding of the social world while recognising that pre-existing assumptions impact the researcher's perspective on it, and positivism, which considers objective enquiry to be possible and human behaviour to be governed by regularities.<sup>7</sup> It has been noted that the use of the traditional strict binary between interpretivist and positivist epistemological stances in social science research can undermine pragmatic considerations about research strategies, "and that a more helpful balance might be struck".<sup>8</sup> I favour a critical realist ontological approach, due to the combination of objective analysis of an external reality, with the emphasis

---

<sup>7</sup> Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (London: Sage, 2003), 16.

<sup>8</sup> Ritchie and Lewis, 17.

that only the perspectives of individuals (i.e. their social constructed meanings) can lead to accurate knowledge about the social world.<sup>9</sup>

### Empirical starting point

I chose to focus my research on Rivne Oblast, in north-western Ukraine, primarily because of access and personal familiarity. In August 2018, I volunteered with a Ukrainian NGO, GoGlobal, which trains and sends fluent English speakers to rural schools to help teach a two-week English language summer programme. I was sent to Chudel (a village about 8 hours by train west of Kyiv) and stayed with the local English teacher, Tanya, and her family. At that point, the news was already suggesting that there was unification of the UOC-KP and UOAC on the horizon. To my surprise, I found out that the local church belonged to the UOC-MP, and Tanya, an ethnic Ukrainian, was very concerned about the politicisation of the denomination. When the unification took place a few months later, I asked about her opinion over email, and she replied that she was particularly worried about how UOC-MP priests were being characterised by politicians and in the media as pro-Russian. I realised that for a non-Orthodox foreigner, I had unique access to research this topic, which has received little investigation on a local level, in an understudied periphery region. Moreover, my proficiency in Russian and understanding of basic Ukrainian would also give me an advantage in carrying out this research.

### Research method and data collection techniques

While I was not required to conduct fieldwork for this thesis, my access to Chudel allowed me to spend at least a short amount of time there to collect data, and so I stayed with Tanya for one week in April 2019. Prior to arriving, I had collected internet reports on both the wider national situation and local issues in English, Russian, and Ukrainian. I had also found many YouTube videos, showing situations in villages where the church was being contested over, or protests outside regional council buildings by religious communities. Once in Chudel, I managed to gather more information from observations and conversations with Tanya and her family. Although people in the village were not open to discussing the situation with me (see the section on limitations), Tanya arranged an interview at a UOC-MP monastery in the regional capital, Rivne, through a friend. Her sister-in-law, Katya, also arranged a meeting with a local UOC-KP priest in the nearest town, Sarny. Though I did not use those interviews in my case study analysis, they allowed me to hear both sides of the situation, confirm the existence of certain developments, and gather more context about religious conflict in the region. Moreover, though the local priest in Chudel was initially hesitant to meet with me, he felt more comfortable about doing so after hearing that I had met with other priests. He permitted me to interview him on Sunday after

---

<sup>9</sup> Ritchie and Lewis, 13.

church, which also gave me the opportunity of attending a service. When talking to priests, I made a map of questions about local social tensions resulting from the religious situation, to make the interview semi-structured (see figure 2 in appendix). These were adapted slightly depending on who I was interviewing, as not all the questions were relevant for each priest. The interviews were carried out mainly in Russian, other than the priest in Sarny, who spoke Ukrainian, with Tanya simultaneously translating. All the priests granted permission for me to record the interviews. Besides allowing me to conduct interviews, my trip to the region also allowed me to observe the impact of the religious situation in daily life. It was particularly interesting to see how the situation was discussed within a family, as Tanya and her mother-in-law favoured UOC-MP, while her mother and sister-in-law Katya favoured the other side. Most of all, being in Chudel allowed me to observe certain coping mechanisms, as there had been no open struggle over the church in the village.

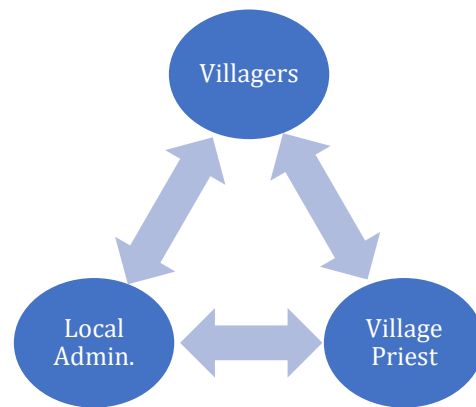
Following six to eight weeks of overviewing the theoretical literature, preliminary research, and my fieldwork in Ukraine, I distinguished between four types of reactions made by rural UOC-MP parishes following the unification of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. To visualise these, I plotted the scenarios in the following matrix:

Scenario matrix of rural UOC -MP parishes reactions

SCENARIO	Parish switches to OCU	Parish does not switch to OCU
No open or visible conflict between local actors	Agreed-upon switchover	Status quo with coping mechanisms
Open conflict between local actors	Contentious switchover	Ongoing conflict

In terms of defining ‘switchover’, the law (no. 4128/D, which came into force January 31st 2019) states that a transition requires a vote by a two-third majority by the church community, and that there must then be a legal re-registration of the religious community, under the new church (the law does not clarify who belongs to the ‘church community’, and therefore who has the right to vote). Those who voted against a switchover have the right to form their own religious community. In terms of property, the ‘church community’ remains the owner and user of the church building, though in the case of a split into two religious communities, an agreement should be arranged as to the alternate use of the church.

It should be underlined that the matrix boxes represent a continuum of reactions rather than four clear-cut scenarios. Conflict can range from arguments and verbal abuse, to confrontation and physical violence. Moreover, whether a switchover has happened or not can be difficult to ascertain within my timeframe, as I limited my focus to the immediate impact. In fact, I did not find a clear case of a parish in the Oblast that had made a contentious switchover to the OCU



without some degree of ongoing conflict. While the church building itself may have been used for OCU services, at least part of the population would use another building in the village for UOC-MP services. For this reason, while I originally sought to describe each scenario in the matrix, I settled on three as within cases of open conflict, it was difficult to differentiate between contentious switchover and ongoing conflict. This preliminary research suggested that once conflict in a community begins, some kind of switchover is likely, and at least in the short-term, it is very difficult to describe an intra-community conflict to be no longer ‘ongoing’. I also identified three key local actors who would determine the reaction of the community: villagers<sup>10</sup>, the local authorities (e.g. the deputies from the regional or village administration), and the village priest. However, it should be underlined that the label ‘villagers’ is an oversimplification, as conflict often arises between themselves over the decision to switch.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the visualisation of this triangle allowed me to focus on the reactions of these actors and how they differed, as well as how in some cases two actors joined sides against one other. Therefore, the arrows between the actors signify how they relate to each other, not only through conflict but also in opportunities for cooperation. Moreover, I analysed how these actors reacted by finding support outside the immediate community, such as how villagers mobilised neighbouring communities.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, my matrix was most useful in narrowing the search for villages to use as case studies, as I wanted to explore the reactions beyond Chudel to understand the diversity of situations in UOC-MP parishes. As already mentioned, my opportunities to undertake fieldwork were limited, and therefore my research for these cases was carried out in The Netherlands using secondary data. Of particular use were interactive maps

<sup>10</sup> I use the word ‘villagers’ and ‘parishioners’ interchangeably in this thesis, use the word parishioner in terms of someone living within the village parish, rather than in the sense of a regular churchgoer (though some are).

<sup>11</sup> My fieldwork interviews suggested that conflict within the village often arises between active churchgoers and those who live in the parish but rarely attend church. However, as I rely largely on secondary sources, it is not possible for me to accurately distinguish between these groups in my analysis.

labelling parishes that have switched.<sup>12</sup> The official UOC-MP site also shows ‘hot’ points of conflict.<sup>13</sup> Comparing these allowed me to easily see cases of villages where conflict had broken out due to the religious situation and contrast various reports. Alongside this, in villages that had experienced conflict (for example, the priest being forcibly removed for refusing to switch), videos had been posted on YouTube from various perspectives – local TV news, religious channels, and local villagers posting footage from their phones. These events were often followed up by reports on Ukrainian news websites and Facebook posts. I therefore looked for the cases that had the most information about them, as this allowed me to access a variety of perspectives and subsequently triangulate data (see appendix figure 3). As a result, the three villages were not selected randomly, but rather were chosen because they clearly show what events took place and the potential factors that may or may not lead to conflict. There is a lack of clarity about the number of parishes that have switched, and within that number the proportion that did so peacefully, due to the recent nature of these events and the politicised atmosphere in which they took place.<sup>14</sup> Since estimations vary between sources and my timeframe concerned the immediate impact of the unification and recognition of the OCU, I decided not to rely on quantitative data for my analysis. Finally, I chose parishes from across Rivne Oblast, rather than concentrating on one Raion alone, as during my fieldwork I heard from various people that there were great differences in the way the situation played regionally.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, my cases are not a random or representative sample.

To explore the various ways UOC-MP parishes reacted to the politicisation of religious boundaries, and in turn hypothesise which factors led to conflictive and non-conflictive situations of switchover or keeping the status quo, I established a number of sub-questions to approach each case study. Each question relied on different combinations of data sources (as outlined in the table in the appendix).

*Following the unification of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2018, how did rural Moscow Patriarchate Parishes in Rivne Oblast react to the activation of religious boundaries on the national level?*

1. What is the local context, history, and geography of the village and its church?
2. Timeline of events, if possible, including information such as:

---

<sup>12</sup> ‘Transfer of Ukrainian Orthodox Parishes’, Interactive Map, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2019, <http://gis.huri.harvard.edu/contemporary-atlas/revolution-of-dignity/religion-module/transfer-of-parishes.html>.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Goryachiye Tochki’, Interactive Map, Union of Orthodox Journalists, 2019, <https://spzh.news/ru/spots>.

<sup>14</sup> Vitaliy Chervonenko, ‘300 ili 60? Skol’ko ukrainskikh prihodov pereshli v novuyu tserkov’ i kak eto schitayut’, BBC News Ukraina, 26 February 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-russian-47368276>.

<sup>15</sup> There are sixteen Raions (districts) in Rivne Oblast.



- a. What was the immediate reaction within the community to the granting of autocephaly to the OCU?
  - b. How was the issue discussed locally? (I.e. in town hall or church meetings)
  - c. Was there a vote on a switchover?
    - i. If so, what was the result?
    - ii. Was the result respected?
    - iii. How did the priest respond?
3. Is there evidence of protests, confrontation, or conflict in reaction to the local religious situation?
  - a. Where did this take place?
  - b. How does each side frame the other through discourse?
4. In the case of no open conflict, what factors suggest why the situation remained (seemingly) peaceful?
  - a. Evidence of pre-existing factors?
  - b. Evidence of coping mechanisms?
5. What were the reactions of the key local actors?
  - a. Villages (how were they divided?)
  - b. Priest
  - c. Local authorities

## Limitations

As already mentioned, I sought to triangulate data wherever possible, and highlight where competing accounts differed in their narrative of events. Interactive maps on church websites affiliated with either side of the divide, for example, provided a starting point for parishes where conflict or switchover may have taken place, but could not be trusted as a reliable source on their own. I also applied the strategy of comparing and contrasting accounts to other media, like YouTube clips and Facebook posts, especially with accounts from official media versus accounts from ordinary people. Local administration websites can be considered the most reliable in providing information like population statistics. Therefore, my research strategy of combining multiple sources that covered the same event allowed me to form a picture that limited any one-sided account. However, I remained constantly aware that the reliability of news articles, Facebook posts, and YouTube clips is never a certainty and treated individual accounts with caution. Despite this limitation, I believe they allowed me to make certain claims, particularly in terms of reactions of certain actors and the surrounding discourse.

In terms of fieldwork, an immediate limitation I came across was a reluctance of ordinary people to talk about the religious situation. I had initially hoped to have semi-structured interviews with villagers in Chudel, but this was not possible in the short time I was there and so I adapted the angle of my thesis accordingly. A second limitation came in the form of the elections. My fieldwork took place after the first round of the Presidential Election of Ukraine in March 2019, but before the second round, which came at the end of April. As mentioned, the incumbent President Poroshenko had campaigned on an ethno-nationalist platform, which emphasised the Ukrainian language and the granting of autocephaly to the OCU as the conception of a 'national' church.

However, it was already clear by the results of the first round of the elections that Volodymyr Zelenskyi, a Russian-speaking comedy actor, was the likely future president. Born into a Jewish family, Zelenskyi's religious views are vague and were not a focus of his campaign. Before his inauguration, he met with the heads of all denominations in Ukraine. Therefore, the election of Zelenskyi suggested that the politicisation of religion at a presidential level was halted, but the long term impact of these structural changes are still unknown. As a result, I focused the data on my case studies on the period from January 2019 to the end of March 2019, when the first round of the elections took place. I am only seeking to understand the immediate impact of the politicisation of religion, rather than how it played out in the longer term with a change of president.

## Theoretical Background: 'Us' vs 'Them'

As this thesis examines the ways in which communities react to boundary-making, an understanding of social boundaries and boundary mechanisms is key. More specifically, this thesis concerns a case of the politicisation of inter-religious boundaries at a national level and how groups cope, adapt, and react at a local level. As the broader idea of social boundaries has been subject to a vast amount of academic study, this chapter presents an exploration of selected literature that studies these processes across universal cases. First, I will introduce the concept, followed by a more specific overview of the nexus between religion and boundary making. I then consider selected literature on social boundary mechanisms, which explores how and why boundaries shift, in turn indicating how boundary changes can play out differently on a local level. Finally, I consider the ways in which local communities can deal with these changes, exploring the idea of 'everyday peace' as a strategy of adaptation in societies affected by conflict in the name of 'us' vs 'them'. The inter-disciplinary nature of the study of social boundaries is reflected in the variety of backgrounds of authors, ranging from history, memory studies, and anthropology, to conflict studies, sociology, and politics. This chapter will also reveal the gaps within the literature that my thesis aims to help fill.

### Social boundaries and boundary work

Boundaries and their maintenance "are essential parts of life"; humans constantly distinguish between 'us' and 'them' to create categories and in turn, order reality.<sup>16</sup> However, in deeply divided societies, the salience of these boundaries can escalate and ultimately lead to discrimination, violence, or even mass killings. The questions of how and why this happens has occupied countless researchers. As one of the key authors of boundary theory, Barth introduces

---

<sup>16</sup> Roger Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Social Practices and Boundary-Making in Deeply Divided Societies', *Civil Wars* 19, no. 1 (2017): 6.

the topic by highlighting that the word itself signifies a wide range of ideas within anthropology. Most obviously, there are the (sometimes physical) boundaries that divide territories or communities, commonly seen on maps.<sup>17</sup> However, these should not be dismissed as something static. From the perspective of memory studies, Zhurzhenko comments that it is often overlooked that borders, rather than people, can also ‘migrate’ over populations.<sup>18</sup> The shift of boundaries can destroy old communities and create new minorities through displacement, deportations, and killings. Secondly, there are abstract limits that label social groups, such as the delineations of ethnicity, gender, or social class. MacGinty highlights that this sort of boundary making is often accepted as part of the furniture in societies, with little thought as to how they are created or maintained.<sup>19</sup> Yet their existence rests on a third, deeper layer of boundary making. Often referred to as symbolic boundaries, they “provide a template for that which separates distinct categories of the mind”.<sup>20</sup> Also defined as “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorise objects, people, practices, and even time and space”, Lamont and Molnar’s sociological approach emphasises that the power of symbolic boundaries to define what constitutes reality means they face continual contention.<sup>21</sup> They expand that both social and symbolic boundaries “should be viewed as equally real”, and only with some form of symbolic boundaries can social boundaries manifest.<sup>22</sup> This is a particularly important point to underline when looking at the politicisation of social boundaries, as a powerful (state) actor has the resources to attempt to produce new symbolic boundaries, or emphasise existing ones.

Tilly conceptualises social boundaries as a rather abstract “contiguous zone of contrasting density, rapid transition, or separation between internally connected clusters of population and/or activity”.<sup>23</sup> These boundaries ‘divide’, ‘interrupt’, or ‘segregate’ populations from each other, giving them the power to create enmity and violence. As a result, many authors investigate the formation of racial or ethnic boundaries as a precursor to inter-ethnic violence, ethnic cleansing, or genocide. Theorists who focus on ethnic boundary making emphasise that ethnicities are constantly made and unmade. Wimmer, for example, explores ethnicity through this constructivist lens, showing it is not a static label, but a “process of constituting and re-

---

<sup>17</sup> Frederik Barth, ‘Boundaries and Connection’, in *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, ed. Anthony P Cohen (New York/London: Routledge, 2000), 17.

<sup>18</sup> Tatiana Zhurzhenko, ‘Borders and Memory’, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Doris Wastl-Walter (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 65.

<sup>19</sup> Mac Ginty, ‘Everyday Social Practices and Boundary-Making in Deeply Divided Societies’, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Barth, ‘Signifying Identities’, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Michele Lamont and Molnar Virag, ‘The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 168.

<sup>22</sup> Lamont and Virag, 169.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Tilly, ‘Social Boundary Mechanisms’, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34, no. 2 (2004): 214.

configuring groups by defining the boundaries between them”.<sup>24</sup> However, Barth argues that this focus within the literature on ethnic boundaries creates “a false conceptual order on a field of much more broadly distributed cultural variation”.<sup>25</sup> His shift away from ethnicity is relevant for my topic and I will therefore utilise his conceptualisation of boundaries as an “abstract sense of separation that surrounds a social group and divides it from other groups and from its surrounding environment”.<sup>26</sup> Barth importantly refers to the interplay of symbolic boundaries (i.e. ‘sense’ of separation) and physical boundaries (divides it from other groups and from its surrounding environment), thus encompassing a range of boundaries.

### Social boundaries and religion

Specifically to this thesis, there is growing literature on the nexus between social boundaries and religion. Dahinden and Zittoun underline that exploring boundary work in religious contexts is particularly rich, because religious belief has the strength to define social reality and symbolic systems, and thus powerful dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion.<sup>27</sup> Barker explores the ways in which religious boundaries can differ from each other. Most importantly, she highlights that those with the right to define the position of a religious group hold a great amount of power. Labelling a religion, whether it be a newer organisation such as Scientology or an ancient belief like Buddhism, as a ‘cult’, ‘money-making scam’, or ‘political front’, is a form of boundary work that can be inconsistently applied (for example, by governments or other religious groups) in the defence of a certain status quo.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it is useful to highlight that although on an everyday level, religious belief is considered a private matter (particularly from a ‘western’ perspective), religion and its organisation is always public, and for this reason, religious institutions must also define their position in relation to the state. However, the boundaries drawn within religious groups can be just as inconsistent as those drawn by states and other religious groups. Drawing the boundary between who is a ‘real’ or dogmatically ‘correct’ believer often shows that the closer the similarities between groups are, the more harshly a boundary will be drawn. This leads to distinctions to be made, for example by Roman Catholics, between ‘Christians’ and ‘Protestants’, and vice versa.<sup>29</sup> Brubaker agrees that in religiously informed conflicts, the boundary is often drawn between believers and the ‘heretics’ or ‘infidels’, which can justify and authorise violence

---

<sup>24</sup> Andreas Wimmer, ‘Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008): 1027.

<sup>25</sup> Barth, ‘Signifying Identities’, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Barth, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Janine Dahinden and Tania Zittoun, ‘Religion in Meaning Making and Boundary Work: Theoretical Explorations’, *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 47 (2013): 186.

<sup>28</sup> Eileen Barker, ‘We’ve Got to Draw the Line Somewhere: An Exploration of Boundaries That Define Locations of Religious Identity’, *Social Compass* 53, no. 2 (2006): 203.

<sup>29</sup> Barker, 204.

in certain contexts.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Eastern Orthodoxy, the word 'schismatic' (*raskol'nik*) is often applied. Boundary work in terms of religion thus involves a range of actors, from the individual to the administrative level.

However, the nexus between religious and national boundary work can coincide most powerfully at the state level. In France, "religion is used as a kind of negative category" in the definition of its secular nation, whereas in countries like Israel, Ireland, or Serbia, nationalism has a distinct religious dimension.<sup>31</sup> However, Brubaker highlights that in many civil conflicts that appear to be informed by religion, such as the Balkans, the parties were not struggling over religion itself. Rather, it was about political power, economic resources, symbolic recognition, or national recognition.<sup>32</sup> This reflects Kalyvas' notion that while a 'master cleavage' may drive conflict, local actors use the label of religious conflict, for example, to settle personal grievances and private enmities.<sup>33</sup> With this in mind, understanding violence means understanding pre-existing fault lines within communities, which are activated when they are politicised and "grafted onto the national structure of cleavages".<sup>34</sup> It must therefore be underlined that while the national level may make certain claims, the agency of individual actors means that the local level can reflect a different reality. This particular dynamic will be explored throughout this thesis, as in the case of the unification of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, political claims were made that resulted in different realities in various localities. While religion has the power to define symbolic boundaries, actors such as institutions also have the power to draw boundaries around or between religious affiliations, which can rupture social cohesion. This leads to the question of how, when, and why the (religious) boundaries that define ingroups and outgroups shift, or become more or less pronounced.

### Social boundary mechanisms

Wimmer explains various types of boundary changes in the context of ethnicity, but his taxonomy could still be applied to a religious context. A boundary can be expanded by reducing the number of categories (fusion), or by adding new categories to the in-group, contracting previous boundaries (fission).<sup>35</sup> Though politics of nation-building has possibly received the most attention with regard to boundary expansion, but it should be noted that nation-building strategies can also lead to narrower boundaries. Boundaries can also shift on an individual level

---

<sup>30</sup> Rogers Brubaker, 'Religious Dimensions of Political Conflict and Violence', *Sociological Theory* 33, no. 1 (2015): 8.

<sup>31</sup> Dahinden and Zittoun, 'Religion in Meaning Making and Boundary Work', 200.

<sup>32</sup> Brubaker, 'Religious Dimensions of Political Conflict and Violence', 4.

<sup>33</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, 'The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars', *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 476.

<sup>34</sup> Kalyvas, 480.

<sup>35</sup> Wimmer, 'Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making', 1031.

(individual crossing), where individuals hope to 'shift sides' to escape minority stigma, re-classifying themselves as a more prestigious social group.<sup>36</sup> Wimmer's focus on individual crossing is of particular use when considering how politicisation of boundaries between religious denominations plays out on a local level. Finally, the phenomenon of boundary blurring reduces the importance of a line between two categories, making the boundary less relevant for everyday life and less institutionalised for social organisation.<sup>37</sup> This shows how boundaries may be more or less relevant as the degree of their definition varies.

Tilly's work moves away from ethnic boundaries alone, posing the key question as to why any type of boundary "that at one point matter little or not at all", can rapidly become salient to the extent that "people who live peaceably with difference one month start killing across the boundary the next".<sup>38</sup> One cause of boundary change is imposition, where the authorities draw lines that did not previously exist, or incentive shift, where in-group perceptions of threats or rewards stemming from the out-group can affect cross-boundary relations.<sup>39</sup> Tilly also considers the mechanisms that constitute boundary change. Inscription heightens the differences between groups on each side of the boundary by more clearly defining what it means to belong to a certain group, while erasure reverses this process; inscription can occur at the same time as activation, when a boundary becomes "more salient as an organiser of social relations", and likewise erasure and de-activation can happen simultaneously.<sup>40</sup> In the case of this study, the events of 2014, which continue to impact Ukrainian society, have arguably lead to the inscription of Orthodox affiliation within some communities. Moreover, activation is an important concept in regards to the politicisation of religious organisations at a state level. Such discussion of boundary change and mechanisms tends to take a top-down approach, focusing on the institutions that decide where a certain boundary within a society should be drawn. My research thus considers the changes made at the political centre, but recognises that the everyday experiences of parishioners in the periphery may not conform to these developments. Elwert, in his discussion of religion and social boundary switching, claims that changes in local boundaries are the product of broader socio-political tensions. He argues that for ordinary people and local communities, the easier option in most situations is "routine and continuity". Therefore, he argues that switching is not a random (or even normal) process, and requires considerable institutional or symbolic power. Although this thesis does not extend into testing this argument, it will explore the reactions of local Ukrainian communities to such socio-political tensions concerning religion.

---

<sup>36</sup> Wimmer, 1039.

<sup>37</sup> Wimmer, 1041.

<sup>38</sup> Tilly, 'Social Boundary Mechanisms', 220.

<sup>39</sup> Tilly, 220.

<sup>40</sup> Tilly, 223.

## Dealing with social boundary change

In order to explore the reactions of communities to wider socio-political developments, a final part of theoretical literature must be introduced. If routine and continuity are, as Elwert claims, the 'easier option', it poses a question: how do individuals or communities cope when social boundaries shift or become activated, especially when they have the potential to lead to conflict? Mac Ginty has investigated the topic of the strategic ways in which people in conflict-affected societies relate to one another, both within and across the boundary, and negotiate a new set of social rules. He questions why in the 1990s, for example, some cities in former Yugoslavia delayed, minimised, or entirely defied conflict between neighbours. He uses the concept of 'everyday peace' to show how social practices in the informal sphere can do more to bring peace than technocratic, formal projects.<sup>41</sup> He critiques liberal peace theory and the failings of top-down attempts at conflict resolution, choosing instead to draw on literature from sociology, anthropology, and feminism, to show "how peace is made and re-made at the local level through the actions of individuals and groups".<sup>42</sup> This is in sharp opposition to accounts of conflict-affected societies that favour "formal actors and institutions", thus focusing on "male, urban, and public versions of events and processes".<sup>43</sup> Defined as the "practices and norms deployed by individuals in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimise conflict", everyday peace is used at both an inter-group and intra-group level.<sup>44</sup> It involves unwritten and constantly evolving systems that regulate relations, that are based on untaught, implicit rules. Therefore, it is "highly context, location and time-specific".<sup>45</sup>

Mac Ginty stresses the importance of environmental factors, as everyday peace occurs in a space "over which individuals and communities will exercise limited control".<sup>46</sup> Therefore, features like physical geography, class, gender, and pre-existing norms and values have a significant role in patterning everyday peace.<sup>47</sup> Pre-existing factors within the rural communities I use as case studies will therefore be included as a key part of my analysis. There is a link here with the concept of social capital, as understood by Putnam. Referring to features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust, a community that has a strong stock of social capital can better "facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit".<sup>48</sup> Again, the study of social capital looks towards the local level, as it is often most easily found in civil society, distinct from

---

<sup>41</sup> Roger Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace: Bottom-up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies', *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 6 (2014): 551.

<sup>42</sup> Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Social Practices and Boundary-Making in Deeply Divided Societies', 9.

<sup>43</sup> Mac Ginty, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace', 553.

<sup>45</sup> Mac Ginty, 554.

<sup>46</sup> Mac Ginty, 553.

<sup>47</sup> Mac Ginty, 553.

<sup>48</sup> Robert D. Putnam, 'The Prosperous Community', *The American Prospect*, 21 March 1993, 2.

government and business interests. However, Putnam does not refer to situations of conflict where social capital is under pressure, and in divided communities a valuable form of social capital may in fact be a (perhaps unspoken) awareness of the fragile social situation, and accompanying coping mechanisms to negotiate everyday life. In this way, everyday peace demonstrates the ways communities can bypass what would usually lead to the disintegration of social relations.

Mac Ginty lists various types of social practices that constitute everyday peace. One of these is avoidance; such tools can include avoiding offensive displays, not drawing attention to oneself, or consciously deciding to live in the present. Most commonly seen is the avoidance of controversial or sensitive conversation topics in public, to avoid revealing too much about where you stand on the boundary. This often takes the form of an implicit agreement to not discuss politics or religion in conversations with one-another.<sup>49</sup> Related to this is the practice of ambiguity, where individuals will conceal signifiers of identity, and the act of ritualised politeness, which can often work simultaneously.<sup>50</sup> Finally, there is blame deferring, whereby individuals scapegoat outsiders or minorities within the group to “perpetuate the constructed notion of intercommunal” peace, with the outliers framed as “unrepresentative of the group”.<sup>51</sup> However, this shows that these practices of everyday peace are aimed ultimately at survival and risk minimisation, rather than long-term conflict resolution. Mac Ginty highlights how ultimately, everyday peace can sustain boundaries, rather than deconstruct them, thus amounting to “bounded civility”.<sup>52</sup> In this sense, it is a very limited form of peace. However, he argues that its existence amounts to a form of social capital and considers it should not be underestimated as “an invisible enabler of more formal attempts to build peace”.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated a constant interplay between agency and structure in the creation, maintenance, and contestation of social boundaries, as well as between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The national-local tension is reflected throughout my thesis, due to my focus on the diversity of reactions by communities to the reposition of inter-religious boundaries along national lines. I approach my topic from an understanding that religious boundaries were activated at a state level, and analyse how this plays out at a local level and the way actors on the ground react to the situation. For this reason, Mac Ginty’s work on mechanisms of everyday peace is key. As already mentioned, I use Barth’s definition of social boundaries being an “abstract sense

---

<sup>49</sup> Mac Ginty, ‘Everyday Peace’, 555.

<sup>50</sup> Mac Ginty, 556.

<sup>51</sup> Mac Ginty, 557.

<sup>52</sup> Mac Ginty, 557.

<sup>53</sup> Mac Ginty, 561.



of separation that surrounds a social group and divides it from other groups and from its surrounding environment".<sup>54</sup> My analysis therefore concerns not only physical divides between groups, but also how a narrative of a boundary is constructed by certain actors in the battle over the religious situation, or in other cases, in an attempt to limit conflict. Mac Ginty's theory of the coping mechanisms used in everyday peace was applied to a society that had experienced multi-generational violence, whereas my study concerns communities that may have tensions, but have not yet broken out into conflict. My study of Chudel, meanwhile, explores the situation where a group is aware of similar communities where violence has broken out. Applying 'everyday peace' theory to a situation where there is no history of conflict but there is an awareness that conflict has broken out in similar communities can add to the understanding of conflict avoidance dynamics. Moreover, within the literature I selected, I found that the local-level impact of a relatively swift activation of social boundaries at a state level was not fully explored. This presents a niche that is further explored in the analysis of this thesis.

---

<sup>54</sup> Barth, 'Signifying Identities', 30.

## Analysis: Introduction

### Ukraine since 1991

Modern Ukraine was formed in 1991, when 92% of the citizens of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic voted for the creation of an independent state. Since then, politicians have generally profiled themselves as more pro-Russian or pro-European and in turn saw their support be concentrated in either the eastern or western half of the country. However, the 2019 election of President Volodymyr Zelenskyi was notable for him winning in the second round in all but one area of Ukraine, around the far western city of Lviv. Preceding this, the country experienced two key episodes of political upheaval: the Orange Revolution (2004) and the Euromaidan Revolution (2014). During the Orange Revolution, people took to the streets to protest election fraud that had marred the election of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovych over Viktor Yushchenko. Protests lead to a re-run, in which pro-European Yushchenko triumphed. However, his presidency was marked by ineffectiveness, and Yanukovych claimed victory in 2010. Though he attempted to maintain close ties with both Russia and the EU, in November 2013, a crucial choice had to be made. Ukraine was close to signing an EU Association Agreement, which would lead to closer economic and political integration with Europe. Yanukovych was urged by Russia not to sign, offering large financial benefits if the President complied. He refrained from signing, sparking months of protests across the country. In February 2014, riot police systematically used lethal force in Kyiv, killing at least around a hundred protesters. Yanukovych fled to Russia soon after. By the Spring of 2014, Crimea had been annexed by the Russian Federation and violence began to surge along the eastern border with Russia. The conflict in the Donbas region has continued between Russian-backed forces and the Ukrainian military, killing over 13,000 and creating millions of internally displaced people.<sup>55</sup>

### Ukraine's Religious Landscape

It is a misconception that religion did not exist in the Soviet Union, the reality being far more complex. Official religious policy fluctuated over time and differed according to place, but in the later years, a sense of pragmatism tended to prevail, rather than aim for the complete extinction of religion.<sup>56</sup> In the context of Ukraine, the western part of the country was one of the most religious areas of the USSR, and even in the early 1960s, 40% of all children born in there were

---

<sup>55</sup> OHCHR Ukraine, 'Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine 16 November 2018 to 15 February 2019' (Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 26 February 2019), <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/ReportUkraine16Nov2018-15Feb2019.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Alfons Brüning, 'Project Ukraine: Christian Churches in Ukraine and Their Relations 1991-2014', in *Religion, State, Society, and Identity in Transition Ukraine*, ed. Rob van der Laarse et al. (Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2015), 358.

baptised.<sup>57</sup> However, officially religion existed in a semi-legal space, and it was only after independence that religious life truly resurged.

Modern Ukraine has a far more pluralistic religious landscape than many other post-Soviet states. In terms of registered communities, the UOC-MP has long been considered the largest, yet in terms of Ukrainians' confessed affiliation, the UOC-KP has claimed first position. The UOAC has a far smaller footprint in terms of both communities and affiliation, and is more prevalent among the Ukrainian diaspora. Kyiv is a sacred place for all Eastern Orthodox Christians. It was the ruler of Kyivan Rus, Volodymyr the Great, who brought Christianity to the region following his conversion in 988, making the city a destination for pilgrims due to its churches and monasteries, the most important being the Pechersk Lavra, which holds ancient relics in its caves. Beyond Orthodoxy, which makes up the largest proportion of confessional affiliation (around 70%, according to a sociological survey from 2014), there is a growing Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church population in the west (around 8% of the country's population), multiple branches of Protestantism, and a small minority of Jewish and Islamic communities, in the Muslim case largely due to Central Asian migration and the post-annexation diaspora of Crimean Tatars.<sup>58</sup> This same survey showed that 76% of Ukrainians consider themselves 'believers'.

However, this rich religious landscape has meant that of all post-Soviet states, Ukraine is not only home to one of the highest religiosity rates, but it is also "probably the country with the most complicated and difficult religious situation".<sup>59</sup> Part of this complication is historical, as the country was continually carved between empires, with various regions being swallowed by Ottoman, Polish, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian rulers. A brief period of independence led to the creation of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in 1921, though it was especially suppressed by the Soviet authorities after the Second World War, re-emerging in the 1990s. As mentioned, the decade also saw the split of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which created the two entities divided between the Kyiv and Moscow Patriarchates, and the resulting local disputes, often over property, to a certain extent reflects the current situation. However, "regardless of their differences and disagreements", both sides of the schism have enjoyed periods of favour by the government since independence, competing with each other about who would be closest to the state.<sup>60</sup> Yet, Euromaidan "challenged not only the political regime of Yanukovich, but also the

---

<sup>57</sup> Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 129, 146.

<sup>58</sup> Natalia Shlikhta, 'Eastern Christian Churches Between State and Society: An Overview of the Religious Landscape in Ukraine (1989-2014)', *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 3 (2016): 124.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Bremer, 'Religion in Ukraine: Historical Background and the Present Situation', in *Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis*, ed. Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Cyril Hovorun, 'Churches in the Ukrainian Public Square', *Toronto Journal of Theology* 31, no. 1 (2015): 6.

Ukrainian churches and their symphonic model of a relationship with the state”.<sup>61</sup> The crisis in Ukraine, in the words of Catherine Wanner, “stems from being forced to choose” between Russia and Europe.<sup>62</sup> When this choice manifested on Maidan, these churches were not exempt from having to choose sides.

The UOC-KP openly supported the protesters, converting the nearby St Michael’s Monastery into a hospital and morgue. However, church leaders tended to condemn “the violence, though not so much the regime as such”.<sup>63</sup> The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church also took a stance in support of the Maidan. The UOC-MP, however, found itself in a more complicated position, as it had received considerable support under President Yanukovych. The leadership therefore either made announcements in support of Yanukovych or made no statements at all. However, many members of this church, as well as “a considerable number of priests”, were active on the Maidan alongside clergy of all denominations.<sup>64</sup> These men stood between lines of riot police and protesters in last-ditch attempts for peaceful resolution and remained on the square to perform the funeral rites for civilians who had been killed. Eventually in February 2014, the UOC-MP issued a statement that “under no conditions can the authorities shoot peaceful civilians”.<sup>65</sup> However, the gap between the official stance of the Church and the actions of the clergy and believers was already putting huge pressure on its relationship with Moscow. The cracks only widened when the military conflict began in the east, as priests of all churches became army chaplains, gathered humanitarian aid, and routinely prayed for the the nation in their sermons.<sup>66</sup> Yet, a number of high-level UOC-MP clergy spoke in favour of the occupation of Crimea, while some of their priests in Donbas openly supported separatists.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, Patriarch Kirill’s close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin was under scrutiny by critics of the UOC-MP. In this context, many Ukrainians began to switch from affiliation with the UOC-MP to the UOC-KP and support grew for the granting of autocephaly to a united Ukrainian church. According to a March 2017 survey, the proportion of self-reporting affiliation of Orthodox believers to the UOC-MP fell from 34.5% in 2010, to 17.4%. Meanwhile, those reporting to affiliate with the UOC-KP rose from 22.1% to 38.8%.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Hovorun, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Wanner, ‘The Politics of Linguistic and Religious Ties’, 427.

<sup>63</sup> Hovorun, ‘Churches in the Ukrainian Public Square’, 9.

<sup>64</sup> Hovorun, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Shlikhta, ‘Eastern Christian Churches Between State and Society: An Overview of the Religious Landscape in Ukraine (1989-2014)’, 138.

<sup>66</sup> Shlikhta, 139.

<sup>67</sup> Shlikhta, 139.

<sup>68</sup> George Soroka, ‘A House Divided. Orthodoxy in Post-Maidan Ukraine’, *New Eastern Europe*, 26 April 2018, <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/04/26/house-divided-orthodoxy-post-maidan-ukraine/>.

## Rivne Oblast

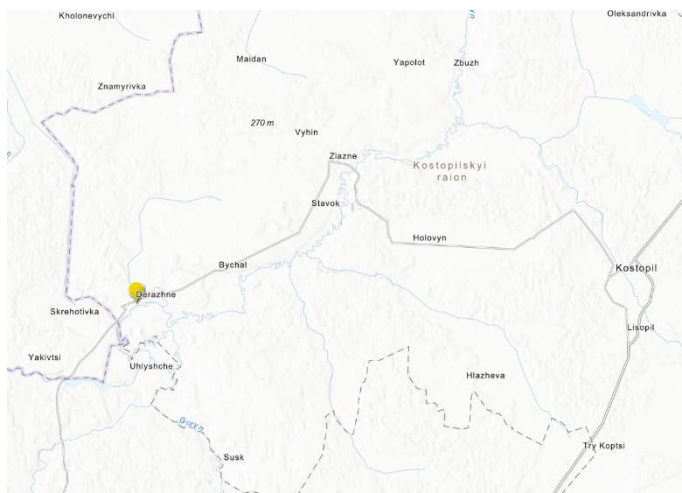
The analysis focuses on Rivne Oblast, a region lying along the border with Belarus and about 200km from Poland. Throughout history, the land was occupied by Polish, Russian, Nazi, and Soviet empires. As part of the historical region of Volhynia, before the Second World War it had a diverse population consisting of Slavic, Polish, Germanic, and Jewish peoples. Today, the inhabitants are 96% ethnically Ukrainian and mainly reside in rural areas.<sup>69</sup> This analysis section consists of three parts: the first, considering a case of a switchover without conflict (agreed-upon switchover), the second, concerning no clear switchover with conflict, and the third and largest case, being no switchover and no conflict (status quo with coping mechanisms). As explained in my methodology, this study is exploratory in nature. Therefore, the chosen villages of Derazhne, Nova Moshchanytsia, and Chudel respectively are by no means statistically representative, and the first two were purposely chosen based on the secondary data I could collect. As Chudel was selected due to my access to conduct fieldwork, the chapter is divided between secondary and primary data use. As already mentioned, I also sought to provide geographic diversity to provide a broader picture of the situation in the Oblast as a whole – the villages are in three separate raions, roughly situated in the west, south, and north of the region, and vary terms of population size. I compare and contrast the situations in each scenario to develop an understanding of how each reacted.



To place Rivne Oblast within the national context, appendix figure 4 shows the locations of switchovers across the country as a whole, as well as the number of UOC-MP communities. While the map shows little regional pattern in terms of where UOC-MP organisations are located, switchovers are more numerous in the western regions. In the central-northern part of western Ukraine, both the number of switchovers and UOC-MP organisations are highest. Within the Oblast itself, there is a higher concentration of switchovers in the southern half of the province, though this may simply correlate with the fact the north is less densely populated.

<sup>69</sup> 'Rivnens'ka Oblast': Sotsial'no-ekonomichni pokaznyky 2017' (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2018), <http://rv.ukrstat.gov.ua>.

## Case I: Derazhne / Деражне



© Rivne1 TV

The events that took place in the village of Derazhne are analysed to explore the scenario of a switchover without conflict. This case study provides an example for how the community reacted to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level and may contribute to an understanding of the possible factors that played a role in the peaceful outcome. Derazhne lies in Kostopilskiy Raion, on the western border of Rivne Oblast with Volyn Oblast. The town is home to the Cross-Ascension Church, which is over 200 years old. According to latest population statistics, Derazhne has 2,098 inhabitants and is the centre of a United Territorial Community (the smallest level of administrative units in Ukraine), encompassing several other smaller settlements.<sup>70</sup> This village was selected for the scenario of switchover without conflict because according to all accounts, the parish was the first in the Oblast that voted to transition to the OCU, and there were no reports of open contention to this decision. As a result, the village received considerable local and national media coverage. This provided me with a variety of secondary sources to analyse. Moreover, being the first switchover, it is arguable that the process was relatively organic on a local level, in the sense that it was less influenced by developments in neighbouring settlements. This is unlike other cases, which happened later in time (i.e. a large number of alleged switchovers happening in a very narrow time period), one of which, Nova Moshchanytsia, is explored in the second analytical chapter. This potentially makes the present case relatively isolated from the impact of outside pressure or local trends, allowing for a deeper exploration of factors relating to this community alone.

The village carried out the vote on transition after the church service on Monday January 7<sup>th</sup>, which is Christmas day in the Orthodox calendar. It was led by the village priest, Father Viktor.

<sup>70</sup> 'Kartka hromady', Derazhnens'ka hromada, 2019, <https://derazhnenska-gromada.gov.ua/structure/>.

The churchwarden, Mykola Gavrilyuk, told *Radio Svoboda* that “the community has expressed the desire that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church should be established in our village. During this time the church was filled with people. Father Viktor supported this decision and is ready to continue to serve the community”.<sup>71</sup> He claimed around 300 people were present at the vote at the church, which passed unanimously. The village received considerable media coverage, and representatives of the village administration even met with President Poroshenko when he visited Rivne a week later. This suggests that their involvement, along with that of the Priest, was considerable in the support of the switch to the OCU. It is difficult to judge whether the ordinary people in this community also reached this consensus, though all the villagers interviewed by various media outlets said that the decision had been made peacefully and unanimously, and confirmed it was initiated by the priest. This is not to say there was not a single member of the parish who disagreed; rather, all that can be discerned is that no disagreement was voiced publicly to the media or through the voting process. Father Viktor himself refused to speak on camera, citing pressure from ‘above’, inferring his superiors in the UOC-MP, though he expected the switchover to go ahead as planned.<sup>72</sup> This indicates the reaction of the priest is of key importance to the process, as he is put under stress to make the decision either side of the conflict deems most favourable. On 15<sup>th</sup> February, to start the legal process, the villagers signed an official protocol with their name, address, and signature after the church service.<sup>73</sup> According to the police, who had an active presence in Derazhne that day, the process passed without any incidents. Reviewing the events in Derazhne from January-February 2019, it appears that the villagers (at least those who attend the church), village administration, and village priest reacted remarkably in sync. The response of this community to politicisation of religious boundaries at a state level appears to be a swift, well-organised transition to the new ‘national’ church, without contention.

### Past Attempts

However, what happened in January-February in Derazhne was part of a much longer process. In fact, a transition from the UOC-MP to the UOC-KP had been on the table for many years within the community. A serious attempt seems to have been made in 2015, when Father Viktor began an effort to start the transition. However, one of the villagers told a journalist that this came to an

---

<sup>71</sup> ‘Persha hromada UPTS (MP) na Rivnenshchyni pereishla do PTSU’, Radio Svoboda, 8 January 2019, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-persha-hromada-upts-mp-na-rivnenshchyni-pereishla-do-ptsu/29697376.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Anna Yatsuk and Volodymyr Zakharov, ‘Z MP u PTSU: hromada na Rivnenshchyni zminyla tserkovnu iurysdyktsiiu’, Rivne 1, 10 January 2019, <https://rivne1.tv/news/z-mp-u-ptsu-hromada-na-rivnenshchyni-zminila-tserkovnu-yurisdiktsiyu-video>.

<sup>73</sup> Rivne 1, *Vid Sliv Do Dila: U Seli Derzhne Tserkovna Hromada Pys'movo Pidtverdyla Perekhid z UPTS MP Do PTSU*, YouTube Video, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXE7oWdtKQg>.



abrupt stop when the priest was allegedly pressured.<sup>74</sup> An article from 2015 reports that after representatives from the UOC-MP visited the priest, he decided to delay this decision.<sup>75</sup> Understanding this context indicates that the granting of autocephaly and state endorsement of the OCU in 2018-19 acted as a catalyst for a contested process that had been ongoing for at least four years. While the Priest had previously been threatened for attempting to switch, and in fact continued to feel ‘under pressure’ when approached by journalists in 2019, the politicisation of religious boundaries encouraged him to switch to the OCU. The long-term process also may explain the reaction of the community of seemingly unanimous support, at least on a surface level. The community had been aware of the process for many years, therefore potentially minimising conflict as the change had not been made abruptly overnight. However, the reports also showed that the priest was under pressure and had experienced threats from other actors, either within or from outside the community, though open conflict never arose. Only research based on long-term fieldwork in the community could uncover the entire process that took place in the runup to this switchover.

### The Issue of Language

A second factor that may have that limited contention in the community’s reaction concerns the issue of language. One of the key differences between the services of the two denominations is the language used in the liturgy – in the UOC-MP, prayers, hymns, and chanting is in Old Church Slavonic, whereas in the OCU, it is Ukrainian. Old Church Slavonic is not used outside religious contexts, and thus for many people their understanding is limited. The head of the village administration, Oleksandr Pustovit, told journalists that Father Viktor had in fact been conducting services in the Ukrainian language since 1995, even though he was ordained in the UOC-MP.<sup>76</sup> Pustovit claimed that the community trusted the priest with his decisions, indicating that this contributed to the peaceful transition. More than trust alone, my initial data collection of conflictive switchovers showed that in many cases, the language issue highlighted the divide between parishioners who supported the UOC-MP and those who wanted to transition to the OCU. Moreover, during my fieldwork trip to the region in April, I noticed that the language issue repeatedly came up as a highly emotive subject for those on both sides of the debate. Since 2014, the status of Ukrainian (i.e. as opposed to the Russian language) has grown exponentially in Ukraine. Following the Revolution and the ongoing war, “Ukrainian is valued not only for its communicative functions but also for its symbolic role as the national language” and its role in

---

<sup>74</sup> Natalka Poltavets, ‘Kryha Skresla: Na Rivnenshchyni persha hromada pereishla vid moskov’skoho patriarkhatu do ptsu’, Kanal 5, 10 February 2019, <https://www.5.ua/regiony/kryha-skresla-na-rivnenshchyni-persha-hromada-pereishla-vid-moskovskoho-patriarkhatu-do-ptsu-184486.html>.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Bor’ba za khram na Rovenschine: svyaschennik posle obscheniya s predstavitelyami UPTS MP poteryal soznanie’, Novosti Rovno, 30 June 2015, <http://topnews.rv.ua/other/2015/06/30/36596.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Yatsuk and Zakharov, ‘Z MP u PTSU: hromada na Rivnenshchyni zminyla tserkovnu iurysdyktsiiu’.



constituting the foundation of Ukraine's independence and autonomy.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the importance of the Ukrainian language was deeply integrated into the politicisation of religious boundaries. President Poroshenko made the explicit link between the Ukrainian language, church, territorial integrity in his re-election campaign, which used the slogan 'Army, Language, Faith'. Therefore, many support its use by the OCU in religious services not simply so people attending services can fully understand the rites, but also because it represents the further elevation of the prestige of the language. During fieldwork in Chudel, I learned that Tanya's mother felt it was "her right" to hear services in Ukrainian, as did her sister-in-law. However, on the other side of the debate, there is the sense that religious services should be conducted as they have been for nearly a thousand years, a view I heard from Tanya. She told me that her mother-in-law, for example, has said these prayers all her life but never tried to understand them, and "never asked to translate them into Ukrainian". It is a highly emotive point of contention, creating a boundary between those who value tradition versus language in religious services. Though it did not result in conflict within Tanya's family, this boundary ran through the family and has no correlation to generation. However, it can create a point of contention that presents little opportunity to compromise. To have had this issue in Derazhne sorted out 'in advance' (i.e. in the 1990s) potentially meant that emotional implications of a language shift that was present in other places was not present here.

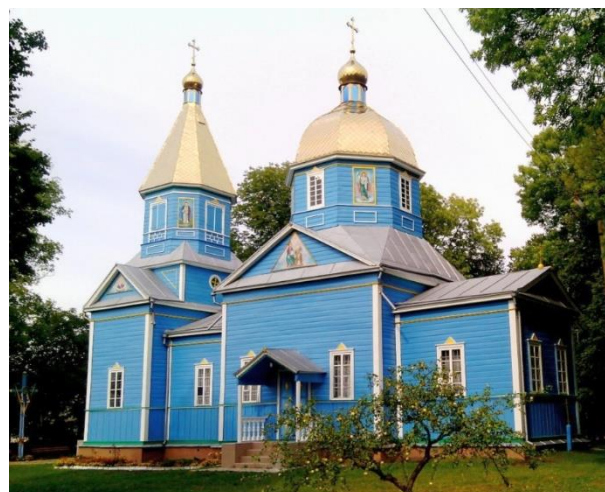
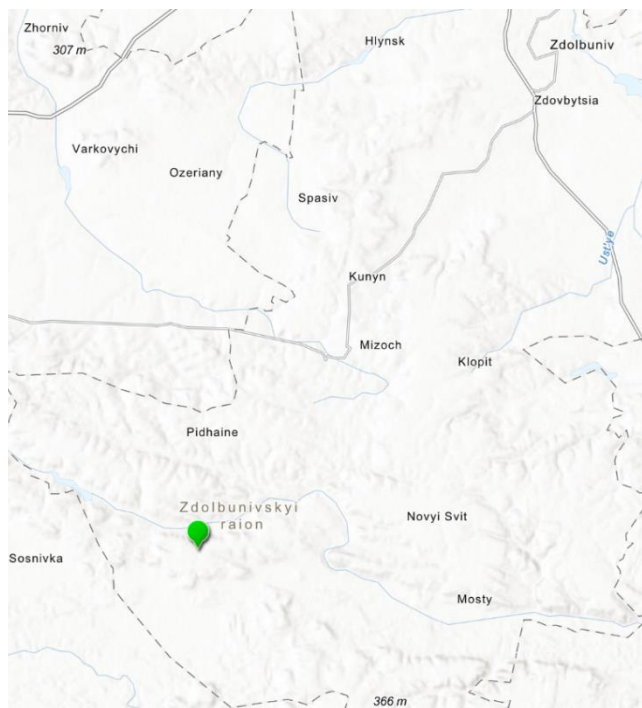
## Conclusion

In answering the question of how this UOC-MP parish reacted to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level, it initially appears that in Derazhne, the process moved incredibly swiftly and with no conflict. Moreover, all three actors (the parishioners, the priest, and the local authorities) were in agreement that the church should switch to the OCU. However, it is impossible to say whether the entire community really had the same reaction of enthusiastic switchover – certainly, some parishioners may have felt more strongly than others, or perhaps some opposed but voted to transition anyway due to the new shifts in religious boundaries at a national level. As mentioned, uncovering these subtleties can only be possible through in-depth fieldwork. It is possible that the long-term nature of the decision to switch, as well as the language situation, minimised the possibility of conflict between actors. It therefore demonstrates the importance of the village's social and historical context in determining the local-level reaction to boundary activation at a national level.

---

<sup>77</sup> Volodymyr Kulyk, 'Language and Identity in Ukraine after Euromaidan', *Thesis Eleven* 136, no. 1 (2016): 98.

## Case II: Nova Moshchanytsia / Нова Мощаниця



© Rivne Oblast Tourist Board

The following case, Nova Moshchanytsia, exemplifies the scenario of no (clear) switchover accompanied by conflict. First, the unclear situation over whether the church switched to the OCU should be addressed. Within the timeframe of my data collection (January-end of April 2019), the parish exhibited characteristics of both switchover and remaining with the status quo. One part of the village voted to transfer to the OCU, while another part carried out a separate vote to remain with the UOC-MP. I focus on a number of episodes of escalation within the process, though the end result was unclear, with legal issues ongoing, and the UOC-MP priest remaining in his residence to conduct services there. Therefore, I consider this a case of a no clear switchover. A certainty, however, is the existence of open conflict between parishioners, the priest, and the local authorities about the future of the church, allowing for an analysis of the reactions of three distinct groups of local actors. I selected Nova Moshchanytsia because the process was drawn out over a number of stages of escalating confrontation. Moreover, at each stage there was considerable attention from media on both sides of the issue, as well as the regional channel of the state broadcasting company. Finally, the village is situated in a district where a number of similar cases of confrontation over the status of churches occurred. Nova Moshchanytsia is located in Zdolbunivsky Raion, at the far south of Rivne Oblast, near the border with Ternopil Oblast. It is about 40km from the district centre, Zdolbuniv, a town of around 25,000, with the population of the village being only around 700. By exploring the turbulent events that happened

in this village in reaction to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level, various factors that may have led to the intensification of conflict over the status of the church.

### Prayers and a Protest

A series of events arose on Sunday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, when two separate meetings were held in the village. The first vote had taken place in the church after the service. According to the village priest, 70 people took part, “all of them active parishioners”, who regularly take communion and look after the church property.<sup>78</sup> He claimed that 55 people voted to remain with the UOC-MP, 3 voted for a switchover, and 11 abstained. However, the head of the district administration in Zdolbuniv, Serhii Kondrachuk, announced to local news that a vote had also taken place in the village hall. Out of 120 villages present at the vote, 113 voted for the switchover, one against, and six did not vote. Kondrachuk told local reporters that the village was one of five within the Raion that voted to switch that day, “without any disturbances, without forceful confrontation. We have democracy”.<sup>79</sup> The supporters of the UOC-MP claimed that the alternative vote held in the village hall was attended by people who did not go to church, “not even on Easter”. This situation highlights the vagueness of the new law on religious communities, which does not define who constitutes a parishioner, or where the vote should exactly take place.<sup>80</sup> It therefore raises the question of who has the right to decide on a transition of the church. Arguably, the lack of clarity over a winner-takes-all situation may have raised tensions and mobilised both locals and other actors to become involved in the contention, as explained below.

The following day, a crowd of pro-UOC-MP villagers and priests from parishes from across the Raion assembled in front of the district administration building in Zdolbuniv, in protest of what had happened in Nova Moshchanytsia and other villages that Sunday. There is a video of the protest, posted on the YouTube channel *Chetverta Vlada*, a news organisation based in Rivne that primarily carries out investigative journalism projects to monitor corruption in public institutions.<sup>81</sup> They also published an accompanying article, detailing what happened. The video begins as a priest finishes a prayer. A man on the side of the local administration, standing with them on the steps of the administration building, shouts at them ‘*Slava Ukraini*’ (glory to Ukraine), the most popular patriotic slogan that came into regular use following Euromaidan. The expected

---

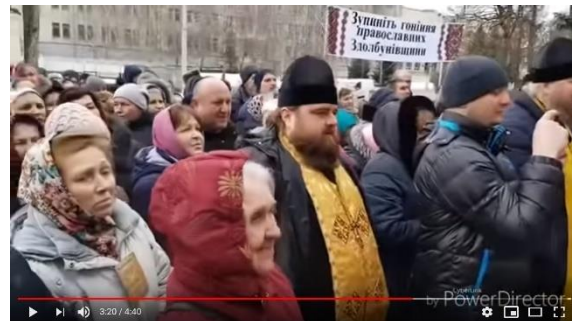
<sup>78</sup> Olha Vivdenko, ‘Hromada UPTS s.Nova Moshchanytsia pidtverdyla svoiu vinist’ kanonichnii tserkvi’, Union of Orthodox Journalists, 6 February 2019, <https://spzh.news/ua/news/59891-obshhina-upc-s-novaja-moshhanica-podtverdila-svoju-vernosty-kanonicheskoj-cerkvi>.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Nova Moshchanytsia i Bushcha proholosuvaly za perekhid do PTSU - Kondrachuk’, UA:Rivne, 3 February 2019, <https://rv.suspilne.media/news/9015>.

<sup>80</sup> As mentioned, law no. 4128/D, states that a transition requires a vote by a two-third majority by the church community, and followed by a legal re-registration of the religious community, under the new church. However, it does not clarify who belongs to the ‘church community’, and therefore who has the right to vote.

<sup>81</sup> Chetverta vlada Rivne, *Sviashchennyky UPTS MP pryishly do holovy Zdolbunivs’koi RDA*, YouTube Video, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EswmWbQLFuk>.

response to *'Slava Ukraini'* is to say *'Heroyam Slava'* (glory to the heroes), referencing those who died in the defence of the nation. However, the pro-UOC-MP parishioners instead shout back *'Slava Bohu'* (glory to God), thereby placing their religious identity above the national identity, with one voice even shouting "God is higher than Ukraine!".<sup>82</sup> However, the priest, likely aware that the man on the steps of the administration is trying to create a scene where UOC-MP supporters appear anti-Ukrainian, turns to face him, asking "do you want to provoke us? No, it will not work". He then shouts the 'expected' reply of *"Heroyam Slava!"*. This exchange reveals an example of the inscription of social boundaries along intensified national-religious lines, as the representations of who constitutes a 'patriot' or a 'believer' come to differentiate relations on either side of the divide.



©Chetverta Vlada YouTube Channel

The existence of the protest itself reveals one way UOC-MP parishioners have reacted to the activation of religious boundaries, in that there was considerable mobilisation beyond singular communities. This shows the story has a regional dimension, both as both UOC-MP priests and parishioners from across the Raion were present. However, the protest also shows a difference between the way the priests and the parishioners react. The parishioners are uncompromising and visibly angry, later shouting 'shame!' at Kondrachuk as he talks to them through a microphone in an attempt to convince them to join the OCU, and 'no one is listening to you!'.<sup>83</sup> It appears that the priests at the front of the protest do not join in with the shouting, and instead one approaches Kondrachuk with papers and engages in conversation. The video ends here, but it the both the words and actions of the UOC-MP clergy in this video seems to be pushing for dialogue and calming tensions, whereas the parishioners show their anger, and openly publicise that their religious identity is their priority over any patriotic discourse. When interviewed, the priest leading the demonstration said that they had gathered to pray in front of the administration

<sup>82</sup> Viktoriya Maksymchuk, "Vy muzhni liudy.." "Shcho ty melesh?": iak parafiiany UPTS MP z holovoiu Zdolbunivs'koi RDA spilkuvalys", Chetverta vlada Rivne, 6 February 2019, [https://4vlada.com/vy-muzhni-liudy\\_\\_shcho-ty-melesh-yak-parafiiany-upts-mp-z-golovoiu-zdolbunivskoi-rda-spilkuvalys](https://4vlada.com/vy-muzhni-liudy__shcho-ty-melesh-yak-parafiiany-upts-mp-z-golovoiu-zdolbunivskoi-rda-spilkuvalys).

<sup>83</sup> Maksymchuk.

building in reaction to the pressure faced by parishioners.<sup>84</sup> He further underlined that the vote should be held in the church as it solely concerns religion, stating that there is a difference between the parish community and those who simply live on the territory of the parish. The priest further stated that the involvement of district administration officials like Kondrachuk in the process was unhelpful, as they should be neutral to religious affairs.

### Confrontation

In the weeks that followed, the parish had not legally switched, and it appears the UOC-MP supporters continued to use the church. However, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, a new confrontation took place. According to the news site of the UOC-MP, a group of around 20 people pushed their way into the church at the end of the service and demanded the keys to be handed over to them – among them was the deputy Kondrachuk.<sup>85</sup> It seems that the situation escalated, as the news site of Rivne Diocese of the OCU then reported that in the evening, a group of people came to the village in support of the UOC-MP.<sup>86</sup> The supporters of the OCU refused to leave the entrance to the church, and by nightfall, both local news cameras and the police had arrived at the scene. In the churchyard, the UOC-MP supporters sang and chanted prayers, while simultaneously, those who wanted the switchover to the OCU stood by the entrance and sang the national anthem. Kondrachuk filmed part of this and posted it on his Facebook page, writing that the situation was “very hot”.<sup>87</sup> Again, the confrontation revolved around boundaries being drawn around national and religious identity, and involved not only parishioners, but figures who represented the local authorities. After midnight, the police reportedly managed to disperse both groups.<sup>88</sup> Kondrachuk claimed the supporters of the UOC-MP came from outside of the village; the UOC-MP parishioners claimed the same thing in reverse.<sup>89</sup> However, the next day he posted on Facebook to thank “all those who, having read my post on Facebook yesterday, immediately arrived at Nova Moshchanytsia, to support the community and get rid of uninvited guests”.<sup>90</sup> This confirms that

---

<sup>84</sup> ‘Virni UPTS (MP) vlashtuvaly “molytovne stoiannia” pid rai’administratsiieiu’, UA:Rivne, 4 February 2019, <https://rv.suspilne.media/news/9099&xid=>.

<sup>85</sup> Yekaterina Filatova, ‘V sele Novaya Moschanitsa proiskhodit popytka reiderskogo zakhvata khram UPTS’, Union of Orthodox Journalists, 2 March 2019, <https://spzh.news/ru/news/60540-v-sele-novaja-moshhanica-proiskhodit-popytka-rejderskogo-zahvata-khrama-upc>.

<sup>86</sup> Press Office of the Rivne Diocese (OCU), ‘Moskovs’kyi patriarkhat znovu provokuie mizhkonfessii’ni protystoiannia na Rivnenshchyni’, Rivne Cerkva, 2 March 2019, <http://www.rivne-cerkva.rv.ua/news/4007-moskovskiy-patriarkhat-znovu-provokuie-mizhkonfessiini-protystoiannia-na-rivnenshchyni.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Serhii Kondrachuk, Facebook, Status Update, 2 March 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/100002021632918/videos/pcb.2134050116672355/2134049020005798/?type=3&theater>.

<sup>88</sup> Andrii Kravets, ‘Na Rivnenshchyni u seli Nova Moshchanytsia parafiiany PTSU zakhopyly khram’, Podrobnosti, 3 March 2019, <https://podrobnosti.ua/2286308-na-rvnenschin-u-sel-nova-moschanitsja-parafjani-ptsu-zahopili-hram-upts.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Filatova, ‘V sele Novaya Moschanitsa proiskhodit popytka reiderskogo zakhvata khram UPTS’.

<sup>90</sup> Serhii Kondrachuk, Facebook, Status Update, 3 March 2019, [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=2135072249903475&id=100002021632918](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2135072249903475&id=100002021632918).



at least on one side, people from outside the community were active in the confrontation. The following day the UOC-MP reported that the service was now taking place in the home of the priest, as the church had been taken over those who supported the OCU.<sup>91</sup> Again, this episode shows that both sides successfully mobilised support from outside the community, and that the OCU supporters used national identity to try to frame themselves as the sole legitimate actors.

### Securitisation of religion

The case of Nova Moshchanytsia exemplifies a confrontation within a village with a large amount of involvement from actors outside the community. Why the authorities in Zdolbunivskiy Raion took on such an active role, compared to other regions, is not clear. However, the interference of local authorities could suggest a greater risk of confrontation emerging, as it means information is disseminated quickly and at risk of being overtly politicised. In this region, it appears that some local authorities further politicised religious boundaries, as was done on a national level. An example of this is an article published on Zdolbuniv.com, an independent local news portal and information site where both journalists and public officials publish articles. Written on March 6th by Kateryna Hrytsyshina, a deputy of the village council of another village in the Raion, Urvenna (just over 15km from Nova Moshchanytsia), it claimed that those who support the UOC-MP are in fact assisting Russia's war against Ukraine from behind the front line. "The worst among them are those who wear a *vyshyvanka* [traditional shirt], hang yellow and blue flags on their homes, beautifully sing the national anthem, and in fact propagate the ideas of the 'Russian World'".<sup>92</sup> She is thus designating priests and supporters of the MP, no matter that their outward allegiance to Ukraine, essentially as fifth columnists. She goes on to list the names, occupations, and workplaces of various public sector workers from across the district who appear to openly support the UOC-MP. One woman named, described as a school teacher in a certain village in Zdolbunivsky Raion, raised funds for the construction of a UOC-MP church, and thus "humiliates the honour and dignity of the mothers of the soldiers" who fought in the conflict in the East. Another woman is listed as the director of a village cultural centre in the district, and denounced as having gone to a UOC-MP service on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, "at the time when she was supposed to be in the workplace". She ends the article with imploring "all conscious Ukrainians" to refrain from believing this is a private matter. "It is necessary to react," she writes, "because otherwise one day we could wake up to the streets filled with tanks, consecrated by priests, and parishioners of the UOC-MP with

---

<sup>91</sup> Olha Vivdenko, 'V Novoi Moschanitse veruyuschiye zakhvachennogo khrama UPTS sobralis' na bogosluzheniye', Union of Orthodox Journalists, 3 March 2019, <https://spzh.news/ru/news/60555-v-novoj-moshhanice-verujushhiye-zakhvachennogo-khrama-upc-sobralisy-na-bogosluzhenije>.

<sup>92</sup> Kateryna Hrytsyshina, 'Na Zdolbunivshchyni vyruyut' relihii'ni prystrasti: tochka zoru mistsevoho deputata', Zdolbuniv.com, 6 March 2019, <http://zdolbuniv.com/narodna-trybuna/na-zdolbunivschyni-vyruyut-relihijni-prystrasti-tochka-zoru-mistsevoho-deputata.html>.

guns that have been stored under altars.”<sup>93</sup> The website is aware of the inflammatory nature of the article, as there is a disclaimer above the text. It warns those who label this a ‘witch hunt’ that there are certain limitations on freedom of thought or even religion all over the world. This sort of language used by a local deputy, and then published on the district news site, demonstrates the sort of sentiments held by some figures in the local authorities to the religious situation. Not only is the allegiance of parishioners and priests to UOC-MP politicised, these people are also securitised as an existential threat. The publication of this reaction and not only politicisation, but securitisation of the denomination, suggests why tensions between parishioners in the region may have escalated into confrontation.

### Protecting Property

By the end of April, it was reported that the registration and official ownership of the church in Nova Moshchanytsia had passed to the villagers that belonged to the OCU religious community. However, the original village priest was in the process of appeal through the courts. Moreover, there remained the complication of church property, in particular, the issue of his residence. The OCU supporters were trying to evict him, otherwise they could not reinstate a new village priest that belonged to their denomination. However, this was also subject to a legal battle, as the priest claimed that to do so, they needed to give him a new home to replace where he had lived for 23 years. Moreover, the house of the priest is where the UOC-MP parishioners have their services. A news crew from UA:Rivne visited the village and spoke to both sides. Outside the priest’s house, the parishioners told the journalist that they stand in shifts to protect the house, “day and night”, otherwise “they will get here”. At the same time, the parishioners of the OCU reported to the journalist that they do the same, “so that there are no provocations”.<sup>94</sup> These comments suggest that tensions between villagers continue, and both on a symbolic and physical level, social boundaries are dividing them.

### Conclusion

The case of Nova Moshchanytsia highlights how a rural Moscow Patriarchate parish reacted to the activation of religious boundaries on a national level through not only a clash over the physical property of the church, but also a discursive battle. This case thus demonstrates the interplay between the physical and symbolic elements of social boundaries. There are various reactions taking place simultaneously. The residents who want to remain with the UOC-MP react with anger, to the extent that they mobilise the region and protest outside the regional administration in Zdolbuniv. However, those who want the switchover also mobilise support from outsiders, namely the district authorities. These actors clearly interfere in the process, either by actively

---

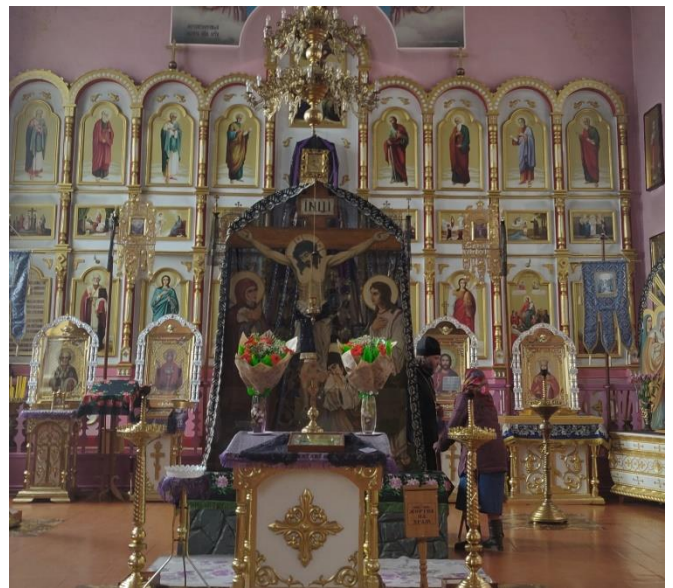
<sup>93</sup> Hrytsyshina.

<sup>94</sup> ‘U seli na Rivnenshchyni odna hromada okhoroniaie tserkvu, insha - budynok sviashchenyka’, UA:Rivne, 22 April 2019, <https://rv.suspilne.media/news/19657>.

providing assistance to those who want switchover on the ground, or by securitising the situation in local media. Finally, the priests appear to be least combative, going through legal mechanisms and trying to calm tensions – though this may be because they are the most vulnerable and have the most to lose. In exploring how the community reacted, it should be reiterated that there were two separate meetings, which ended in different results. Arguably, there may be a point of contention between the desires of regular churchgoers and ordinary villagers. Tensions first arose when a social boundary is drawn within the community between them by these separate votes. However, it cannot be excluded that the situation acted as a ‘master cleavage’ and was used to settle local scores – though investigating this could only be done by long-term fieldwork. Escalation then followed in large part due to the mobilisation of outside actors, during which (social) media most likely played a role in aggravating tensions. These external actors clearly interfere in the process, either by actively providing assistance to those who want to switchover on the ground, or by securitising the situation in the local media. Moreover, the fact that these developments happened within the context of wider regional issues may have led to more heated conflict due to the mobilisation of outside actors. Within this timeframe, conflict was limited to verbal aggression and confrontation, though there was also no open physical violence, as was the case in other villages. Even so, both sides felt a constant threat of violence, largely due to the continuing standoff between two sides.



## Case III: Chudel / Чудель



This final section of analysis uses the result of my fieldwork in the village of Chudel as a case study for the scenario of no switchover to the OCU without conflict. Through interviews and observations, the analysis demonstrates the potential coping mechanisms used by a community in reaction to the politicisation of social boundaries, as well as other factors that may have prevented the breakout of conflict. Chudel is therefore the only case that uses primary data, which, as already explained in the methodology, was due to the unique access I had. As I could only stay one week, the data is limited – I rely on observations, informal interviews with the family I stayed with, and a formal interview with the local priest. Though not representative, I also experienced attending part of the Sunday service, where I observed no confrontations in or outside the church. I recognise that had I stayed for months, another story may have emerged. However, the findings are useful as a starting point for discussion or future research, and despite the limited data I am able to produce a meaningful representation of how the community reacted to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level, at least in the short term. Specifically, the research was fruitful in uncovering some of the potential coping mechanisms UOC-MP communities have used since the activation of religious boundaries at a national level. I take the idea of coping mechanisms from Mac Ginty's work on everyday peace (as discussed in the theoretical chapter of this thesis), which he defines as the "practices and norms deployed by individuals in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimise conflict".<sup>95</sup> I divide my analysis into

---

<sup>95</sup> Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace', 553.

sections that consider mechanisms of avoidance, dialogue, silence, blame deferral, and the use of local identity.

My visit took place in the first week of April 2019, following the first round of the Ukrainian Presidential election. The village lies around 50 kilometres south of the border with Belarus and has a population of around 3,000.<sup>96</sup> Its church was burnt down by invading Nazi forces in 1942; under Soviet rule the building was not reconstructed.<sup>97</sup> However, the church in Kamyane survived the war, and Tanya remembered being taken by her grandmother as a child, telling me that going to church was an open secret. Chudel's Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin as constructed soon after Ukraine gained independence in 1991.

### Avoidance

Upon arriving, I asked Tanya whether there had been any conflict between villagers over the granting of the Tomos to the OCU. She told me that there seemed to be no large push from parishioners to change from the UOC-MP. However, she recalled that two women had gone to talk to the priest, Father Serhii, as they wanted the church to switch over. According to Tanya, he discussed the issue with the women and told them that if the majority of the village wanted it, he would not oppose the move. However, in such a case he stated he would step down as village priest, because he was ordained according to the rites of the UOC-MP and believed that this was incompatible with the new church. In the end, the women did not bring the matter further. I wanted to interview the priest to hear his perspective, but when Tanya contacted him to arrange a meeting, he declined. He was wary of discussing anything to do with the situation with me, and this hesitation to talk about the religious situation with me was also reflected in the ordinary population. Prior to arriving, I had discussed with Tanya the idea of having group interviews with other parishioners to understand their perspective on the religious situation. However, she told me that the idea was not taken up enthusiastically, apologising that "people don't want to talk about politics". The fact that my research was interpreted to be about politics, rather than religion alone, gave an indication in itself of how local people viewed the situation and how it was managed, at least with outsiders. This avoidance of the topic suggested a potential way in which the developments were being dealt with in the community. It is important here to recall the coping mechanisms detailed by MacGinty in his work on everyday peace. He underlines avoidance as "perhaps the principal everyday peace activity", often taking the form of avoiding controversial and sensitive political or religious conversation topics.<sup>98</sup> In this case, it appears that much of the local population classifies the topic as both political and religious. By declining to be interviewed

---

<sup>96</sup> 'Chudel's'ka Sil's'ka Rada', Rada.info, accessed 20 April 2019, <https://rada.info/rada/04387775/>.

<sup>97</sup> 'Chudel', Sarnens'kyi Raion, Rovens'ka Oblast', Istorya mist i sil Ukrains'koi RSR, 5 April 2016, <http://ukrssr.com.ua/rovenska/sarnenskiy/chudel-sarnenskiy-rayon-rovenska-oblast>.

<sup>98</sup> Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace', 555.

by me, Father Serhii and others were potentially minimising the risk of provoking conflict, either in a group setting or with the fear that my research would lead to attacks from those outside the group. Alternatively, dismissing the events as ‘politics’ may point to a different technique of avoidance, namely choosing to “display little to no interest in the ongoing division”.<sup>99</sup> However, my short time in Chudel meant that I was unable to assess whether these coping mechanisms were deployed consciously or not, and whether this avoidance was used consistently within an inter-group setting.

## Dialogue

Towards the end of my time in Chudel, Tanya had convinced Father Serhii to speak to me, allowing an interview after the Sunday service. I asked him how he talked about the issue with those who expressed they supported a switchover. He told me that he independently took the initiative to have open discussions with the community, immediately after the unification council meeting in Kyiv in December 2018, which created the new church.

*I initiated this discussion with people to have a conversation, to find out what people thought and their different views, their attitudes. And I laid out not my opinion, but about the facts of what had happened in that so-called council, just simply the facts of everything, as to not let anyone lose their temper, so that I could hear the opinions of people, what their position was.*

Consequently, it appears there are two mechanisms at play: while the natural reaction, at least to outsiders or on an ‘everyday’ level, is to avoid the topic completely, the priest also reacted in a way that tackled the issue head-on through dialogue. Therefore, how (or whether) the issue is discussed is the result of a distinction between different relationships between actors: local-local is less likely to be discussed than local-priest. It also suggests that while the events were perceived as controversial (as evident from his reference to the ‘so-called’ council), he simultaneously saw it as necessary to have conversations with his parishioners about their concerns. He told me that this strategy of dialogue was not easy, and other priests had not taken such initiatives:

*I communicate with neighbouring priests and they have not talked and in all this time, there are tensions, and so they don't know, how people are concerned, what are their perceptions. I immediately decided to openly discuss, because every person has their own thoughts and on social media there is also a discussion. They listen to my position and I listen to their position.*

He therefore agreed that dialogue was an important strategy to minimise conflict, underlining that it was crucial to “set out immediately”. The quote above also demonstrates that while there was no open conflict, he was aware that on social media sites there may have been more heated exchanges that have the potentially to undermine social cohesion. His focus on engaging in

---

<sup>99</sup> Mac Ginty, 556.

conversation with his parishioners, even if they have opposing views that they do not openly talk about, may therefore indicate an important factor that limited the potential for confrontation within the community. However, the fact that no neighbouring villages had switched despite these tensions suggests there may be specific local factors at play, which allow for conflict to be managed at least in the short term.

### Silence

Beyond the interplay between avoiding the topic and dialogue, my research revealed that in Chudel there was also a deeper mechanism of avoidance at use. I asked Father Serhii if he was aware of any parishioners saying that he was 'pro-Moscow' or 'pro-Russian', as I had seen in my research of conflictive scenarios. He answered:

*So far I have not encountered that in my life. So far no. But firstly, it's an opinion and maybe some people have that opinion of me. But I...I don't disagree that these thoughts exist, I could even say I am sure that they are there. But so far I have never heard them in my life. Maybe that is due to the fact that I have so far not compromised faith (...) Maybe it's because of that, but I don't know. But so far I have not heard it with my ears, but I am sure that it is there.*

Silence is a relatively under-studied mechanism of averting conflict, perhaps due to the negative connotations the word has within the field of conflict studies and human rights. This is particularly the case in the context of studying post-conflict societies, as in transitional justice literature 'silence' is linked to forgetting and collective amnesia. However, in some contexts silence can be a useful tool in societies that are vulnerable to conflict, since the absence of any reference to a certain word, phrase, or insult may in fact prevent tensions from boiling over. In this sense, silence is a form of strategic politeness, more specific than avoidance of contentious topics alone. Why the villagers in this village, unlike other cases, chose to not openly say words like 'Moskal' or 'pro-Russian', despite the fact that Father Serhii believes these thoughts exist, is open to further research.

### Blame Deferral

By considering the issue 'politics', the villagers put the matter at a distance and designated a result of the manipulation of political actors in Kyiv. In this sense, there was a degree of blame deferral, which according to MacGinty assists the sentiment that inter-group relations are stable, while outsiders are responsible for any problems. He clearly highlighted the perception that the religious situation was the result of political interference. One of my questions concerned how he felt about the use of religion by politicians in the election campaigning, he answered:

*It worries me very much. Very much. Even proceeding from that, I cannot talk about all politicians, but Poroshenko is untrustworthy in his words and deeds. They are contradictory. Even his first [Presidential] campaign in 2014, in which he met with the bishop of our church, the UOC [MP] in the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra*

*and asked them to support him in his elections. My son [also a priest] was present at those discussions, meetings. He promised to support our church and then, [turned] everything against the church. For that reason, the fact that politics is now in our church is very bad [...] I am against that and very worried that politics is playing a role in the church.*

His words demonstrate a deep anxiety with the policies of President Poroshenko, and how his contradictory policies have resulted in instability. The blame is directed one actor, rather than framed as an internal problem within the region, community, or church itself. It also indicates the priest has a political awareness, and is mapping out what is going on at a higher level, and thinking about how it will play out locally.

### Local Identity

Related to this, a final potential factor is related to the topic of local identity. It is important to note that regionally, the northern half of Rivne Oblast had not seen considerable contentious reactions. This was confirmed in my interview with the UOC-KP priest in Sarny, who told me that “in Sarny Raion there have been no switchovers, but in neighbouring regions there have been”. However, it was in my interview with Father Serhii that I learned about a geographical boundary that I was not previously fully aware of. My first question concerned why the politicisation of religion had not inflamed tensions in the village, in the way it had in others that created conflict.

*It's hard for me to say why. Firstly, my feeling is that here is in Polissia, the people you find are altogether different compared to there, such as in Dubno or Volyn. Here people are, well, more kind hearted, understanding, in this sense they are educated and more peaceful, than in Dubno or Ostroh. Here we have many spiritual people.*

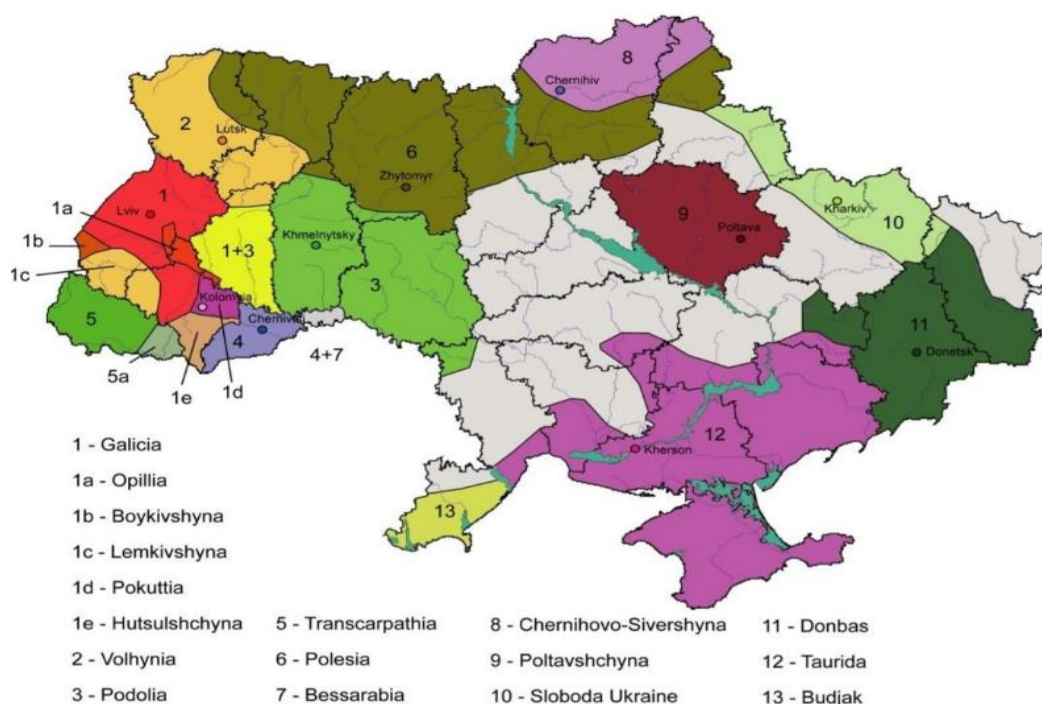
The first factor that came to his mind was therefore the distinct identity of not just the village, but the surrounding area. Also known as Polesia, it refers to a historical region that lies along the border of Ukraine and Belarus, stretching from the border with Russia in the east to where Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland meet in the west. However, only the northern half of Rivne Oblast is considered to be part of Polissia – the area around the cities of Rivne, Dubno and Ostroh lie outside the boundary. The name implies a forested area (*lis* being forest in Ukrainian, *les* in Russian), and has long been one of the least densely populated areas of the country, due to the marshy and wooded terrain. It has been known to have retained a distinct cultural identity and longstanding traditions due to its geography and remoteness from metropolitan urban centres.<sup>100</sup> To reveal the territorial identities of populations within Ukraine, one study used quantitative data to analyse the naming of markers in urban space, such as streets, squares, private enterprises,

---

<sup>100</sup> Maria Sonevytsky and Adrian Ivakhiv, ‘Late Soviet Discourses of Nature and the Natural: Musical Avtentyka, Native Faith, and “Cultural Ecology” after Chornobyl’, in *Current Directions in Ecomusicology*, ed. Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dawe (New York: Routledge, 2015), 137.



regional brands, and institutions. Polissia was one of the most distinctive historical-geographical regions, with the third largest number of detected names.<sup>101</sup> It therefore indicates that there is a strong sense of sub-national identity in the region. The data also confirmed that in Rivne Oblast, the naming of markers referring to Polissia is generally confined to the parts of these regions that are traditionally considered 'Polissian', i.e. in the physical geography (forest landscapes).<sup>102</sup> There is thus a very clear symbolic boundary evident even today between the part of the Oblast that is considered Polissian and that which is not.



*Sub-national identities in Ukraine, according to the study by Melnychuk, Gnatiuk, and Rastvorova, 2014.*

Later in the interview, Father Serhii referred back to the difference between the area around Chudel and other parts of the oblast, saying:

*Here there are many religious people, good and righteous ones [...] Of course, there are different people, but this is the majority. When I arrived here in 1992 that was right away a large, cardinal difference that I saw. People from Rivne to the west and between Rivne and here, there is a large difference.*

Father Serhii's words may point to regional identity as a factor more resilient to conflict. This is not to say that there have been no religiously-informed conflicts in Polissia – maps on websites of both the UOC-MP and the OCU show that there are villages that have experienced confrontations, and some have reportedly switched. However, the further towards the border

<sup>101</sup> Anatoliy Melnychuk, Oleksiy Gnatiuk, and Mariia Rastvorova, 'Use of Territorial Identity Markers in Geographical Researches', *SCIENTIFIC ANNALS OF „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY OF IAȘI* 60, no. 2 (2014): 166.

<sup>102</sup> Melnychuk, Gnatiuk, and Rastvorova, 168.

with Belarus (and thus the deeper into Polissia), the less frequently such labels appear on the maps – though, the lack of data on the number of parishes belonging to the UOC-MP to begin with makes statistical comparisons difficult. In any case, from an anthropological perspective, it has been noted that while borders can disappear from a map, the symbolic boundary is embedded and can result in regional differences in social or political behaviour, or even economic development.<sup>103</sup> In this case, it may result in differences in the reaction to the politicisation of religious boundaries. Specifically, the concept of ‘borderland identities’ is key – the idea that communities on the periphery have a strengthened sense of local or regional identity due to the historical shift of borders over the population.<sup>104</sup> While borders can disappear from a map, the historical memory remains and can result in regional differences in social or political behaviour, or even economic development.<sup>105</sup> Borderland identity in particular emphasises the way the region is different from the national centre.<sup>106</sup> With Chudel just 50km from Belarus, and an 8-hour train journey from both Kyiv and Lviv (the largest urban centre in western Ukraine), this sense of local identity may have impacted the reaction of the region around Chudel. In particular, the priest may have referred to this sense of the community being ‘Polissians’ as part of the process of blame deferral.

## Conclusion

It should again be highlighted that a longer period of fieldwork would have resulted in a greater, or even completely different, amount of data, with which more concrete conclusions could be drawn. However, my research found that the reaction of Chudel to the politicisation of religious boundaries on a national level involves a number of coping mechanisms related to everyday peace. An especially interesting point of further research would be into the role of referring to sub-national identity when boundaries are activated at a national level, particularly in the case of Ukraine due to the continued simplification of the country as being divided between east and west. Beyond historical and geographical factors, the role of the priest in facilitating dialogue appeared to be extremely important in easing tensions, at least in the short term. A final point is the complete absence of local authorities as an actor in the discussion of the religious situation in Chudel. Unlike other cases, local deputies were never mentioned as interfering in church affairs, though during my fieldwork I did not ask about this topic specifically. In terms of reactions to boundary activation at a national level, further research could be carried out on how administrations responded to this on a local level, as it appears that depending on the raion, there were different degrees of involvement in religious affairs.

---

<sup>103</sup> Zhurzhenko, ‘Borders and Memory’, 76.

<sup>104</sup> Zhurzhenko, 74.

<sup>105</sup> Zhurzhenko, 76.

<sup>106</sup> Zhurzhenko, 70.

## Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer the question of how rural Moscow Patriarchate parishes in Rivne Oblast reacted to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level, following the unification of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2018. After explaining my methodology, the theoretical chapter provided a conceptual background on social boundaries, the ways they shift, and how communities cope with such changes, as well as indicating potential gaps in the selected literature. It was clear from the beginning of the research process that there was no one way that these communities reacted. Rather, each village was faced with a number of key decisions over whether to switch to the OCU or not, and over whether that decision would be forcefully contested. I approached the situation through a matrix of potential scenarios, and then used qualitative data to provide a more detailed exploration of three different situations.

In the case of agreed-upon switchover, my preliminary understanding of Derazhne was that the village had switched to the OCU surprisingly quickly and with no visible contention, either between the parishioners, or between them, the priest, and local authorities. However, a more in-depth examination of the case revealed that the option to leave the UOC-MP had been deliberated for many years and there was a history of contention and pressure. Derazhne therefore usefully demonstrates that no matter how peaceful and orderly a development can seem on the surface, the underlying story is far more complex. Nova Moshchanytsia, as a case of contentious switchover, demonstrated how different various actors could react to the activation of religious boundaries at a national level. It also showed how outside forces can be mobilised within the region by both sides of the divide. The role of the local authorities in this case was of particular interest, as their use of combative discourse on social media arguably securitised the UOC-MP as a threat to local security. Related to this case, the securitisation of religion on a local level is a topic that could be further investigated within the context of Ukraine's religious landscape. Finally, Chudel demonstrated the reaction of a village that chose not to switch to the OCU, but also did not experience contention of this decision. Adapting Mac Ginty's understanding of everyday peace, I identified a number of coping mechanisms at use, both between parishioners and between them and other actors. My fieldwork revealed the role of the priest in limiting tensions, and particularly the complex interplay between avoidance, silence, and dialogue. The analysis as a whole developed a greater understanding of the different ways in which the national-level activation of religious boundaries impacts the local level, as well as potential reasons behind reactions. Pre-existing factors, such as local identity and the orientation of the priest, were found to be important in limiting or activating tensions and conflict. However, developments such as the role taken on by the local authorities, the way the priest reacted to the national-level situation



were also key in determining whether a community would switch or not, and whether this would happen with conflict.

It should again be underlined that this research was exploratory and thus limited in terms of number of cases, geographical scope, and timeframe. The long-term impact of the unification of the OCU still needs to be assessed, particularly within the context of a change of president. In this sense, in providing an answer to one main question this thesis brought up further questions. For example, the puzzle of why in some raions, regional administrations became deeply involved in local religious affairs, whereas in others their presence was hardly noticed, remains to be explored. In the context of social boundary activation at a local level, the use of sub-national identities as a strategy of blame deferral also offers an interesting puzzle, particularly in Ukraine's case, where regional differences are simplified as an east versus west boundary. However, in answering the question of how UOC-MP parishes reacted locally to the activation of religious boundaries, this thesis has created a greater understanding of how structural level changes can create tensions on a local level and how decisions made in the political centre can unpredictably impact lives on the periphery. A point in itself is the new law on religious communities, as its vague language has likely caused confusion and conflict in UOC-MP parishes across Ukraine. The focus of this thesis on rural areas, a demographic often ignored when considering structural level changes, allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Ukraine's evolving religious landscape, and in turn, its social boundaries beyond the east-west dichotomy.

## Works Cited

- Barker, Eileen. 'We've Got to Draw the Line Somewhere: An Exploration of Boundaries That Define Locations of Religious Identity'. *Social Compass* 53, no. 2 (2006): 201–13.
- Barth, Frederik. 'Boundaries and Connection'. In *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, edited by Anthony P Cohen, 17–36. New York/London: Routledge, 2000.
- 'Bor'ba za khram na Rovenschine: svyaschennik posle obscheniya s predstavitelyami UPTS MP poteryal soznanie'. *Novosti Rovno*, 30 June 2015.  
<http://topnews.rv.ua/other/2015/06/30/36596.html>.
- Bremer, Thomas. 'Religion in Ukraine: Historical Background and the Present Situation'. In *Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer, 3–20. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 'Religious Dimensions of Political Conflict and Violence'. *Sociological Theory* 33, no. 1 (2015): 1–19.
- Brüning, Alfons. 'Project Ukraine: Christian Churches in Ukraine and Their Relations 1991-2014'. In *Religion, State, Society, and Identity in Transition Ukraine*, edited by Rob van der Laarse, Mykhailo N Cherenkov, Vitaliy V Proshak, and Tetiana Mykhalchuk, 357–94. Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2015.
- Chervonenko, Vitaliy. '300 ili 60? Skol'ko ukrainskikh prihodov pereshli v novuyu tserkov' i kak eto schitayut'. *BBC News Ukraina*, 26 February 2019.  
<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-russian-47368276>.
- Chetverta vlada Rivne. *Sviashchennyky UPTS MP pryishly do holovy Zdolbunivs'koi RDA*. YouTube Video, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EswmWbQLFuk>.
- 'Chudel', Sarnens'kyi Raion, Rovens'ka Oblast'. *Istoriya mist i sil Ukrains'koi RSR*, 5 April 2016.  
<http://ukrskr.com.ua/rovenska/sarnenskiy/chudel-sarnenskiy-rayon-rovenska-oblast>.
- 'Chudel's'ka Sil's'ka Rada'. *Rada.info*. Accessed 20 April 2019.  
<https://rada.info/rada/04387775/>.
- Dahinden, Janine, and Tania Zittoun. 'Religion in Meaning Making and Boundary Work: Theoretical Explorations'. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 47 (2013): 185–206.
- Filatova, Yekaterina. 'V sele Novaya Moschanitsa proiskhodit popytka reiderskogo zakhvata khram UPTS'. *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, 2 March 2019.  
<https://spzh.news/ru/news/60540-v-sele-novaja-moshhanica-proiskhodit-popytka-rejderskogo-zahvata-khrama-upc>.
- 'Goryachiye Tochki'. *Interactive Map*. *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, 2019.  
<https://spzh.news/ru/spots>.
- Hovorun, Cyril. 'Churches in the Ukrainian Public Square'. *Toronto Journal of Theology* 31, no. 1 (2015): 3–14.

- . 'Interpreting the "Russian World"'. In *Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer, 163–71. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016.
- Hrytsyshina, Kateryna. 'Na Zdolbunivshchyni vyruiliu' relihii'ni prystrasti: tochka zoru mistsevoho deputata'. Zdolbuniv.com, 6 March 2019. <http://zdolbuniv.com/narodna-trybuna/na-zdolbunivshchyni-vyruiut-relihiini-pystrasti-tochka-zoru-mistsevoho-deputata.html>.
- Jarzyńska, Katarzyna. 'Patriarch Kirill's Game over in Ukraine'. OSW Commentary. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 14 August 2014. [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary\\_144\\_0.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary_144_0.pdf).
- Kalyvas, Stathis. 'The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars'. *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475–94.
- 'Kartka hromady'. Derazhnens'ka hromada, 2019. <https://derazhnenska-gromada.gov.ua/structure/>.
- Kazakov, Ivan. *Evromaidan 'kto ne skachet tot moskal'*. YouTube Video, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzE9rep2svI>.
- Kondrachuk, Serhii. Facebook. Status Update, 2 March 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/100002021632918/videos/pcb.2134050116672355/2134049020005798/?type=3&theater>.
- . Facebook. Status Update, 3 March 2019. [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=2135072249903475&id=100002021632918](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2135072249903475&id=100002021632918).
- Kravets, Andrii. 'Na Rivnenshchyni u seli Nova Moshchanytsia parafiiany PTSU zakhopyly khram'. Podrobnosti, 3 March 2019. <https://podrobnosti.ua/2286308-na-rvnenschin-u-sel-nova-moschanitsja-parafjani-ptsu-zahopili-hram-upts.html>.
- Kulyk, Volodymyr. 'Language and Identity in Ukraine after Euromaidan'. *Thesis Eleven* 136, no. 1 (2016): 90–106.
- Lamont, Michele, and Molnar Virag. 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 167–95.
- Mac Ginty, Roger. 'Everyday Peace: Bottom-up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies'. *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 6 (2014): 548–64.
- . 'Everyday Social Practices and Boundary-Making in Deeply Divided Societies'. *Civil Wars* 19, no. 1 (2017): 4–25.
- Maksymchuk, Viktoriya. "Vy muzhni liudy.." "Shcho ty melesh?": iak parafiiany UPTS MP z holovoiu Zdolbuniv's'koi RDA spilkuvalys". Chetverta vlada Rivne, 6 February 2019. [https://4vlada.com/vy-muzhni-liudy\\_\\_shcho-ty-melesh-yak-parafiiany-upts-mp-z-golovoiu-zdolbunivskoi-rda-spilkuvalys](https://4vlada.com/vy-muzhni-liudy__shcho-ty-melesh-yak-parafiiany-upts-mp-z-golovoiu-zdolbunivskoi-rda-spilkuvalys).
- Melnychuk, Anatoliy, Oleksiy Gnatiuk, and Mariia Rastvorova. 'Use of Territorial Identity Markers in Geographical Researches'. *SCIENTIFIC ANNALS OF „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY OF IASI* 60, no. 2 (2014): 157–84.

- 'Nova Moshchanytsia i Bushcha proholosuvaly za perekhid do PTSU - Kondrachuk'. UA:Rivne, 3 February 2019. <https://rv.suspilne.media/news/9015>.
- OHCHR Ukraine. 'Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine 16 November 2018 to 15 February 2019'. Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 26 February 2019. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/ReportUkraine16Nov2018-15Feb2019.pdf>.
- 'Persha hromada UPTS (MP) na Rivnenshchyni pereishla do PTSU'. Radio Svoboda, 8 January 2019. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-persha-hromada-upts-mp-na-rivnenshchyni-pereishla-do-ptsu/29697376.html>.
- Poltavets', Natalka. 'Kryha Skresla: Na Rivnenshchyni persha hromada pereishla vid moskov'skoho patriarkhatu do ptsu'. Kanal 5, 10 February 2019. <https://www.5.ua/regiony/kryha-skresla-na-rivnenshchyni-persha-hromada-pereishla-vid-moskovskoho-patriarkhatu-do-ptsu-184486.html>.
- Press Office of the Rivne Diocese (OCU). 'Moskov'skyi patriarkhat zнову provokuie mizhkonfesiini protystoiannia na Rivnenshchyni'. Rivne Cerkva, 2 March 2019. <http://www.rivne-cerkva.rv.ua/news/4007-moskovskiyi-patriarkhat-znovu-provokuie-mizhkonfesiini-protystoiannia-na-rivnenshchyni.html>.
- Putnam, Robert D. 'The Prosperous Community'. *The American Prospect*, 21 March 1993.
- Ritchie, Jane, and Jane Lewis. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage, 2003.
- Rivne 1. *Vid Sliv Do Dila: U Seli Derzhne Tserkovna Hromada Pys'movo Pidtverdyla Perekhlid z UPTS MP Do PTSU*. YouTube Video, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXE7oWdtKQg>.
- 'Rivnens'ka Oblast': Sotsial'no-ekonomichni pokaznyky 2017'. State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2018. <http://rv.ukrstat.gov.ua>.
- Shlikhta, Natalia. 'Eastern Christian Churches Between State and Society: An Overview of the Religious Landscape in Ukraine (1989-2014)'. *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 3 (2016): 123-42.
- Smolkin, Victoria. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Sonevsky, Maria, and Adrian Ivakhiv. 'Late Soviet Discourses of Nature and the Natural: Musical Avtentyka, Native Faith, and "Cultural Ecology" after Chornobyl'. In *Current Directions in Ecomusicology*, edited by Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dawe, 135-46. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Soroka, George. 'A House Divided. Orthodoxy in Post-Maidan Ukraine'. *New Eastern Europe*, 26 April 2018. <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/04/26/house-divided-orthodoxy-post-maidan-ukraine/>.
- 'Svezhiy opros: Stalo izvestno o reitingakh Zelenskogo i Poroshenko'. *Hvilya.net*, 11 April 2019. <https://hvilya.net/news/exclusive/svezhiy-opros-stalo-izvestno-o-rejtingah-zelenskogo-i>

poroshenko.html?fbclid=IwAR2lMihlHJq1\_IardPAXjb2YJ0DhUFxAyy7qq\_hRFSHv9M4357ASlPT1Fc.

Tilly, Charles. 'Social Boundary Mechanisms'. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34, no. 2 (2004): 211–36.

'Transfer of Ukrainian Orthodox Parishes'. Interactive Map. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2019. <http://gis.huri.harvard.edu/contemporary-atlas/revolution-of-dignity/religion-module/transfer-of-parishes.html>.

'U seli na Rivnenshchyni odna hromada okhoroniaie tserkvu, insha - budynok sviashchenyka'. UA:Rivne, 22 April 2019. <https://rv.suspilne.media/news/19657>.

'Virni UPTS (MP) vlashtuvaly "molytovne stoiannia" pid rai'administratsiieiu'. UA:Rivne, 4 February 2019. <https://rv.suspilne.media/news/9099&xid=>.

Vivdenko, Olha. 'Hromada UPTS s.Nova Moshchanytsia pidtverdyla svoiu vinist' kanonichnii tserkvi'. Union of Orthodox Journalists, 6 February 2019. <https://spzh.news/ua/news/59891-obshhina-upc-s-novaja-moshhanica-podtverdila-svoju-vernosty-kanonicheskoy-cerkvi>.

———. 'V Novoi Moschanitse veruyuschiye zakhvachennogo khrama UPTS sobralis' na bogosluzheniye'. Union of Orthodox Journalists, 3 March 2019. <https://spzh.news/ru/news/60555-v-novoj-moshhanice-verujushhiye-zahvachennogo-khrama-upc-sobralisy-na-bogosluzhenije>.

Wanner, Catherine. "'Fraternal" Nations and Challenges to Sovereignty in Ukraine: The Politics of Linguistic and Religious Ties'. *American Ethnologist* 41, no. 3 (2014): 427–39.

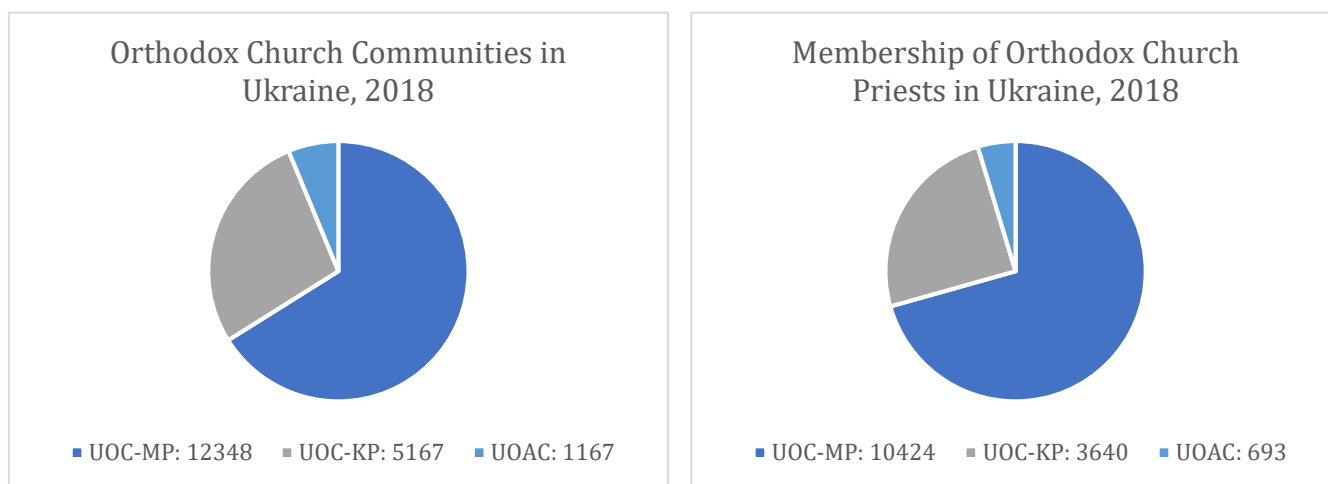
Wimmer, Andreas. 'Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008): 1025–55.

Yatsuk, Anna, and Volodymyr Zakharov. 'Z MP u PTSU: hromada na Rivnenshchyni zminyla tserkovnu iurysdyktsiiu'. Rivne 1, 10 January 2019. <https://rivne1.tv/news/z-mp-u-ptsu-hromada-na-rivnenshchyni-zminila-tserkovnu-yurisdiktsiyu-video>.

Zhurzhenko, Tatiana. 'Borders and Memory'. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies*, edited by Doris Wastl-Walter, 63–84. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2011.

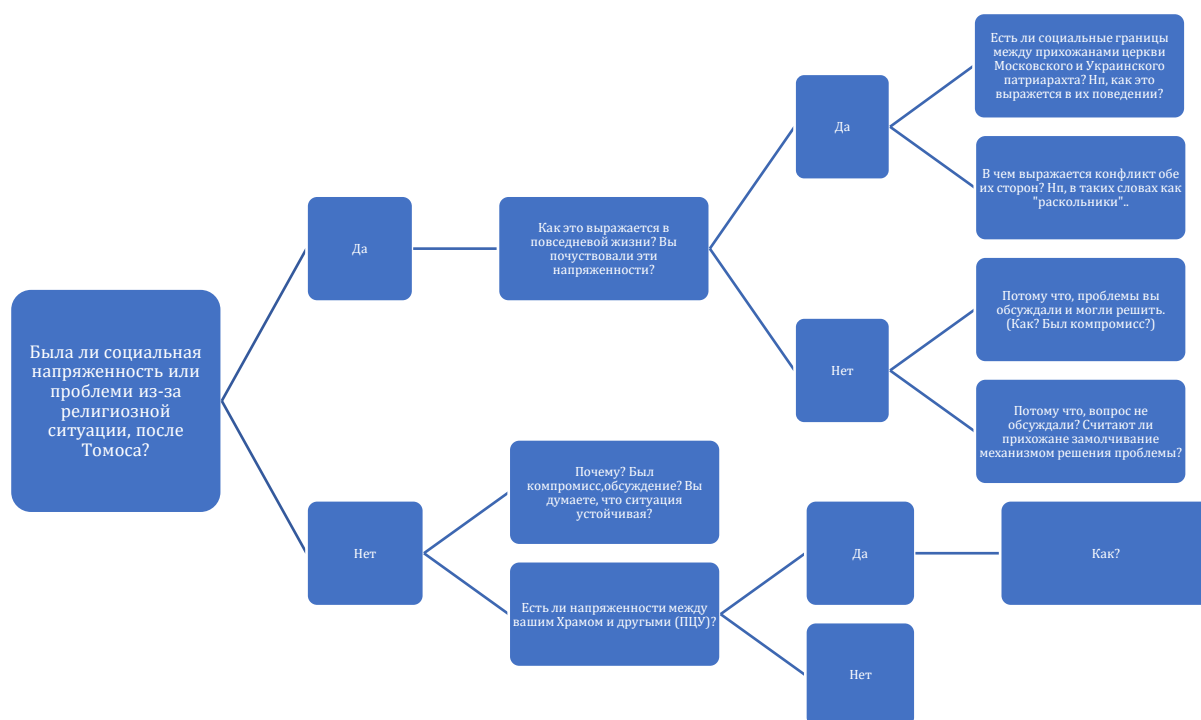
## Appendix

Figure 1



Overview of the number of parishes and priests belonging to the three largest Orthodox denominations. Source: Religious Information Service of Ukraine/Department of Religious Rights and Nationalities of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine.

Figure 2: semi structured interview questions



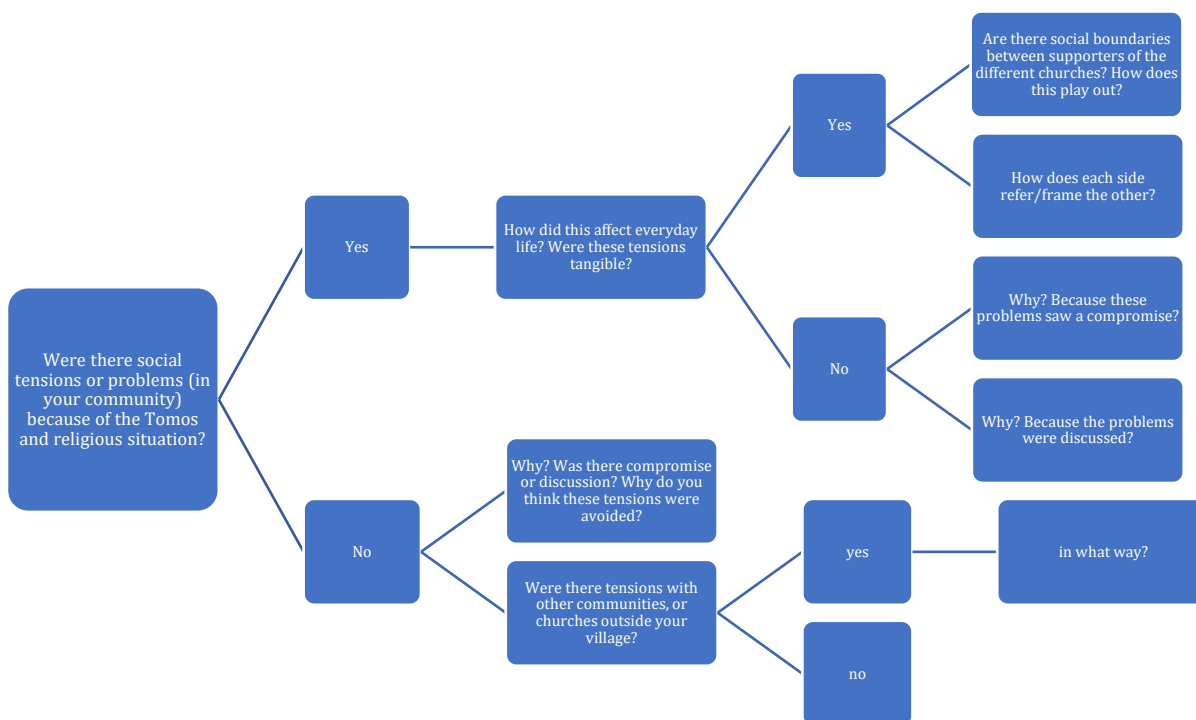


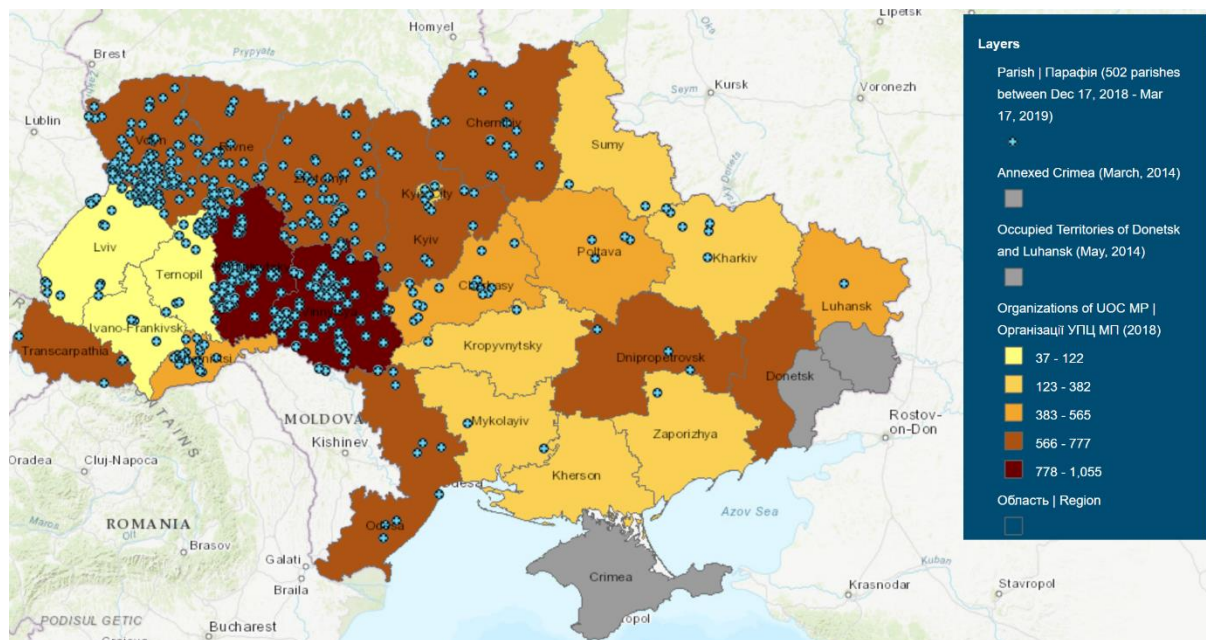
Figure 3: Sources and Sub Questions

Research Question: <i>Following the unification of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2018, how did rural Moscow Patriarchy parishes in Rivne Oblast react to the activation of religious boundaries on the national level?</i>	
Sub-Questions	Sources
1) What is the local context/history/geography of the village and church?	-(Interactive) internet maps -(Local) news reports -Local history websites -Websites affiliated with both churches -Local administration websites
2) Timeline of events, if possible, including information such as: a) What was the immediate impact of granting of autocephaly to OCU? b) How was the issue discussed locally? Town hall meetings, church meetings c) Was there a vote on switchover? i. What was the result? (i.e. 50/50 or more clear result?) ii. Was the result respected? iii. How did the priest respond?	-News reports, local and national -Websites affiliated with both churches -Local administration websites -YouTube clips -Facebook posts

<p>3) Is there evidence of protests, confrontation, or conflict because of the religious issue? [if no, continue to question 4]</p> <p>a) Where did this confrontation take place? (i.e. in many instances they take place at the regional capital city hall, some happen outside the church)</p> <p>b) What does the language used by each side in such protests indicate about how actors react to the activation of religious boundaries</p>	<p>-News reports, local and national</p> <p>-Local administration websites</p> <p>-YouTube clips</p> <p>-Facebook posts</p> <p>-Potentially my interviews with UOC-MP priests in Rivne</p>
<p>3) In the case of no conflict, what factors suggest why the village remained peaceful?</p> <p>a) Existence of re-existing factors?</p> <p>b) Evidence of coping mechanisms?</p>	<p>-See sources for sub-question 1</p> <p>In the case of Chudel:</p> <p>-interview with village priest</p> <p>-observations</p>
<p>4)What were the reactions of the key local actors?</p> <p>c) Villagers (were they divided?)</p> <p>d) Priest</p> <p>e) Local authorities</p>	<p>-News reports, local and national</p> <p>-Websites affiliated with both churches</p> <p>-Local administration websites</p> <p>-YouTube clips</p> <p>-Facebook posts</p> <p>In the case of Chudel:</p> <p>-interview with village priest</p> <p>-observations</p>



Figure 4: Map of switchovers



© Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University, Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv.

More detailed view of Rivne Oblast:

